



CHANDOS
OPERA IN
ENGLISH

THE RHINEGOLD

CHAN 3054(3)

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



AKG

Richard Wagner

Richard Wagner (1813–1883)

The Rhinegold

Preliminary Evening to the Festival Play *The Ring of the Nibelung*

Music drama in four scenes

Poem by Richard Wagner

English translation by Andrew Porter

Gods

Wotan	Norman Bailey <i>bass-baritone</i>
Donner.....	Norman Welsby <i>baritone</i>
Froh	Robert Ferguson <i>tenor</i>
Loge	Emile Belcourt <i>tenor</i>

Giants

Fasolt.....	Robert Lloyd <i>bass</i>
Fafner	Clifford Grant <i>bass</i>

Nibelungs

AlberichDerek Hammond-Stroud *baritone*

MimeGregory Dempsey *tenor*

Goddesses

Fricka.....Katherine Pring *mezzo-soprano*

FreiaLois McDonall *soprano*

ErdaAnne Collins *contralto*

Rhinemaids

Woglinde.....Valerie Masterson *soprano*

WellgundeShelagh Squires *mezzo-soprano*

FlosshildeHelen Attfield *contralto*

Nibelungs

English National Opera Orchestra
English National Opera Movement Group
Reginald Goodall



Alberich and the Rhinemaidens, Scene 1

COMPACT DISC ONE

Scene 1

[1]	Orchestral prelude	5:01	[p. 134]
[2]	'Weia! Waga! Wandering waters' <i>Woglinde, Wellgunde, Flosshilde</i>	1:33	[p. 134]
[3]	'He, he! You nixies!' <i>Alberich, Woglinde, Wellgunde, Flosshilde</i>	1:40	[p. 135]
[4]	'Slimy, slippery, slithery smoothness!' <i>Alberich, Woglinde, Wellgunde, Flosshilde</i>	9:57	[p. 136]
[5]	'Look, sisters! The sunlight is greeting the gold' <i>Woglinde, Wellgunde, Flosshilde</i>	2:41	[p. 140]
[6]	'What's that, you nixies...?' <i>Alberich, Woglinde, Wellgunde, Flosshilde</i>	5:01	[p. 140]
[7]	'The world's wealth can be mine...?' <i>Alberich, Woglinde, Wellgunde, Flosshilde</i>	1:01	[p. 142]
[8]	'Still not afraid?' <i>Alberich, Flosshilde, Wellgunde, Woglinde</i> Orchestral interlude	4:39	[p. 142]

Scene 2

[9]	'Wotan, my lord! Awaken!' <i>Fricka, Wotan</i>	6:12	[p. 143]
[10]	'For I wished you faithful and true' <i>Fricka, Wotan</i>	2:59	[p. 144]
[11]	'Then shelter her now' <i>Fricka, Freia, Wotan</i>	2:24	[p. 145]
[12]	'Soft sleep closed your eyes' <i>Fasolt, Wotan, Fafner</i>	3:20	[p. 145]

Time Page

[13]	'God of light, light of spirit!' <i>Fasolt, Wotan, Fafner, Freia</i>	5:09	[p. 146]
[14]	'To me, Freia! Back from her, giant!' <i>Froh, Donner, Fafner, Fasolt, Wotan</i>	1:17	[p. 147]

TT 52:57

COMPACT DISC TWO

[1]	'This bond is graved on my spear's strong shaft' <i>Wotan, Freia, Fricka</i>	0:58	[p. 148]
[2]	'What? How am I concerned in a contract?' <i>Loge, Wotan, Fricka, Froh, Donner, Fafner, Fasolt</i>	4:15	[p. 148]
[3]	'Never one word of praise or thanks!' <i>Loge</i>	2:52	[p. 150]
[4]	'But one I found then' <i>Loge</i>	2:02	[p. 150]
[5]	'So I promised I'd tell you the story' <i>Loge, Wotan, Fasolt, Fafner</i>	1:05	[p. 150]
[6]	'A toy, while it was in the waters' <i>Loge, Wotan, Fricka</i>	2:01	[p. 151]
[7]	'And I should possess it!' <i>Wotan, Loge, Donner, Froh, Fricka, Fafner</i>	4:38	[p. 151]
[8]	'Hear, Wotan, I'll speak my last word!' <i>Fafner, Wotan, Fasolt, Freia, Froh, Donner</i>	2:29	[p. 152]
[9]	'Over rock and stone they stride' <i>Loge, Fricka, Donner, Froh</i>	3:07	[p. 153]

	Time	Page
[10] 'I see now! Hear what is wrong!' <i>Loge, Fricka</i>	3:13	[p. 154]
[11] 'Come, Loge, descend with me!' <i>Wotan, Loge, Donner, Froh, Fricka</i> Orchestral interlude	5:11	[p. 155]
Scene 3		
[12] 'Hehe! Hehe! Come here! Come here!' <i>Alberich, Mime</i>	0:56	[p. 156]
[13] 'Ha, you rogue!' <i>Alberich, Mime</i>	2:25	[p. 156]
[14] 'Nibelheim here' <i>Loge, Mime, Wotan</i>	1:45	[p. 157]
[15] 'What help for me?' <i>Mime, Loge, Wotan</i>	5:06	[p. 158]
[16] 'Better take care! Alberich's near' <i>Mime, Wotan, Alberich</i>	2:56	[p. 159]
[17] 'What brought you here?' <i>Alberich, Wotan, Loge</i>	3:32	[p. 160]
[18] 'In the clouds, you great ones' <i>Alberich, Wotan, Loge</i>	3:23	[p. 162]
[19] 'All must stand in amazement' <i>Loge, Alberich</i>	4:58	[p. 162]

TT 56:54

COMPACT DISC THREE

	Time	Page
[1] 'Ohe! Ohe! Terrible dragon' <i>Loge, Wotan, Alberich</i>	3:20	[p. 163]
[2] 'Now swiftly up!' <i>Loge</i> Orchestral interlude	4:46	[p. 164]
Scene 4		
[3] 'There, Alberich, sit on your throne!' <i>Loge, Alberich, Wotan</i>	2:53	[p. 165]
[4] 'And now the Niblungs will come to my call' <i>Alberich, Wotan</i>	3:12	[p. 166]
[5] 'The gold lies there; now let me go' <i>Alberich, Loge, Wotan</i>	6:38	[p. 166]
[6] 'Am I now free?' (Alberich's curse) <i>Alberich, Loge, Wotan</i>	4:27	[p. 168]
[7] 'Fasolt and Fafner come this way' <i>Loge, Froh, Donner, Fricka</i>	3:08	[p. 169]
[8] 'Wait! Don't touch her yet!' <i>Fasolt, Wotan, Fafner, Loge, Froh</i>	3:12	[p. 170]
[9] 'Far too loose you're piling the gold' <i>Fafner, Loge, Wotan, Fricka, Donner</i>	2:44	[p. 170]
[10] 'Freia, the fair one, see I no more' <i>Fasolt, Fafner, Loge, Wotan, Freia, Fricka, Froh, Donner</i>	3:07	[p. 171]
[11] 'Yield it, Wotan, yield it!' (Erda's warning) <i>Erda, Wotan, Fricka, Froh</i>	5:44	[p. 173]

	Time	Page
¹² 'Hear, you giants!' <i>Donner, Freia, Wotan</i>	2:13	[p. 174]
¹³ 'Stop, you greedy one!' <i>Fasolt, Fafner, Loge, Wotan</i>	2:25	[p. 174]
¹⁴ 'Your luck, Wotan, what could surpass it?' <i>Loge, Wotan, Fricka</i>	2:25	[p. 175]
¹⁵ 'Sweltering mists hang in the air... Heda! Heda! Hedo!' <i>Donner</i>	2:47	[p. 175]
¹⁶ 'The bridge leads you homeward' <i>Froh</i>	1:52	[p. 176]
¹⁷ 'Evening rays flood the sky with splendour' <i>Wotan, Fricka, Loge</i>	4:21	[p. 176]
¹⁸ 'Rhinegold! Rhinegold!' (Entry of the Gods into Valhalla) <i>Woglinde, Wellgunde, Flosshilde, Wotan, Loge</i> Orchestral postlude	4:53	[p. 177]

TT 64:08



Reg Wilson

Wotan and Fricka, Scene 2

Richard Wagner: The Rhinegold

Foreword by Lord Harewood

The English National Opera, and before it Sadler's Wells, aims at Music Theatre, not grand opera. To some degree our repertoire is chosen with this in mind; to some degree, too, this is a situation created by our habit of bringing opera close to the audience, because it is in the audience's own language, rather than holding it at arm's length, as *can* happen when it is heard in a foreign language, however well understood. We aim for the 'immediacies' of a theatrical experience, rather than the cerebral process which results from long study – each admirable but quite different, as different as being out in a shower of rain is from a description of it.

For years there has been controversy among record-buyers (I write as a heavy consumer of gramophone records) about the merits of recordings taken from live performances as compared with those made in the studio. Your dyed-in-the-wool collector will know the re-recordings from Mapleson's cylinders taken at performances at The Metropolitan Opera, New York, in about 1900. They reach us through a hailstorm of static but still provide

unique evidence of the singing of a past age. Others will know HMV's recordings, published and unpublished, made at Covent Garden about the start of electrical recording, in 1926 and 1927: Melba's Farewell, bits of a performance of *Otello* with Zenatello, and excerpts from *Boris* and *Mefistofele* with Chaliapin. Many of us find them uniquely valuable as providing not only audible proof of a style and standard of performance from nearly fifty years ago but also as possessing a 'live' impact which is absent from the studio recordings made at the same sort of time – Chaliapin's are a prime example of this.

So there is an element of consistency in an opera company, which attempts the immediacy of Music Theatre, being associated with the 'reality' of live recorded performance.



Lord Harewood
Managing Director
English National Opera
August 1975

An Introduction to 'The Ring of the Nibelung'

Wagner conceived the idea of a musical drama on the subject of the Nibelung myth in 1848, at around the time he completed the last of his traditional operas, *Lohengrin*. *The Ring of the Nibelung* can be enjoyed on many levels: as a fairy story, political allegory or philosophical tract, for instance. In essence it deals with the timeless struggle between good and evil and the contrast between the love of power and the power of love. Wotan, chief of the gods, wants power for ultimately benign purposes; Alberich, chief of the Nibelungs, dwarfs who live underground, wants it for his own evil ends. From Monteverdi's *Orfeo* to Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, from Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* to Weber's *Der Freischütz*, the juxtaposition of light and darkness has fascinated composers of opera. Wagner recognised that all is not black and white but very largely shades of grey. Thus, Wotan resorts to subterfuge and theft and describes himself as the dwarf's alter ego, 'Light-Alberich', while Alberich, who after all acquires the Rhinegold by complying with the condition that he renounce love, is invested with dignity as well as malignity.

Wagner worked on the words and music for

several years, starting with a résumé of the story in prose before embarking on the text of what he called *The Death of Siegfried* ('Siegfrieds Tod'). By December 1856, however, he informed a friend that 'the Nibelungs are beginning to bore me'; indeed he abandoned the *Ring* the following summer and did not resume its composition until 1869, by which time he had written *Tristan and Isolde* and *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*. From conception to completion the gigantic project took him twenty-six years: years of turmoil both in his personal life and on the political stage of Europe.

It was not just boredom that led him, as he put it, to leave his young Siegfried under the linden tree, where he 'bade him farewell with heartfelt tears'. Having fled Dresden to avoid being arrested for his involvement in the revolution of 1848, he was living as an exile in Zürich with scant prospect of ever seeing the *Ring* staged; and his compositional style was changing so radically that he needed to work it through, so to speak, with *Tristan*. That he should go on to complete the *Ring* and, through his own efforts, have it performed in a purpose-built theatre is nothing short of a miracle.

His sources included five epics, in Icelandic,

Middle High German and Old Norse, all dating from the thirteenth century. As with all his operas, before and after the *Ring*, Wagner wrote his own words. But, to the alarm of his friends, starting with *The Death of Siegfried* he revived an old poetic device called 'Stabreim' that made use of explosive alliteration rather than scansion and rhyme. This was of a piece with his theories, expounded in essays written from his exile in Zürich, which were concerned among other things with the interdependence of verbal and musical sounds and the need for sung words to be audible; from which it followed that ensembles and choruses would no longer be appropriate.

As it turned out, Wagner did not always follow his own precepts: there is a full-blown quintet, as well as choruses galore, in *The Mastersingers*, and a chorus and a trio in the second act of *Twilight of the Gods*. The opera that begins the *Ring* cycle, *The Rhinegold*, provides a good example of Wagnerian theory in practice, but much work lay ahead before Wagner could start on the music. At first he was planning just one opera, which would end on a note of optimism with the moral and physical superiority of the gods firmly established. The comment by one of his friends that the story required an unrealistic

amount of background knowledge on the part of the audience caused him first to expand *The Death of Siegfried* and then to add what we would now call a 'prequel', *Young Siegfried* ('Der junge Siegfried'). Seeing the need for still further expansion backwards, he wrote the texts of *The Valkyrie* and *The Rhinegold*. *Young Siegfried* was eventually renamed *Siegfried* and *The Death of Siegfried* became *Twilight of the Gods*, with significant omissions and changes, one of the latter being to the ending where the gods now perished in the flames of their castle, Valhalla. Acknowledging the influence of the *Oresteia* and the *Prometheus* plays of Aeschylus, Wagner described the *Ring* as a trilogy (*The Rhinegold* being by way of an *hors-d'œuvre*).

In 1854 Wagner was introduced to the writings of the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer – 'a grouch of the most pronounced description', as P.G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster puts it. The revised ending to the story of the *Ring* had been written before then; but Wagner wrote several different endings thereafter, while engaged in the compositional stage of the cycle, including one reflecting Schopenhauer's pessimistic view that life was merely the negation of death. Here, Brünnhilde achieves a state of Buddhist enlightenment by arriving at 'the blessed end

of everything eternal'. This was not the version he finally set to music, but it is an indication of his state of mind at the time he was composing the end of *The Valkyrie* and the beginning of *Siegfried*.

Having written the texts in the reverse order, Wagner proceeded to compose the music from the beginning: thus he began *The Rhinegold* in 1853, a year after finishing the words, whereas in the case of *Twilight of the Gods*, which he began in 1869, he was setting words that he had written (albeit with later revisions) twenty years earlier. Of course his musical style developed over that period, and the score of the latter opera is considerably more subtle and complex than that of the former. Yet the four operas, disparate as they are, hang together on account of the connecting device known as the leitmotif (from the German *Leitmotiv*, leading motif).

There was nothing new about musical reminiscence in opera. A familiar example is the little phrase on the oboe that tells us, in Act II of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, that the sleeping Florestan is now dreaming of the wife about whom he has just been singing. Wagner's achievement was to create a network of leitmotifs: short, pregnant phrases associated with individuals, objects, feelings and many

other things, that recur in the vocal line and, particularly, in the orchestra. They are much more than the 'visiting cards' derided by Debussy (who was not above using the device himself in *Pelléas et Mélisande*): plain repetition, melodic or harmonic modification, and combination – especially towards the end of the cycle – with other motifs, all serve to create a tightly woven tapestry.

Books have been written that assign names to the various motifs, but the more precise the attempted definition of any of the more abstract ones, the more elusive it can turn out to be. None of this need trouble the first-time listener, who will come to recognise the themes after a few hearings. Not all the connections are obvious, however: it is worth pointing out, to take but one example, the similar contours of the 'Valhalla' and the 'ring' motifs – noble and sinister, respectively – which confirm, or rather anticipate our impression that Wotan and Alberich are two sides of the same coin.

Of the many delights of the *Ring*, not the least is the orchestration. Wagner employs enormous forces, but time and again it is a single woodwind instrument – oboe, say, or bass clarinet – that will express a situation or give point to a vocal phrase. One of the *Ring*'s

most characteristic tone colours is provided by the so-called Wagner tubas (played by members of the eight-strong horn section), which indeed intone the 'Valhalla' motif in the second scene of *The Rhinegold*.

By 1862 Wagner was no longer banned from the German states. In the following year he published an edition of the text of the *Ring* with a foreword in which he expressed the hope that a German prince would provide the money to enable the cycle – still incomplete – to be mounted in a specially built theatre. His prayer was soon answered. The eighteen-year-old crown prince of Bavaria succeeded to the throne as King Ludwig II in 1864. He helped Wagner to pay off his debts, installed him in a house in Munich, provided him with gifts of cash and an annual salary, and encouraged him to proceed with his great work.

Their relationship had its ups and downs, to put it mildly; but it was thanks to Ludwig that *Tristan* and *The Mastersingers* had their premieres at the court theatre, which also saw revivals of Wagner's earlier operas. Productions of *The Rhinegold* and *The Valkyrie* were given too, much against the composer's will. Wagner was still determined that the complete *Ring* should be performed in its own theatre, under festival conditions. In 1871 he settled on the

provincial town of Bayreuth. The building of the new theatre was financed by public subscription, Ludwig stepping in with help at a critical moment. Wagner completed *Twilight of the Gods* in 1874 and *The Ring of the Nibelung* was given its first complete performance in August 1876. By 1889 productions had been seen all over the operatic world; they are still the yardstick by which any opera house aspiring to greatness has to be judged.

© 2000 Richard Lawrence

The Rhinegold

The autumn of 1853 was, in retrospect, a momentous time for Wagner. He began composing the music of *The Rhinegold*, and he met Cosima, the daughter of Franz Liszt, who was to become the mother of his children and, eventually, his second wife. But whereas Cosima was only fifteen and did not become his mistress until 1864, by which time she had married the conductor Hans von Bülow and borne him two daughters, the gestation of the opera was rather less prolonged. The first draft was completed in under eleven weeks and Wagner's fair copy of the full score was ready in September 1854, when he was already half-way through the first draft of *The Valkyrie*.

Unlike the subsequent *Ring* operas, each of which is in three acts, *The Rhinegold* runs for an uninterrupted span of some two-and-three-quarter hours. The four scenes are separated by substantial orchestral interludes which brilliantly exemplify Wagner's view of composition as 'the art of transition'. After Alberich has seized the gold from its guardians, the Rhinemaidens, for instance, the fierce sound of the 'ring' leitmotif, anchored by a pedal point on the dominant of C minor, is softened successively by the woodwind, violas and horns before being transformed into the stately 'Valhalla' motif on the brass. A more extensive pedal point follows the second scene and introduces the sound of Alberich's team of smiths hammering away at eighteen anvils. The B flat minor of Nibelheim complements its relative major, the D flat of Valhalla, in another example of the connection between Alberich and Wotan.

The mother of all pedal points, though, is to be heard at the very beginning of the prelude, where the double basses sustain a low E flat for no less than 136 bars. They are joined a fifth higher by the bassoons; then a horn steals in softly with a rising arpeggio, then another and another, until all eight horns are echoing and re-echoing this one elemental

phrase. Wagner is seeking to evoke the origin of all things, a virtual absence of time and motion, using the same means as Beethoven at the beginning of his Ninth Symphony. Gradually the arpeggio is transformed into a rush of semiquavers depicting the Rhine. Wagner would have been happy to acknowledge the influence of Beethoven; he might not have cared to have the resemblance here to Mendelssohn's overture *Die schöne Melusine* pointed out to him, though he admired Mendelssohn's music enough to perform it in his conducting days.

As one would expect in a work intended as the background to the ensuing drama, many (but by no means all) of the *Ring* leitmotifs are present in *The Rhinegold*. One of the most significant, which is in two segments, comes when the Rhinemaidens salute the gold: both the fanfare 'Heiajaheia!' and the two-note figure 'Rhinegold! Rhinegold!', modified melodically and harmonically, take on new subtleties of meaning as the epic progresses.

Wagner considered the Rhinemaidens as a unit, despite giving each of them a name, so from time to time, as here, they sing in harmony. Elsewhere, however, he follows his own rules to the extent that no character utters a word while another is singing. In fact, as

suggested in the Introduction above, *The Rhinegold* is the *locus classicus* of Wagnerian idealism. There are no ensembles, and the word setting is pretty much one note to a syllable, with no lyrical or rhetorical effusions. The nearest that Wagner comes to an aria is Loge's great narration in Scene 2, which could be, and has been, performed as a concert piece.

If Wotan is fundamentally good, with a dark side, and Alberich fundamentally evil, but possessing at least a sense of right and wrong, Loge is permanently ambivalent. (The part, best taken by a *Heldentenor* [heroic tenor], is so coveted by character tenors that the singer cast as Mime in *Siegfried* is often given Loge too, necessitating – but not here, fortunately – the employment of a different singer for the *Rhinegold* Mime.) Loge is only a demi-god, denied Freia's life-sustaining apples, and he is mistrusted by the others: as Wotan says, 'Recall that I am your only friend'. We never know what Loge really thinks. Several times he proposes that the gold should be returned to the Rhinemaidens; yet to Fricka he advocates its possession as a means of her restraining Wotan from non-connubial roaming, and willingly mocks the Rhinemaidens as they lament their loss. He is

ashamed to be associated with the gods; yet he joins them in their grand procession into Valhalla. Wagner characterises him with flickering motifs appropriate to a god of fire and, tellingly, with a phrase that partakes of both the two-note 'Rhinegold! Rhinegold!' motif and its chromatic modification.

Loge does not reappear, though his music does, and in *Twilight of the Gods* the Third Norn tells her sisters of his forthcoming end. Erda, on the other hand, is seen again in *Siegfried*. There she is baffled by the news brought by Wotan, the Wanderer. In *The Rhinegold* she is as all-wise as she claims to be. Heralded by a soft rising phrase derived from the prelude, she urges Wotan to give up the ring to the giants. She then foretells the end of the gods. The crucial passage is at 'All things that are, perish! An evil day [dawns] for the immortals', where the rising phrase is met by its opposite, a descending phrase in the violins and violas that can be quite easy to miss. The scene, doom-laden though it is, provides a rare moment of respite between the squabbling gods and giants and the first result of Alberich's curse on the ring: the brutal murder of Fasolt by his brother Fafner.

The clouds that have symbolically gathered are dispersed by Donner's hammer, and Froh

summons up a rainbow bridge. Wotan shakes off his depression at the turn of events and the gods enter their new castle. For this scene Wagner requires seven harps: six in the orchestra and one to accompany the off-stage Rhinemaidens. The chromaticism of their plaint is, so to speak, the worm in the bud, but the audience's abiding impression is one of unexampled splendour. How illusory that splendour is becomes all too apparent as this great drama unfolds.

The Rhinegold was first performed in Munich in September 1869. Its first performance as part of the complete *Ring* cycle was at the Bayreuth Festival in August 1876.

© 2001 Richard Lawrence

The 'Ring' – In English?

We all feel, somewhere at the back of our minds, that a work of art springs fully formed from the soul of the creator, a feeling which conveniently overlooks the difference between nature and art. The creative process is a long and detailed one, starting from a sketch and leading to a work that is polished and re-polished. In the performing arts more than in other art forms the creator has always shaped his work to his particular audience.

Clearly the composer who involves his audience creates a stronger emotional response, which can be accumulative.

If you read the correspondence about the creation of an operatic masterpiece, two things become startlingly clear. Firstly, the composer urges his librettist towards a goal while he himself continually modifies his sketch as he achieves his end. Frequently this development continues after the first performance, either between the initial performances or for a later revival. Two of the most successful arias in *Don Giovanni*, 'Dalla sua pace' and 'Mi tradi', were not in the original Prague performance. *Madama Butterfly* as first performed was not the opera we know today: Pinkerton never reappeared in the third act.

Second, you realise that the composer also writes his opera for a specific theatre, a specific set of instrumentalists and singers, and a specific audience. Mozart's correspondence with his father records not only the concessions that he had to make to the lack of technique of a particular singer but also the effects he could achieve by exploiting the advantages of the forces at his disposition. Many of Rossini's coloratura mezzo roles were written for his mistress Isabella Colbran. Even the censorship was frequently a formative

force, and the word formative is used intentionally. *Un ballo in maschera* owes its present tightly wound form to Verdi's battle with the censor. Yet the public was perhaps the strongest external force. The opera composer, a man of the theatre, knew that the success of his work, and his own success, depended on the response of his audience. Maximum response comes not only if the work is artistically successful but also if the work is in step with the literary, political, nationalistic and extra-aesthetic consciousness of that audience at that moment in that place. The young composer fitted his work to suit his audience; the established composer selected the city which would appreciate his new work. This was not only a question of regional differences, as Mozart even used two different musical and verbal languages for his Imperial audience in *Così fan tutte* and for his popular audience of the same city in *Die Zauberflöte*. Gluck, Rossini, Donizetti and Verdi wrote their Paris operas to French librettos and to the Parisian taste.

What happened to the opera when it reached the stage? The premiere was supervised by the composer and, once the musical structure was set, this production became the stamp for all subsequent

performances. In the same way, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company repeats the original stagings, and the shining example of the success of this system today is the American musical such as *West Side Story*, which preserves every gesture of the original conception. In this way the creator's original intentions are available to us today, with the advantages of authenticity.

Freezing the piece into a fixed stamp can, however, create disadvantages. The performance cannot develop and the performers are tied into a corset of fixed routine. The piece cannot change with the movement of social tastes and, if it is reproduced in the same manner in a different country or continent, its relevance to its new audience may be severely impaired, especially if language barriers intervene.

The new work is often brought out again some years later and the composer recreates it. *Orfeo*, *Idomeneo*, *Don Giovanni*, *Fidelio*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Cardillac*, *Troilus and Cressida* – the list runs on. Would Mozart have rewritten *Le nozze di Figaro* if he had recreated it for London in 1830? Would Bizet, if he had lived so long, not have composed sung recitatives for *Carmen* when it was taken up at the Opéra?

Whenever an opera house thinks it opportune to mount a production of a certain work that is not already in its repertoire, the director has to decide whether to reproduce or to recreate, regardless of whether the composer is alive or dead. If the opera is set in a language unintelligible to the audience, the choice is basically between reproduction in the original language or recreation in translation. Either choice runs the risk of failure, but a recreation, without the composer, has a chance of more serious failure or of a greater success. The settings, the staging, the translation, the musical edition to be used, can be tailored to suit the theatre, the artists available and, perhaps most important, the emotional temperature of the public at the time and in that place. Often the translation can not only make the work comprehensible and thus available and immediate to each member of the audience by speaking to him in his own language, but also clarify a text which exists in a dated or obscure form. A criticism on this subject from the German newspaper *Die Welt*, which is reported below in an English translation, is illuminating on the subject of a modern German's problems with Wagner's verbal convolutions.

The 'English *Ring*' at the Coliseum is a

recreation. Its enormous success is due to the fact that the work was made available to many who had been unable to appreciate this great masterpiece in reproduction. *The Ring* is not reserved for the connoisseur. It is now available to everyone, and the purpose of this recording is to make it available in the living rooms of the many people who will never be able to participate in the theatre performances. The Peter Moores Foundation is proud to give this great performance a chance to be more fully appreciated.

Peter Moores

© 1975 Peter Moores

...And the English Alberich can now justifiably reproach the German Alberich with the words, 'How darkly you tell me what so clearly I know'. A new English translation of *The Ring* was specially made for the production of the tetralogy at the Coliseum in London by Andrew Porter, now the highly esteemed musical critic of the influential American periodical *The New Yorker*. It is a remarkably successful one, for the task was anything but simple. Thanks to Porter's skill, it is now only in the view of caricaturists that

Siegfried consists of one long drawn-out succession of 'Hoho! Haheil' and a few 'Heils', which, to be sure, sound much more civilised as soon as they are turned into English 'Hails'.

Porter's translation was admittedly very much helped by the fact that there are many more words of one syllable in English than there are in German, and this is an advantage of which he was able to make effective use. The English are now the owners of the twentieth-century *Ring*, while we, with our teeth that are losing their bite, still have to chew away at the language of Wagner, which sounds more and more discordant to us as the years go by. It is a strange thing, but Porter's translation gives Wagner's libretto a limpid, clear-cut distinction that is exceedingly impressive. The possibility of sampling it and appreciating it alone is just one of the virtues of this recording...

Extract from 'Alberich singt an der Themse'
(Alberich sings beside the Thames) by
'Discophilus' in *Die Welt*, 30 November 1974

The Goodall 'Ring'

People may call it 'The Goodall *Ring*' but it is Everybody's *Ring*. *The English National 'Ring'*. The whole beauty is that it is a joint effort. They say that I am the only man in the last

fifty years to have conducted the *Ring* in German and English. When it is sung in German the audience, few of whom understand the language, sits there waiting for the big moment; the emphasis is almost entirely on the music and not on the text. In English I enjoy the immediacy of the work – you feel it in the audience because they understand. This is a wonderful sensation – it makes up for any lack in the translation of binding together the words and tone. Wagner wanted the *Ring* to be understood. The text was written first and evoked the music.

Wagner started writing the text of *Siegfried's Death* and he found he needed to explain what led up to that, almost right from the beginning, the original sin, that sacrificing of love for power and greed which rebounds on Siegfried, although he is in a way guiltless. Leave nature as it is. The Rhine flows on for no reason at all. It is just nature. God or nature, whichever you like, in its wisdom hid the atom and we've discovered it. And when you think what the atom can do... We have destroyed in the last fifty years more than in the aeons before. We are poisoning the oceans; we have destroyed half the animals of nature. Nature is so finely balanced that we disturb the purity of the world. We cannot help it.

That is the original sin and that is what the whole *Ring* is about: Adam and Eve in the Garden, the death of the world's innocence, the destruction of a world system. The *Ring* poem has the potency and timelessness of myth. That is what it is all about and that is what makes the *Ring* deeper.

Yes, I am a perfectionist – not for detail but for the mood and meaning. I do not think the *Valkyrie* recording can be a perfect performance, although I have never been so happy as I was with Curphey and Remedios in that first act. I do prefer live recording because I feel that an audience contributes to the performance – *Siegfried* and *Rhinegold* are marvellous: you hear just a ripple of laughter which, I think, is right; and I like that on the record: I think you should laugh at times in the *Ring* – it becomes alive.

© Reginald Goodall

Synopsis

In the beginning, when the world was young, the earth was peopled by a race of giants: simple, strong, hardworking folk content to lead simple lives. Their only troubles were caused by clashes with the race of Nibelungs: dwarfs who lived in caverns underground and

who were forced by their leader Alberich, after the events of Scene 1, to serve his world-dominating ambitions. But they never succeeded in subduing the giants, and as for the ultimate control of the world, that belonged to the race of gods, spirits of light and air led by Wotan who exercised benevolent rule from above the earth.

The Rhinegold, the Prologue to this epic drama, takes place in these first days of life on earth, and it is played out between these three races of creation. Close to the gods but not of their number are Loge, the spirit of fire and subtlety whom Wotan tamed and befriended, and Erda, Mother Earth, the source of all wisdom and mother of the three Norns, or Fates. The last of the four elements, water, is the first to appear in the opera – the River Rhine and its three maidens.

Compact Disc One

Scene 1

On the bed of the Rhine

□ The prelude at once plunges us to the very bottom of the Rhine. The darkness is at first so intense that we hear and perceive, but cannot yet see, the vastness of the expanse and the gently hovering groundswell of the waters

(eight horns playing a rising E flat arpeggio one after another). Gradually the senses become aware of the faster currents above, and of the rocky eminences on the river bed, stretching far into the distance. [2] A mermaid, one of the Rhinemaidens, Woglinde, swims into view, singing an only partly intelligible song as she plays round the most imposing of the rocks. One of her sisters, Wellgunde, joins her in a game of chase, and a third, Flosshilde, dives down, scolding them for their careless guardianship of the gold which sleeps higher up on the rock. But she, too, is dragged into the game. As they chase one another, a sinister shadow disturbs the pale haze on the riverbed. [3] Alberich has climbed through a cleft in a rock and is eavesdropping on the innocent play of the graceful water nymphs. He attempts to fraternise with them, but they are repelled by his ugliness, and Flosshilde suspects him of loitering with intent. But from his lecherous invitations it is clear that he is not a danger to their gold. [4] They decide to tease him and each in turn makes him scurry up and down the rocks after her, though only the third, Flosshilde, allows him to get close to her, and she quickly escapes. Now Alberich's passions are provoked and he chases even more furiously after the girls, while they

dart rapidly from rock to rock, mocking his efforts.

[5] Suddenly a bright light begins to gleam from higher up on the central rock; the sunlight has pierced through the waters to light up the Rhine's gold; cheerfully the Rhinemaidens praise the treasure which they guard. [6] Alberich grows inquisitive, and learns that it is not merely a glittering ornament but, if forged into a ring, would give the wearer power over all the world. Flosshilde thinks that they have said too much until Woglinde reminds her that the gold can only be obtained by someone willing to forswear love ('He must pronounce a curse on love'), which nobody, least of all this lovesick hobgoblin, is prepared to do. But they have relaxed their guard too soon: [7] Alberich, spurned in love and endlessly greedy for power, is perfectly willing to pay the price for the gold. He has clambered up to it before the Rhinemaidens notice; [8] terribly he calls out his curse on love, snatches up the gold and disappears into the depths. The wails of the Rhinemaidens are echoed by his mocking laughter.

Darkness descends again, the waters are heard flowing onwards; horns English and German recollect the melody of the curse on love; clouds cover the scene.

Scene 2

Open space on a mountain height

When the clouds fade away, to the tune of the 'ring' theme on horns, we find ourselves transported to the top of a high mountain far above the Rhine. Wotan and his wife Fricka are lying there fast asleep, and when dawn breaks it discloses an enormous glittering castle perched on a mountain farther away. It is Valhalla, Wotan's status symbol (and the resemblance of the 'Valhalla' theme, for Wagner tubas, to the 'ring' theme just heard reminds us that it, too, is a symbol of power, and that Wotan and Alberich are not as dissimilar as either would want to think).

[9] Fricka wakes first, sees the newly built castle, and rouses her husband, who is delighted by its splendour ('Completed, the eternal work!'). She, on the other hand, reminds him anxiously that it has to be paid for, and the price, agreed with the giants who built it, is possession of Fricka's sister Freia (sometimes called Holda), goddess of eternal youth and guardian of the sacred rejuvenating apples. Fricka is angry because the price was agreed in her absence, but she wants the castle as much as Wotan, [10] if only in the hopes that it will keep him at home, out of adulterous temptation. He has no intention of

keeping his promise to hand over Freia in exchange for Valhalla and is relying on his slippery adviser Loge (who had suggested the bargain) to find another means of satisfying the giants.

[11] Freia enters in great distress, and [12] is shortly followed by the two giants who built the castle and have come to claim their wages: Fasolt is infatuated with Freia's beauty; his brother Fafner, more cynical and scornful, only wants to remove Freia's powers of rejuvenation from the gods, since without her they will quickly droop and die, leaving power to the giants. [13] They resist Wotan's weak effort to make them name another form of payment. [14] Freia's brothers Froh and Donner, the one all radiant geniality, the other an aggressive tough, are just in time to prevent Freia from being dragged away. Wotan stops Donner from quelling the giants by brute force ('Force will not serve!').

Compact Disc Two

[1] – [2] Loge at last arrives; he has been testing the quality of the builders' work and [3] resents the insults heaped on him for his tardy appearance ('Never one word of praise or thanks!'). He has also been searching

everywhere for a substitute payment. But no one, it seems, can name anything more desirable than a good, beautiful woman –

[4] only one man, Alberich, was prepared to give up love for the power of the Rhine's gold and an omnipotent ring forged from it. Loge tells the tale of Alberich's theft as if merely passing on a complaint from the Rhinemaidens; [5] but it does not leave the giants unmoved – [6] nor, indeed, the gods.

[7] Each team decides that this gold is extremely desirable and Loge assures Wotan that it can be got without abandoning love, but simply by theft – no crime at all, he adds, if Wotan is going to return the gold to the Rhine. [8] Fafner announces that Freia may remain with the gods if Wotan will, instead, pay the giants in Alberich's gold. Wotan protests in vain that the gold is not his to hand over; the two giants seize Freia as hostage, promising to return the same evening and, if the gold is forthcoming, give her back.

[9] – [10] As soon as they have departed it becomes apparent that without Freia and her apples the gods are growing grey and listless, deprived of all power to act. [11] Wotan decides, much to the relief of Fricka and the rest, to go down with Loge to Nibelheim and take possession of the gold so as to ransom

Freia. They slip through a crevice in the rock and descend through the inside of the mountain, down to subterranean caverns where the Nibelungs, Alberich's slaves, can be heard ceaselessly forging away at their anvils (eighteen of them are specified in Wagner's score).

Scene 3

A subterranean cavern

[12] While the travellers are still finishing their descent, a broad cave is seen into which Alberich has dragged his brother Mime to make him surrender his latest piece of workmanship. This is a magic golden cap, called the Tarnhelm, which grants the wearer unlimited powers of invisibility or metamorphosis. Alberich wrests it from the maker, who claims it is still faulty, and [13] at once tests it successfully, making himself invisible and thrashing Mime for his attempted dishonesty. Mime is still whimpering in a corner when [14] Wotan and Loge arrive, [15] quickly finding out from him about the working conditions in Nibelheim and the magic of the Tarnhelm. Hastily Loge promises help for the dwarf-workers, as [16] Alberich charges in, driving a horde of Nibelungs heavily laden with the fruits of their

labour. Seeing Wotan and Loge, he dismisses the others with a twitch of the ring, which sends them screaming in terror back to their tasks. [17] Loge now makes friends with Alberich, introducing himself as the old and trusty spirit of fire. [18] Alberich is not much calmed, and he also recognises Wotan; [19] but his delusions of power make him bold and he boasts of his achievements, notably the Tarnhelm. Loge pretends incredulity and dares Alberich to demonstrate the virtues of the magic cap.

Compact Disc Three

[1] Alberich obligingly turns himself into a monstrous dragon, then, after a further taunt, into a tiny toad. Wotan promptly treads on the toad, Loge removes the Tarnhelm and ties up the captive dwarf. [2] They convey him up to the rocky height, passing as before through the vicinity of the anvils and at length up the crevice.

Scene 4

Open space on a mountain height

[3] Wotan and Loge bring Alberich, firmly bound, out on to the plateau and inform him that the gold is the price of his freedom. He

soon consents because he knows that the ring can replenish and infinitely increase his stockpile. [4] He works his spell and the Nibelungs bring up the treasure from their caves. [5] When he demands his freedom, Loge insists on retaining the Tarnhelm, and Wotan on the addition of the ring. Alberich, aghast, offers anything else, even his own life, but quickly realises that this, too, would rob him of the ring. It is seized from him by Wotan, he is untied and [6] at once ('Am I now free?') pronounces a fatal curse on anybody else who takes possession of the ring: everybody shall desire it, every owner go in terror of losing it, and be hounded to a wretched death until it returns to Alberich. With this impressive imprecation he departs, leaving in his wake a terrifying, baleful theme.

[7] The other gods return. Almost at once Fasolt and Fafner bring Freia back and, [8] seeing the gold, announce that for a just reward it must be piled up to such a height and breadth as to obscure Freia from sight. [9] Their greedy insistence is not satisfied until the Tarnhelm has been added; [10] even then Fasolt finds a tiny hole through which he can spy Freia's radiant glance, and he demands the ring to fill it. Wotan categorically refuses; he has now abandoned all pretence of

surrendering it to the Rhinemaidens, and intends high-handedly to keep it for himself. The giants prepare to depart with Freia, this time for ever; ^[11] but an apparition of Mother Earth ('Yield it, Wotan, yield it!') warns Wotan that the ring must be surrendered since the gods are in any case fated to pass away.

^[12] Wotan is persuaded; he throws the ring on the pile of treasure and welcomes Freia back. ^[13] At once the giants begin to quarrel over division of the gold, and when Fasolt, on Loge's advice, tries to snatch the ring Fafner raises his cudgel and kills him, then calmly finishes heaping Freia's ransom into a sack which he puts on his back, and departs.

^[14] – ^[15] The air is still thick with mist which Donner dispels by creating a sensational thunderstorm ('Heda! Heda! Hedo!'). ^[16] Froh throws a rainbow bridge across the valley, and the castle of Valhalla is once more visible.

^[17] Wotan again salutes his new fortress ('Evening rays flood the sky with splendour'), and the gods prepare to cross the rainbow bridge, though Loge confesses shame at being associated with them. ^[18] As they all step on the bridge the Rhinemaidens are heard bewailing the loss of their gold. But Wotan has now, by deceit, made himself powerless to assist them and he crossly tells Loge to stop

the mermaids' chatter. The Rhinemaidens are still wailing while the gods cross the bridge and enter Valhalla, upon which *The Rhinegold* ends with a superb orchestral postlude involving six harps.

William Mann

© The Estate of William Mann
Reproduced by permission of
David Higham Associates

Born in South Africa, the bass-baritone **Norman Bailey** studied in Vienna and spent his early career singing in Austria and Germany. He then returned to the United Kingdom where he has sung with all the major opera companies. As one of the leading Wagner singers of his generation he is associated particularly with the title role in *Der fliegende Holländer* and Hans Sachs in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. He has also sung the Landgraf in *Tannhäuser* with Opera North and Wotan/the Wanderer and Gunther with English National Opera, where as company member he also sang Pizarro (Beethoven's *Leonore*), Count di Luna (*Il trovatore*), Alfio (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Scarpia (*Tosca*), the Father (*Hansel and Gretel*), Prince Gremin (*Eugene Onegin*), Kutuzov

(Prokofiev's *War and Peace*) and the Forester (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) among other roles. With The Royal Opera, Covent Garden he has appeared as Balstrode (*Peter Grimes*, also on tour to Palermo) and as Germont (*La traviata*), Ford (*Falstaff*), Wolfram (*Tannhäuser*), Kurwenal (*Tristan und Isolde*), Donner (*Das Rheingold*), Wotan (*Die Walküre*), Klingsor and Amfortas (*Parsifal*), Jochanaan (*Salome*) and the Music Master (*Ariadne auf Naxos*). Recent roles have included Oroveso (*Norma*), Banquo (*Macbeth*), the King (*Aida*), the Doctor (*Wozzeck*) and Schigolch (*Lulu*). His international career has taken him to major opera stages and festivals throughout Europe and the United States, including several seasons at Bayreuth, and to collaborations with conductors such as Sir Colin Davis, Sir Georg Solti, James Levine, Carlo Maria Giulini, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Claudio Abbado and Daniel Barenboim. For Chandos he has recorded the title role in Sir Michael Tippett's *King Priam*.

The baritone **Norman Welsby** was born in Warrington, Lancashire and received his musical training at the Royal Manchester College of Music (later the Royal Northern

College of Music). After two seasons with the Glyndebourne Festival Opera, where among others he sang the title role in *Falstaff*, he joined Sadler's Wells Opera (later English National Opera), making his debut as Masetto (*Don Giovanni*). A variety of roles with the company stretched from Liberto in *The Coronation of Poppea* to Pentheus in the British premiere of Hans Werner Henze's *The Bassarids*, and included also the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro*, the Speaker (*The Magic Flute*), Alfio (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Silvio (*Pagliacci*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) and Schlemil (*The Tales of Hoffmann*). He also sang many roles with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden.

Born in Athens, the tenor **Robert Ferguson** studied at the Royal Manchester College of Music (later the Royal Northern College of Music) under Frederick Cox. He sang Pinkerton (*Madam Butterfly*) and Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) with Yorkshire Opera, and made his debut at Sadler's Wells Opera (later English National Opera) as Pinkerton, going on to sing such roles as Nero (*The Coronation of Poppea*), Turiddu (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Camille (*The Merry Widow*) and Tikhon (*Kár'a Kabanová*).

Born in Saskatchewan, Canada, **Emile Belcourt** first trained as a light baritone at the Academy of Music in Vienna, becoming a member of the opera companies in Ulm and Bonn where he sang such roles as Don Giovanni, Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) and Dr Falke (*Die Fledermaus*). Deciding to train instead as a tenor, he moved to Paris to study with Pierre Bernac and Germaine Lubin. After a broadcast performance of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* in Paris, he was engaged to sing Pelléas at Scottish Opera, then Gonzalve in Ravel's *L'Heure espagnole* under Georg Solti at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Moving to England, he began a long association with Sadler's Wells Opera (later English National Opera) which included, besides his famous Loge in *The Rhinegold*, roles in *Orpheus in the Underworld*, *Bluebeard* and *Patience*. His repertoire has ranged from Herod (*Salome*) and participation in the British premiere of the three-act version of Berg's *Lulu* at Covent Garden to Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*) and Count Danilo (*The Merry Widow*), as well as the leading role in *Man of La Mancha* in London's West End. He has appeared also with Welsh National Opera, Châtelet théâtre musical, the Canadian

Opera Company, San Francisco Opera, and Seattle Opera where he sang Tristan. His involvement with contemporary opera has included Malcolm Williamson's *The Violins of Saint-Jacques* and *Lucky-Peter's Journey*, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's *A Penny for a Song*, Iain Hamilton's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* and David Blake's *Toussaint L'Ouverture*.

Born in Essex and educated at Oxford University, **Robert Lloyd** turned from academic historian to singer at the age of twenty-eight. He was appointed Principal Bass with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden where he has sung an enormous range of repertoire and was the first British bass to sing the title role of *Boris Godunov*, in the late Andrei Tarkovsky's production. This production, with Robert Lloyd as Boris, later travelled to the Kirov Opera in Leningrad where it was televised internationally, and to the Vienna State Opera where it was conducted by Claudio Abbado. He has sung the role also in Amsterdam and Florence. Besides recent appearances at Covent Garden (which include *Roméo et Juliette*, *Chérubin* and *Samson et Dalila*), he has visited the Teatro alla Scala, Milan (*Der fliegende Holländer* and *Parsifal*), Deutsche Oper, Berlin (*Tristan und Isolde*),

The Netherlands Opera (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), the Salzburg Festival (*Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Les Troyens*), The Metropolitan Opera, New York (*Die Zauberflöte*, *Fidelio*, *Rigoletto*, *Aida* and *Faust*), San Francisco Opera (*L'incoronazione di Poppea* and *Don Carlos*) and Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Simon Boccanegra*). He has sung under the world's most distinguished conductors and is an exceptionally active concert, recording and broadcast artist. He was created a CBE in the 1991 New Year's Honours List.

The Australian bass **Clifford Grant** trained in Sydney, Melbourne and London, and made his operatic debut with the New South Wales Opera Company as Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. He joined Sadler's Wells Opera (later English National Opera), where he has appeared as Seneca (*The Coronation of Poppea*), the Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*), Sarastro (*The Magic Flute*), Silva (*Ernani*), Padre Guardiano (*The Force of Destiny*), Philip II (*Don Carlos*), King Henry (*Lohengrin*), Pogner (*The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*), Fafner, Hunding and Hagen (*The Ring of the Nibelung*) and in leading roles in *The Barber of Seville*, *Rigoletto*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Manon*,

Oedipus Rex and *Peter Grimes*. Other engagements have included roles at The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Welsh National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, L'Opéra de Marseille, San Francisco Opera and in Sydney. After appearing in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* with Opera Australia in 1990 he retired from opera but returned to the stage in 1993 to sing Alvisé Badoero in *La Gioconda* with Opera North. He has collaborated with such distinguished artists as Dame Joan Sutherland, Otto Klemperer, Sir Adrian Boult and Sir Colin Davis.

The English baritone **Derek Hammond-Stroud** studied with Elena Gerhardt and Gerhard Hüsch in Munich and London, and his career has embraced both the recital platform and the operatic stage. He has sung with all the major British opera companies while his engagements in Europe have included ones at the Bavarian State Opera, the Theater an der Wien, the Theater am Gärtnerplatz and three seasons with The Netherlands Opera. In South and North America he has sung at the Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires and with The Metropolitan Opera, New York and San Diego Opera among many others. Major roles have

included Dr Bartolo, Rigoletto, Fra Melitone (*La forza del destino*), Sharpless, Tonio (*Pagliacci*), Papageno, Alberich, Beckmesser, Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Krušina (*The Bartered Bride*) and Sir Robert Cecil (*Gloriana*) besides numerous roles in works by Gilbert and Sullivan and by Offenbach. He has taken part in several first British stage productions, including Haydn's *Orfeo ed Euridice* (as Creonte), Rossini's *La pietra del paragone* (as Pacuvio), *War and Peace* (as Napoleon, with English National Opera) and Gottfried von Einem's *Der Besuch der alten Dame* (as the Schoolmaster, at Glyndebourne). He created the role of the Old Fisherman in the world premiere of Malcolm Williamson's *The Violins of Saint-Jacques* at Sadler's Wells. He has received many honours including, in 1987, the OBE.

The Australian tenor **Gregory Dempsey**, born in Melbourne, made his debut as Don Ottavio for the Melbourne National Opera Company before joining The Elizabethan Trust Opera Company. His appearance as Jenik in *The Bartered Bride* with Sadler's Wells Opera (later English National Opera) led to his becoming resident tenor with the company. His many roles have included Florestan, Max,

Erik (*The Flying Dutchman*), David (*The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*), Mime, Don José, Canio, Gregor (*The Makropulos Affair*), Skuratov (*The House of the Dead*), Tom Rakewell and Essex (*Gloriana*). He has also been a frequent guest with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Welsh National Opera and Scottish Opera, and has sung at the Edinburgh and Aldeburgh Festivals. Abroad he has appeared with San Francisco Opera as well as in Brussels, Stuttgart and other European cities. Now residing in Australia, he has performed frequently with The Australian Opera (later Opera Australia) and with Victoria State Opera, and has also appeared at the Adelaide Festival (the title role in *The Excursions of Mr Brouček* and Mark in Tippet's *The Midsummer Marriage*).

The mezzo-soprano **Katherine Pring** was educated at the Royal College of Music in London and at the Geneva Conservatory, and made her operatic debut as Flora (*La traviata*) at the Grand Théâtre in Geneva. Joining Sadler's Wells Opera (later English National Opera), she sang such roles as Ottavia (*The Coronation of Poppea*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Azucena (*Il trovatore*), Princess Eboli (*Don Carlos*), Suzuki (*Madam Butterfly*),

Prince Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*), Carmen, Jocasta (*Oedipus Rex*), and Agave in the British stage premiere of Henze's *The Bassarids*. She made her debut at The Royal Opera, Covent Garden as Thea in Tippet's *The Knot Garden*, returning to sing Preziosilla (*La forza del destino*) and Kate Julian (Britten's *Owen Wingrave*). She sang Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*) at the Glyndebourne Festival, Delilah (*Samson and Delilah*) at English National Opera North (later Opera North), Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*) in Düsseldorf, Princess Marina (*Boris Godunov*) in Frankfurt and Preziosilla at the Paris Opéra. She made her American debut as Carmen at San Diego Opera, returning two years later to sing Princess Eboli. As an established concert and recital singer she has performed with world-renowned conductors such as Claudio Abbado, Christoph von Dohnanyi and Sir Charles Mackerras.

The Canadian soprano **Lois McDonall** gained a special reputation for her naturally beautiful voice and secure technique which permitted her to sing Mozart and Richard Strauss with equal stylishness. She made her debut with the Canadian Opera Company in Wolf-Ferrari's *Il segreto di Susanna*. At Städtische Bühnen,

Flensburg she sang Constanze (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), Elsa (*Lohengrin*), Tosca and Arabella before making her first appearance with Sadler's Wells Opera (later English National Opera) as Handel's Semele. Subsequent roles with that company included Ilia (*Idomeneo*), the Countess (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Donna Elvira and Donna Anna, Fiordiligi, the title role in *Euryanthe*, Lucrezia Contarini (*I due Foscari*), Gilda, Violetta, Massenet's Manon, Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*), the Marschallin (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Jenny (Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's *The Mines of Sulphur*) and the title role in the world premiere of Iain Hamilton's *Anna Karenina*, besides Freia in the famous *Ring* cycle under Reginald Goodall. In addition to The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, she has also appeared with Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, Dublin Grand Opera and at the BBC Promenade Concerts. Her recordings include, for Opera Rara, Donizetti's *Maria Padilla*.

The contralto **Anne Collins** studied at the Royal College of Music and made her London debut with a recital in the Purcell Room. Soon after, she joined Sadler's Wells Opera (later English National Opera) where her repertoire has encompassed roles in *The Coronation of*

Poppea, *Count Ory*, *A Masked Ball*, *Madam Butterfly* and *Arabella*, as well as Dame Quickly (*Falstaff*), Katisha (*The Mikado*), Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*) and several parts, including most famously Erda, in Wagner's *Ring* cycle. She has sung frequently with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden and has also performed with Welsh National Opera (Filipyevna in *Eugene Onegin*), Opera North (the Nurse in *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* and Auntie in *Peter Grimes*) and Scottish Opera (James MacMillan's *Ines de Castro*), and has appeared at the Glyndebourne, Aldeburgh, Wexford and Camden Festivals and at the BBC Promenade Concerts. She has performed in concert, at festivals and with opera companies throughout Europe, including the opera houses of Lyon, Strasbourg, Geneva and Hamburg, the Paris Opéra and Châtelet théâtre musical, the Théâtre royal de la Monnaie in Brussels and the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. American appearances have included The Metropolitan Opera in New York. She has made many recordings, among them, for Chandos, the Grammy-award-winning *Peter Grimes* under Richard Hickox.

Born in Birkenhead and having studied in London and Milan on scholarships, the soprano **Valerie Masterson** sang at the

Salzburger Landestheater for one season before joining the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company as Principal Soprano. She has sung with all the major British opera companies, including the Glyndebourne Festival Opera, and abroad has appeared at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, the Paris Opéra, and at opera houses in Toulouse, Nancy, Montpellier, Geneva, Prague, Munich, Milan, Barcelona, Dublin, Santiago, San Francisco, Houston, Chicago and New York. Her vast repertoire ranges from Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* to Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, in addition to which she also sang in the world premiere of Henze's *We Come to the River* and the British premiere of Sallinen's *The King Goes Forth to France*, both at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Her many recordings include, for Chandos, *Julius Caesar* and *La traviata*, both in association with the Peter Moores Foundation. She was awarded the CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 1989.

Shelagh Squires studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She has appeared with English National Opera, at the Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Operas, and The Metropolitan Opera, New York among others; she has also performed at the

Bergen International Festival and in Vienna and Japan. Her wide repertoire includes Ottavia (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Ulrica (*Un ballo in maschera*), Magdalene (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Herodias (*Salome*), Annina (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Adelaide (*Arabella*), Martha (*Faust*), the Witch (*Rusalka*) and Filipyevna (*Eugene Onegin*).

The contralto **Helen Attfield** studied at the Royal Academy of Music where she won many awards. With the English Opera Group she sang in the world premiere of Britten's *Death in Venice*. Besides having sung several roles with English National Opera, she appeared as Maddalena (*Rigoletto*) with Welsh National Opera and also performed with the Handel Opera Society and, abroad, with Brussels Opera.

Critically and publicly acclaimed, the **English National Opera Orchestra** (Leader Barry Griffiths) has in recent years received several prestigious awards, including the *Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award* and an *Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera*. The Orchestra is at the heart of the Company's artistic life and as well as opera

performances in the London Coliseum has also been seen on the concert platform. In addition many of the players participate in the work of the Baylis Programme of the Company's education and outreach department and with the English National Opera Studio in the development of new operas, in particular Mark-Anthony Turnage's *The Silver Tassie* which had its world premiere in February 2000. The Orchestra appears in many recordings, including Verdi's *Otello* under Mark Elder which is soon to appear on Chandos under the sponsorship of the Peter Moores Foundation. Other recordings for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation are *Mary Stuart*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Rigoletto* (Jonathan Miller's production), *La traviata* and *Werther*.

The English conductor **Reginald Goodall** was born in 1901 and studied conducting under Malcolm Sargent and Constant Lambert at the Royal College of Music. From 1929 to 1936 he was organist and choirmaster at St Alban the Martyr, Holborn, where he conducted the first British performances of choral works by Bruckner, Stravinsky and Szymanowski, as well as early works by Britten. During the late 1930s he worked as assistant to Albert Coates

and Malcolm Sargent among others. At the beginning of the Second World War he became conductor of the Bournemouth-based Wessex Philharmonic Orchestra.

In June 1945, as a member of Sadler's Wells Opera (later English National Opera), he conducted the first performance of *Peter Grimes* at the newly reopened Sadler's Wells Theatre. In the following year he shared with Ernest Ansermet the first performances of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* during the Glyndebourne Festival's first postwar season. Shortly afterwards he joined the music staff at Covent Garden, where for the next twenty-five years he conducted a repertoire ranging from *Il trovatore* to *Troilus and Cressida*.

Only rarely was he given the chance to

conduct operas by the composer he most admired, Richard Wagner. This omission was rectified in 1968, not by The Royal Opera but by Sadler's Wells, which invited him to conduct a new production of *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*. So remarkable was its success that he returned to the company to conduct its now legendary complete production of *The Ring of the Nibelung*, built up between 1970 and 1973 and the first to be given in English for some years. He went on to conduct *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* for The Royal Opera, *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Walküre* for Welsh National Opera, and *Tristan* and *Parsifal* at English National Opera. He received a CBE in 1975 and was knighted in 1985. Reginald Goodall died in 1990 at the age of eighty-eight.



Reg. Wilson

Wotan and
Freia,
Scene 2

PETER MOORES, CBE, DL

Peter Moores was born in Lancashire, the son of Sir John Moores, founder of the giant Littlewoods mail order, chain store and football pools group. He was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, where he read modern languages – he was already fluent in German and Italian. It was opera, however, which was his great love. He had worked at Glyndebourne Festival Opera before going up to university, and after Oxford he became a production student at the Vienna State Opera, combining this with a three-year course at the Vienna Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.

By the end of his third year at the Academy Moores had produced the Vienna premiere of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, had worked as Assistant Producer at the San Carlo Opera House, Naples, the Geneva Festival and Rome Opera, and seemed set for a successful operatic career. At this point he received a letter from his father asking him to come home as he was needed in the firm. Family loyalty being paramount, he returned to Liverpool.

From 1981 to 1983 he was a Governor of the BBC, and a Trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1978 until 1985; from 1988 to 1992 he was a director of Scottish Opera. He received the Gold Medal of the Italian Republic in 1974, an Honorary MA from Christ Church, Oxford, in 1975, and was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Northern College of Music in 1985. In May 1992 he became Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire, and in the New Year's Honours List for 1991, he was made a CBE for his charitable services to the Arts.

Whilst still in his early twenties, Peter Moores had started



Christina Burron/PMF

Peter Moores, CBE, DL

giving financial support to various young artists, several of whom – Joan Sutherland, Colin Davis and the late Geraint Evans amongst them – were to become world-famous. In 1964 he set aside a substantial part of his inheritance to establish the Peter Moores Foundation, a charity designed to support those causes dear to his heart: to make music and the arts more accessible to more people; to give encouragement to the young and to improve race relations.

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

In the field of music, the main areas supported by the Peter Moores Foundation are:

the recording of operas from the core repertoire sung in English translation; the recording or staging of rare Italian opera from the *bel canto* era of the early nineteenth century (repertoire which would otherwise only be accessible to scholars); the nurturing of promising young opera singers; new operatic work.

The Foundation awards scholarships annually to students and post-graduates for furthering their vocal studies at the Royal Northern College of Music. In addition, project awards may be given to facilitate language tuition in the appropriate country, attendance at masterclasses or summer courses, specialised repertoire study with an acknowledged expert in the field, or post-graduate performance training.

The Foundation encourages new operatic work by contributing to recordings, the publication of scores and stage productions.

Since 1964 the Foundation has supported the recording of more than forty operas, many of these sung in English, in translation. It has always been Peter Moores's belief that to enjoy opera to the full, there must be no language barrier, particularly for newcomers and particularly in the popular repertoire – hence the *Opera in English* series launched with Chandos in 1995. This includes many of the English language recordings funded by the Foundation in the 1970s and 1980s, and is now the largest recorded collection of operas sung in English.



Donner, Froh and Freia, Scene 2

John Garner/English National Opera Archive



Fafner, Fasolt and Loge, Scene 2

Anthony Crickmay/Theatre Museum, V&A

Richard Wagner: Das Rheingold

Vorwort von Lord Harewood

Die English National Opera und vor ihr Sadler's Wells haben es auf Musiktheater abgesehen, nicht auf die große Oper. Unser Repertoire ist in gewisser Hinsicht danach ausgewählt; außerdem ist die derzeitige Situation in gewisser Hinsicht auf unsere Angewohnheit zurückzuführen, dem Publikum die Oper nahezubringen (sie wird in der Muttersprache dieses Publikums aufgeführt), anstatt es auf Distanz zu halten, was passieren *kann*, wenn sie in einer noch so gut verstandenen, aber fremden Sprache gehört wird. Wir haben es eher auf die "Unmittelbarkeit" eines Theatererlebnisses abgesehen als auf den Denkprozess, der das Ergebnis langer Beschäftigung mit dem Thema ist – das eine ist so bewundernswert wie das andere, doch der Unterschied ist groß, ein Unterschied wie der zwischen dem Erleben eines Regenschauers im Freien und dessen Beschreibung.

Seit Jahren sind sich die Plattenkäufer (ich schreibe dies in meiner Eigenschaft als passionierter Schallplattenkonsument) über die Vorzüge uneinig, die Live-Aufzeichnungen

gegenüber solchen haben, die im Studio aufgenommen sind. Eingefleischte Sammler werden die Neuauflage von Maplesons Zylindern kennen, die um 1900 bei Aufführungen in der New Yorker Metropolitan Opera hergestellt wurden. Sie erreichen unser Ohr durch einen Hagelsturm von Störgeräuschen, sind aber dennoch eine einzigartige Aussage zum Gesangsstil einer vergangenen Epoche. Andere werden die veröffentlichten und nicht veröffentlichten HMV-Aufnahmen kennen, die 1926 und 1927 in den Anfangstagen elektrischer Tonaufzeichnung in Covent Garden entstanden sind: die Abschiedsgala der Melba, Teile einer *Otello*-Vorstellung mit Giovanni Zenatello und Auszüge aus *Boris Godunow* und *Mefistofele* mit Fjodor Schaljapin. Viele von uns finden sie ungeheuer wertvoll, da sie nicht nur hörbare Beweise des vor fast fünfzig Jahren gängigen Stils und Standards der Darbietung liefern, sondern auch eine "Live-Wirkung" besitzen, die Studioaufnahmen aus dem selben Zeitraum abgeht – die von Schaljapin sind ein erstklassiges Beispiel dafür.

In diesem Sinne ist es für eine Operntruppe,

der an der Unmittelbarkeit des Musiktheaters gelegen ist, gewissermaßen konsequent, die Verbindung zur "Wirklichkeitsnähe" von Live-Aufzeichnungen zu suchen.



Lord Harewood
Generaldirektor
English National Opera
August 1975

Übersetzung: Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller

Eine Einführung in den "Ring des Nibelungen"

Wagner entwickelte die Idee eines Musikdramas zum Thema der Nibelungensage 1848, etwa um die Zeit, als er *Lohengrin* fertig stellte, die letzte seiner traditionellen Opern. *Der Ring des Nibelungen* ist auf zahlreichen Ebenen zu genießen: beispielsweise als Märchen, politische Allegorie oder philosophisches Traktat. Im Grunde behandelt er den zeitlosen Widerstreit von gut und böse, den Gegensatz zwischen der Liebe zur Macht und der Macht der Liebe. Wotan, der oberste der Götter, strebt mit letztendlich guten Absichten nach der Macht;

Alberich, das Oberhaupt der Nibelungen (unterirdisch lebender Zwerge) erstrebt sie für seine eigenen bösen Zwecke. Von Monteverdis *Orfeo* bis zu Mozarts *Zauberflöte*, von Rameaus *Hippolyte et Aricie* bis zu Webers *Freischütz* hat die Gegenüberstellung von Licht und Schatten stets die Openkomponisten fasziniert. Wagner erkannte, dass nicht alles Schwarz und Weiß ist, sondern dass Grauschattierungen vorherrschen. So nimmt Wotan Zuflucht zu Täuschungsmanövern und Diebstahl und bezeichnet sich selbst als Alberichs Alter Ego ("Licht-Alberich"), während Alberich, der das Rheingold erwirbt, indem er die Bedingung erfüllt, aller Liebe zu entsagen, nicht nur als boshaft, sondern auch als würdevoll dargestellt wird.

Wagner arbeitete mehrere Jahre lang an Text und Musik, angefangen mit einer Zusammenfassung der Fabel in Prosa, ehe er den Text des Werks zu erstellen begann, das er *Siegfrieds Tod* nannte. Im Dezember 1856 teilte er jedoch einem Freund mit, dass ihn die Nibelungen allmählich langweilten; tatsächlich legte er den *Ring* im folgenden Sommer beiseite und nahm die Arbeit daran erst wieder 1869 auf – bis dahin hatte er *Tristan und Isolde* sowie *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* komponiert. Vom ersten Entwurf bis zur Fertigstellung brauchte er für das

gigantische Projekt sechszwanzig Jahre: Jahre des Aufbruchs sowohl in seinem Privatleben als auch auf der politischen Bühne Europas.

Es war nicht nur Langeweile, die Wagner bewog, den jungen Siegfried unter der Linde zurückzulassen, wo er sich nach eigenem Bekunden mit aufrichtigen Tränen von ihm verabschiedete. Nachdem er aus Dresden geflohen war, um der Verhaftung wegen seiner Beteiligung an der Revolution von 1848 zu entgehen, lebte Wagner im Züricher Exil und sah kaum eine Chance, den *Ring* jemals aufgeführt zu sehen; außerdem war sein Kompositionsstil einem derart raschen Wandel unterworfen, dass er ihn mit *Tristan* gewissermaßen durcharbeiten musste. Dass er den *Ring* doch noch vollenden und aus eigener Kraft dafür sorgen sollte, dass er in einem eigens erbauten Theater aufgeführt wurde, grenzt an ein Wunder.

Zu seinen Quellen gehörten fünf Epen, alle aus dem dreizehnten Jahrhundert, auf Isländisch, Mittelhochdeutsch und Altnordisch. Wie bei allen seinen Opern vor und nach dem *Ring* verfasste Wagner seine Texte selbst. Allerdings ließ er zum Entsetzen seiner Freunde anfangen mit *Siegfrieds Tod* den altherwürdigen dichterischen Kunstgriff

des Stabreims wieder aufleben, der statt auf einem Versmaß mit Endreim auf der Alliteration von Explosivlauten beruht. Dies entsprach den Theorien, die er in Essays aus dem Züricher Exil dargelegt hatte und die sich unter anderem mit der Interdependenz von gesprochenen und musikalischen Klängen sowie mit der Notwendigkeit befassten, Gesangstexte verständlich zu halten, weshalb ihm Ensemblesummern und Chöre nicht mehr angemessen erschienen.

Wie es sich herausstellte, gehorchte Wagner nicht immer seinen eigenen Regeln: In den *Meistersingern* kommen ein ausgewachsenes Quintett und zahllose Chöre vor, im zweiten Akt der *Götterdämmerung* ein Chor und ein Trio. Die Oper, mit der der *Ring*-Zyklus beginnt, *Das Rheingold*, liefert ein gutes Beispiel für die praktische Umsetzung Wagnerscher Theorien, aber ehe Wagner sich mit der Musik befassen konnte, war noch viel zu tun. Zunächst plante er nur eine einzige Oper, die optimistisch enden sollte, mit einer entschiedenen Bestätigung der moralischen und physischen Überlegenheit der Götter. Die Bemerkung eines Freundes, dass die Fabel vom Publikum ein unrealistisches Maß an Vorkenntnissen verlange, veranlasste ihn, erst *Siegfrieds Tod* zu erweitern und dann mit

Der junge Siegfried eine Art Vorgeschichte hinzuzufügen. Als er die Notwendigkeit erkannte, noch weiter in die Vergangenheit zurückzugehen, schrieb er die Libretti zur *Walküre* und zum *Rheingold*. *Der junge Siegfried* wurde in *Siegfried* umbenannt, aus *Siegfrieds Tod* wurde mit erheblichen Streichungen und Änderungen die *Götterdämmerung*; geändert wurde unter anderem der Schluss, der nun die Götter in den Flammen ihrer Feste Walhall umkommen sah. In Anerkennung des Einflusses der *Orestia* und der *Prometheus*-Dramen des Aischylos beschrieb Wagner den *Ring* als Trilogie (wobei *Das Rheingold* gewissermaßen als Vorspeise diente).

Im Jahre 1854 wurde Wagner mit den Schriften von Arthur Schopenhauer bekannt gemacht – „ein Griesgram der allerschlimmsten Sorte“, wie P.G. Wodehouses Bertie Wooster es ausdrückt. Der Schluss der *Ring*-Fabel war schon zuvor revidiert worden; aber danach, während er mit der Komposition des Zyklus beschäftigt war, verfasste Wagner mehrere verschiedene Schlüsse, darunter einen, der Schopenhauers pessimistische Sicht vom Leben als bloßer Negation des Todes widerspiegelte. Darin erlangt Brünnhilde einen Zustand buddhistischer

Erleuchtung, indem sie das gesegnete Ende alles Ewigen erreicht. Dies ist nicht die Fassung, die Wagner schließlich vertont hat, doch sie gibt einen Einblick in seine Geistesverfassung um die Zeit, als er den Schluss der *Walküre* und den Anfang von *Siegfried* komponierte.

Nachdem er die Texte in umgekehrter Reihenfolge geschrieben hatte, machte Wagner sich daran, die Musik vom Beginn an zu schreiben: So nahm er *Das Rheingold* 1853 in Angriff, ein Jahr nach Fertigstellung des Librettos, wohingegen er bei der *Götterdämmerung*, die er 1869 begann, einen Text vertonte, den er (wenn auch mit späteren Überarbeitungen) zwanzig Jahre zuvor geschrieben hatte. Natürlich entwickelte sich sein Musikstil über diesen Zeitraum, und die Partitur der letztgenannten Oper ist erheblich subtiler und komplexer als die der Ersten. Dennoch werden die vier Opern, so unterschiedlich sie auch sind, durch das Bindemittel zusammengehalten, das als Leitmotiv bekannt ist.

Musikalische Reminiszenzen waren in der Oper nichts Neues. Ein bekanntes Beispiel ist die kurze Phrase der Oboe, die uns im zweiten Akt von Beethovens *Fidelio* klar macht, dass der schlafende Florestan nun von seiner Frau

träumt, von der er soeben noch gesungen hat. Wagners Leistung war es, ein Geflecht von Leitmotiven zu schaffen: kurze, bedeutungsschwere Phrasen, die mit bestimmten Personen, Objekten, Gefühlen und vielem anderem in Verbindung stehen und in der Gesangslinie, vorwiegend jedoch im Orchester wiederkehren. Sie sind viel mehr als die "Visitenkarten", über die Debussy spottete (der selbst keineswegs darüber erhaben war, in *Pelléas et Mélisande* davon Gebrauch zu machen): Schlichte Wiederholung, melodische oder harmonische Abwandlung und die Kombination mit anderen Motiven – speziell gegen Ende des Zyklus – lassen allesamt ein eng verflochtenes Gewirk entstehen.

Ganze Bücher sind geschrieben worden, die den verschiedenen Motiven Namen zuordnen, aber je genauer die versuchte Definition der abstrakteren dieser Motive ausfällt, desto schwerer können sie zu fassen sein. Das muss den neuen Hörer nicht kümmern, der die Themen nach mehrmaligem Anhören wieder erkennen lernt. Allerdings sind nicht alle Zusammenhänge offensichtlich: Es lohnt sich zum Beispiel, auf die ähnlichen Konturen des Walhall- und des Ring-Motivs hinzuweisen – das eine edel, das andere finster –, die unseren Eindruck bestätigen oder vielmehr

vorwegnehmen, dass Wotan und Alberich zwei Seiten ein und derselben Münze darstellen.

Von den vielen Freuden des *Rings* ist die Orchestrierung nicht die geringste. Wagner setzt umfangreiche Kräfte ein, doch immer wieder ist es ein einzelnes Holzblasinstrument – sagen wir eine Oboe oder Bassklarinette –, das eine Situation umreißt oder eine Gesangsphrase auf den Punkt bringt. Eine der typischsten Klangfarben des *Rings* liefern die so genannten Wagner-Tuben (gespielt von Mitgliedern der mit acht Musikern besetzten Hörner), die auch tatsächlich in der zweiten Szene des *Rheingold* das Walhall-Motiv intonieren.

Um 1862 war Wagner nicht mehr aus den deutschen Staaten verbannt. Im folgenden Jahr veröffentlichte er eine Ausgabe des *Ring*-Textes mit einem Vorwort, in dem er der Hoffnung Ausdruck gibt, ein deutscher Fürst werde die Mittel aufbringen, um den – noch immer unvollständigen – Zyklus in einem eigens errichteten Theater aufzuführen. Seine Bitte wurde bald erhört. Der achtzehnjährige bayerische Kronprinz bestieg 1864 als Ludwig II. den Thron. Er half Wagner, seine Schulden abzubezahlen, quartierte ihn in einem Haus in München ein, ließ ihm

Geldgeschenke und ein Jahresgehalt zukommen und ermunterte ihn, mit seinem großen Werk fortzufahren.

Die Beziehung zwischen den beiden hatte ihre gute und schlechten Zeiten, um es höflich auszudrücken; aber es ist Ludwig zu verdanken, dass *Tristan* und *Die Meistersinger* am Hoftheater uraufgeführt wurden, das auch Wiederaufnahmen der früheren Opern Wagners erlebte. Auch *Das Rheingold* und *Die Walküre* gelangten gegen den Willen des Komponisten zur Aufführung. Wagner war immer noch fest entschlossen, den gesamten *Ring* in einem eigenen Theater unter Festspielbedingungen aufgeführt zu sehen. 1871 legte er sich auf die Provinzstadt Bayreuth fest. Der Bau des neuen Theaters wurde durch öffentliche Subskription finanziert, wobei Ludwig in einem kritischen Moment zu Hilfe kam. Wagner vollendete die *Götterdämmerung* 1874, und im August 1876 wurde *Der Ring des Nibelungen* erstmals vollständig aufgeführt. Bis 1889 hatte es überall in der Welt der Oper weitere Inszenierungen gegeben; sie sind nach wie vor der Maßstab, an dem sich jedes nach wahrer Größe trachtende Opernhaus messen lassen muss.

© 2000 Richard Lawrence
Übersetzung: Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller

Das Rheingold

Der Herbst 1853 war im Nachhinein betrachtet für Wagner eine bedeutsame Zeit. Er begann die Musik zum *Rheingold* zu komponieren und lernte Cosima kennen, die Tochter von Franz Liszt, die die Mutter seiner Kinder und schließlich seine zweite Frau werden sollte. Während jedoch Cosima damals gerade fünfzehn Jahre alt war und erst 1864 seine Geliebte wurde, nachdem sie den Dirigenten Hans von Bülow geheiratet und ihm zwei Töchter geboren hatte, war die Entstehungszeit der Oper weniger langwierig. Der erste Entwurf lag in weniger als elf Wochen vor, und Wagners Reinschrift war im September 1854 vollendet, als er bereits halb mit dem ersten Entwurf der *Walküre* fertig war.

Im Gegensatz zu den nachfolgenden *Ring*-Opern, die jeweils in drei Akte aufgeteilt sind, ist das *Rheingold* ein ohne Unterbrechung gespieltes Werk von rund zwei dreiviertel Stunden Dauer. Die vier Szenen sind durch umfangreiche Orchesterzwischenspiele getrennt, die auf brillante Weise Wagners Auffassung von der Komposition als Kunst des Übergangs veranschaulichen. Zum Beispiel wird, nachdem Alberich das Gold seinen Bewacherinnen (den Rheintöchtern) entrissen

hat, der grimmige Klang des "Ringmotivs", das an einem Orgelpunkt in der Dominante c-Moll verankert ist, anschließend von Holzbläsern, Bratschen und Hörnern gemildert und dann in das getragene "Walhallmotiv" der Blechbläser verwandelt. Ein länger anhaltender Orgelpunkt folgt der zweiten Szene und führt den Klang von Alberichs Schmieden ein, die auf achtzehn Ambosse einhämmern. Das b-Moll von Nibelheim ergänzt seine Durparallele, das Des von Walhall, zu einem weiteren Beispiel für die Verbindung zwischen Alberich und Wotan.

Der umfangreichste aller Orgelpunkte ist jedoch ganz zu Beginn des Vorspiels zu hören, wo die Kontrabässe nicht weniger als 136 Takte lang ein tiefes Es aushalten. Ihnen gesellen sich eine Quinte höher die Fagotte hinzu; anschließend schleicht sich erst ein Horn leise mit einem ansteigenden Arpeggio ein, dann ein weiteres und noch eines, bis alle acht Hörner nach Art eines Echos immer wieder die eine urwüchsige Phrase spielen. Wagner geht es darum, den Ursprung allen Seins heraufzubeschwören, die so gut wie vollkommene Abwesenheit von Zeit und Bewegung, indem er die gleichen Mittel einsetzt wie Beethoven zu Beginn seiner

Neunten Sinfonie. Allmählich wird aus dem Arpeggio ein Schwall von Sechzehnteln, die den Rhein darstellen. Wagner wäre gern bereit gewesen, den Einfluss Beethovens einzugestehen; hätte man ihn auf die hier vorliegende Ähnlichkeit mit Mendelssohns Ouvertüre *Die schöne Melusine* hingewiesen, wäre ihm das möglicherweise nicht so recht gewesen, obwohl er Mendelssohns Musik genug schätzte, um sie in seiner Zeit als Dirigent aufzuführen.

Wie nicht anders zu erwarten bei einem Werk, das als Vorgeschichte eines sich entspinrenden Dramas gedacht ist, sind im *Rheingold* viele (aber keineswegs alle) Leit motive des *Rings* präsent. Eines der wichtigsten, ein zweiteiliges Motiv, tritt in Erscheinung, wenn die Rheintöchter das Gold grüßen: Sowohl die Fanfare "Heiajaheia!" als auch die aus zwei Tönen bestehende, melodisch und harmonisch abgewandelte Figur "Rheingold! Rheingold!" nehmen neue Bedeutungsnuancen an, je weiter das Epos voranschreitet.

Wagner betrachtete die Rheintöchter als Einheit, auch wenn er jeder einen Namen gab, darum singen sie wie hier von Zeit zu Zeit im mehrstimmigen Satz. Anderswo hält er sich insofern an die eigenen Regeln, als keine Figur ein Wort sagt, während eine andere singt.

Tatsächlich ist wie oben in der Einleitung dargelegt *Das Rheingold* der *locus classicus* des Wagnerschen Idealismus. Es gibt keine Ensemblenummern, und die Vertonung ist im wesentlichen syllabisch, ohne lyrischen oder rhetorischen Überschwang. Einer Arie am nächsten kommt Wagner mit Loges Schilderung in Szene 2, die für sich genommen als Konzertstück aufgeführt werden könnte und auch aufgeführt wurde.

Während Wotan im Grunde gut ist und nur eine finstere Seite hat, Alberich dagegen grundsätzlich böse, aber wenigstens zwischen Recht und Unrecht unterscheiden kann, ist Loge durch und durch ambivalent. (Die Partie, die am besten von einem Heldenenor übernommen wird, ist unter Charaktertenören so begehrt, dass der Sänger, der in *Siegfried* als Mime besetzt ist, oft Loge dazu erhält, weshalb – wenn auch glücklicherweise nicht in diesem Fall – ein anderer Sänger für den Mime im *Rheingold* engagiert werden muss.) Loge ist nur ein Halbgott, dem Freias lebensbewahrende Äpfel versagt sind, und die anderen misstrauen ihm. Wie es Wotan ausdrückt: "Von allen Göttern dein einziger Freund ...". Wir wissen nie, was Loge wirklich denkt. Mehrmals empfiehlt er, das Gold den Rheintöchtern zurückzuerstatten; aber Fricka

gegenüber spricht er sich dafür aus, es zu behalten und damit Wotan von außerehelichen Streifzügen abzuhalten. Außerdem verspottet er mit Vergnügen die Rheintöchter, als diese ihren Verlust beklagen. Er schämt sich, mit den Göttern in Verbindung zu stehen, und gesellt sich doch auf ihrer feierlichen Prozession nach Walhall zu ihnen. Wagner charakterisiert ihn mit flackernden Motiven, die einem Gott des Feuers angemessen wären, sowie bezeichnenderweise mit einer Phrase, die sich sowohl beim zweitönigen "Rheingold! Rheingold!"-Motiv als auch bei dessen chromatischer Abwandlung bedient.

Loge selbst tritt später nicht mehr auf, seine Musik aber sehr wohl, und in der *Götterdämmerung* setzt die Dritte Norne ihre Schwestern über sein bevorstehendes Ende in Kenntnis. Erda dagegen ist noch einmal in *Siegfried* zu sehen. Dort ist sie über die Neuigkeit verblüfft, die Wotan der Wanderer überbringt. Im *Rheingold* ist sie hingegen so allwissend, wie sie zu sein behauptet. Eingeleitet von einer leisen ansteigenden Phrase, die aus dem Vorspiel hergeleitet ist, rät sie Wotan, den Riesen den Ring zu überlassen. Dann sagt sie den Niedergang der Götter voraus. Die entscheidende Passage lautet:

“Alles, was ist, endet. Ein düster Tag dämmert den Göttern.” Dort begegnet der ansteigenden Phrase ihr Gegenteil, eine absteigende Phrase der Geigen und Bratschen, die leicht zu überhören ist. Die Szene mag von ihrer Grundstimmung her noch so verhängnisvoll sein, doch bietet sie einen seltenen Moment der Erholung zwischen dem Streit der Götter und Riesen und der ersten Folge des Fluchs, mit dem Alberich den Ring belegt hat, der brutalen Ermordung Fasolts durch seinen Bruder Fafner.

Die Wolken, die sich symbolträchtig zusammengebraut haben, werden von Donners Hammer zerstreut, und Froh zaubert aus einem Regenbogen eine Brücke herbei. Wotan streift angesichts der Wendung der Ereignisse seine Niedergeschlagenheit ab, und die Götter betreten ihre neue Burg. Für diese Szene verlangt Wagner sieben Harfen: sechs im Orchester und eine, um hinter der Bühne die Rheintöchter zu begleiten. Die Chromatik ihrer Klage ist sozusagen der Wurm in der Knospe, doch der bleibende Eindruck beim Publikum ist der beispielloser Pracht. Wie trügerisch diese Pracht ist, wird im weiteren Verlauf des großen Dramas nur allzu deutlich.

Das Rheingold wurde im September 1869 in München uraufgeführt. Die erste Aufführung

als Teil des vollständigen *Ring*-Zyklus erfolgte bei den Bayreuther Festspielen im August 1876.

© 2001 Richard Lawrence

Übersetzung: Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller

Der “Ring” – auf Englisch?

Wir alle sind irgendwie fest davon überzeugt, dass ein Kunstwerk in vollständig ausgearbeiteter Form der Seele seines Schöpfers entspringt, und übersehen dabei, da es uns gelegen kommt, den Unterschied zwischen Natur und Kunst. Der kreative Prozess ist langwierig und detailliert; er fängt mit dem Entwurf an und führt zu einem Werk, an dem immer wieder gefeilt worden ist. In der darstellenden Kunst hat der Urheber mehr als in jeder anderen Kunstform sein Werk immer auf sein Zielpublikum abgestimmt. Der Komponist, der sein Publikum einbezieht, sorgt selbstverständlich für eine stärkere emotionale Reaktion, die sich auch noch akkumulieren kann.

Wenn man die Korrespondenz liest, in der es um die Entstehung eines Meisterwerks der Oper geht, wird zweierlei unmissverständlich klar. Erstens drängt der Komponist seinen Librettisten in eine bestimmte Richtung, während er selbst auf dem Weg zu seinem Ziel

ständig seinen Entwurf modifiziert. Häufig setzt sich diese Entwicklung nach der Uraufführung fort, sei es zwischen den ersten Vorstellungen oder anlässlich einer späteren Wiederaufnahme. Zwei der erfolgreichsten Arien in *Don Giovanni* – “Dalla sua pace” und “Mi tradi” – waren in der ursprünglichen Prager Fassung nicht enthalten. *Madama Butterfly* war in der Form, in der sie anfangs aufgeführt wurde, nicht die Oper, die wir heute kennen: Pinkerton kam im dritten Akt nicht mehr vor.

Zweitens stellt man fest, dass der Komponist seine Oper auch für eine bestimmte Bühne schreibt, für ein bestimmtes Ensemble aus Instrumentalisten und Sängern und für ein bestimmtes Publikum. Mozarts Korrespondenz mit seinem Vater verzeichnet nicht nur die Zugeständnisse, die er an die fehlende Technik des jeweiligen Sängers machen musste, sondern auch die Wirkung, die er erzielen konnte, indem er die Vorzüge der Kräfte nutzte, die ihm zur Verfügung standen. Viele von Rossinis Koloraturpartien für Mezzosopran entstanden für seine Geliebte Isabella Colbran. Selbst die Zensur war häufig eine prägende Kraft, und der Begriff “prägend” wird hier absichtlich benutzt. *Un ballo in maschera* verdankt seine straffe Form Verdis Auseinandersetzung mit dem

Zensor. Aber die Öffentlichkeit war wohl die stärkste von außen wirkende Kraft. Der Opernkomponist, ein Mann des Theaters, war sich darüber im klaren, dass der Erfolg seines Schaffens und sein eigener Erfolg von der Reaktion seines Publikums abhing. Die maximale Reaktion stellt sich nicht nur dann ein, wenn das Werk künstlerisch erfolgreich ist, sondern auch, wenn das Werk im Einklang mit dem literarischen, politischen, nationalen und außerästhetischen Bewusstsein des Publikums in genau jenem Augenblick und an genau jenem Ort steht. Der junge Komponist passte sein Werk dem Publikum an; der etablierte Komponist suchte sich die Stadt aus, die sein neues Werk zu schätzen wissen würde. Dies war nicht nur eine Frage regionaler Unterschiede: Mozart hat sogar zwei verschiedene musikalische und verbale Idiome benutzt, eins für sein Publikum am kaiserlichen Hof in *Così fan tutte* und eins für die einfache Bevölkerung der gleichen Stadt in der *Zauberflöte*. Gluck, Rossini, Donizetti und Verdi schrieben ihre Pariser Opern mit französischen Libretti und mit Rücksicht auf den Pariser Geschmack.

Und was geschah, wenn die Oper auf die Bühne kam? Die Uraufführung erfolgte unter der Aufsicht des Komponisten, und nachdem die musikalische Struktur festgelegt war, wurde

die betreffende Inszenierung zum Vorbild für alle nachfolgenden Aufführungen. Auf die gleiche Weise wiederholt die D'Oyly Carte Opera Company immer wieder die Originalinszenierungen. Das Musterbeispiel für den Erfolg dieses Systems ist heute das amerikanische Musical (zum Beispiel *West Side Story*), das jede Geste der ursprünglichen Konzeption beibehält. So sind die Intentionen des Urhebers für uns bis auf den heutigen Tag zugänglich, mit allen Vorteilen der Authentizität.

Das betreffende Werk derart fertig einzufrieren kann jedoch auch Nachteile mit sich bringen. Die Darbietung kann sich nicht weiterentwickeln, und die Interpreten sind in ein Korsett starrer Routine eingebunden. Das Werk kann sich nicht mit dem Geschmack der Gesellschaft verändern, und wenn es auf die gleiche Art in einem anderen Land, auf einem anderen Kontinent reproduziert wird, kann es sein, dass seine Relevanz für das neue Publikum schwer beeinträchtigt ist, vor allem dann, wenn auch noch eine Sprachbarriere zu überwinden ist.

Das neue Werk wird oft einige Jahre später wieder auf die Bühne gebracht, und der Komponist selbst sorgt für seine Auffrischung. *Orfeo*, *Idomeneo*, *Don Giovanni*, *Fidelio*, *Simon*

Boccanegra, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Cardillac*, *Troilus and Cressida* – man könnte die Aufzählung fortsetzen. Hätte Mozart *Le nozze di Figaro* etwa nicht umgearbeitet, wenn er die Oper 1830 für London wiederaufgenommen hätte? Hätte Bizet, wenn er lange genug gelebt hätte, etwa nicht gesungene Rezitative für *Carmen* geschaffen, als das Werk von der Pariser Opéra aufgegriffen wurde?

Wann immer ein Opernhaus es für angebracht hält, die Produktion eines Werks in Angriff zu nehmen, das es noch nicht im Repertoire hat, muss der Regisseur entscheiden, ob reproduziert oder rekreiert werden soll, ohne Rücksicht darauf, ob der Komponist noch lebt oder gestorben ist. Wird die Oper in einer für das Publikum fremden Sprache inszeniert, besteht eigentlich nur die Wahl, in der Originalsprache zu reproduzieren oder in übersetzter Form zu rekreieren. Beide Möglichkeiten enthalten das Risiko eines Fehlschlags, doch kann eine Neuschöpfung ohne den Komponisten ein ernsthafterer Fehlschlag werden, aber auch ein noch größerer Erfolg. Bühnenbild, Inszenierung, Übersetzung und die zu verwendende Edition der Musik können auf die Bedürfnisse der betreffenden Bühne abgestimmt werden, auf die verfügbaren Künstler und – was vielleicht

am wichtigsten ist – auf das emotionale Klima der Öffentlichkeit um die jeweilige Zeit und am jeweiligen Ort. Oft kann die Übersetzung das Werk nicht nur verständlich und damit für jeden im Publikum eingängig und direkt nachvollziehbar machen, indem sie ihn in seiner eigenen Sprache anspricht, sondern auch einen Text bereinigen, der in altmodischer oder schwer verständlicher Form vorliegt. Ein Kritiker, der in einem (unten abgedruckten) Artikel in der deutschen Tageszeitung *Die Welt* auf das Thema eingeht, beleuchtet die Probleme eines Deutschen von heute mit der gewundenen Sprache Wagners.

Der "englische *Ring*" am Londoner Coliseum ist eine Neuschöpfung. Sein ungeheurer Erfolg ist auf die Tatsache zurückzuführen, dass das Werk vielen zugänglich gemacht wurde, die mit diesem bedeutende Meisterwerk in reproduzierter Form nichts hätten anfangen können. *Der Ring* ist nicht dem Kenner vorbehalten. Er ist fortan für alle da, und der Zweck dieser Aufzeichnung besteht darin, ihn in den Wohnzimmern derer verfügbar zu machen, die nie die Möglichkeit haben werden, selbst eine Vorstellung zu besuchen. Die Peter Moores Foundation ist stolz darauf, dieser hervorragenden Inszenierung die Chance

geben zu können, in weiteren Kreisen geschätzt zu werden.

Peter Moores

© 1975 Peter Moores

Übersetzung: Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller

... Und der englische Alberich kann nun dem deutschen mit Recht vorwerfen: "How darkly you tell me what so clearly I know". Für die Aufführung der Tetralogie im Londoner "Coliseum" hatte Andrew Porter, jetzt hochgeschätzter Musikkritiker der amerikanischen Paradezeitschrift *The New Yorker*, den Text eigens neu ins Englische übertragen – und zwar mit grandiosem Geschick. Denn einfach war seine Aufgabe gewiß nicht. *Siegfried* besteht schließlich nur in der Sicht von Karikaturisten aus einer ausgedehnten Folge von "Hoho! Haheil!" und einigen "Heils", die sich als englische "Hails" allerdings gleich viel ziviler ausnehmen.

Porter kam bei seiner Übertragung nun freilich zur Hilfe, daß die englische Sprache über viel mehr einsilbige Worte verfügt als die deutsche: ein Vorteil, den er kraftvoll zu nutzen wußte. Die Engländer

besitzen also nun den *Ring* des 20. Jahrhunderts, während wir mit immer stumpferen Zähnen an der Wagnerischen Sprache kauen, die uns von Jahr zu Jahr unverträglicher klingt. Seltsam: Porters Übersetzung gibt dem Gedicht Wagners eine klare, kluge Würde, die überaus eindringlich wirkt. Sie zu kosten: das ist allein schon ein Glück dieser Schallplatte ...

Auszug aus "Alberich singt an der Themse", Discophilus, *Die Welt*, 30. November 1974

Der Goodallsche "Ring"

Die Leute mögen ihn den "Goodallschen *Ring*" nennen, doch er ist Jedermanns *Ring*, der *English National "Ring"*. Das Schöne daran ist, dass es sich um eine Gemeinschaftsleistung handelt. Es heißt, ich sei in den letzten fünfzig Jahren der Einzige gewesen, der den *Ring* in deutscher und englischer Sprache dirigiert hat. Wenn er hierzulande auf Deutsch gesungen wird, sitzt das Publikum, das zum allergrößten Teil die Sprache nicht versteht, nur da und wartet auf die dramatischen Höhepunkte; der Schwerpunkt liegt fast ausschließlich bei der Musik und nicht beim Text. Auf Englisch genieße ich die direkte Wirkung des Werks – man spürt sie im Publikum, weil es alles versteht. Das ist ein wunderbares Gefühl – es

gleicht den Mangel aus, dass es der Übersetzung nicht immer gelingt, Wort und Klang zu verbinden. Wagner wollte, dass der *Ring* verstanden wird. Der Text lag als Erstes vor und beschwor die Musik herauf.

Wagner fing damit an, dass er den Text zu *Siegfrieds Tod* schrieb und dabei feststellte, dass er erklären musste, wie es dazu gekommen war, fast von Anfang an, die Ursünde, jenes Aufopfern der Liebe zugunsten von Macht und Gier, das auf Siegfried zurückfällt, obwohl er gewissermaßen schuldlos ist. Lasst die Natur in Frieden. Der Rhein fließt dahin, ohne einen Grund dafür zu haben. Er ist einfach Natur. Gott oder Natur, ganz wie es beliebt, haben in ihrer Weisheit das Atom versteckt, aber wir haben es gefunden. Und wenn man bedenkt, was das Atom anrichten kann ... Wir haben in den vergangenen fünfzig Jahren mehr zerstört als in den Äonen davor. Wir vergiften die Meere; wir haben dafür gesorgt, dass die Hälfte aller Tierarten in der Natur ausgestorben sind. Die Natur hält ein so feines Gleichgewicht, dass wir die Reinheit der Welt stören. Wir können nicht anders. Das ist die Ursünde, und davon handelt der ganze *Ring*: von Adam und Eva im Garten Eden, vom Verlust der Unschuld der Welt, von der Vernichtung eines Weltensystems. Die *Ring*-

Dichtung hat die Bedeutungsschwere und Zeitlosigkeit eines Mythos. Das ist das Besondere, das ist es, was den *Ring* noch tiefgründiger macht.

Ja, ich bin Perfektionist – nicht im Hinblick auf Details, sondern in Bezug auf Atmosphäre und Bedeutung. Ich glaube nicht, dass die *Walküre*-Aufnahme eine perfekte Darbietung sein kann, obwohl ich nie mit jemandem so glücklich gewesen bin wie mit Curphey und Remedios in jenem ersten Akt. Ich ziehe Live-Aufzeichnungen vor, weil ich finde, dass ein Publikum zur Darbietung beiträgt – *Siegfried* und *Das Rheingold* sind fabelhaft: Man hört nur einmal leises Gelächter, was meines Erachtens richtig ist; das gefällt mir in der Aufnahme: Ich finde, man sollte im *Ring* gelegentlich lachen – es macht ihn lebendig.

© Reginald Goodall

Übersetzung: Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller

Inhaltsangabe

Am Anfang, als die Welt noch jung war, bevölkerten Riesen die Erde: ein schlichtes, starkes, fleißiges Volk, das es zufrieden war, ein einfaches Leben zu führen. Sorgen bereiteten ihnen nur die Auseinandersetzungen mit den Nibelungen:

Zwergen, die in unterirdischen Höhlen hausten und von ihrem Anführer Alberich im Anschluss an die Ereignisse der ersten Szene gezwungen wurden, seinem Streben nach Weltherrschaft dienlich zu sein. Doch es gelang ihnen nicht, die Riesen zu unterwerfen, und die Oberherrschaft gehörte den Göttern, Licht- und Luftgeistern, von Wotan angeführt, der die Erde aus der Höhe mit Milde regierte.

Das Rheingold, der Auftakt zu diesem epischen Drama, spielt sich in den ersten Tagen des Lebens auf der Erde ab und wird zwischen den drei Rassen der Schöpfung ausgetragen. Den Göttern nahe, ohne dazuzugehören, stehen Loge, der Geist des Feuers und der Schläue, den Wotan gebändigt und zu seinem Freund gemacht hat, und Erda, die Erdmutter, Quelle aller Weisheit und Mutter der drei Schicksalsgöttinnen, Nornen genannt. Das letzte der vier Elemente – Wasser – ist das erste, das in der Oper in Erscheinung tritt: der Rhein und die drei Rheintöchter.

CD 1

Szene 1

Auf dem Grund des Rheines

□ Das Vorspiel stürzt uns sogleich hinab auf den Grund des Rheines. Die Finsternis ist

zunächst so tief, dass wir die Weite des Wassers und seine sanft beharrnde Grundströmung hören und wahrnehmen, aber noch nicht sehen können (acht Hörner spielen nacheinander ein ansteigendes Es-Dur-Arpeggio). Allmählich werden die Sinne auf die schnelleren Strömungen darüber und die felsigen Erhebungen im Flussbett aufmerksam, das sich in weite Ferne erstreckt. [2] Eine Nixe namens Woglinde, eine der Rheintöchter, kommt herbeigeschwommen und singt ein nur teilweise verständliches Lied, während sie sich rund um die höchsten Felsen tummelt. Wellgunde, eine ihrer Schwestern, gesellt sich dazu und spielt mit ihr Fangen. Flosshilde, eine dritte, kommt herabgetaucht und bezichtigt sie der Achtlosigkeit beim Bewachen des Goldes, das weiter oben auf dem Felsen ruht. Doch auch sie lässt sich mit in das Spiel hineinziehen. Während sie hintereinander herjagen, verdüstert ein finsterer Schatten den bleichen Dunst des Flussbetts. [3] Alberich ist aus einer felsigen Kluft hervorgekrochen und belauscht das unschuldige Spiel der anmutigen Wassernixen. Er versucht sich bei ihnen einzuschmeicheln, doch sie sind von seiner Hässlichkeit abgestoßen, und Flosshilde verdächtigt ihn, in böser Absicht herumzulungern. Doch aus seinen lüsternen

Annäherungsversuchen wird deutlich, dass er für ihr Gold keine Gefahr bedeutet. [4] Sie beschließen ihn zu hänseln, und eine nach der anderen bringt ihn dazu, hinter ihr her die Felsen hinauf und hinunter zu hetzen. Nur Flosshilde, die dritte, lässt ihn näher an sich heran, um ihm dann flink zu entweichen. Nun ist Alberichs Leidenschaft geweckt, und er jagt zunehmend besessen hinter den Mädchen her, während sie schnell von Felsen zu Felsen huschen und über seine Bemühungen spotten.

[5] Auf einmal blitzt weiter oben auf dem zentralen Felsbrocken ein helles Licht auf; ein Sonnenstrahl ist in die wässrige Tiefe vorgedrungen und hat das Rheingold aufleuchten lassen; fröhlich preisen die Rheintöchter den Schatz, den sie bewachen. [6] Alberich wird neugierig und erfährt, dass dieser Hort nicht bloß funkelnder Zierat ist, sondern seinem Träger, wenn er zum Ring geschmiedet wird, Macht über die ganze Welt verleiht. Flosshilde ist überzeugt, dass sie zu viel verraten haben, bis Woglinde sie daran erinnert, dass nur der des Goldes habhaft werden kann, der bereit ist, auf die Liebe zu verzichten ("Nur wer der Minne Macht versagt"). Und dazu sei niemand bereit, schon gar nicht dieser liebeskranke Kobold. Aber ihre Wachsamkeit hat zu früh nachgelassen:

[7] Alberich, dessen Liebe verschmäht wurde und der unendlich machthungrig ist, will nur zu gern den Preis für das Gold bezahlen. Er ist zu ihm hinaufgeklettert, ehe die Rheintöchter es bemerkt haben; [8] grausig erklingt sein Fluch auf die Liebe. Er reißt das Gold an sich und verschwindet in der Tiefe. Das Wehklagen der Rheintöchter hallt in seinem höhnischen Gelächter wider.

Erneut senkt sich Finsternis herab, und man hört das Wasser weiterrauschen; Englisch Horn und Waldhorn erinnern an das "Fluchmotiv"; Wolken verdecken die Szenerie.

Szene 2

Freie Gegend auf Bergeshöhen

Sobald sich zur Melodie des "Ringmotivs" auf den Hörnern die Wolken verzogen haben, sehen wir uns auf den Gipfel eines Berges hoch über dem Rhein versetzt. Wotan und seine Gemahlin Fricka liegen in tiefem Schlaf, und als der Morgen anbricht, wird auf einem anderen, weiter entfernten Gipfel eine gewaltige, glänzende Burg sichtbar. Es ist Walhall, Wotans Statussymbol (und die Ähnlichkeit des "Walhallmotivs" für Wagnertuba mit dem kurz davor gehörten "Ringmotiv" erinnert uns daran, dass es ebenfalls ein Symbol der Macht ist und dass

Wotan und Alberich nicht so verschieden sind, wie sie beide gern glauben möchten).

[9] Fricka erwacht als erste, erblickt die neu erbaute Burg und weckt ihren Gemahl, der von ihrer Pracht entzückt ist ("Vollendet das ewige Werk"). Sie dagegen erinnert ihn besorgt daran, dass sie bezahlt werden muss, und der Preis, der mit den beiden Riesen vereinbart wurde, die es erbaut haben, ist Frickas Schwester Freia (manchmal auch Holda genannt), die Göttin der ewigen Jugend und Bewacherin der heiligen verjüngenden Äpfel. Fricka ist zornig, weil der Preis in ihrer Abwesenheit festgelegt wurde, aber sie wünscht sich die Burg ebenso sehr wie Wotan, [10] und sei es nur in der Hoffnung, dass sie ihn ans Haus binden und von ehebrecherischer Versuchung fernhalten wird. Er dagegen hat nicht die Absicht, das Versprechen einzuhalten und im Austausch für Walhall Freia auszuhändigen, sondern verlässt sich auf seinen windigen Berater Loge (der den Handel vorgeschlagen hat), eine andere Möglichkeit zu finden, um die Riesen zufriedenzustellen.

[11] Freia eilt zutiefst bestürzt herbei, [12] dicht gefolgt von den zwei Riesen, die die Burg gebaut haben und gekommen sind, ihren Lohn einzufordern: Fasolt ist von Freias Schönheit betört; sein eher zynischer,

verachtungsvoller Bruder Fafner will den Göttern lediglich Freias Fähigkeit rauben, andere zu verjüngen, denn ohne sie müssten sie rasch verfallen, sterben und den Riesen die Oberherrschaft überlassen. ^[13] Sie widerstehen Wotans schwachem Versuch, sie dazu zu bringen, dass sie eine andere Form der Bezahlung nennen. ^[14] Freias Brüder Froh und Donner, der eine ganz strahlende Freundlichkeit, der andere ein aggressiver Dickschädel, kommen gerade rechtzeitig, um zu verhindern, dass Freia fortgezerrt wird. Wotan hält Donner davon ab, die Riesen mit brutaler Gewalt niederzuringen ("Nichts durch Gewalt!")

CD 2

^[1] – ^[2] Loge kehrt endlich zurück; er hat sich der Qualität der Bauarbeiten versichert und ^[3] ärgert sich über die Beschimpfungen, mit denen er wegen seines verspäteten Erscheinens überhäuft wird ("Immer ist Undank Loges Lohn!"). Außerdem hat er überall nach einem Ersatz gesucht, um die Riesen zu entlohnen. Aber wie es scheint, kann niemand etwas Begehrntes nennen als eine gute und schöne Frau – ^[4] nur einer, nämlich Alberich, war bereit, um der Macht des Rheingolds und

eines daraus geschmiedeten Rings willen der Liebe zu entsagen. Loge berichtet von dem Diebstahl, den Alberich begangen hat, als würde er lediglich eine Beschwerde der Rheintöchter weitergeben; ^[5] aber seine Schilderung lässt die Riesen nicht kalt – ^[6] und ebenso wenig die Götter.

^[7] Jede der Parteien entscheidet für sich, dass dieses Gold extrem begehrnt ist, und Loge versichert Wotan, dass man es auch ohne Liebesverzicht, einfach durch Raub an sich bringen könne – was kein Verbrechen sei, fügt er hinzu, wenn Wotan das Gold wieder dem Rhein überantwortet. ^[8] Fafner verkündet, dass Freia bei den Göttern bleiben dürfe, wenn Wotan die Riesen stattdessen mit Alberichs Gold zu bezahlen bereit sei. Wotan wendet vergebens ein, dass es ihm nicht freistehe, das Gold weiterzugeben; die beiden Riesen nehmen Freia als Geisel. Sie versprechen, am Abend wiederzukommen und sie zurückzugeben, falls ihnen dafür das Gold ausgehändigt würde. ^[9] – ^[10] Sobald sie fort sind, wird deutlich, dass die Götter ohne Freia und ihre Äpfel grau und lustlos werden, und vollkommen unfähig, zu handeln. ^[11] Wotan beschließt zur großen Erleichterung Frickas und der anderen, sich mit Loge nach Nibelheim hinabzugeben und das Gold als

Lösegeld für Freia in Besitz zu nehmen. Sie schlüpfen durch eine Felsspalte und steigen im Innern des Berges in die unterirdischen Höhlen hinab, wo man die Nibelungen, Alberichs Sklaven, unaufhörlich auf ihre Ambosse hämmern hört (in Wagners Partitur sind achtzehn vorgesehen).

Szene 3

Unterirdische Kluft

^[12] Während die Reisenden ihren Weg in die Tiefe beenden, wird eine weitläufige Höhle sichtbar, in die Alberich seinen Bruder Mime gezerrt hat, um ihm das letzte Ergebnis seiner Handwerkskunst abzurufen. Es handelt sich dabei um die Tarnhelm genannte goldene Zauberkappe, die dem Träger die unbegrenzte Fähigkeit verleiht, sich unsichtbar zu machen oder eine andere Gestalt anzunehmen. Alberich entreißt sie ihrem Schöpfer, der behauptet, dass sie noch fehlerhaft sei, und ^[13] stellt sie sofort mit Erfolg auf die Probe, indem er sich unsichtbar macht und Mime wegen seiner versuchten Unehrllichkeit verprügelt. Mime kauert noch jammernd in einer Ecke, als ^[14] Wotan und Loge erscheinen und ^[15] sich von ihm rasch über die Arbeitsbedingungen in Nibelheim und den Zauber des Tarnhelms aufklären lassen. Loge sagt ihm hastig Hilfe für

die Fronarbeit leistenden Zwerge zu. ^[16] Da stürmt Alberich herbei, eine mit den Früchten ihrer Arbeit schwer beladene Horde Nibelungen vor sich her treibend. Beim Anblick von Wotan und Loge schickt er die anderen fort, indem er an seinem Ring zupft, was sie schreiend vor Entsetzen an ihre Arbeit zurück eilen lässt. ^[17] Nun versucht Loge Alberichs Vertrauen zu gewinnen und stellt sich ihm als alter Getreuer vor, als der Geist des Feuers. ^[18] Alberich lässt sich davon kaum beruhigen; außerdem erkennt er Wotan. ^[19] Doch sein Größenwahn macht ihn tollkühn – er brüstet sich mit dem, was er erreicht hat, und vor allem mit dem Tarnhelm. Loge täuscht Ungläubigkeit vor und fordert Alberich heraus, die Vorzüge der Zauberkappe zu beweisen.

CD 3

^[1] Alberich ist ihm gefällig und verwandelt sich erst in einen abscheulichen Drachen und dann, nach einer weiteren spöttischen Bemerkung, in eine kleine Kröte. Wotan tritt prompt auf die Kröte, Loge nimmt den Tarnhelm an sich und fesselt den gefangenen Zwerg. ^[2] Sie verschleppen ihn, wiederum vorbei an den Ambossen und dann die Felsspalte hinauf, in felsige Höhen.

Szene 4

Freie Gegend auf Bergeshöhen

[3] Wotan und Loge schaffen Alberich fest verschnürt hinaus auf die Hochebene und teilen ihm mit, dass das Gold der Preis für seine Freiheit sei. Er erklärt sich damit bald einverstanden, denn er weiß, dass der Ring die Macht hat, seine Bestände aufzufüllen und ohne Grenzen wachsen zu lassen. [4] Auf seinen Zauberspruch hin bringen die Nibelungen den Hort aus ihren Höhlen herauf. [5] Als er verlangt, freigelassen zu werden, besteht Loge darauf, den Tarnhelm zu behalten, und Wotan fordert ihn auf, den Ring ebenfalls abzuliefern. Bestürzt erbietet sich Alberich, stattdessen alles zu geben, auch sein eigenes Leben, bis ihm aufgeht, dass ihn das ebenfalls des Rings berauben würde. Wotan entreißt ihm den Ring, und man nimmt ihm die Fesseln ab, worauf er [6] („Bin ich nun frei?“) einen schicksalhaften Fluch gegen jeden ausspricht, der den Ring in Besitz nimmt: Alle sollen ihn begehren, jeder, der ihn besitzt, Todesangst vor seinem Verlust erleiden und jämmerlich zu Tode gejagt werden, bis Alberich wieder im Besitz des Rings ist. Mit dieser eindrucksvollen Verwünschung geht er ab. In seinem Gefolge erklingt ein beängstigendes, unheilvolles Thema.

60

[7] Die übrigen Götter stellen sich wieder ein. Gleich darauf bringen Fasolt und Fafner Freia zurück und geben [8] beim Anblick des Goldes bekannt, dass es, um ein gerechter Lohn zu sein, so hoch und so breit aufgetürmt werden müsse, dass Freia dahinter nicht mehr zu sehen sei. [9] Ihre beharrliche Gier ist erst gestillt, als auch noch der Tarnhelm dazugelegt wird; [10] aber selbst dann findet Fasolt noch ein winziges Loch, durch das er Freias strahlenden Blick erspähen kann, und verlangt den Ring, um es zu stopfen. Wotan weigert sich entschieden; er ist inzwischen ganz von dem Vorwand abgekommen, ihn den Rheintöchtern zurückgeben zu wollen, und will ihn in selbstherrlicher Absicht für sich behalten. Die Riesen schicken sich an, mit Freia davonzugehen, diesmal für immer; [11] doch da erscheint die Erdmutter („Weiche, Wotan, weiche!“) und sagt mahnend zu Wotan, dass der Ring zurückerstattet werden müsse, da den Göttern ohnehin der Niedergang bestimmt sei.

[12] Wotan lässt sich überreden; er wirft den Ring auf den aufgetürmten Schatz und heißt Freia willkommen. [13] Die Riesen beginnen sogleich, sich über die Verteilung des Goldes zu streiten, und als Fasolt auf Anraten Loges versucht, den Ring an sich zu reißen, hebt Fafner seinen Knüppel und erschlägt ihn.

Dann stopft er seelenruhig das restliche Lösegeld für Freia in einen Sack, nimmt ihn auf die Schulter und entfernt sich. [14] – [15] Die Luft ist noch immer von dichtem Nebel erfüllt, den Donner mit einem sensationellen Gewitter zerstreut („Heda! Heda! Hedo!“). [16] Froh überbrückt mit einem Regenbogen das Tal, und erneut wird die Burg Walhall sichtbar. [17] Wotan grüßt ein zweites Mal seine neue Festung („Abendlich strahlt der Sonne Auge“), und die Götter machen sich bereit, die Regenbogenbrücke zu überqueren. Nur Loge bekennt, dass er sich schäme, mit ihnen in Verbindung zu stehen. [18] Als sie zusammen die Brücke betreten, sind auf einmal die Rheintöchter zu hören, die den Verlust ihres Goldes beklagen. Aber Wotan hat sich durch seine Falschheit selbst die Macht genommen, ihnen behilflich zu sein, und er befiehlt Loge aufgebracht, dem Geschwätz der Wassergeister ein Ende zu bereiten. Die Rheintöchter setzen ihre Klage fort, während die Götter über die Brücke schreiten und Walhall betreten. Dann schließt *Das Rheingold* mit einem herrlichen Orchesternachspiel unter Einsatz von sechs Harfen.

William Mann

Übersetzung: Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller

Der in Südafrika geborene Bassbariton **Norman Bailey** studierte in Wien und verbrachte die Anfangsjahre seiner Laufbahn in Österreich und Deutschland. Dann ging er nach Großbritannien, wo er an allen bedeutenden Opernhäusern gesungen hat. Als einer der führenden Wagner-Sänger seiner Generation ist er besonders in der Titelrolle des *Fliegenden Holländer* und als Hans Sachs in den *Meistersingern von Nürnberg* bekannt geworden. Außerdem hat er den Landgrafen im *Tannhäuser* an der Opera North und Wotan/Wanderer sowie Gunther an der English National Opera gesungen; als Mitglied dieses Ensembles gab er unter anderem auch Don Pizarro (Beethovens *Leonore*), den Grafen von Luna (*Il trovatore*), Alfio (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Scarpia (*Tosca*), den Vater (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Fürst Gremin (*Eugen Onegin*), Kutusow (Prokofjews *Krieg und Frieden*) und den Förster (*Das schlaue Fuchslein*). An der Royal Opera Covent Garden ist er als Balstrode (in *Peter Grimes*, auch auf Tournee in Palermo), Germont (*La traviata*), Ford (*Falstaff*), Wolfram (*Tannhäuser*), Kurwenal (*Tristan und Isolde*), Donner (*Das Rheingold*), Wotan (*Die Walküre*), Klingsor und Amfortas (*Parsifal*), Jochanaan (*Salome*) und der Musiklehrer (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) aufgetreten.

61

Zu seinen jüngsten Rollen gehören Oroveso (*Norma*), Banquo (*Macbeth*), der König (*Aida*), der Doktor (*Wozzeck*) und Schigolch (*Lulu*). Seine internationale Karriere hat ihn an bedeutende Opernbühnen und Festivals in ganz Europa und den USA geführt; so war er mehrere Spielzeiten in Bayreuth beschäftigt und hat mit Dirigenten wie Sir Colin Davis, Sir Georg Solti, James Levine, Carlo Maria Giulini, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Claudio Abbado und Daniel Barenboim zusammengearbeitet. Für Chandos hat er die Titelrolle von Sir Michael Tippetts *King Priam* aufgenommen.

Der Bariton **Norman Welsby** wurde in Warrington in der englischen Grafschaft Lancashire geboren und hat seine Musikausbildung am Royal Manchester College of Music (dem späteren Royal Northern College of Music) abgeschlossen. Nach zwei Spielzeiten an der Glyndebourne Festival Opera, wo er unter anderem die Titelrolle in *Falstaff* gesungen hat, ging er an die Sadler's Wells Opera (die spätere English National Opera) und gab dort sein Debüt als Masetto (*Don Giovanni*). Seine zahlreichen Rollen für diese Truppe reichen von Liberto in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* bis hin zu Pentheus

in der britischen Erstaufführung von Hans Werner Henzes *The Bassarids* und haben außerdem die Titelrolle von *Le nozze di Figaro*, den Sprecher (*Die Zauberflöte*), Alfio (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Silvio (*Pagliacci*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) und Schlemil (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*) umfasst. Davon abgesehen hat er viele Partien an der Royal Opera Covent Garden gesungen.

Der in Athen geborene Tenor **Robert Ferguson** wurde unter Frederick Cox am Royal Manchester College of Music (dem späteren Royal Northern College of Music) ausgebildet. Er hat Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) und Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) an der Yorkshire Opera gesungen. Sein Debüt an der Sadler's Wells Opera (der späteren English National Opera) gab er als Pinkerton, und sang später dort Rollen wie Nero (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Turiddu (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Camille (*Die lustige Witwe*) und Tichon (*Káťa Kabanová*) gesungen.

Emile Belcourt, geboren in der kanadischen Provinz Saskatchewan, wurde zunächst an der Wiener Musikhochschule im Fach Spielbariton ausgebildet und ins Ensemble der

Opernhäuser von Ulm und Bonn aufgenommen, wo er Rollen wie Don Giovanni, Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) und Dr. Falke (*Die Fledermaus*) gesungen hat. Sein Entschluss, sich statt dessen als Tenor ausbilden zu lassen, führte ihn nach Paris, um bei Pierre Bernac und Germaine Lubin Unterricht zu nehmen. Im Anschluss an eine Rundfunkausstrahlung von Debussys *Pelléas et Mélisande* in Paris wurde er verpflichtet, erst den Pelléas an der Scottish Opera zu singen und dann Gonzalve in Ravels *L'Heure espagnole* unter Georg Solti am Royal Opera House Covent Garden. Nach seinem Umzug nach Großbritannien begann für ihn eine langjährige Zusammenarbeit mit der Sadler's Wells Opera (der späteren English National Opera), wo er außer seinem berühmten Loge im englischsprachigen *Rheingold* Partien in *Orphée aux enfers*, *Barbe-Bleue* und *Patience* übernahm. Sein Repertoire reicht von Herodes (*Salome*) und der Teilnahme an der britischen Erstaufführung der dreiaktigen Fassung von Bergs *Lulu* in Covent Garden bis hin zu Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*), Graf Danilo (*Die lustige Witwe*) und der Hauptrolle in *Man of La Mancha* im Londoner West End. Außerdem hat er bei der Welsh National

Opera, dem Châtelet théâtre musical, der Canadian Opera Company und der San Francisco Opera gastiert, sowie an der Seattle Opera, wo er den Tristan gesungen hat. Sein Interesse an zeitgenössischen Opern hat er unter anderen in Malcolm Williamsons *The Violins of Saint-Jacques* und *Lucky-Peter's Journey*, Sir Richard Rodney Bennetts *A Penny for a Song*, Iain Hamiltons *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* und David Blakes *Toussaint L'Ouverture* bewiesen.

Robert Lloyd, in der englischen Grafschaft Essex geboren und an der Universität Oxford ausgebildet, wandte sich mit 28 Jahren von der Geschichtswissenschaft ab und dem Gesang zu. Er wurde als Bassolist an die Royal Opera Covent Garden engagiert und hat dort eine ungeheuer breite Palette von Rollen gesungen. Unter anderem hat er (in der Inszenierung des inzwischen verstorbenen Andrei Tarkowski) als erster britischer Bass die Titelrolle von *Boris Godunow* gesungen. Die Produktion mit Robert Lloyd als Boris hat später an der Kirow-Oper in Leningrad gastiert, von wo sie international im Fernsehen ausgestrahlt wurde, und an der Wiener Staatsoper, wo Claudio Abbado am Dirigentenpult stand. Außerdem hat Robert Lloyd die Rolle in Amsterdam und

Florenz gesungen. Neben seinen jüngsten Auftritten in Covent Garden (unter anderem in *Roméo et Juliette*, *Chérubin* und *Samson et Dalila*) war er am Teatro alla Scala in Mailand zu Gast (*Der fliegende Holländer* und *Parsifal*), an der Deutschen Oper Berlin (*Tristan und Isolde*), an der Nederlandse Opera (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), bei den Salzburger Festspielen (*Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* und *Les Troyens*), an der Metropolitan Opera in New York (*Die Zauberflöte*, *Fidelio*, *Rigoletto*, *Aida* und *Faust*), an der San Francisco Opera (*L'incoronazione di Poppea* und *Don Carlos*) und an der Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Simon Boccanegra*). Er hat unter den renommiertesten Dirigenten der Welt gesungen und ist ein viel beschäftigter Solist auf der Konzertplattform, im Rundfunk und auf Tonträger. 1991 wurde er mit dem britischen Orden und Titel "Commander of the Order of the British Empire" ausgezeichnet.

Der australische Bass **Clifford Grant** absolvierte seine Ausbildung in Sydney, Melbourne und London; er gab sein Operndebüt mit der New South Wales Opera Company als Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Danach ging er an die Sadler's Wells Opera (die spätere English National

Opera), wo er als Seneca (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), der Komtur (*Don Giovanni*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), Silva (*Ernani*), Pater Guardiano (*La forza del destino*), Philipp II. (*Don Carlos*), Heinrich der Vogler (*Lohengrin*), Pogner (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Fafner, Hunding und Hagen (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*) sowie in tragenden Rollen in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon*, *Oedipus Rex* und *Peter Grimes* auftrat. Seine sonstigen Engagements umfassten Auftritte an der Royal Opera Covent Garden, der Welsh National Opera, der Glyndebourne Festival Opera, der Opéra de Marseille, der San Francisco Opera und in Sydney. Nachdem er 1990 an der Opera Australia in Meyerbeers *Les Huguenots* aufgetreten war, verabschiedete er sich von der Oper, kehrte jedoch 1993 auf die Bühne zurück, um an der Opera North Alvis Badoero in *La Gioconda* zu singen. Er hat mit namhaften Künstlern wie Dame Joan Sutherland, Otto Klemperer, Sir Adrian Boult und Sir Colin Davis zusammengearbeitet.

Der englische Bariton **Derek Hammond-Stroud** hat bei Elena Gerhardt und Gerhard Hüsch in München und London studiert, und seine Karriere erstreckt sich ebenso auf das

Konzertpodium wie auf die Opernbühne. Er ist mit allen bedeutenden britischen Operntruppen aufgetreten und war auf dem europäischen Kontinent unter anderem an der Bayerischen Staatsoper, am Theater an der Wien, am Theater am Gärtnerplatz und drei Spielzeiten lang an der Nederlandse Opera engagiert. In Süd- und Nordamerika hat er am Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, an der New Yorker Metropolitan Opera, an der San Diego Opera und an vielen anderen Bühnen gesungen. Zu seinen bedeutenden Partien zählen Dr. Bartolo, Rigoletto, Fra Melitone (*La forza del destino*), Sharpless, Tonio (*Pagliacci*), Papageno, Alberich, Beckmesser, Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Krušina (*Die verkaufte Braut*) und Sir Robert Cecil (*Gloriana*); daneben hat er zahlreiche Rollen in Werken von Gilbert und Sullivan und solchen von Offenbach gespielt. Er war an mehreren britischen Erstaufführungen beteiligt, beispielsweise an Haydns *Orfeo ed Euridice* (als Creonte), Rossinis *La pietra del paragone* (als Pacuvio), Prokofjews *Krieg und Frieden* (als Napoleon, an der English National Opera) und Gottfried von Einems *Der Besuch der alten Dame* (als der Lehrer, in Glyndebourne). Er hat anlässlich der Uraufführung von Malcolm Williamsons *The Violins of Saint-*

Jacques am Sadler's Wells Theatre die Rolle des alten Fischers kreiert. Es wurden ihm viele Auszeichnungen zuerkannt, zum Beispiel 1987 der Orden Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE).

Der in Melbourne geborene australische Tenor **Gregory Dempsey** gab sein Debüt als Don Ottavio an der Melbourne National Opera Company, ehe er ins Ensemble der Elizabethan Trust Opera Company aufgenommen wurde. Sein Auftritt als Jenik in Smetanas *Die verkaufte Braut* an der Sadler's Wells Opera (der späteren English National Opera) führte zu einem festen Engagement als Tenorsolist der Truppe. Er hat zahlreiche Partien gesungen, darunter Florestan, Max, Erik (*Der fliegende Holländer*), David (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Mime, Don José, Canio, Gregor (*Die Affäre Makropulos*), Skuratov (*Aus einem Totenhaus*), Tom Rakewell und Essex (*Gloriana*). Außerdem hat er häufig an der Royal Opera Covent Garden gastiert, an der Welsh National Opera und an der Scottish Opera und ist sowohl beim Edinburgh Festival als auch beim Aldeburgh Festival aufgetreten. Im Ausland hat er an der San Francisco Opera gesungen, in Brüssel, in Stuttgart und anderen europäischen

Städten. Inzwischen ist er in Australien ansässig und hat dort häufig an der Australian Opera (der späteren Opera Australia) und der Victoria State Opera gastiert. Außerdem ist er beim Adelaide Festival aufgetreten (in der Titelrolle von *Die Ausflüge des Herrn Brouček* und als Mark in Tippetts *The Midsummer Marriage*).

Die Mezzosopranistin **Katherine Pring** wurde am Royal College of Music in London und am Genfer Konservatorium ausgebildet und gab ihr Operndebüt als Flora (*La traviata*) am Grand Théâtre in Genf. Nachdem sie an die Sadler's Wells Opera (die spätere English National Opera) engagiert worden war, sang sie Rollen wie Ottavia (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Azucena (*Il trovatore*), die Prinzessin Eboli (*Don Carlos*), Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*), Prinz Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*), Carmen, Jokaste (*Oedipus Rex*) und Agave in der britischen Bühnenpremiere von Henzes *The Bassarids*. Ihr Debüt an der Royal Opera Covent Garden gab sie als Thea in Tippetts *The Knot Garden*, und seither ist sie dorthin zurückgekehrt, um Preziosilla (*La forza del destino*) und Kate Julian (in Britten's *Owen Wingrave*) zu singen. Außerdem hat sie Baba the Turk (*The Rake's*

Progress) beim Glyndebourne Festival gegeben, Delilah (*Samson et Dalila*) an der English National Opera North (der späteren Opera North), Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*) in Düsseldorf, Marina Mnischek (*Boris Godunow*) in Frankfurt und Preziosilla an der Pariser Opéra. Ihr Amerikadebüt erfolgte als Carmen an der San Diego Opera, wohin sie zwei Jahre später zurückgekehrt ist, um die Prinzessin Eboli zu singen. Als etablierte Konzert- und Liedsängerin ist sie mit weltbekannten Dirigenten wie Claudio Abbado, Christoph von Dohnanyi und Sir Charles Mackerras aufgetreten.

Die kanadische Sopranistin **Lois McDonall** hat wegen ihrer natürlich schönen Stimme und sicheren Technik, die es ihr gestattet hat, mit gleicher Eleganz Mozart und Richard Strauss zu singen, besonderes Renommee erworben. Ihr Debüt an der Canadian Opera Company gab sie in Wolf-Ferraris *Il segreto di Susanna*. An den Städtischen Bühnen Flensburg hat sie die Constanze (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), Elsa (*Lohengrin*), Tosca und Arabella gesungen, ehe sie zum ersten Mal an der Sadler's Wells Opera (der späteren English National Opera) als Handels Semele aufgetreten ist. Danach hat sie

für die Truppe unter anderem Ilia (*Idomeneo*), die Gräfin (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Donna Elvira und Donna Anna, Fiordiligi, die Titelrolle von *Euryanthe*, Lucrezia Contarini (*I due Foscari*), Gilda, Violetta, Massenets Manon, Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*), die Marschallin (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Jenny (in Sir Richard Rodney Bennetts *The Mines of Sulphur*) und die Titelrolle in der Uraufführung von Iain Hamiltons *Anna Karenina* interpretiert, sowie Freia im berühmten *Ring*-Zyklus unter der Leitung von Reginald Goodall. Außer an der Royal Opera Covent Garden war sie an der Welsh National Opera, der Scottish Opera und der Dublin Grand Opera zu sehen, wie bei den BBC-Promenade-konzerten in London. Zu ihren Aufnahmen auf Tonträger zählt Donizettis *Maria Padilla* für die Reihe Opera Rara.

Die Altistin **Anne Collins** hat am Royal College of Music studiert und ihr London-Debüt mit einem Soloabend im Purcell Room gegeben. Bald darauf wurde sie an die Sadler's Wells Opera (die spätere English National Opera) engagiert, wo ihr Repertoire Rollen in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *Le Comte Ory*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Madama Butterfly* und

Arabella sowie Dame Quickly (*Falstaff*), Katisha (*The Mikado*), Mrs. Sedley (*Peter Grimes*) und mehrere andere Partien umfasst hat, darunter insbesondere Erda in Wagners *Ring*-Zyklus. Sie hat häufig an der Royal Opera Covent Garden gesungen und ist außerdem an der Welsh National Opera (als Filipjewna in *Eugen Onegin*), der Opera North (als die Amme in *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* und Auntie in *Peter Grimes*) und der Scottish Opera (in James MacMillans *Ines de Castro*) aufgetreten. Außerdem hat sie bei den Festivals von Glyndebourne, Aldeburgh, Wexford und Camden sowie bei den Londoner BBC-Promenade-Konzerten gastiert. Sie ist im Konzertsaal, bei Festspielen und zusammen mit Opernensembles in ganz Europa aufgetreten, beispielsweise an den Opernhäusern von Lyon, Straßburg, Genf und Hamburg, an der Pariser Opéra und am Châtelet théâtre musical, am Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brüssel und am Teatro alla Scala in Mailand. In den USA hat sie unter anderem an der Metropolitan Opera in New York gastiert. Sie hat zahlreiche Aufnahmen auf Tonträger vorgenommen, darunter (für Chandos) die mit einem *Grammy* ausgezeichnete *Peter-Grimes*-Aufzeichnung unter der Leitung von Richard Hickox.

Die in Birkenhead geborene und mit Stipendien in London und Mailand ausgebildete Sopranistin **Valerie Masterson** hat eine Saison am Salzburger Landestheater gesungen, ehe sie als Sopransolistin an die D'Oyly Carte Opera Company engagiert wurde. Sie hat bei allen bedeutenden britischen Operntruppen gastiert, darunter auch bei der Glyndebourne Festival Opera, und ist im Ausland bei den Festspielen in Aix-en-Provence, an der Pariser Opéra und in den Opernhäusern von Toulouse, Nancy, Montpellier, Genf, Prag, München, Mailand, Barcelona, Dublin, Santiago, San Francisco, Houston, Chicago und New York aufgetreten. Ihr umfangreiches Repertoire reicht von Monteverdis *L'incoronazione di Poppea* bis hin zu Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*. Darüber hinaus hat sie an der Uraufführung von Henzes *We Come to the River* und der britischen Erstaufführung von Sallinen's *Der König geht nach Frankreich* mitgewirkt, jeweils am Royal Opera House Covent Garden. Zu ihren zahlreichen Aufnahmen auf Tonträger zählen *Giulio Cesare* und *La traviata* für Chandos in Zusammenarbeit mit der Peter Moores Foundation. 1989 wurde sie von der britischen Krone mit dem Orden und Titel "Commander of the Order of the British Empire" geehrt.

Shelagh Squires hat an der Guildhall School of Music and Drama studiert. Sie ist an der English National Opera aufgetreten, beim Glyndebourne Festival und mit der Glyndebourne Touring Opera sowie unter anderem an der Metropolitan Opera in New York; außerdem war sie bei den Internationalen Festspielen in Bergen, in Wien und in Japan zu Gast. Ihr breit gefächertes Repertoire umfasst Ottavia (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Ulrica (*Un ballo in maschera*), Magdalene (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Herodias (*Salome*), Annina (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Adelaide (*Arabella*), Martha (*Faust*), die Hexe (*Rusalka*) und Filipjewna (*Eugen Onegin*).

Die Altistin **Helen Attfield** hat an der Royal Academy of Music studiert und dort zahlreiche Preise gewonnen. Mit der English Opera Group war sie an der Uraufführung von Britten's *Death in Venice* beteiligt. Sie hat nicht nur mehrere Rollen an der English National Opera gesungen, sondern war auch als Maddalena (*Rigoletto*) an der Welsh National Opera zu sehen und ist mit der Handel Opera Society und an der Brüsseler Oper aufgetreten.

Das von der Kritik ebenso wie vom Publikum gefeierte **Orchester der English National Opera** unter Konzertmeister Barry Griffiths hat in den letzten Jahren mehrere angesehene Preise gewonnen, beispielsweise den Musikpreis der *Royal Philharmonic Society* und einen *Olivier Award* für herausragende Leistungen im Bereich der Oper. Das Orchester ist von zentraler Bedeutung für das künstlerische Leben der Truppe und war nicht nur bei Opernvorstellungen im Londoner Coliseum, sondern auch auf dem Konzertpodium zu sehen. Zusätzlich sind viele der Musiker am Baylis-Programm der für Schul- und Gemeindearbeit zuständigen Abteilung des Orchesters beteiligt und arbeiten mit dem English National Opera Studio an der Entwicklung neuer Opern, speziell an Mark-Anthony Turnages *The Silver Tassie*, das im Februar 2000 uraufgeführt wurde. Das Orchester hat an vielen Einspielungen mitgewirkt, zum Beispiel an deren von Verdis *Otello* unter Mark Elder die demnächst bei Chandos herauskommen wird. Dies geschieht unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation. Andere Aufnahmen des Orchesters für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation sind *Maria Stuarda*,

Giulio Cesare, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto* (in der Inszenierung von Jonathan Miller), *La traviata* und *Werther*.

Der englische Dirigent **Reginald Goodall** wurde 1901 geboren und studierte Orchesterleitung am Royal College of Music unter Malcolm Sargent und Constant Lambert. Von 1929 bis 1936 war er Organist und Chorleiter der Kirche St. Alban the Martyr im Londoner Stadtteil Holborn, wo er die britische Erstaufführung von Chorwerken von Bruckner, Strawinski und Szymanowski sowie frühe Werke von Britten besorgte. Gegen Ende der 1930er-Jahre war er unter anderem als Assistent von Albert Coates und Malcolm Sargent tätig. Zu Beginn des Zweiten Weltkriegs wurde er Dirigent des im südenglischen Bournemouth ansässigen Wessex Philharmonic Orchestra.

Im Juni 1945 dirigierte er als Mitglied der Sadler's Wells Opera (der späteren English National Opera) die Uraufführung von *Peter Grimes* im neu eröffneten Sadler's Wells Theatre. Im Jahr darauf wechselte er sich in der ersten Nachkriegsspielzeit des Glyndebourne Festival bei den ersten Aufführungen von Britten's *The Rape of*

Lucretia als Dirigent mit Ernest Ansermet ab. Kurz darauf trat er dem musikalischen Stab der Royal Opera Covent Garden bei, wo er über die folgenden fünfundzwanzig Jahre hin ein Repertoire dirigierte, das von *Il trovatore* bis *Troilus and Cressida* reichte.

Nur selten erhielt er Gelegenheit, Opern seines Lieblingskomponisten Richard Wagner zu leiten. Diese Unterlassungssünde wurde 1968 wettgemacht, und zwar nicht von der Royal Opera, sondern von Sadler's Wells, wohin er eingeladen wurde, eine Neuinszenierung der *Meistersinger von Nürnberg* zu dirigieren. Der Erfolg war so durchschlagend, dass er an das Haus

zurückkehrte, um seine heute legendäre vollständige Produktion vom *Ring des Nibelungen* zu erarbeiten, die zwischen 1970 und 1973 Gestalt annahm und seinerzeit die erste seit vielen Jahren war, die auf Englisch gesungen wurde. Später leitete er *Das Rheingold* und *Die Walküre* an der Royal Opera, *Tristan und Isolde* und *Die Walküre* an der Welsh National Opera sowie *Tristan und Parsifal* an der English National Opera. 1975 wurde er mit dem Orden CBE ausgezeichnet und 1985 zum Ritter geschlagen. Reginald Goodall verstarb 1990 im Alter von achtundachtzig Jahren.



Reg Wilson

Fasolt, Wotan and Loge, Scene 2



Fricka and Loge,
Scene 2

John Garner/English National Opera Archive



Fafner, Fasolt, Wotan, Donner and Froh, Scene 2

Reg Wilson

Richard Wagner: Das Rheingold

Avant-propos de Lord Harewood

L'English National Opera, et avant lui le Sadler's Wells, vise le Théâtre musical et non le grand opéra. Jusqu'à un certain point, notre répertoire est choisi avec cette idée à l'esprit; jusqu'à un certain point également, cette situation résulte de notre habitude de rendre l'opéra proche du public, parce qu'il est présenté dans sa propre langue, plutôt que de le tenir à bout de bras, comme il *peut* arriver quand il est chanté dans une langue étrangère, aussi bien comprise qu'elle soit. Nous visons le "caractère immédiat" de l'expérience théâtrale, plutôt que le processus cérébral qui résulte d'une longue étude – chacun étant admirable mais complètement différent, aussi différent qu'être dehors sous une averse l'est de sa description.

Il existe une controverse depuis des années parmi les acheteurs de disques (j'écris en qualité de gros consommateur de microsillons) à propos des mérites des enregistrements pris sur le vif comparés à ceux effectués en studio. Votre collectionneur invétéré connaîtra les réenregistrements réalisés à partir des

cylindres Mapleson de représentations données au Metropolitan Opera de New York vers 1900. Ils nous parviennent au travers d'une avalanche de bruits parasites, mais offrent encore la preuve unique de la manière dont on chantait autrefois. D'autres connaîtront les enregistrements publiés et inédits de HMV, réalisés à Covent Garden vers les débuts de l'enregistrement électrique, en 1926 et 1927: l'Adieu de Melba, des fragments d'une représentation d'*Otello* avec Zenatello, et des extraits de *Boris* et de *Mefistofele* avec Chaliapine. Beaucoup d'entre nous les considèrent comme inestimables, car non seulement ils offrent la preuve audible d'un style et d'un niveau d'interprétation datant de presque cinquante ans, mais ils possèdent également un impact "vivant" absent des studios d'enregistrement réalisés vers la même époque – ceux de Chaliapine sont particulièrement révélateurs de ce point de vue.

Il y a donc une certaine cohérence dans une compagnie d'opéra, qui tente de saisir le caractère immédiat du Théâtre musical, d'être

associée avec la "réalité" d'une représentation enregistrée sur le vif.



Lord Harewood
Directeur général
English National Opera
Août 1975

Traduction: Francis Marchal

Une introduction à "Der Ring des Nibelungen"

Wagner conçut l'idée d'un drame musical s'inspirant de l'histoire du mythe des Nibelungen en 1848, à peu près à l'époque où il achevait le dernier de ses opéras traditionnels, *Lohengrin*. Il est possible d'apprécier *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (L'Anneau du Nibelung) à plusieurs niveaux: comme un conte de fées, une allégorie politique ou un tract philosophique, par exemple. En son essence, il traite du combat éternel entre le bien et le mal, et du contraste qui existe entre l'amour du pouvoir et le pouvoir de l'amour. Wotan, le chef des dieux, veut un pouvoir dont les fins sont bénignes; Alberich, le chef des Nibelungen, gnomes qui

vivent sous la terre, le veut pour servir ses propres fins maléfiques. De l'*Orfeo* de Monteverdi à *Die Zauberflöte* de Mozart, d'*Hippolyte et Aricie* de Rameau au *Freischütz* de Weber, la superposition entre la lumière et les ténèbres a été un sujet de fascination pour les compositeurs d'opéras. Wagner reconnut que tout n'est pas noir et blanc, mais très largement teinté d'ombres de gris. Ainsi, Wotan a recours à la ruse et au vol, et se décrit lui-même comme l'alter ego du gnome, "Lumière-Alberich", tandis qu'Alberich, qui après tout obtient l'or du Rhin en se pliant à la condition de renoncer à l'amour, est investi aussi bien par la dignité que par la malversation.

Wagner travailla pendant plusieurs années aux paroles et à la musique, commençant par un résumé en prose de l'histoire avant de se lancer dans le texte de ce qu'il appela *Siegfrieds Tod* (La Mort de Siegfried). Cependant, il déclara à un ami en décembre 1856 que "les Nibelungen commencent à m'ennuyer"; en effet, il abandonna le *Ring* l'été suivant, et ne revint à la composition de celui-ci qu'en 1869, époque à laquelle il avait composé *Tristan und Isolde* et *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Les Maîtres chanteurs de Nuremberg). Depuis sa conception jusqu'à son achèvement, ce projet gigantesque lui demanda vingt-six ans: années

de trouble dans sa vie privée ainsi que sur la scène politique de l'Europe.

Ce n'est pas seulement l'ennui qui le poussa, comme il le raconta, à abandonner son jeune Siegfried sous le tilleul, où il "lui fit des adieux avec des larmes sincères". Ayant fui Dresde pour échapper à l'arrestation en raison de sa participation à la Révolution de 1848, il vivait en exil à Zürich avec peu d'espoir de jamais voir le *Ring* représenté sur scène; et son style était en train de changer de manière si radicale qu'il lui fallait le faire passer, c'est le cas de le dire, par *Tristan*. Le fait que Wagner ait persévéré jusqu'à terminer le *Ring* puis, grâce à ses propres efforts, à le faire représenter dans un théâtre spécialement construit à cet effet, tient véritablement du miracle.

Ses sources incluent cinq poèmes épiques, en islandais, en allemand moyen et en vieux norrois, qui datent tous du treizième siècle. Comme pour tous ses opéras, avant et après le *Ring*, Wagner écrivit lui-même ses livrets. Mais, à l'inquiétude de ses amis, commençant par *Siegfrieds Tod*, il reprit une ancienne technique poétique appelée "Stabreim" qui fait appel à des alitérations explosives plutôt qu'à la scansion et aux rimes. Ceci s'accordait avec ses théories, exposées dans les essais qu'il écrivit en exil à Zürich, et qui traitaient entre autres de

l'interdépendance entre les sons verbaux et musicaux, et de la nécessité pour les paroles chantées d'être audibles; d'où il s'ensuivit que les ensembles et les chœurs n'avaient plus leur place.

Cependant, Wagner ne suivit pas toujours à la lettre ses propres préceptes: en effet, on peut trouver un quintette et de nombreux chœurs dans *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, ainsi qu'un chœur et un trio au deuxième acte de *Götterdämmerung* (Le Crépuscule des dieux). L'opéra qui ouvre le cycle du *Ring*, *Das Rheingold* (L'Or du Rhin), offre un bon exemple de la mise en pratique des théories wagnériennes, mais il restait beaucoup de travail avant que Wagner puisse commencer à composer la musique. Au départ, il prévoyait de n'écrire qu'un seul opéra, qui pourrait s'achever sur une note d'optimisme avec la supériorité morale et physique des dieux solidement établie. La remarque de l'un de ses amis selon laquelle l'histoire exigerait du public une quantité irréaliste de connaissances touchant le contexte l'incita d'abord à développer *Siegfrieds Tod*, puis à ajouter ce que l'on pourrait qualifier de "prologue", *Der junge Siegfried* (Le Jeune Siegfried). Voyant la nécessité d'un plus grand retour en arrière, Wagner écrivit les textes de *Die Walküre*

(La Walkyrie) et de *Das Rheingold*. *Der junge Siegfried* fut rebaptisé *Siegfried*, tandis que *Siegfrieds Tod* devint *Götterdämmerung*, avec des omissions et des changements significatifs, notamment la fin où maintenant les dieux périssent dans l'incendie de leur palais, le Walhalla. Reconnaisant l'influence de l'*Orestie* et du *Prométhée* d'Eschyle, Wagner décrivit le *Ring* comme étant une trilogie (*Das Rheingold* servant de hors-d'œuvre).

En 1854, Wagner prit connaissance des écrits du philosophe Arthur Schopenhauer – "un râleur d'un genre des plus prononcés" selon l'expression de Bertie Wooster, un personnage de l'écrivain humoriste anglais P.G. Wodehouse. La version révisée de la fin de l'histoire du *Ring* avait été écrite auparavant; mais Wagner rédigea par la suite plusieurs fins différentes au cours de la composition du cycle, notamment une qui reflète la vue pessimiste de Schopenhauer selon laquelle la vie n'est que la négation de la mort. Ici, Brünnhilde parvient à un état d'illumination bouddhiste en arrivant à la "fin bénie de toute chose éternelle". Ce n'est pas la version que Wagner utilisa finalement, mais c'est une indication de son état d'esprit au moment où il composait la fin de *Die Walküre* et le début de *Siegfried*.

Ayant écrit le texte en ordre inverse, Wagner composa la musique à partir du début: ainsi, il commença *Das Rheingold* en 1853, un an après la rédaction du livret, alors que dans le cas de *Götterdämmerung*, commencé en 1869, il mit en musique le texte qu'il avait écrit (quoique avec des révisions) vingt ans plus tôt. Bien entendu, son style musical se développa pendant cette période, et la partition de *Götterdämmerung* est beaucoup plus subtile et complexe que celle de *Das Rheingold*. Pourtant, aussi disparates qu'ils soient, les quatre opéras se tiennent ensemble grâce à l'outil de liaison connu sous le nom de leitmotiv (de l'allemand *Leitmotiv*, motif conducteur).

Les réminiscences musicales dans l'opéra n'avaient rien de nouveau. Un exemple bien connu est celui de la petite phrase de hautbois qui nous dit, à l'Acte II de *Fidelio* de Beethoven, que Florestan endormi est maintenant en train de rêver à l'épouse à propos de laquelle il vient juste de chanter. La réussite de Wagner fut de créer un réseau de leitmotiv: phrases brèves et éloquentes associées à des individus, des objets, des sentiments et bien d'autres choses encore, qui réapparaissent dans la ligne vocale, et en particulier dans l'orchestre. Ils sont bien plus

que les “cartes de visite” ridiculisées par Debussy (qui pourtant ne dédaigna pas d'utiliser ce moyen dans *Pelléas et Mélisande*): simple répétition, modification mélodique ou harmonique, et combinaison – en particulier vers la fin du cycle – avec d'autres motifs, tous concourent à créer une tapisserie solidement tissée.

Des livres ont assigné des noms aux divers leitmotive, mais au fur et à mesure que la définition des plus abstraits se veut plus précise, ceux-ci peuvent se révéler encore plus insaisissables. Rien de tout cela ne doit troubler l'auditeur qui prend connaissance du *Ring* pour la première fois, car il parviendra à reconnaître les leitmotive après quelques auditions. Toutefois, les correspondances ne sont pas toutes évidentes: il est utile de souligner, pour ne prendre qu'un exemple, la similarité des contours des leitmotive du “Walhall” et de “anneau” – respectivement noble et sinistre – qui confirme, ou plutôt anticipe notre impression que Wotan et Alberich représentent les deux faces d'une même pièce.

L'un des nombreux plaisirs du *Ring*, et non des moindres, est son orchestration. Si Wagner a recours à des ensembles gigantesques, très souvent c'est un seul instrument à vent – un

hautbois ou une clarinette basse par exemple – qui exprime une situation ou répond à une phrase vocale. L'une des couleurs les plus caractéristiques du *Ring* est créée par ce que l'on a appelé les “tubas Wagner” (joués par des membres de la puissante section des huit cors), qui entonnent le leitmotiv du “Walhall” à la scène deux de *Das Rheingold*.

En 1862, Wagner n'était plus banni des états allemands. Il publia l'année suivante une édition du texte du *Ring* avec une préface dans laquelle il exprimait l'espoir qu'un prince allemand fournirait l'argent nécessaire permettant au cycle – pas encore achevé – d'être représenté dans un théâtre spécialement construit. Sa prière fut rapidement entendue. Le prince héritier de Bavière âgé de dix-huit ans monta sur le trône en 1864 et devint le roi Louis II. Il aida Wagner à rembourser ses dettes, l'installa dans une maison à Munich, lui offrit des cadeaux en numéraires et un salaire annuel, et l'encouragea à poursuivre son grand œuvre.

Leurs relations eurent des hauts et des bas, pour dire les choses avec modération, mais c'est grâce à Louis II de Bavière que *Tristan und Isolde* et *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* furent créés au théâtre de la cour, qui vit également les reprises d'opéras plus anciens de

Wagner. Des productions de *Das Rheingold* et de *Die Walküre* furent également données au grand dam du compositeur. En effet, Wagner était encore déterminé à ce que le cycle complet du *Ring* soit représenté dans son propre théâtre et dans le cadre d'un festival. En 1871, il se décida pour la ville provinciale de Bayreuth. La construction du nouveau théâtre fut financée par une souscription publique, Louis II apportant son renfort à un moment critique. Wagner acheva *Götterdämmerung* en 1874 et *Der Ring des Nibelungen* reçut sa première représentation intégrale en août 1876. Parvenu en 1889, des productions avaient été données dans les opéras du monde entier; aujourd'hui encore, le *Ring* demeure l'ouvrage de référence par lequel est jugé tout théâtre aspirant à la grandeur.

© 2000 Richard Lawrence

Traduction: Francis Marchal

Das Rheingold

L'automne 1853 fut, rétrospectivement, une période capitale pour Wagner. En effet, il se mit à la composition de *Das Rheingold*, et il rencontra Cosima, la fille de Franz Liszt, qui allait devenir la mère de ses enfants et, finalement, sa seconde épouse. Mais étant

donné que Cosima n'était alors âgée que de quinze ans et qu'elle ne devait devenir sa maîtresse qu'en 1864, date à laquelle elle épouserait le chef d'orchestre Hans von Bülow dont elle aurait deux filles, la gestation de l'opéra fut plutôt moins longue. La première esquisse fut terminée en moins de onze semaines et la copie au propre de Wagner de la partition d'orchestre complète fut prête en septembre 1854, alors qu'il était déjà parvenu au milieu de la première esquisse de *Die Walküre*.

Contrairement aux opéras suivants du *Ring*, chacun comportant trois actes, *Das Rheingold* se déroule sur une durée ininterrompue de quelque deux heures et quarante-cinq minutes. Les quatre scènes sont séparées par de longs interludes orchestraux qui illustrent brillamment la conception que Wagner avait de la composition comme étant “l'art de la transition”. Après, par exemple, qu'Alberich a dérobé l'or à ses gardiennes, les Filles du Rhin, la sonorité farouche du leitmotiv de “l'anneau”, ancré sur la pédale de dominante d'ut mineur, se voit successivement adoucie par les bois, les altos et les cors avant de se transformer et devenir le motif imposant du “Walhall” entonné par les cuivres. Une pédale harmonique encore plus longue suit la

deuxième scène et introduit le son produit par l'équipe des forgerons d'Alberich en train de marteler sur dix-huit enclumes. Le si bémol mineur du Nibelheim complète son relatif majeur, le ré bémol du Walhalla, en un autre exemple du lien qui unit Alberich et Wotan.

Cependant, la mère de toutes les pédales harmoniques est entendue au tout début du prélude, où les contrebasses maintiennent un mi bémol grave pendant non moins de 136 mesures. Elles sont rejointes à la quinte supérieure par les bassons; puis un cor se mêle doucement avec un arpège ascendant, puis un autre et un autre encore jusqu'à ce que l'ensemble des huit cors reprenne à l'infini cette phrase élémentaire. Wagner cherche à évoquer l'origine de toute chose, une absence quasi-totale du temps et du mouvement, en utilisant les mêmes moyens que Beethoven au début de sa Neuvième Symphonie. Peu à peu, l'arpège se transforme en un mouvement précipité de doubles croches représentant les eaux du Rhin. Wagner eût été heureux de reconnaître l'influence de Beethoven; il se serait peut-être moqué qu'on lui fasse remarquer la ressemblance qui existe ici avec l'ouverture de Mendelssohn *Die schöne Melusine* ("La Belle Mélusine"), quoiqu'il eût suffisamment admiré la musique de

Mendelssohn pour la diriger pendant ses années de chef d'orchestre.

Comme on peut s'y attendre dans une œuvre conçue pour servir d'arrière-plan au drame à venir, un grand nombre (mais ils sont loin d'être tous là) des leitmotive du *Ring* sont présents dans *Das Rheingold*. L'un des plus importants, qui est en deux segments, apparaît quand les Filles du Rhin saluent l'or: la fanfare "Heiajaheia!" et le motif de deux notes "Rheingold! Rheingold!", modifiés mélodiquement et harmoniquement, se chargent de nouvelles subtilités de sens tandis que l'épopée progresse.

Bien qu'il les eût parées chacune d'un nom différent, Wagner considérait les Filles du Rhin comme une unité, aussi de temps en temps, comme ici, elles chantent en harmonie. Ailleurs, cependant, il suit sa propre règle jusqu'au point qu'aucun personnage ne prononce une parole pendant qu'un autre est en train de chanter. En fait, comme il est suggéré dans l'Introduction précédente, *Das Rheingold* est le *locus classicus* de l'idéalisme wagnérien. Il ne règne aucun ensemble, et la mise en musique des paroles est le plus souvent une syllabe par note, sans effusions lyriques ou rhétoriques. La grande narration de Loge à la Scène 2, qui pourrait

être chantée séparément comme morceau de concert, et l'a été, est la seule fois où Wagner s'approche le plus près d'une aria.

Si Wotan est fondamentalement bon, avec un côté sombre, et Alberich fondamentalement mauvais, mais possédant au moins un sens de ce qui est le bien et le mal, Loge est constamment ambivalent. (Le rôle, qui convient mieux à un *Heldentenor* [ténor héroïque], est tellement convoité par les ténors dramatiques que le chanteur choisi pour le rôle de Mime dans *Siegfried* reçoit souvent également celui de Loge, ce qui nécessite – mais pas ici, heureusement – l'emploi d'un autre chanteur pour le Mime de *Das Rheingold*.) Loge est seulement un demi-dieu, ayant dédaigné les pommes porteuses de vie de Freia, et les autres dieux se méfient de lui: ainsi que Wotan le lui dit, "Souviens-toi que parmi les dieux je suis ton seul ami". Nous ne savons jamais ce que Loge pense réellement. Plusieurs fois, il propose que l'or devrait être restitué aux Filles du Rhin; pourtant, face à Fricka, il défend sa possession comme le moyen de retenir Wotan contre le vagabondage extra-conjugal, et il se moque volontiers des Filles du Rhin quand elles se lamentent de leur perte. Il a honte de se voir associé avec les dieux; et pourtant, il se joint à eux dans leur

grandiose procession vers le Walhalla. Wagner le caractérise par des motifs vacillants appropriés à un dieu du feu et, de manière révélatrice, par une phrase qui tient du motif de deux notes "Rheingold! Rheingold!" et de sa modification chromatique.

Loge ne reparait pas, bien que sa musique soit réentendue et, dans *Götterdämmerung*, la Troisième Norne annonce à ses sœurs sa fin proche. Erda, d'autre part, réapparaît dans *Siegfried*. Là, elle est confondue par les nouvelles apportées par Wotan, le Wanderer. Dans *Das Rheingold*, elle est toute sagesse comme elle prétend l'être. Annoncée par une tendre phrase ascendante dérivée du prélude, elle presse Wotan de donner l'anneau aux géants. Ensuite, elle prédit la disparition des dieux. Le passage crucial se trouve à "Tout ce qui est a une fin! Un jour maléfique se lève pour les dieux", quand la phrase ascendante rencontre son opposée, une phrase descendante jouée par les violons et les altos qui peut très facilement passer inaperçue. La scène, toute chargée de menaces qu'elle soit, offre un rare moment de répit entre les querelles qui opposent les dieux et les géants et le premier effet de la malédiction lancée par Alberich contre l'anneau, à savoir le meurtre brutal de Fasolt par son frère Fafner.

Les nuages qui s'étaient symboliquement assemblés sont dispersés par le marteau de Donner, tandis que Froh fait apparaître un arc-en-ciel. Wotan se défait de sa dépression devant la tournure des événements, et les dieux entrent dans leur nouveau palais. Wagner exige sept harpes pour cette scène: six dans l'orchestre et une septième accompagnant les Filles du Rhin en coulisses. Le chromatisme de leur plainte est, c'est le cas de le dire, le ver dans le fruit, mais l'impression durable sur l'auditoire est celle d'une splendeur sans pareille. Le caractère combien illusoire de cette splendeur devient plus qu'apparent au fur et à mesure que ce déploie ce grand drame.

Das Rheingold fut créé à Munich en septembre 1869. Sa première représentation dans le cadre du cycle complet du *Ring* eut lieu au Festival de Bayreuth en août 1876.

© 2001 Richard Lawrence

Traduction: Francis Marchal

Le "Ring" – En anglais?

Nous avons tous le sentiment, quelque part au fond de notre esprit, qu'une œuvre d'art jaillit entièrement formée de l'âme de son créateur, sentiment qui ignore de manière commode la différence entre nature et art. L'acte de

création est un processus long et minutieux, qui part d'une esquisse et conduit à une œuvre polie et repolée. Plus que pour tout autre forme d'art, le créateur d'œuvres scéniques a toujours modelé ses ouvrages en fonction de son public particulier. Il est clair qu'un compositeur qui implique son auditoire crée une réponse émotionnelle plus forte, qui peut être cumulative.

Si vous lisez la correspondance traitant de la création d'un chef-d'œuvre lyrique, deux choses s'imposent avec une clarté frappante. En premier lieu, le compositeur presse son librettiste vers un objectif, alors que lui-même modifie sans cesse ses esquisses au fur et à mesure qu'il parvient à son but. Ce développement se poursuit fréquemment après la première représentation, soit entre les premières représentations, ou lors d'une reprise ultérieure. Deux des arias les plus réussies de *Don Giovanni*, "Dalla sua pace" et "Mi tradi", ne figuraient pas lors de la création originale à Prague. *Madama Butterfly*, le soir de la première, n'était pas l'opéra que nous connaissons aujourd'hui: Pinkerton ne réapparaissait pas au troisième acte.

En second lieu, vous vous rendez compte que le compositeur écrit également son opéra pour un théâtre spécifique, un ensemble

d'instrumentistes et de chanteurs spécifiques, ainsi qu'un public spécifique. La correspondance de Mozart avec son père raconte non seulement les concessions qu'il dut faire à cause du manque de technique de tel ou tel chanteur, mais également les effets qu'il pouvait obtenir en exploitant les avantages offerts par les effectifs mis à sa disposition. Un grand nombre des rôles de mezzo-soprano colorature de Rossini furent composés pour sa maîtresse Isabella Colbran. Même la censure fut fréquemment une force formatrice, et l'adjectif formatrice est utilisé ici intentionnellement. *Un ballo in maschera* doit sa forme actuelle resserrée au conflit qui opposa Verdi à la censure. Et pourtant, le public fut peut-être la force extérieure la plus puissante. Le compositeur d'opéras, homme de théâtre, savait que le succès de son œuvre, et son propre succès, dépendait de la réaction de son auditoire. La réaction maximale ne se produit pas seulement si l'œuvre est un succès sur le plan artistique, mais également si elle est en phase avec la conscience littéraire, politique, nationaliste et extra-esthétique de ce public à ce moment, et dans ce lieu. Le jeune compositeur assemblait son œuvre pour convenir à son public; le compositeur reconnu choisissait la ville qui serait capable d'apprécier

son nouvel ouvrage. Ceci n'était pas seulement une question de différences régionales, car Mozart alla jusqu'à utiliser deux niveaux de langue et deux styles musicaux différents dans la même ville: dans *Così fan tutte* pour son public impérial et dans *Die Zauberflöte* pour son public populaire. Gluck, Rossini, Donizetti et Verdi ont écrit leurs opéras destinés à Paris sur des livrets en français et pour le goût du public parisien.

Quel était le sort de l'opéra quand il parvenait à la scène? La première était supervisée par le compositeur, et une fois que la structure musicale était en place, cette production devenait le modèle de référence de l'ensemble des représentations à venir. De la même manière, la D'Oyly Carte Opera Company répète les mises en scène originales, et l'exemple brillant du succès d'un tel système est, aujourd'hui, la comédie musicale américaine qui, telle *West Side Story*, préserve chacun des faits et gestes de la conception originale. A cet égard, les intentions d'origine du compositeur nous sont aujourd'hui disponibles, avec l'avantage d'être authentiques.

Toutefois, figer la pièce dans un modèle fixe peut créer des inconvénients. L'interprétation ne peut pas se développer, et les interprètes

sont liés par le corset d'une routine fixe. La pièce ne peut pas évoluer avec le mouvement des goûts de la société, et si elle est reproduite de la même manière dans différents pays ou continents, sa pertinence pour ses nouveaux publics risque d'être sérieusement compromise, en particulier si la barrière linguistique s'interpose.

La nouvelle œuvre est souvent reprise quelques années plus tard, et le compositeur doit la recréer. *Orfeo*, *Idomeneo*, *Don Giovanni*, *Fidelio*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Cardillac*, *Troilus and Cressida* – et la liste s'allonge. Mozart aurait-il réécrit *Le nozze di Figaro* s'il avait recréé cet ouvrage pour le Londres de 1830? Bizet, s'il avait vécu plus longtemps, n'aurait-il pas composé des récitatifs pour *Carmen* quand l'œuvre fut reprise à l'Opéra de Paris?

Quand un théâtre lyrique estime opportun de monter la production d'un opéra qui n'est pas encore à son répertoire, le directeur doit prendre la décision de reproduire ou de recréer, que le compositeur soit vivant ou mort. Si l'opéra est représenté dans une langue que le public ne comprend pas, le choix est en fait entre une reproduction dans la langue originale ou une recréation au travers d'une traduction. Ces deux possibilités risquent

l'échec, mais une récréation, sans la participation du compositeur, encourt un échec plus grave ou un succès plus grand. Les décors, la mise en scène, la traduction, l'édition musicale à utiliser, peuvent être réalisés sur mesure pour convenir au théâtre, aux artistes disponibles, et peut-être de manière plus importante, à la température émotionnelle du public du moment et du lieu. Souvent la traduction rend non seulement l'œuvre compréhensible, et ainsi disponible et immédiate pour chacun de membre de l'auditoire en lui parlant dans sa propre langue, mais permet également de clarifier un texte qui se présente sous une forme datée ou obscure. Une critique sur ce sujet, extraite du journal allemand *Die Welt* et reproduite ci-dessous en français, est éclairante sur les problèmes posés aux allemands d'aujourd'hui par la langue littéraire tortueuse de Wagner.

Le "*Ring* en anglais" au Coliseum est une récréation. Son immense succès est dû au fait que l'œuvre a été rendue accessible à beaucoup d'auditeurs qui n'avaient pu apprécier ce grand chef-d'œuvre en reproduction. Le *Ring* n'est pas réservé aux seuls connaisseurs. Il est maintenant à la portée de chacun, et le but de cet enregistrement est de le rendre accessible

dans les salons de beaucoup de mélomanes qui ne pourront jamais assister à une représentation au théâtre. La Peter Moores Foundation est fière de donner à cette grande interprétation la possibilité d'être plus largement appréciée.

Peter Moores

© 1975 Peter Moores

...Et l'Alberich anglais peut maintenant faire des reproches justifiés à l'Alberich allemand par ces paroles: "Combien, de manière obscure, tu me dis ce que je sais clairement". Une nouvelle traduction anglaise du *Ring* a été spécialement réalisée pour la production de la tréialogie donnée au Coliseum de Londres par Andrew Porter qui est maintenant le très respecté critique musical du périodique américain influent *The New Yorker*. Elle est particulièrement remarquable, car la tâche fut loin d'être simple. Grâce au talent de Porter, les caricaturistes sont aujourd'hui les seuls à ne voir dans *Siegfried* qu'une succession interminable de "Hoho! Hahei!" et de quelques "Heils" qui, assurément, sonnent de manière plus civile dès qu'ils sont transposés en anglais par "Hails".

Il est vrai que la traduction de Porter est considérablement facilitée par le fait qu'il existe beaucoup plus de mots d'une syllabe en anglais qu'en allemand, et c'est là un avantage dont il a su tirer parti. Les Anglais possèdent maintenant le *Ring* du vingtième siècle, tandis que nous mâchons avec des dents de plus en plus émoussées la langue de Wagner, qui sonne de manière de plus en plus dissonante à nos oreilles avec les ans. C'est un fait curieux, mais la traduction de Porter confère au livret de Wagner une distinction limpide et nette particulièrement impressionnante. La possibilité de la goûter et de l'apprécier simplement n'est que l'une des vertus de cet enregistrement...

Extrait de la rubrique "Discophilibus",
"Alberich singt an der Themse"
("Alberich chante sur les bords de la Tamise"),
publiée dans *Die Welt*, 30 novembre 1974

Traduction: Francis Marchal

Le "*Ring*" Goodall

Les gens peuvent bien l'appeler "Le *Ring* Goodall", mais c'est le *Ring* de tout le monde, le "*Ring*" de l'*English National*. Le plus beau, c'est qu'il s'agit d'un effort en commun. On dit que je suis le seul homme à avoir dirigé le

Ring en allemand et en anglais au cours de ces cinquante dernières années. Quand il est chanté en allemand, le public, dont seuls quelques membres comprennent la langue, reste assis à attendre le grand moment; l'accent est presque entièrement porté sur la musique et non pas sur le texte. En anglais, je jouis du caractère immédiat de l'œuvre – vous le sentez dans le public parce qu'il comprend. C'est une sensation merveilleuse – elle compense les lacunes possibles de la traduction par la réunion des mots et de la musique. Wagner voulait que l'on comprenne le *Ring*. Le texte a été écrit en premier, et il a produit la musique.

Wagner commença par écrire le texte de la *Mort de Siegfried* ("Siegfrieds Tod"), et il découvrit qu'il avait besoin d'expliquer ce qui l'y avait conduit, presque depuis le commencement, le péché originel, ce sacrifice de l'amour pour le pouvoir et l'avidité qui retombe sur Siegfried, bien qu'il soit innocent d'une certaine manière. Laissons la nature telle qu'elle est. Le Rhin coule sans aucune raison. C'est juste la nature. Dieu ou la nature, comme vous voudrez, dans sa sagesse cachait l'atome, et nous l'avons découvert. Et quand vous songez à ce que l'atome peut faire... Au cours des cinquante dernières années

nous avons détruit plus que pendant tous les millénaires qui ont précédé. Nous sommes en train d'empoisonner les océans; nous avons détruit la moitié des espèces animales. La nature est si subtilement équilibrée que nous dérangeons la pureté du monde. Nous ne pouvons pas nous en empêcher. C'est cela le péché originel, et c'est tout cela qui est dit dans le *Ring*: Adam et Eve dans le Jardin, la mort de l'innocence du monde, la destruction du système d'un monde. Le poème du *Ring* possède la force et l'éternité d'un mythe. C'est de cela qu'il est question, et c'est cela qui rend le *Ring* plus profond.

Oui, je suis un perfectionniste – pas pour les détails, mais pour l'atmosphère et la signification. Je ne pense pas que l'enregistrement de *Die Walküre* puisse être une interprétation parfaite, quoique je n'aie jamais été aussi content que je le fus avec Curphey et Remedios dans ce premier acte. Je préfère les enregistrements pris sur le vif, parce que j'ai le sentiment que le public contribue à l'interprétation – *Siegfried* et *Das Rheingold* sont merveilleux: vous entendez seulement quelques rires, qui, me semble-t-il, sont appropriés; et j'aime cela dans l'enregistrement: je pense qu'il faut rire de

temps en temps dans le *Ring* – c'est ainsi qu'il prend vie.

© Reginald Goodall

Traduction: Francis Marchal

Argument

Au commencement, quand le monde était enfant, la terre était peuplée par une race de géants: des êtres simples, forts et travailleurs contents de mener une vie simple. Leurs seuls soucis étaient provoqués par des querelles avec la race des Nibelungen: des gnomes qui vivaient dans des cavernes sous terre, et qui étaient contraints par leur chef Alberich, après les événements de la Scène 1, de servir son ambition de dominer le monde. Cependant, ils ne parvinrent jamais à soumettre les géants, et quant au contrôle suprême du monde, celui-ci appartenait à la race des dieux, esprits de lumière et d'air conduit par Wotan qui faisait valoir un ordre éclairé au-dessus de la terre.

Das Rheingold, le Prologue de ce drame épique, se situe pendant ces premiers temps de la vie sur terre, et se joue entre ces trois races de la création. Proches des dieux sans être des leurs sont Loge, l'esprit du feu et de la ruse que Wotan a apprivoisé et transformé en ami, et Erda, la Mère de la Terre, source de toute

sagesse et mère des trois Nornes ou Destinées. Le dernier des quatre éléments, l'eau, est le premier à apparaître dans l'opéra – le Rhin et ses trois sirènes.

Disque Compact Un

Scène 1

Dans les profondeurs du Rhin

[1] Le prélude nous plonge d'emblée au plus profond du Rhin. L'obscurité est d'abord si dense que nous entendons et percevons, mais sans pouvoir encore voir, l'immensité de l'étendue et l'oscillation légère de la vague de fond (huit cors jouant l'un après l'autre un arpège de mi bémol ascendant). Peu à peu, les sens prennent conscience des courants supérieurs plus rapides, et des rochers escarpés qui se dressent sur le lit du fleuve, s'étendant loin dans la distance. [2] On aperçoit l'une des trois Filles du Rhin, la sirène Woglinde, en train de nager en chantant une chanson intelligible seulement en partie tandis qu'elle s'amuse autour du plus imposant des rochers. L'une de ses sœurs, Wellgunde, se joint à elle dans un jeu de poursuite, et la troisième, Flosshilde, plonge en leur reprochant leur garde insouciant de l'or qui dort au sommet du rocher. Mais elle aussi est entraînée dans le

jeu. Tandis qu'elles se poursuivent l'une l'autre, une ombre sinistre vient troubler la brume pâle qui règne au fond du fleuve. [3] Alberich a grimpé le long de la fissure d'un rocher, et écoute d'une oreille indiscrete le jeu innocent des gracieuses nymphes des eaux. Il tente de fraterniser avec elles, mais sa laideur les repousse, et Flosshilde le soupçonne de s'attarder avec de mauvaises intentions. Cependant, ses invitations lubriques indiquent clairement qu'il ne représente aucun danger pour leur or. [4] Ayant décidé de le taquiner, elles le font, l'une après l'autre, grimper et descendre à toute vitesse les rochers à leur poursuite, mais seule la troisième, Flosshilde, le laisse s'approcher tout près d'elle avant de se sauver rapidement. La passion d'Alberich est maintenant enflammée, et il les poursuit de manière encore plus furieuse tandis qu'elles s'élancent d'un rocher à l'autre en se moquant de ses efforts.

[5] Soudain, une lumière éclatante commence à briller en haut du rocher central; les rayons du soleil ont percé à travers les eaux et illuminent l'or du Rhin; joyeusement, les Filles du Rhin louent le trésor dont elles ont la garde. [6] Alberich devient curieux, et apprend qu'il ne s'agit pas d'un simple ornement

scintillant, mais que forgé sous la forme d'un anneau, il donnerait à quiconque le porte le pouvoir de dominer le monde entier. Flosshilde estime qu'elles ont trop parlé jusqu'à ce que Woglinde lui rappelle que l'or ne peut être conquis que par celui qui serait prêt à renoncer à l'amour ("Seul celui qui renie le pouvoir de l'amour"), ce que personne, encore moins ce gnome qui languit d'amour, n'est prêt à faire. Mais elles ont relâché leur garde trop tôt. [7] Alberich, éconduit en amour et infiniment avide de pouvoir, est tout à fait prêt à payer le prix pour obtenir l'or. Il a grimpé jusqu'à l'or avant que les Filles du Rhin s'en aperçoivent; [8] d'une voix terrible, il lance sa malédiction sur l'amour, s'empare de l'or et disparaît dans les profondeurs. Son rire moqueur fait écho aux lamentations des Filles du Rhin.

L'obscurité retombe, on entend le courant des eaux qui continue; les cors anglais et allemands reprennent la mélodie de la malédiction lancée contre l'amour; les nuages recouvrent la scène.

Scène 2

Sur le sommet découvert d'une montagne
Quand les nuages se dissipent au son du leitmotiv de "l'anneau" joué par les cors,

nous nous trouvons transportés sur le sommet d'une haute montagne très au-dessus du Rhin. Wotan et sa femme Fricka sont allongés et dorment d'un profond sommeil. En se levant, l'aube révèle un énorme château tout scintillant perché sur une montagne dans le lointain. C'est le Walhalla, le symbole du statut de Wotan (et la ressemblance du leitmotiv du "Walhalla", pour les tubas Wagner, avec celui de "l'anneau" entendu juste à l'instant, nous rappelle qu'il est aussi un symbole de puissance, et que Wotan et Alberich ne sont pas aussi différents qu'ils voudraient bien le penser).

[9] Fricka s'éveille la première, aperçoit le château nouvellement construit et réveille son mari qui est enchanté par sa splendeur ("L'œuvre éternelle est achevée"). Mais Fricka lui rappelle avec anxiété qu'il faut le payer, et que le prix, convenu avec les géants qui l'ont construit, est la possession de sa sœur Freia (parfois appelée Holda), la déesse de la jeunesse éternelle et la gardienne des pommes sacrées, source de jeunesse. Fricka est en colère parce que le prix a été convenu en son absence, mais elle désire le château tout autant que Wotan, [10] ne serait-ce que parce qu'elle espère qu'il le retiendra à la maison, loin des infidélités.

Wotan n'a aucunement l'intention de tenir sa promesse de donner Freia en échange du Walhalla, et il compte sur Loge, son peu fiable conseiller qui lui a suggéré ce marché, pour trouver un autre moyen de satisfaire les géants.

[11] Freia, profondément inquiète, entre en scène, et [12] est bientôt suivie par les deux géants qui ont bâti le château et qui viennent demander leur dû: Fasolt s'est entiché de la beauté de Freia; son frère Fafner, plus cynique et méprisant, désire uniquement enlever aux dieux le pouvoir de rajeunir que possède Freia, car, sans elle, ils se flétriraient rapidement et mourront, laissant ainsi le pouvoir aux géants. [13] Ils résistent au faible effort de Wotan de leur faire nommer une autre forme de paiement. [14] Froh et Donner, les frères de Freia, l'un d'une cordialité toute rayonnante, l'autre d'une dureté agressive, arrivent juste à temps pour empêcher Freia d'être enlevée. Wotan interdit à Donner de menacer les géants par la force brutale ("Pas de violence!").

Disque Compact Deux

[1] – [2] Loge arrive enfin; il est allé vérifier la qualité du travail des bâtisseurs et [3] supporte mal les insultes lancées contre lui pour son

apparition tardive (“Loge est toujours payé d’ingratitude!”). Il a également cherché partout une autre forme de paiement. Mais personne, semble-t-il, ne peut nommer quelque chose de plus désirable qu’une femme belle et bonne – [4] seul un homme, Alberich, fut prêt à renoncer à l’amour en échange du pouvoir de l’or du Rhin et de l’anneau tout-puissant forgé avec celui-ci. Loge raconte l’histoire du vol d’Alberich comme s’il ne faisait que transmettre une simple plainte des Filles du Rhin; [5] cependant, cela ne laisse pas les géants indifférents – [6] ni les dieux, bien sûr.

[7] Chaque groupe conclut que cet or est extrêmement désirable. Loge assure à Wotan qu’il est possible de l’obtenir sans renoncer à l’amour: il suffit simplement de le voler – ce n’est pas un crime, ajoute-t-il, si Wotan rend l’or au Rhin. [8] Fafner annonce que Freia pourra rester avec les dieux si Wotan paye les géants avec l’or d’Alberich. Wotan proteste en vain que cet or ne lui appartient pas; les deux géants prennent Freia en otage, et promettent de revenir le soir même et de la rendre si l’or leur est donné. [9] – [10] Dès qu’ils sont partis, il est visible que, sans Freia et ses pommes, les dieux se mettent à grisonner et à devenir apathiques, et se trouvent dépourvus de tout

pouvoir d’agir. [11] Wotan décide, au grand soulagement de Fricka et des autres dieux, de descendre avec Loge dans le Nibelheim et de s’emparer de l’or afin de pouvoir payer la rançon exigée pour Freia. Ils se glissent dans une crevasse du rocher, et descendent à l’intérieur de la montagne jusqu’aux cavernes souterraines où on peut entendre les Nibelungen, les esclaves d’Alberich, en train de marteler sans interruption sur leurs enclumes (Wagner précise dans la partition qu’elles sont au nombre de dix-huit).

Scène 3

Une caverne sous terre

[12] Tandis que les voyageurs sont sur le point d’achever leur descente, on peut voir une vaste caverne dans laquelle Alberich a entraîné son frère Mime pour obtenir de lui la plus récente pièce de sa production. Il s’agit du heaume magique, nommé Tarnhelm, qui donne à celui qui le porte le pouvoir illimité de se rendre invisible ou de se métamorphoser. Alberich l’arrache à son créateur, qui prétend qu’il n’est pas encore au point, et [13] l’essaye immédiatement avec succès en se rendant invisible et en frappant Mime pour lui avoir menti. Mime pleurniche encore dans un coin quand [14] Wotan et Loge arrivent, et [15] sont

rapidement informés par lui des conditions de travail qui règnent dans le Nibelheim et du pouvoir magique du Tarnhelm. Immédiatement, Loge promet d’aider les ouvriers-gnomes, tandis [16] qu’Alberich revient, conduisant une horde de Nibelungen lourdement chargés par les fruits de leur labeur. Voyant Wotan et Loge, il renvoie d’un mouvement de l’anneau les ouvriers qui retournent à leurs travaux en hurlant de terreur. [17] Loge se lie d’amitié avec Alberich et se présente comme le vieux et fidèle esprit du feu. [18] Alberich ne se calme pas vraiment et, par ailleurs, il reconnaît Wotan; [19] cependant, son illusion de puissance l’enhardit, et il se met à venter ses réalisations, notamment le Tarnhelm. Loge fait semblant de ne pas le croire, et défie Alberich de démontrer les pouvoirs du heaume magique.

Disque Compact Trois

[1] Alberich se transforme obligeamment en un dragon monstrueux puis, après une nouvelle provocation, en un tout petit crapaud. Wotan pose alors le pied sur le crapaud, tandis que Loge retire le Tarnhelm et ligote le gnome pris au piège. [2] Ils l’emportent au sommet du rocher, passant de

nouveau à proximité des enclumes et se faufilant par la crevasse.

Scène 4

Sur le sommet découvert d’une montagne

[3] Wotan et Loge amènent Alberich, solidement ligoté, sur le sommet, et lui déclarent que l’or est le prix de sa liberté. Il accepte rapidement car il sait que l’anneau peut reconstituer sa réserve et l’accroître à l’infini. [4] Il utilise sa formule magique et les Nibelungen remontent le trésor de leur caverne. [5] Quand il demande sa liberté, Loge exige aussi le Tarnhelm, et Wotan l’anneau. Horrifié, Alberich offre n’importe quoi d’autre, sa vie s’il le faut, mais comprend vite que cela aussi lui enlèverait l’anneau. Wotan le lui arrache. Il est libéré [6] (“Suis-je donc libre maintenant?”), et lance immédiatement une malédiction mortelle sur quiconque posséderait l’anneau: tout le monde le convoitera, chaque possesseur sera dans l’effroi de le perdre et se verra acculé à une mort affreuse jusqu’à ce qu’il soit restitué à Alberich. Après cette impressionnante imprécation, Alberich s’en va, laissant derrière lui un leitmotiv terrifiant et maléfique.

[7] Les autres dieux reviennent. Presque immédiatement, Fasolt et Fafner ramènent

Freia et, ^[8] voyant l'or, déclarent que pour une juste rétribution, il doit être empilé en hauteur et en largeur jusqu'à cacher entièrement Freia de leur vue. ^[9] Leur obstination avide n'est satisfaite que lorsque le Tarnhelm est ajouté à l'or; ^[10] Fasolt parvient même à déceler une fente minuscule par laquelle il peut encore épier la vision rayonnante de Freia, et il exige l'anneau pour la boucher. Wotan refuse catégoriquement; il a désormais abandonné toute prétention de le restituer aux Filles du Rhin, et a fermement l'intention de le garder pour lui seul. Les géants se préparent à repartir avec Freia, et cette fois définitivement; ^[11] mais une apparition de la Mère de la Terre ("Cède, Wotan, cède!") avertit Wotan que l'anneau doit être abandonné puisque les dieux sont de toute façon condamnés à disparaître.

^[12] Wotan est convaincu; il jette l'anneau sur le trésor, et accueille Freia.

^[13] Immédiatement, les géants commencent à se disputer sur le partage de l'or, et quand Fasolt, sur le conseil de Loge, tente de saisir l'anneau, Fafner brandit son pieu et le tue. Ensuite, il finit tranquillement d'entasser la rançon de Freia dans un sac qu'il met sur ses épaules, et s'en va. ^[14] – ^[15] L'air est encore chargé d'un épais brouillard que Donner dissipe en provoquant une violente tempête

("Héda! Héda! Hédo!"). ^[16] Froh jette un arc-en-ciel, semblable à un pont, au-dessus de la vallée, et le château du Walhalla est de nouveau visible. ^[17] Wotan salue une fois encore sa nouvelle forteresse ("Les rayons du soir inondent le ciel"), et les dieux se préparent à traverser le pont, mais Loge avoue avoir honte d'être associé à eux. ^[18] Tandis qu'ils s'avancent sur le pont, on entend les Filles du Rhin se lamenter de la perte de leur or. A cause de sa tromperie, Wotan ne peut plus maintenant leur venir en aide, et d'un ton agacé il demande à Loge de faire cesser le bavardage des sirènes. Les Filles du Rhin se lamentent encore tandis que les dieux traversent le pont et entrent dans le Walhalla. *Das Rheingold* s'achève alors par un somptueux postlude orchestral comportant six harpes.

William Mann

Traduction: Francis Marchal

Né en Afrique du Sud, la basse-baryton **Norman Bailey** a fait ses études à Vienne, puis a passé les premières années de sa carrière à chanter en Autriche et en Allemagne. Il est ensuite revenu au Royaume-Uni où il s'est produit avec toutes les grandes compagnies d'opéra. Salué comme l'un des plus

remarquables chanteurs wagnériens de sa génération, son nom est particulièrement associé au rôle titre de *Der fliegende Holländer* et à celui de Hans Sachs dans *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Il a également chanté le Landgrave (*Tannhäuser*) à l'Opera North, Wotan/le Wanderer et Gunther à l'English National Opera, où en sa qualité de membre de la compagnie il a par ailleurs incarné les rôles de Pizarro (*Leonore* de Beethoven), le Comte de Luna (*Il trovatore*), Alfio (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Scarpia (*Tosca*), le Père (*Hänsel und Gretel*), le Prince Gremin (*Eugène Onéguine*), Kutuzov (*Guerre et Paix* de Prokofiev), et le Forestier (*Le Petit Renard rusé*). Au Royal Opera de Covent Garden, Norman Bailey s'est produit dans les rôles de Balstrode (*Peter Grimes*, également en tournée à Palerme), Germont (*La traviata*), Ford (*Falstaff*), Wolfram (*Tannhäuser*), Kurwenal (*Tristan und Isolde*), Donner (*Das Rheingold*), Wotan (*Die Walküre*), Klingsor et Amfortas (*Parsifal*), Jochanaan (*Salome*), et le Maître de musique (*Ariadne auf Naxos*). Récemment, il a également chanté Oroveso (*Norma*), Banquo (*Macbeth*), le Roi (*Aida*), le Docteur (*Wozzeck*) et Schigolch (*Lulu*). Sa carrière internationale l'a conduit à se produire sur les grandes scènes lyriques et dans les festivals de toute l'Europe

et des Etats-Unis, incluant plusieurs saisons à Bayreuth. Il a collaboré avec des chefs aussi importants que Sir Colin Davis, Sir Georg Solti, James Levine, Carlo Maria Giulini, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Claudio Abbado et Daniel Barenboim. Pour Chandos, Norman Bailey a enregistré le rôle titre dans *King Priam* de Sir Michael Tippett.

Le baryton **Norman Welsby** naquit à Warrington dans le Lancashire, et fit ses études musicales au Royal Manchester College of Music (rebaptisé par la suite Royal Northern College of Music). Après deux saisons avec le Glyndebourne Festival Opera où il chanta notamment le rôle titre de *Falstaff*, il entra au Sadler's Wells Opera (rebaptisé par la suite English National Opera), où il fit ses débuts dans le rôle de Masetto (*Don Giovanni*). Avec cette compagnie, il chanta de nombreux rôles allant de Liberto dans *L'incoronazione di Poppea* à Pentheus dans la première anglaise de *The Bassarids* de Hans Werner Henze, ainsi que le rôle titre dans *Le nozze di Figaro*, le Récitant (*Die Zauberflöte*), Alfio (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Silvio (*Pagliacci*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) et Schlemil (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*). Norman Welsby a également interprété de nombreux rôles au Royal Opera de Covent Garden.

Né à Athènes, le ténor **Robert Ferguson** fit ses études au Royal Manchester College of Music (rebaptisé par la suite Royal Northern College of Music) avec Frederick Cox. Il chanta le rôle de Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) et celui de Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) avec le Yorkshire Opera. Il fit ses débuts au Sadler's Wells Opera (rebaptisé par la suite English National Opera) avec Pinkerton, et y chanta des rôles tels que Nero (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Turiddu (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Camille (*Die lustige Witwe*) et Tikhon (*Kár'a Kabanová*).

Né à Saskatchewan au Canada, **Emile Belcourt** commença par étudier le chant en qualité de baryton léger à l'Académie de Musique de Vienne, et devint membre des théâtres lyriques d'Ulm et de Bonn où il chanta des rôles tels que Don Giovanni, Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) et le Docteur Falke (*Die Fledermaus*). Ayant décidé de devenir ténor, il vint à Paris pour y étudier avec Pierre Bernac et Germaine Lubin. Après la retransmission radiophonique d'une représentation de *Pelléas et Mélisande* de Debussy donnée à Paris, il fut engagé à chanter le rôle de Pelléas au Scottish Opera, puis celui de Gonzalve dans *L'Heure espagnole* de Ravel sous la direction de Georg Solti au Royal Opera

de Covent Garden. S'étant établi en Angleterre, Emile Belcourt commença alors une longue association avec le Sadler's Wells Opera (rebaptisé par la suite English National Opera) où il chanta des rôles dans *Orphée aux enfers*, *Barbe-Bleue*, *Patience*, et fut célébré pour son interprétation magistrale de Loge dans *Das Rheingold*. Outre sa participation à la création anglaise de la version en trois actes de *Lulu* de Berg au Royal Opera de Covent Garden, son répertoire s'étendit de Herod (*Salome*) jusqu'à Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*) et au Comte Danilo (*Die lustige Witwe*), ainsi que le premier rôle dans *Man of La Mancha* dans le West End de Londres. Emile Belcourt chanta également avec le Welsh National Opera, le Châtelet théâtre musical, la Canadian Opera Company, au San Francisco Opera, et au Seattle Opera où il incarna le rôle de Tristan. Dans le domaine de l'opéra contemporain, il chanta dans *The Violins of Saint-Jacques* et *Lucky-Peter's Journey* de Malcolm Williamson, *A Penny for a Song* de Sir Richard Rodney Bennett, *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* de Iain Hamilton et *Toussaint L'Ouverture* de David Blake.

Né dans l'Essex, **Robert Lloyd** étudia à l'Université d'Oxford et abandonna une carrière universitaire d'historien à l'âge de

vingt-huit ans pour se consacrer au chant. Il fut nommé basse principale au Royal Opera de Covent Garden où il a chanté un immense répertoire, et où il a été la première basse anglaise à incarner le rôle titre de *Boris Godounov* dans la production du défunt Andrei Tarkovsky. Cette production, avec Robert Lloyd dans le rôle de Boris, fut reprise par la suite à l'Opéra Kirov de Leningrad où elle fut télévisée et retransmise dans le monde entier, puis à l'Opéra d'Etat de Vienne, où elle fut dirigée par Claudio Abbado. Robert Lloyd a également chanté ce rôle à Amsterdam et à Florence. Outre ses récentes prestations à Covent Garden (notamment dans *Roméo et Juliette*, *Chérubin* et *Samson et Dalila*), il s'est rendu au Teatro alla Scala de Milan (*Der fliegende Holländer* et *Parsifal*), au Deutsche Oper de Berlin (*Tristan und Isolde*), à l'Opéra des Pays-Bas (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), au Festival de Salzbourg (*Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* et *Les Troyens*), au Metropolitan Opera de New York (*Die Zauberflöte*, *Fidelio*, *Rigoletto*, *Aida* et *Faust*), au San Francisco Opera (*L'incoronazione di Poppea* et *Don Carlos*) et au Lyric Opera de Chicago (*Simon Boccanegra*). Robert Lloyd a chanté sous la direction des plus grands chefs internationaux, et poursuit une carrière exceptionnellement

active au concert, au disque et à la radio. Il a reçu le titre commandeur de l'ordre de l'empire britannique (CBE) en 1991.

Après avoir fait ses études musicales à Sydney, Melbourne et Londres, la basse australienne **Clifford Grant** a fait ses débuts avec la New South Wales Opera Company dans le rôle de Raimondo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*). Il est ensuite entré au Sadler's Wells Opera (plus tard rebaptisé English National Opera) où il a chanté Seneca (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), le Commandeur (*Don Giovanni*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), Silva (*Ernani*), Padre Guardiano (*La forza del destino*), Philippe II d'Espagne (*Don Carlos*), le Roi Henri (*Lohengrin*), Pogner (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Fafner, Hunding et Hagen (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*), ainsi que dans des rôles importants dans *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon*, *Oedipus Rex* et *Peter Grimes*. Il s'est également produit au Royal Opera de Covent Garden, au Welsh National Opera, au Glyndebourne Festival Opera, à l'Opéra de Marseille, à l'Opéra de San Francisco, et à Sydney. Après s'être produit dans *Les Huguenots* de Meyerbeer avec l'Opera Australia en 1990, Clifford Grant se retira de l'opéra mais revint sur scène en 1993 pour

chanter Alvisé Badoero dans *La Gioconda* à l'Opera North. Il a collaboré avec des artistes aussi éminents que Dame Joan Sutherland, Otto Klemperer, Sir Adrian Boult et Sir Colin Davis.

Le baryton anglais **Derek Hammond-Stroud** a étudié avec Elena Gerhardt et Gerhard Hüsch à Munich et à Londres, et a consacré sa carrière au récital et à l'opéra. Il a chanté avec toutes les grandes compagnies d'opéra de Grande-Bretagne, et s'est produit en Europe à l'Opéra d'Etat de Bavière, au Theater an der Wien, au Theater am Gärtnerplatz, et a chanté pendant trois saisons à l'Opéra des Pays-Bas. En Amérique du Nord et du Sud, il a chanté dans de nombreuses salles lyriques, notamment au Teatro Colón de Buenos Aires, au Metropolitan Opera de New York et à l'Opéra de San Diego. Parmi les rôles importants qu'il a interprétés figurent le Dr Bartolo, Rigoletto, Fra Melitone (*La forza del destino*), Sharpless, Tonio (*Pagliacci*), Papageno, Alberich, Bechmesser, Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Krušina (*La Fiancée vendue*) et Sir Robert Cecil (*Gloriana*), ainsi que de nombreux rôles dans des œuvres de Gilbert et Sullivan et d'Offenbach. Il a participé à plusieurs premières anglaises, incluant *Orfeo ed*

Euridice de Haydn (dans le rôle de Creonte), *La pietra del paragone* de Rossini (dans le rôle de Pacuvio), *Guerre et Paix* (dans le rôle de Napoléon, avec l'English National Opera) et *Der Besuch der alten Dame* de Gottfried von Einem (dans le rôle du Maître d'école, à Glyndebourne). Derek Hammond-Stroud a créé le rôle du Vieux Pêcheur dans la première mondiale de *The Violins of Saint-Jacques* de Malcolm Williamson au Sadler's Wells Theatre. Il a reçu de nombreuses distinctions, notamment celle d'officier de l'ordre de l'empire britannique (OBE) en 1987.

Le ténor australien **Gregory Dempsey**, né à Melbourne, fit ses débuts dans le rôle de Don Ottavio avec la Melbourne National Opera Company, puis devint membre de l'Elizabethan Trust Opera Company. Après sa prestation dans le rôle de Jenik (*La Fiancée vendue*) au Sadler's Wells Opera (plus tard rebaptisé English National Opera), il devint ténor résident de cette compagnie. Parmi les nombreux rôles qu'il a chantés figurent Florestan, Max, Erik (*Der fliegende Holländer*), David (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Mime, Don José, Canio, Gregor (*L'Affaire Makropoulos*), Skuratov (*La Maison des morts*), Tom Rakewell et Essex (*Gloriana*). Il s'est

également produit très souvent au Royal Opera de Covent Garden, au Welsh National Opera et au Scottish Opera, et a chanté aux Festivals d'Edimbourg et d'Aldeburgh. A l'étranger, Gregory Dempsey s'est produit avec le San Francisco Opera, ainsi qu'à Bruxelles, Stuttgart et d'autres villes européennes. Vivant maintenant en Australie, il a fréquemment chanté à l'Australian Opera (par la suite Opera Australia) et au Victoria State Opera. Il s'est également produit au Festival d'Adelaide (dans le rôle titre des *Aventures de Monsieur Brouček*, et dans celui de Mark dans *The Midsummer Marriage* de Tippett).

La mezzo-soprano **Katherine Pring** fit ses études au Royal College of Music de Londres et au Conservatoire de Genève. Elle fit ses débuts à l'opéra dans le rôle de Flora (*La traviata*) au Grand Théâtre de Genève. Devenue membre du Sadler's Wells Opera (rebaptisé par la suite English National Opera), elle y chanta des rôles tels que celui d'Ottavia (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Azucena (*Il trovatore*), la Princesse Eboli (*Don Carlos*), Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*), le Prince Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*), Carmen, Jocasta (*Oedipus*

Rex), et Agave dans la création anglaise de *The Bassarids* de Hans Werner Henze. Après avoir fait ses débuts au Royal Opera de Covent Garden dans le rôle de Thea dans *The Knot Garden* de Sir Michael Tippett, elle y incarna également Preziosilla (*La forza del destino*) et Kate Julian (dans *Owen Wingrave* de Britten). Elle chanta le rôle de Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*) au Festival de Glyndebourne, Dalila (*Samson et Dalila*) à l'English National Opera North (plus tard rebaptisé Opera North), Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*) à Düsseldorf, la Princesse Marina (*Boris Godounov*) à Francfort et Preziosilla à l'Opéra de Paris. Katherine Pring fit ses débuts américains dans le rôle de Carmen à l'Opéra de San Diego où elle revint deux ans plus tard pour y chanter celui de la Princesse Eboli. Elle s'est produite en récital et en concert sous la direction de chefs internationaux tels que Claudio Abbado, Christoph von Dohnanyi et Sir Charles Mackerras.

La soprano canadienne **Lois McDonall** se fit une réputation spéciale grâce à la beauté naturelle de sa voix et à une solide technique qui lui permirent de chanter Mozart et Richard Strauss avec un égal raffinement stylistique. Elle fit ses débuts avec la Canadian

Opera Company dans *Il segreto di Susanna* de Wolf-Ferrari. Au Städtische Bühnen de Flensburg, elle chanta Constanze (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), Elsa (*Lohengrin*), Tosca et Arabella avant de se produire pour la première fois au Sadler's Wells Opera (rebaptisé par la suite English National Opera) dans le rôle de Semele de Haendel. Elle y chanta également Ilia (*Idomeneo*), la Comtesse (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Donna Elvira et Donna Anna, Fiordiligi, le rôle titre dans *Euryanthe*, Lucrezia Contarini (*I due Foscari*), Gilda, Violetta, Manon de Massenet, Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*), la Maréchale (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Jenny (dans *The Mines of Sulphur* de Sir Richard Rodney Bennett), le rôle titre dans la création mondiale de *Anna Karenina* de Iain Hamilton, et celui de Freia dans le célèbre *Ring* dirigé par Reginald Goodall. Lois McDonall chanta également au Royal Opera de Covent Garden, au Welsh National Opera, au Scottish Opera, à l'Opéra de Dublin, et dans le cadre des BBC Promenade Concerts. Parmi ses enregistrements, on citera *Maria Padilla* de Donizetti pour Opera Rara.

La contralto **Anne Collins** étudia au Royal College of Music de Londres, puis fit ses débuts londoniens avec un récital à la Purcell

Room. Peu après, elle entra au Sadler's Wells Opera (rebaptisé par la suite English National Opera) où son répertoire compte des rôles dans *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *Le Comte Ory*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Madama Butterfly* et *Arabella*, ainsi que ceux de Dame Quickly (*Falstaff*), Katisha (*The Mikado*), Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*) et plusieurs autres dont le plus célèbre fut Erda dans le cycle du *Ring* de Wagner. Anne Collins s'est souvent produite au Royal Opera de Covent Garden, ainsi qu'au Welsh National Opera (Filipyevna dans *Eugène Onéguine*), à l'Opera North (la Nourrice dans *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* et Auntie dans *Peter Grimes*), et au Scottish Opera (dans *Ines de Castro* de James MacMillan). Elle a chanté dans les festivals de Glyndebourne, Aldeburgh, Wexford, Camden, et dans le cadre des BBC Promenade Concerts de Londres. Elle s'est produite en concert, dans des festivals et des théâtres lyriques à travers toute l'Europe, notamment aux opéras de Lyon, Strasbourg, Genève, Hambourg, à l'Opéra de Paris et au Châtelet théâtre musical, au Théâtre royal de la Monnaie de Bruxelles et au Teatro alla Scala de Milan. Aux Etats-Unis, elle s'est produite au Metropolitan Opera de New York entre autres. Anne Collins a réalisé de nombreux disques, parmi lesquels, pour Chandos, *Peter*

Grimes sous la direction de Richard Hickox, un enregistrement qui fut couronné par un *Grammy Award*.

Née à Birkenhead, la soprano **Valerie Masterson** fit ses études musicales à Londres et à Milan grâce à plusieurs bourses d'études. Après avoir chanté pendant une saison au Salzburger Landestheater, elle devint soprano principale dans la D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. Elle a chanté avec toutes les grandes compagnies d'opéra britanniques, incluant le Glyndebourne Festival Opera, tandis qu'à l'étranger, elle s'est produite au Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, à l'Opéra de Paris, et dans les théâtres lyriques de Toulouse, Nancy, Montpellier, Genève, Prague, Munich, Milan, Barcelone, Dublin, Santiago, San Francisco, Houston, Chicago et New York. Son vaste répertoire s'étend de *L'incoronazione di Poppea* de Monteverdi à *The Turn of the Screw* de Britten. Valerie Masterson a également participé à la création mondiale de *We Come to the River* de Henze, et à la première anglaise de *Le Roi se rend en France* de Sallinen, deux opéras donnés au Royal Opera de Covent Garden. Parmi ses nombreux enregistrements, on citera *Giulio Cesare* et *La traviata* pour Chandos en association avec la Peter Moores

Foundation. Valerie Masterson a reçu le titre de commandeur de l'ordre de l'empire britannique (CBE) en 1989.

Shelagh Squires fit ses études à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama de Londres. Elle s'est produite entre autres à l'English National Opera, au Festival de Glyndebourne, avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera et au Metropolitan Opera de New York. Elle a également chanté au Festival international de Bergen, à Vienne et au Japon. Son vaste répertoire compte Ottavia (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Ulrica (*Un ballo in maschera*), Magdalene (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Herodias (*Salome*), Annina (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Adelaïde (*Arabella*), Martha (*Faust*), la Sorcière (*Rusalka*) et Filipyevna (*Eugène Onéguine*).

La contralto **Helen Attfield** fit ses études à la Royal Academy of Music de Londres où elle obtint de nombreux prix. Avec l'English Opera Group, elle chanta dans la création mondiale de *Death in Venice* de Britten. Outre les divers rôles qu'elle incarna à l'English National Opera, elle interpréta également celui de Maddalena (*Rigoletto*) avec le Welsh National Opera. Elle se fit entendre avec la Handel

Opera Society, et à l'étranger à l'Opéra de Bruxelles.

Salué autant par la critique que par le public, L'Orchestre de l'English National Opera, avec Barry Griffiths comme premier violon, s'est vu décerner ces dernières années plusieurs prix prestigieux comme le Prix de la *Royal Philharmonic Society* et un *Olivier Award* pour sa contribution exceptionnelle au monde lyrique. L'Orchestre est au cœur de la vie artistique de la Compagnie et outre les représentations lyriques au Coliseum à Londres, il se produit également en concert. De plus, de nombreux membres de l'Orchestre participent au Projet Baylis mis sur pied par la branche de la Compagnie chargée de l'éducation ainsi qu'au développement de nouveaux opéra avec l'English National Opera Studio, comme *The Silver Tassie* de Mark-Anthony Turnage dont la création mondiale eut lieu en février 2000. L'Orchestre a participé à de nombreux enregistrements, comme son enregistrement d'*Otello* de Verdi sous la baguette de Mark Elder qui doit prochainement paraître chez Chandos grâce au financement de la Peter Moores Foundation. Parmi ses autres enregistrements pour Chandos, en collaboration avec la Peter

Moores Foundation, notons *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto* (dans la mise en scène de Jonathan Miller), *La traviata* et *Werther*.

Le chef d'orchestre anglais **Reginald Goodall** naquit en 1901 et étudia la direction d'orchestre avec Malcolm Sargent et Constant Lambert au Royal College of Music de Londres. De 1929 à 1936, il fut organiste et chef de chœur à St Alban the Martyr, Holborn (Londres), où il dirigea les premières anglaises d'œuvres chorales de Bruckner, Stravinski et Szymanowski, ainsi que des œuvres de jeunesse de Britten. Pendant la fin des années trente, il fut l'assistant d'Albert Coates et de Malcolm Sargent. Au début de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, il devint le chef du Wessex Philharmonic Orchestra basé à Bournemouth.

En sa qualité de membre du Sadler's Wells Opera (plus tard rebaptisé English National Opera) Reginald Goodall dirigea en juin 1945 la première représentation de *Peter Grimes* au Sadler's Wells Theatre récemment réouvert. L'année suivante, il partagea avec Ernest Ansermet les premières représentations de *The Rape of Lucretia* de Britten pendant la première saison d'après-guerre du Festival de

Glyndebourne. Peu après, il devint membre du Royal Opera de Covent Garden où pendant vingt-cinq ans il allait diriger un répertoire allant de Verdi (*Il trovatore*) à Walton (*Troilus and Cressida*).

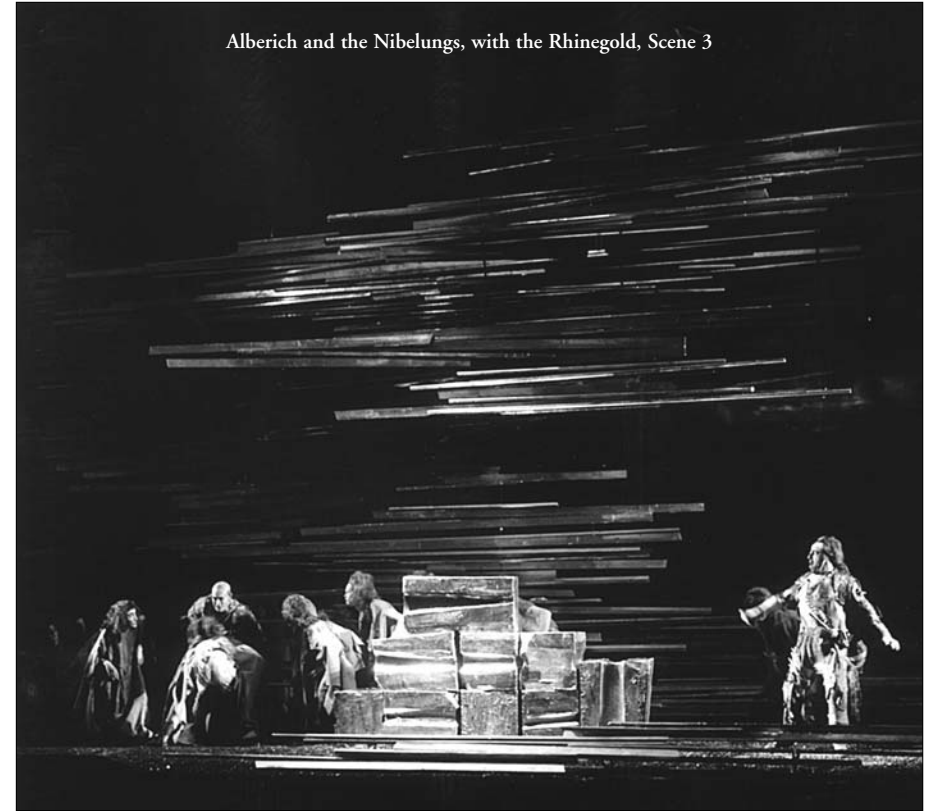
Reginald Goodall n'eut que rarement la possibilité de diriger les opéras du compositeur qu'il admirait le plus, Richard Wagner. Cette omission fut rectifiée en 1968, non pas par le Royal Opera de Covent Garden mais par le Sadler's Wells Opera qui l'invita à diriger une nouvelle production de *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Ce fut un tel succès qu'il fut

réinvité à diriger une production maintenant légendaire du cycle complet de *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, montée entre 1970 et 1973, et la première à être donnée en langue anglaise depuis plusieurs années. Il dirigea par la suite *Das Rheingold* et *Die Walküre* au Royal Opera de Covent Garden, *Tristan und Isolde* et *Die Walküre* au Welsh National Opera, et *Tristan und Isolde* et *Parsifal* à l'English National Opera. Reginald Goodall devint commandeur de l'ordre de l'empire britannique (CBE) en 1975, et fut anobli en 1985. Il mourut en 1990 à l'âge de quatre-vingt-huit ans.



John Garner/English National Opera Archive

Fricka, Loge, Wotan (Raimund Herincx), Donner, Fafner, Froh, Fasolt and Freia, Scene 2



Anthony Crickmay/Theatre Museum, V&A

Alberich and the Nibelungs, with the Rhinegold, Scene 3

Richard Wagner: Das Rheingold

Prefazione di Lord Harewood

L'obiettivo della English National Opera e, prima ancora, di Sadler's Wells, è il teatro musicale, non l'opera. Fino a un certo punto, il nostro repertorio viene scelto in base a questo; fino a un certo punto, si tratta anche di una situazione che si è creata perché abbiamo l'abitudine di avvicinare l'opera al pubblico, perché la proponiamo nella lingua del pubblico, piuttosto che tenere quest'ultimo a rispettosa distanza, come *può* accadere quando l'opera viene fruita in una lingua straniera, per quanto nota e compresa. Il nostro obiettivo è l'immediatezza di un'esperienza teatrale, piuttosto che il processo cerebrale derivato da un lungo studio. Entrambi sono ammirevoli, ma completamente diversi, come è diversa la descrizione della sensazione di trovarsi sotto la pioggia dalla situazione effettiva.

Da anni gli acquirenti di dischi (e io ne possiedo molti) continuano a parlare dei meriti delle registrazioni effettuate dal vivo rispetto a quelle svolte in studio. Il

collezionista più accanito riesce a distinguere le registrazioni sui cilindri di Mapleson effettuate agli spettacoli della Metropolitan Opera di New York, nel 1900 circa. Ci raggiungono attraverso una grandinata di scariche statiche, ma sono una prova unica delle interpretazioni vocali di un'era passata. Altri conoscono i dischi H.M.V., pubblicati e non, registrati al Covent Garden all'inizio delle incisioni elettriche, nel 1926 e nel 1927: l'addio della Melba, brani di *Otello* con Zenatello ed estratti da *Boris* e *Mefistofele* con Chaliapine. Per molti di noi si tratta di documenti estremamente preziosi perché forniscono non solo prova sensibile dello stile e del livello interpretativo di circa cinquant'anni fa, ma anche per la qualità di esecuzione "dal vivo", assente dalle registrazioni in studio effettuate allo stesso tempo. Quelle di Chaliapine ne rappresentano un ottimo esempio.

Quindi esiste un elemento di coerenza tra una compagnia lirica, che tenta di raggiungere l'immediatezza del teatro musicale, e la "realtà"

della registrazione dal vivo di una rappresentazione.



Lord Harewood
Direttore generale
English National Opera
Agosto 1975

Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Un'introduzione a "Der Ring des Nibelungen"

Wagner concepì l'idea di un dramma musicale sul soggetto del mito del Nibelungo nel 1848, all'incirca all'epoca in cui aveva completato l'ultima delle sue opere tradizionali, *Lohengrin*. Si può essere interessati a *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (L'anello del Nibelungo) a diversi livelli: ad esempio come un racconto di fate, come un'allegoria politica o come un libretto filosofico. In sostanza tratta con l'eterna battaglia tra il bene e il male ed il contrasto tra l'amore del potere ed il potere dell'amore. Wotan, il capo degli dei, desidera il potere per scopi che infine sono ben intenzionati; Alberich, il capo dei Nibelunghi, nani che

vivono sotto terra, lo desidera per i suoi fini malvagi. Dall'*Orfeo* di Monteverdi a *Die Zauberflöte* di Mozart, dall'*Hippolyte et Aricie* di Rameau a *Der Freischütz* di Weber, la giustapposizione di luce e d'ombra ha sempre affascinato i compositori di opere. Wagner riconobbe che ogni situazione non è mai definita nettamente in bianco e nero, ma ha per lo più tonalità grigie. Pertanto Wotan ricorre ad un sotterfugio ed al furto e si descrive come un amico inseparabile del nano, "Luce-Alberich" mentre Alberich, il quale dopo tutto acquista l'oro del Reno osservando la condizione di rinunciare all'amore, assume un'aria di dignità insieme a quella di malvagità.

Wagner lavorò sulle parole e sulla musica per parecchi anni, cominciando con un abbozzo in prosa della storia prima di iniziare il testo di quello che chiamò *Siegfrieds Tod* (La morte di Siegfried). Durante il dicembre 1856, tuttavia, fece sapere ad un amico che "i Nibelunghi cominciano ad annoiarmi"; ed in realtà l'estate successiva abbandonò il *Ring* e ricominciò a comporre soltanto nel 1869, dopo aver scritto *Tristan und Isolde* e *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (I maestri cantori di Norimberga). Dal momento della concezione al completamento questo progetto gigantesco lo occupò per ventisei anni, che

furono anni di scompiglio sia nella sua vita personale che sulla scena politica europea.

Non era stata solo la noia, come disse, che lo aveva indotto ad abbandonare il giovane Siegfried sotto il taglio, dove “gli aveva fatto gli addii con lacrime sincere”. Dopo aver abbandonato Dresda per evitare l’arresto per la sua complicità nella rivoluzione del 1848, viveva in esilio a Zurigo con scarse prospettive di poter vedere il suo *Ring* rappresentato; ed il suo stile di composizione stava cambiando in modo così radicale che si può dire gli fu necessario affinarlo lavorando su *Tristan*. Si può dire che fu quasi miracoloso il fatto che continuò poi con il completamento del *Ring*, fino alla sua rappresentazione, grazie ai suoi sforzi, in un teatro costruito unicamente a tale scopo.

Le sue sorgenti inclusero cinque epopee, in islandese, in tedesco medio alto e norvegese antico, che risalgono tutte al tredicesimo secolo. Analogamente a tutte le sue opere, prima e dopo il *Ring*, Wagner scrisse il proprio libretto. Ma allarmando i suoi amici, a cominciare con *Siegfrieds Tod* riportò in vita un vecchio espediente poetico chiamato “Stabreim” che utilizzava allitterazioni esplosive invece di scansione e rima. Questo faceva parte delle sue teorie, esposte in saggi scritti durante il suo

esilio a Zurigo, che si occupavano tra l’altro della connessione reciproca tra suoni verbali e musicali e la necessità di poter udire parole cantate, la cui conseguenza logica era che complessi e cori non erano più adatti.

Negli sviluppi successivi, Wagner non si attenne sempre alle proprie regole: in *Die Meistersinger* si trova un quintetto completo, insieme a cori a profusione, ed un coro ed un trio nel secondo atto della *Götterdämmerung* (Crepuscolo degli dei). L’opera che dà inizio al ciclo del *Ring*, *Das Rheingold* (L’oro del Reno), presenta un buon esempio delle teorie di Wagner messe in pratica, ma fu necessario successivamente tanto lavoro prima che Wagner potesse cominciare con la musica. Da principio egli aveva in preparazione una sola opera, che sarebbe terminata con una nota di ottimismo e la superiorità morale e fisica degli dei ben stabilita. L’osservazione da parte di uno dei suoi amici che la storia richiedeva una conoscenza inusitata degli antefatti da parte degli spettatori lo convinse per prima cosa ad ampliare *Siegfrieds Tod* e poi ad aggiungere quello che oggi possiamo chiamare un “antefatto”, *Der junge Siegfried* (Il giovane Siegfried). Riconoscendo la necessità di ampliare più indietro nel tempo, scrisse i testi della *Walküre* (La Valchiria) e *Das Rheingold*.

Der junge Siegfried fu infine intitolato *Siegfried* e *Siegfrieds Tod* diventò *Götterdämmerung*, dopo aver apportato notevoli tagli e modifiche, tra queste ultime alla fine quando gli dei periscono nel loro castello, il Walhalla. Dando atto all’influenza delle tragedie di *Oresteia* e di *Prometeo* di Eschilo, Wagner descrisse il *Ring* come una trilogia (considerando *Das Rheingold* come un preambolo).

Nel 1854 Wagner venne a conoscenza degli scritti del filosofo Arthur Schopenhauer – “un brontolone della massima misura”, come l’aveva descritto Bertie Wooster di P.G. Wodehouse. Il finale riveduto della storia del *Ring* era già stato scritto, ma Wagner continuò a scrivere successivamente parecchi finali diversi, mentre era allo stesso tempo occupato nella composizione del ciclo, incluso uno che rispecchiava la visione pessimistica di Schopenhauer che la vita rappresenta semplicemente la negazione della morte. Qui, Brünnhilde raggiunge uno stato di illuminazione buddista riuscendo ad arrivare alla “fine benedetta di ogni cosa eterna”. Questa non fu la versione che Wagner traspose in musica, ma rimane indicativa del suo stato d’animo al momento in cui stava componendo la fine della *Walküre* e l’inizio di *Siegfried*.

Dopo aver scritto i testi in ordine inverso,

Wagner iniziò a comporre la musica dal principio: cominciò pertanto *Das Rheingold* nel 1853, un anno dopo aver completato il libretto, mentre nel caso della *Götterdämmerung*, cominciato nel 1869, stava adattando parole scritte (anche se corrette successivamente) venti anni prima. Naturalmente il suo stile musicale si stava sviluppando durante tale periodo, e la partitura dell’ultima opera è assai più ingegnosa e complessa di quella che la precede. Eppure le quattro opere, nonostante la loro diversità, rappresentano un tutto coerente a motivo di un espediente di connessione che passa sotto il nome di leitmotiv (dal tedesco *leitmotiv*, tema melodico ricorrente).

Reminiscenze musicali in opere non rappresentavano certo una novità. Un esempio ben noto è costituito dalla piccola frase sull’oboe che ci dice, nel secondo atto del *Fidelio* di Beethoven, che Florestan addormentato sta sognando di sua moglie della quale stava poco prima cantando. Wagner riuscì a creare una rete di leitmotiv, rappresentati da frasi brevi e ricche di significato, associate a persone, oggetti, sentimenti e tanto altro, che ricorrono nella musica vocale e specialmente nell’orchestra. Essi sono assai più che i

semplici “biglietti da visita” derisi da Debussy (il quale peraltro non era alieno ad impiegare tale espediente lui stesso in *Pelléas et Mélisande*). Sono rappresentate da ripetizioni pure e semplici, da modifiche melodiche o armoniche, e da combinazioni con altri motivi particolarmente verso la fine del ciclo, le quali tutte servono a creare un arazzo strettamente intessuto.

Sono stati scritti volumi interi per dare un nome ai vari motivi, ma più si cerca di definire in modo preciso quelli più astratti, più difficile da afferrare si rende una definizione. Chi ascolta per la prima volta non se ne deve preoccupare, in quanto comincerà a riconoscere i vari motivi tematici dopo alcuni ascolti. Non tutte le connessioni sono tuttavia ovvie: vale la pena notare, solo per dare un esempio, i profili simili dei motivi del “Walhall” e dell’“anello” (rispettivamente nobili e funesti), che confermano o, meglio ancora, anticipano la nostra impressione che Wotan ed Alberich rappresentano il dritto e il rovescio della stessa medaglia.

L’orchestrazione è una delle delizie di particolare rilievo del *Ring*. Wagner impiega forze enormi, ma assai di frequente un solo strumento a fiato di legno (un oboe, per esempio, o un clarinetto in fa) è quello che

esprime una situazione o dà punto ad una frase vocale. Una delle tonalità più caratteristiche del *Ring* è offerta da quelle che sono chiamate le tube di Wagner (suonate da membri della sezione composta da otto corni) che intonano davvero il motivo del “Walhall” nella seconda scena di *Das Rheingold*.

A partire dal 1862 Wagner non era più al bando dagli stati tedeschi. Durante l’anno seguente pubblicò un’edizione del testo del *Ring* con una prefazione in cui espresse la speranza che un principe tedesco fosse disposto a procurare il denaro necessario per rappresentare il ciclo (tuttora incompleto) in un teatro costruito appositamente. La sua richiesta ricevette presto una risposta favorevole. Il diciottenne principe ereditario della Baviera ereditò il trono nel 1864 diventando Re Ludwig II. Egli aiutò Wagner a ripagare i propri debiti, lo sistemò in una casa a Monaco di Baviera, gli diede denaro in contanti ed uno stipendio annuale, e lo incoraggiò a continuare con il suo grande lavoro.

A dir poco, i loro rapporti passarono tra alti e bassi, ma fu grazie a Ludwig che *Tristan e Die Meistersinger* ebbero le loro prime rappresentazioni al teatro di corte, dove furono anche riesumate opere precedenti di Wagner. Furono anche messe in scena

produzioni di *Das Rheingold* e della *Walküre*, malgrado la resistenza del compositore. Wagner era tuttora deciso all’esecuzione del *Ring* al completo nel proprio teatro, in condizioni di festival. Nel 1871 scelse la cittadina provinciale di Bayreuth. La costruzione del nuovo teatro fu finanziata mediante una sottoscrizione pubblica, con un intervento da parte di Ludwig ad un momento critico. Wagner completò *Götterdämmerung* nel 1874 e *Der Ring des Nibelungen* fu rappresentato per la prima volta nella sua interezza nell’agosto 1876. Entro il 1889 erano state rappresentate produzioni in tutto il mondo operistico; esse rappresentano tuttora il modello a cui si riferiscono tutti i teatri dell’opera che aspirano all’eccellenza.

© 2000 Richard Lawrence

Traduzione: ASA Products

Das Rheingold

L’autunno del 1853, ripensandoci, fu un periodo molto importante per Wagner. Aveva iniziato a comporre la musica del *Rheingold* e aveva conosciuto Cosima, la figlia di Franz Liszt, che sarebbe divenuta la madre dei suoi figli e, infine, sua seconda moglie. Cosima aveva appena quindici anni e sarebbe divenuta

sua amante solo nel 1864, dopo aver sposato il direttore d’orchestra Hans von Bülow e avergli dato due figlie. La gestazione dell’opera fu invece più breve. La prima stesura fu completata in meno di undici settimane e la bella copia della partitura completa era pronta nel settembre del 1854, quando il compositore si trovava già a metà della prima stesura della *Walküre*.

A differenza delle successive opere della tetralogia, ognuna delle quali è suddivisa in tre atti, *Das Rheingold* si svolge per un arco ininterrotto di circa due ore e tre quarti. Le quattro scene sono separate da grandi interludi orchestrali che esemplificano brillantemente la concezione wagneriana della composizione come “arte della transizione”. Dopo che Alberich ha sottratto l’oro alle sue custodi, le Figlie del Reno, per esempio, il feroce suono del *leitmotiv* dell’anello, ancorato da una nota grave sulla dominante in do minore, viene addolcito successivamente dai legni, dalle viole e dai corni prima di essere trasformato nel maestoso tema del Walhall sugli ottoni. Un passaggio più ampio con una nota grave segue la seconda scena e introduce il martellare dei fabbri di Alberich su diciotto incudini. L’accordo del Nibelheim, nella relativa minore, si bemolle, completa quello maggiore, in

re bemolle, del Walhalla, in un altro esempio del collegamento tra Alberich e Wotan.

Il passaggio con nota grave per eccellenza, però, si sente proprio all'inizio del preludio, dove i contrabbassi sostengono un mi bemolle basso per ben 136 misure. Ad essi si aggiungono i fagotti una quinta sopra; quindi un corno si introduce delicatamente con un arpeggio ascendente, seguito da un altro e un altro ancora, finché gli otto corni echeggiano e riecheggiano questa frase fondamentale. Wagner cerca di evocare l'origine del mondo, un'assenza virtuale di tempo e movimento, utilizzando gli stessi mezzi di Beethoven all'inizio della Nona sinfonia. Gradualmente l'arpeggio si trasforma in una corsa di semicrome che rappresentano il Reno. Wagner non avrebbe avuto difficoltà ad ammettere l'influenza di Beethoven, ma forse avrebbe obiettato se qualcuno gli avesse indicato l'analogia con l'ouverture a *Die schöne Melusine* di Mendelssohn, sebbene ammirasse sufficientemente la musica di Mendelssohn da eseguirla durante la sua attività di direttore d'orchestra.

Com'è prevedibile in un'opera che vuole essere lo sfondo del dramma successivo, molti *leitmotiv* del *Ring* (ma non tutti) sono presenti nel *Rheingold*. Uno dei più significativi, che è

suddiviso in due segmenti, arriva quando le Ondine salutano l'oro: sia la fanfara "Heiajaheia!" e la figura in due note "Oro del Reno! Oro del Reno!", con le sue modifiche melodiche e armoniche, assumono nuove sfumature di significato durante lo svolgimento dell'epica narrazione.

Wagner considerava le Figlie del Reno una sola unità, nonostante avesse attribuito nomi diversi a ciascuna di esse, così di tanto in tanto, come qui, esse cantano in armonia. Altrove, invece, il compositore segue le proprie regole al punto che nessun personaggio pronuncia una parola mentre l'altro canta. Anzi, come suggerito nell'Introduzione di cui sopra, *Das Rheingold* è il *locus classicus* dell'idealismo wagneriano. Non ci sono esecuzioni d'insieme, e l'accompagnamento musicale consiste praticamente in una nota per sillaba, senza effusioni liriche o retoriche. La cosa che si avvicina di più a un'aria è la grande narrazione di Loge nella seconda scena, che potrebbe essere utilizzata – e lo è stata – come brano da concerto.

Se Wotan è fondamentalmente buono, con un lato oscuro, e Alberich fondamentalmente malvagio, ma almeno con il senso del bene e del male, Loge è sempre ambiguo. (Il ruolo, meglio se interpretato da un *Heldentenor*, è

talmente ambito che all'interprete di Mime in *Siegfried* spesso è assegnato anche il ruolo di Loge, e questo richiede – ma non qui, per fortuna – l'uso di un cantante diverso per il Mime del *Rheingold*.) Loge è solo un semidio, a cui sono negate le mele della vita eterna di Freia, e di lui gli altri non si fidano: come dice Wotan, "Di tutti gli dèi tuo unico amico". Noi non sappiamo mai cosa pensa veramente Loge. Diverse volte propone di restituire l'oro alle Ondine, ma davanti a Fricka ne difende il possesso perché può essere un mezzo per impedire le scappatelle extraconiugali di Wotan, e si prende gioco volentieri delle Figlie del Reno che piangono la sua perdita. Si vergogna di essere associato con gli dei, ma si unisce a loro nella grandiosa processione alla volta del Walhalla. Wagner lo caratterizza con guizzanti motivi come si addice a un dio del fuoco ed, espressivamente, con una frase che contiene allo stesso tempo il motivo di due note "Oro del Reno! Oro del Reno!" e la sua modifica cromatica.

Loge non ricompare, anche se lo fa la sua musica, e in *Götterdämmerung* la Terza Norna parla alle sorelle della sua prossima fine. Erda, invece, torna in scena in *Siegfried*, sconcertata dalle notizie portate dal Viandante Wotan. Nel *Rheingold* è onnisciente come dichiara di

essere. Annunciata da una frase delicatamente ascendente ricavata dal preludio, sollecita Wotan a consegnare l'anello ai giganti. Poi predice la caduta degli dei. Il passaggio cruciale è "Tutto quel che è, finisce! Un giorno oscuro rompe agli dèi", dove la frase ascendente si incontra con il suo contrario, una frase discendente dei violini e delle viole che può facilmente sfuggire. La scena, per quanto carica di presagi di sventura, è un raro momento di pausa tra le schermaglie degli dei e dei giganti e il primo risultato della maledizione scagliata da Alberich sull'anello, il brutale assassinio di Fasolt per mano del fratello Fafner.

Le nubi che si sono radunate simbolicamente vengono disperse dal martello di Donner e Froh crea un ponte d'arcobaleno. Wotan si scrolla di dosso la tristezza davanti alla piega che hanno preso gli eventi e gli dei entrano nel nuovo castello. Per questa scena Wagner richiede sette arpe: sei nell'orchestra e una per accompagnare le Ondine che sono fuori scena. Il cromatismo del loro lamento è, per così dire, l'unica nota negativa, ma l'impressione costante del pubblico è di singolare splendore. Quanto sia illusorio tale splendore lo riveleranno le vicende successive di questo splendido dramma.

Das Rheingold fu rappresentato per la prima volta a Monaco nel settembre del 1869. La prima rappresentazione nell'ambito del ciclo completo del *Ring* sarebbe venuta al festival di Bayreuth nell'agosto del 1876.

© 2001 Richard Lawrence
Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Il "Ring" – in inglese?¹

Tutti noi, in fondo, pensiamo che un'opera d'arte scaturisca completa dall'anima del proprio creatore, e questa sensazione ci consente di sorvolare comodamente sulle differenze tra natura e arte. Il processo creativo è lungo e dettagliato; partendo da un abbozzo iniziale l'opera viene modificata e perfezionata più volte. Per lo più il creatore modella la propria opera d'arte per il suo pubblico particolare. Chiaramente, il compositore che coinvolge il proprio pubblico crea una reazione emotiva più forte che può essere cumulativa.

Leggendo i diversi carteggi epistolari sulla creazione di un capolavoro operistico, emergono subito con chiarezza due cose. Primo, il compositore sollecita il librettista a raggiungere un determinato obiettivo, mentre egli stesso costantemente modifica il suo abbozzo per realizzare il proprio fine. Spesso

questo sviluppo prosegue anche dopo la prima rappresentazione, tra una rappresentazione iniziale e l'altra, oppure nei revival successivi. Due delle arie di maggior successo del *Don Giovanni*, "Dalla sua pace" e "Mi tradi", non erano presenti nella rappresentazione originale di Praga. Alla sua prima rappresentazione, *Madama Butterfly* non era l'opera che conosciamo oggi: Pinkerton non ricompariva nel terzo atto.

In secondo luogo, ci si rende conto che il compositore crea la sua opera anche per un particolare teatro, un particolare organico di musicisti e cantanti e un particolare pubblico. La corrispondenza tra Mozart e il padre descrive non solo le concessioni che il compositore fu costretto a fare per ovviare alle pecche tecniche di un particolare interprete, ma anche gli effetti che era in grado di ottenere sfruttando i vantaggi delle forze a sua disposizione. Rossini compose molti ruoli di coloratura per mezzosoprano per la sua amante, Isabella Colbran. Persino la censura spesso rappresentò una forza formativa e il termine formativo qui viene utilizzato intenzionalmente. *Un ballo in maschera* deve la sua forma finale ad una battaglia tra Verdi e la censura. Però la forza esterna più importante forse fu il pubblico. Il compositore, uomo di

teatro, sapeva che il successo della sua opera e quello suo personale dipendevano dalle reazioni del pubblico. La migliore reazione si ottiene non solo se l'opera è un successo dal punto di vista artistico, ma anche se è in linea con la consapevolezza letteraria, politica, nazionalistica e non esclusivamente estetica di un particolare pubblico, in un particolare momento e in un particolare luogo. Il compositore giovane adattava la sua opera al proprio pubblico, quello affermato selezionava la città che avrebbe apprezzato un'opera nuova. Non si trattava solo di differenze locali: Mozart addirittura utilizzò due diverse lingue, dal punto di vista musicale e verbale, per il suo pubblico imperiale in *Così fan tutte* e per il pubblico popolare della stessa città in *Die Zauberflöte*. Le opere parigine di Gluck, Rossini, Donizetti e Verdi furono composte su libretti francesi e nel rispetto del gusto parigino.

Cosa succedeva all'opera quando raggiungeva il teatro? La prima si svolgeva sotto la supervisione del compositore e, una volta stabilita la struttura musicale, quest'allestimento diventava la matrice di tutte le rappresentazioni successive. Analogamente, la D'Oyly Carte Opera Company ripropone gli allestimenti originali; l'esempio migliore di

questo sistema oggi è rappresentato da musical americani come *West Side Story*, che conserva ogni gesto della concezione originale. In questo modo, le intenzioni originali del compositore rimangono disponibili a noi oggi, con il vantaggio dell'autenticità.

Congelare l'opera in uno stampo fisso, però, può creare degli svantaggi. Le rappresentazioni non si sviluppano e gli interpreti vengono immobilizzati in un corsetto di routine fisse. Il brano non cambia con l'evoluzione dei gusti sociali e, se viene riprodotto nello stesso modo in un paese o continente diverso, il suo significato per il nuovo pubblico può essere gravemente indebolito, specialmente se sono presenti delle barriere linguistiche.

Un'opera nuova spesso viene riproposta alcuni anni dopo e il compositore fornisce una nuova creazione. *Orfeo*, *Idomeneo*, *Don Giovanni*, *Fidelio*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Cardillac*, *Troilus and Cressida* – l'elenco non si esaurisce qui. Chissà, forse Mozart avrebbe riscritto *Le nozze di Figaro* se l'avesse proposta a Londra nel 1830. E Bizet, se fosse vissuto così a lungo, non avrebbe composto recitativi cantati per *Carmen* quando fu presentata all'Opéra?

Quando un teatro lirico ritiene opportuno allestire una determinata opera che non è

ancora inclusa nel suo repertorio, il regista deve scegliere tra la riproduzione e la nuova creazione, indipendentemente dal fatto che il compositore sia ancora in vita. Se l'opera è in una lingua incomprensibile al pubblico, la scelta sta tra la riproduzione nella lingua originale o la nuova creazione in traduzione. In entrambi i casi si rischia l'insuccesso, ma una nuova creazione senza il compositore può trasformarsi in un fiasco più disastroso o in un successo maggiore. L'ambientazione, l'allestimento, la traduzione, l'edizione musicale da utilizzare possono essere adattati al teatro, agli artisti disponibili e forse, soprattutto, alla temperatura emotiva del pubblico in un momento e un luogo particolare. Spesso la traduzione riesce non solo a rendere comprensibile e quindi disponibile e immediata un'opera a ciascuno spettatore, parlandogli nella propria lingua, ma anche a chiarire un testo che esiste in forma antiquata oppure oscura. A questo proposito, la recensione del quotidiano tedesco *Die Welt*, che viene riportata di seguito, serve a far luce sui problemi del tedesco moderno nei confronti delle circonvoluzioni verbali di Wagner.

Il *Ring* allestito in inglese al Coliseum è una nuova creazione. Il suo straordinario successo si spiega con il fatto che l'opera è stata resa

accessibile a molti che non avevano potuto apprezzare questo grande capolavoro attraverso la riproduzione. Il *Ring* non si rivolge solo agli addetti ai lavori. Oggi è disponibile a tutti; l'obiettivo di questa registrazione è di renderlo disponibile a coloro che non potranno mai partecipare alle rappresentazioni teatrali. La Peter Moores Foundation è orgogliosa di offrire a questa grande interpretazione una possibilità di essere apprezzata in maniera più completa.

Peter Moores

© 1975 Peter Moores

...E l'Alberich inglese oggi può rimproverare giustamente l'Alberich tedesco con le parole, "Com'è oscuro il tuo modo di dirmi delle cose che conosco così chiaramente". Andrew Porter, oggi prestigioso critico dell'influente periodico americano *The New Yorker*, ha preparato una nuova traduzione in inglese del *Ring* per l'allestimento della tetralogia presso il Coliseum di Londra. La traduzione è straordinariamente riuscita – e bisogna considerare che non si trattava di un'impresa semplice. Grazie all'abilità di Porter, oggi solo i caricaturisti possono descrivere *Siegfried* come una

successione infinita di "Hoho! Hahei!" e di qualche "Heil", che, chiaramente, appare molto più educato se trasformato nell'inglese "Hail".

La traduzione di Porter è stata molto agevolata dal fatto che in inglese esistono molte più parole monosillabiche rispetto al tedesco, un vantaggio che il traduttore è riuscito a sfruttare egregiamente. Gli Inglesi oggi hanno un *Ring* per il ventesimo secolo, mentre noi, con denti sempre più deboli, siamo ancora costretti a masticare la lingua di Wagner, che sembra sempre più stridente per noi con il passare del tempo. È strano, ma la traduzione di Porter conferisce al libretto wagneriano una caratteristica di limpida nitidezza, straordinariamente notevole. Già la sola possibilità di provarla e apprezzarla è una delle virtù di questa registrazione...

Estratto da "Alberich singt an der Themse"

(Alberich canta lungo il Tamigi) da

"Discophilus" in *Die Welt*, 30 novembre 1974

¹Le riflessioni di P. Moores sono rivolte ovviamente ai lettori di lingua inglese e una traduzione non può che rispecchiarlo, ma gli assunti generali possono essere validi per gli appassionati di musica di ogni nazionalità. [N.d.T.]

Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Il "Ring" di Goodall

Molti l'hanno chiamato il "*Ring* di Goodall", ma questo *Ring* appartiene a tutti, è il *Ring* nazionale inglese. La cosa più bella sta nel fatto che si tratta di uno sforzo congiunto. Si dice che negli ultimi cinquant'anni io sia stato l'unico a dirigere il *Ring* in tedesco e in inglese. Quando viene eseguito in tedesco, il pubblico, che per la maggior parte non conosce la lingua, rimane ad aspettare il momento *clou*, e l'accento si sposta quasi interamente sulla musica, anziché sul testo. Quando è eseguito in inglese, assume per me un'immediatezza particolare, che si percepisce nel pubblico, perché capisce. È una sensazione meravigliosa e compensa eventuali scollature tra le parole e il tono causate da qualche pecca nella traduzione. Wagner desiderava che il *Ring* venisse compreso. Il testo fu composto per primo e la musica venne dopo.

Quando Wagner iniziò a scrivere il testo della *Morte di Siegfried* ("Siegfrieds Tod"), si rese conto che era necessario spiegare l'antefatto risalendo fin quasi all'inizio, al peccato originale: la rinuncia all'amore a favore del potere e dell'avidità che si ritorce su Siegfried, sebbene egli sia in certo modo innocente. La natura va lasciata com'è. Il Reno continua a scorrere senza motivo. È solo

natura. Nella sua saggezza, Dio o la natura, a seconda delle convinzioni personali, ha deciso di nascondere l'atomo, ma noi l'abbiamo scoperto. E basti pensare a cosa è capace di fare l'atomo... Abbiamo scatenato più distruzione noi negli ultimi cinquant'anni che nei millenni precedenti. Stiamo avvelenando gli oceani, abbiamo distrutto la metà delle razze animali. L'equilibrio della natura è talmente delicato che noi turbiamo la purezza del mondo. Non possiamo farne a meno. Questo è il peccato originale ed è questo il significato del *Ring*; Adamo ed Eva nel paradiso terrestre, la morte dell'innocenza del mondo, la distruzione di un sistema mondiale. Il poema del *Ring* ha la potenza e l'eternità del mito. Questo è il suo significato e in questo sta la sua profondità.

È vero, io sono un perfezionista, non in fatto di dettagli, ma per quanto riguarda lo stato d'animo e il significato. Secondo me la registrazione della *Walküre* in inglese non può essere un'esecuzione perfetta, anche se non sono mai stato altrettanto soddisfatto di Curphey e Remedios nel primo atto. Preferisco le registrazioni dal vivo perché secondo me è importante il contributo del pubblico all'interpretazione. *Siegfried* e *Das Rheingold* in inglese sono meravigliosi: qui e là si può

sentire l'eco di una risata che, secondo me, è appropriato. Mi piace che sia presente nella registrazione. Secondo me bisogna ridere qualche volta ascoltando il *Ring* – questo lo rende vivo.

© Reginald Goodall

Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Argomento

In principio la terra era popolata da una razza di giganti: gente semplice, forte, lavoratrice, contenta di vivere con semplicità. Gli unici problemi erano provocati dagli scontri con i Nibelunghi, una razza di nani che vivevano in caverne sotterranee ed erano obbligati dal loro capo, Alberich, dopo gli eventi della scena 1, a servire le sue ambizioni di dominazione del mondo. Ma i nani non riuscivano mai a soggiogare i giganti e l'estremo controllo del mondo apparteneva alla stirpe degli dei, spiriti di luce e aria guidati da Wotan, che esercitava un governo benevolo sulla terra.

Das Rheingold, prologo di questo epico dramma, si svolge al mattino del mondo tra queste tre stirpi del creato. Vicini agli dei, ma non appartenenti al loro numero sono Loge, spirito del fuoco e dell'astuzia, che Wotan ha domato e di cui è diventato amico ed Erda, la

Madre Terra, fonte di ogni saggezza e madre delle tre Norne o Fati. L'ultimo dei quattro elementi, l'acqua, è il primo a comparire in quest'opera: si tratta del Reno e le sue tre fanciulle.

Primo Compact Disc

Scena 1

Il fondo del Reno

[1] Il preludio ci immerge immediatamente in fondo al Reno. L'oscurità inizialmente è così intensa che riusciamo ad udire e percepire, ma non riusciamo ancora a vedere, la sua enorme vastità e il delicato fruscio della risacca (otto corni che suonano un arpeggio ascendente in mi bemolle uno dopo l'altro). Gradualmente i sensi percepiscono l'accelerazione delle correnti in superficie e delle protuberanze rocciose sul letto del fiume, che si allungano in lontananza.

[2] Compare nuotando l'Ondina Woglinde, una delle figlie del Reno, e canta delle parole solo in parte intelligibili mentre gira intorno a uno degli scogli più imponenti. Una delle sue sorelle, Wellgunde, si unisce a lei inseguendola e una terza, Flosshilde, si immerge, rimproverandole per la loro disattenzione; dovrebbero custodire l'oro che riposa sulla roccia. Ma anche lei viene coinvolta nel gioco.

Mentre si inseguono, un'ombra sinistra disturba la pallida foschia del letto del fiume.

[3] Alberich si è arrampicato attraverso la fenditura di una roccia e ascolta, non visto, l'innocente gioco delle belle ninfe. Tenta di fraternizzare con loro, ma le fanciulle rimangono inorridite dalla sua bruttezza e Flosshilde sospetta che abbia delle mire poco pulite. Ma dai suoi inviti lascivi è chiaro che non rappresenta una minaccia per l'oro.

[4] Le Ondine decidono di prenderlo in giro e, una dopo l'altra, si fanno inseguire da una roccia all'altra; la terza, Flosshilde, gli permette di avvicinarla e poi fugge rapidamente. Sentendosi provocato, Alberich si accanisce a rincorrere le Ondine, che sfrecciano da una roccia all'altra, prendendosi gioco dei suoi sforzi.

[5] All'improvviso dall'alto comincia a manifestarsi una luce brillante sulla roccia centrale; i raggi del sole penetrano attraverso le acque e illuminano l'oro del Reno. Le Ondine esaltano allegramente il tesoro a cui fanno la guardia. [6] Alberich si incuriosisce e viene a sapere che non si tratta solo di un ornamento scintillante; chi sappia forgiare un anello con esso, avrà il dominio del mondo. Flosshilde teme di aver detto troppo finché Woglinde le ricorda che l'oro può essere ottenuto solo da

chi è disposto a rinunciare all'amore ("Solo chi dell'amore la potenza rinnega"), e nessuno, men che mai questo spauracchio infatuato, sarebbe disposto a farlo. Ma hanno abbassato la guardia troppo presto: ^[7] Alberich, di cui hanno disprezzato l'amore, è infinitamente avido di potere e quindi è perfettamente disposto a pagare questo prezzo per impadronirsi dell'oro. Si avvicina ad esso prima che se ne accorgano le figlie del Reno; ^[8] lancia una terribile maledizione sull'amore, afferra l'oro e scompare nelle profondità. Ai lamenti delle figlie del Reno risponde l'eco della sua risata di scherno.

Scende di nuovo l'oscurità, le acque continuano a fluire; corni inglesi e tedeschi ricordano la melodia della maledizione dell'amore; le nubi ammantano la scena.

Scena 2

Spazio aperto su un altopiano

Quando le nubi si disperdono, al suono del tema dell'anello sui corni, ci troviamo trasportati in cima ad un'alta montagna che s'innalza sul Reno. Wotan e sua moglie Fricka giacciono profondamente addormentati e al suo levarsi, l'alba rivela un enorme castello scintillante arroccato su una montagna più lontana. È il Walhalla, simbolo della potenza

di Wotan (e la somiglianza del tema del Walhalla, per le tube wagneriane, con quello dell'anello ci ricorda che anch'esso è un simbolo di potere e che Wotan e Alberich non sono diversi l'uno dall'altro come vorrebbero pensare).

^[9] Fricka si sveglia per prima, vede il nuovo castello e sveglia il marito, che ne ammira lo splendore ("Perfetta l'opera perenne!"). La moglie però gli ricorda ansiosamente che deve essere pagato e il prezzo pattuito con i giganti che l'hanno costruito è sua sorella, Freia (talvolta chiamata Holda), dea dell'eterna giovinezza e custode delle sacre mele che hanno il potere di ringiovanire. Fricka è furibonda perché il prezzo è stato concordato durante una sua assenza, ma desidera il castello quando Wotan, ^[10] se non altro perché spera che serva a farlo rimanere a casa e a sottrarlo dalla tentazione dell'adulterio. Il dio non ha intenzione di mantenere la promessa di consegnare Freia in cambio del Walhalla e fa affidamento su Loge, suo astuto consigliere (aveva suggerito lui il contratto) perché trovi un altro mezzo per soddisfare i giganti.

^[11] Entra Freia, angosciata, e ^[12] ben presto la seguono i due giganti costruttori del castello, giunti per esigere il compenso: Fasolt è infatuato della bellezza di Freia; suo fratello

Fafner, più cinico e sprezzante, desidera solo sottrarre agli dei il potere che ha Freia di ringiovanire, perché senza di lei essi invecchieranno e moriranno, lasciando il potere ai giganti. ^[13] I due resistono al debole tentativo di Wotan di convincerli a indicare un'altra forma di pagamento. ^[14] I fratelli di Freia, Froh e Donner, uno radiante genialità, l'altro un aggressivo criminale, arrivano appena in tempo per impedire che Freia venga trascinata via. Wotan impedisce a Donner di domare i giganti con la forza ("Niente con la violenza!").

Secondo Compact Disc

^[1] – ^[2] Finalmente arriva Loge, che ha verificato la qualità dei lavori di costruzione e ^[3] si lamenta degli insulti che riceve per il suo ritardo ("Sempre ingratitudine è di Loge il compenso!"). Ha cercato dappertutto anche un pagamento alternativo. Ma sembra che nessuno sia in grado di suggerire una cosa più desiderabile di una bella donna – ^[4] solo un uomo, Alberich, è stato disposto a rinunciare all'amore pur di impossessarsi dell'oro del Reno, con il quale ha forgiato un anello onnipotente. Loge narra la storia del furto di Alberich come se riferisse soltanto una protesta

delle figlie del Reno; ^[5] ma questo non lascia indifferenti né i giganti – ^[6] né, tantomeno, gli dei.

^[7] Entrambe le parti decidono che l'oro è estremamente desiderabile e Loge assicura Wotan che si può ottenere senza dover rinunciare all'amore, ma semplicemente con il furto, che non è affatto un crimine, aggiunge, purché Wotan lo restituisca al Reno. ^[8] Fafner annuncia che Freia potrà rimanere con gli dei se Wotan pagherà i giganti con l'oro di Alberich. Invano Wotan ribatte che l'oro non è suo e non può consegnarlo; i due giganti prendono in ostaggio Freia, promettendo di ritornare la sera stessa e riportarla indietro in cambio dell'oro. ^[9] – ^[10] Non appena escono, si capisce subito che senza Freia e le sue mele gli dei invecchiano e si indeboliscono, privi di ogni potere di agire. ^[11] Con grande sollievo di Fricka e degli altri, Wotan decide di andare con Loge fino al Nibelheim per impadronirsi dell'oro e pagare il riscatto di Freia. I due scivolano attraverso una fenditura nella roccia e scendono all'interno di una montagna fino alle caverne sotterranee dove si possono sentire i Nibelunghi, schiavi di Alberich, mentre martellano senza sosta le loro incudini (ben diciotto, come sottolinea la partitura di Wagner).

Scena 3*Una caverna sotterranea*

[12] Mentre i viaggiatori stanno per terminare la loro discesa, si profila un vasto antro in cui Alberich ha trascinato suo fratello Mime per fargli consegnare l'ultimo oggetto da lui fabbricato. Si tratta di un elmo magico d'oro, il Tarnhelm, che consente a chi lo indossa di essere invisibile o cambiare sembianza. Alberich lotta per strapparli al suo creatore, il quale sostiene che è ancora difettoso; [13] lo prova con successo, rendendosi invisibile, quindi picchia Mime per la sua tentata disonestà. Mime continua a gemere in un angolo quando [14] arrivano Wotan e Loge e [15] si fanno rivelare le condizioni di lavoro nel Nibelheim e la magia del Tarnhelm. Loge promette in fretta aiuto ai nani lavoratori, mentre [16] irrompe Alberich, seguito da un'orda di Nibelunghi carichi dei frutti del proprio lavoro. Nel vedere Wotan e Loge, congeda gli altri minacciandoli con l'anello; tutti fuggono, tra grida di terrore, per ritornare al proprio lavoro. [17] Loge adesso cerca di ingraziarsi Alberich, presentandosi come vecchio e fidato spirito del fuoco. [18] Alberich non si tranquillizza molto e riconosce Wotan; [19] ma le sue manie di grandezza lo rendono audace e si vanta delle proprie imprese,

soprattutto del Tarnhelm. Loge finge incredulità e sfida Alberich a dimostrare le virtù dell'elmo magico.

Terzo Compact Disc

[1] Alberich si trasforma in drago mostruoso e poi, dopo un'altra provocazione, in un minuscolo rospo. Wotan lo calpesta subito, Loge gli toglie il Tarnhelm e lo imprigiona.

[2] I due trascinano il nano sulla cima rocciosa, ripassando vicino alle incudini e soffermandosi nel crepaccio.

Scena 4*Spazio aperto su un altopiano*

[3] Wotan e Loge portano Alberich, strettamente legato, sull'altopiano e gli comunicano che per essere liberato dovrà consegnare l'oro. Il nano accetta subito perché sa che l'anello può ricostituire e accrescere eternamente il suo tesoro. [4] Opera il suo incantesimo e i Nibelunghi portano il tesoro delle loro grotte. [5] Quando chiede la libertà, Loge insiste nel tenere il Tarnhelm e Wotan nel volere anche l'anello. Alberich, inorridito, offre qualunque altra cosa, persino la vita, ma si rende conto ben presto che anche questo lo priverebbe dell'anello. Wotan glielo prende, lo

slega e [6] immediatamente ("Sono libero ora?") il nano scaglia una maledizione fatale su chiunque si impossessi dell'anello: chi non l'avrà vorrà ottenerlo, chi l'avrà vivrà nel terrore di perderlo e sarà condannato a una morte infelice finché l'anello non sarà restituito ad Alberich. Con questa terribile imprecazione si allontana, lasciandosi dietro un terribile tema minaccioso.

[7] Ritornano gli altri dei. Quasi subito Fasolt e Fafner riportano Freia e, [8] vedendo l'oro, chiedono che venga accatastato a un'altezza e a un'ampiezza tali da nascondere la figura di Freia. [9] La loro avidità non viene soddisfatta finché non viene aggiunto il Tarnhelm; [10] persino allora, Fasolt trova una minuscola apertura attraverso la quale riesce a scorgere lo sguardo radioso di Freia, ed esige l'anello per riempirla. Wotan rifiuta categoricamente; ha abbandonato ogni pretesa di restituirlo alle figlie del Reno e intende tenerselo di prepotenza. I giganti si preparano ad allontanarsi con Freia, questa volta per sempre; [11] ma l'apparizione della Madre Terra ("Cedi, Wotan, cedi!") ammonisce Wotan che l'anello va abbandonato perché in ogni caso il destino degli dei è segnato.

[12] Wotan si convince, getta l'anello sul mucchio d'oro e riabbraccia Freia. [13] I giganti

cominciano immediatamente a litigare sulla spartizione dell'oro e quando Fasolt, su consiglio di Loge, cerca di strappargli l'anello, Fafner solleva la propria clava e l'uccide; poi con calma finisce di accumulare il riscatto di Freia in un sacco che si carica sulle spalle, prima di allontanarsi. [14] – [15] La nebbia è ancora fitta nell'aria e Donner la disperde suscitando un sensazionale temporale ("Heda! Heda! Hedo!"). [16] Froh costruisce un ponte d'arcobaleno sulla valle e si scorge ancora una volta il Walhalla. [17] Wotan saluta ancora una volta la sua nuova fortezza ("Serótino splende l'occhio del sole") e gli dei si preparano ad attraversare il ponte d'arcobaleno, anche se Loge confessa di vergognarsi perché è associato con loro. [18] Mentre tutti salgono sul ponte, si sente il lamento delle figlie del Reno per la perdita dell'oro. Ma adesso, a causa del suo inganno, Wotan non può più aiutarle e ordina irato a Loge di farle tacere. Le figlie del Reno piangono ancora mentre gli dei attraversano il ponte ed entrano nel Walhalla. *Das Rheingold* termina con un superbo posludio orchestrale che comprende sei arpe.

William Mann

Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Nato in South Africa, il baritono basso **Norman Bailey** ha studiato a Vienna e durante la prima parte della sua carriera ha cantato in Austria e Germania. È poi ritornato nel Regno Unito dove ha cantato con tutte le compagnie d'opera più importanti. È uno dei principali cantanti di Wagner della sua generazione, collegato particolarmente con la parte del personaggio principale nel *Fliegende Holländer* e come Hans Sachs in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Ha anche cantato come Landgraf in *Tannhäuser* con Opera North e Wotan/il Viandante e Gunther con l'English National Opera, dove come membro della compagnia ha anche cantato nella parte di Pizarro (*Leonore* di Beethoven), Conte di Luna (*Il trovatore*), Alfio (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Scarpia (*Tosca*), il Padre (*Hänsel und Gretel*), il Principe Gremin (*Eugene Onegin*), Kutuzov (*Guerra e pace* di Prokof'ev) e il Guardaboschi (*La piccola volpe astuta*) tra gli altri ruoli. Con la Royal Opera, Covent Garden è comparso nella parte di Balstrode (*Peter Grimes*, anche in tournée a Palermo) e di Germont (*La traviata*), Ford (*Falstaff*), Wolfram (*Tannhäuser*), Kurwenal (*Tristan und Isolde*), Donner (*Das Rheingold*), Wotan (*Die Walküre*), Klingsor e Amfortas (*Parsifal*), Jochanaan (*Salome*) ed il Maestro di musica

(*Ariadne auf Naxos*). Ruoli più recenti hanno incluso Oroveso (*Norma*), Banquo (*Macbeth*), il Re (*Aida*), il Dottore (*Wozzeck*) e Schigolch (*Lulu*). La sua carriera internazionale lo ha visto sui palcoscenici delle opere ed ai festival più importanti in tutta Europa e negli Stati Uniti, incluse parecchie stagioni a Bayreuth, ed a collaborare con direttori quali Sir Colin Davis, Sir Georg Solti, James Levine, Carlo Maria Giulini, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Claudio Abbado e Daniel Barenboim. Per Chandos ha registrato la parte principale in *King Priam* di Sir Michael Tippett.

Il baritono **Norman Welsby** è nato a Warrington, nel Lancashire e ha studiato presso il Royal Manchester College of Music (oggi Royal Northern College of Music). Dopo due stagioni con la Glyndebourne Festival Opera, dove ha interpretato, tra l'altro, il ruolo di protagonista in *Falstaff*, è entrato alla Sadler's Wells Opera (oggi English National Opera), debuttando nelle vesti di Masetto (*Don Giovanni*). I diversi ruoli da lui interpretati con la compagnia vanno da Liberto ne *L'incoronazione di Poppea* a Pentheus nella prima britannica di *The Bassarids* di Hans Werner Henze e comprendono anche la parte di protagonista

nelle *Nozze di Figaro*, l'Oratore (*Die Zauberflöte*), Alfio (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Silvio (*Pagliacci*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) e Schlemil (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*). L'artista ha lavorato molto anche con la Royal Opera, Covent Garden.

Il tenore **Robert Ferguson** è nato ad Atene e ha studiato presso il Royal Manchester College of Music (oggi Royal Northern College of Music) con Frederick Cox. Ha interpretato i ruoli di Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) e Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) con la Yorkshire Opera, e ha esordito alla Sadler's Wells Opera (oggi English National Opera) nelle vesti di Pinkerton, passando poi ai ruoli di Nerone (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Turiddu (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Camille (*Die lustige Witwe*) e Tikhon (*Kat'a Kabanová*).

Nato a Saskatchewan, in Canada, **Emile Belcourt** ha studiato inizialmente come baritono leggero presso l'accademia musicale di Vienna, poi è entrato nelle compagnie liriche di Ulm e Bonn dove ha interpretato i ruoli di Don Giovanni, Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) e Dr Falke (*Die Fledermaus*). Avendo deciso di diventare tenore, si è trasferito a

Parigi per studiare con Pierre Bernac e Germaine Lubin. Dopo un'interpretazione televisiva di *Pelléas et Mélisande* di Debussy a Parigi, veniva scelto per cantare Pelléas alla Scottish Opera, poi Gonzalve ne *L'Heure espagnole* di Ravel diretta da Georg Solti alla Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Trasferitosi in Inghilterra, ha iniziato una lunga collaborazione con la Sadler's Wells Opera (oggi English National Opera) che ha incluso, oltre al suo famoso Loge in *Das Rheingold*, alcuni ruoli in *Orphée aux enfers*, *Barbe-Bleue* e *Patience*. Il suo vasto repertorio va da Eride (*Salome*) e la prima britannica della versione in tre atti della *Lulu* di Berg al Covent Garden, a Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*) e il conte Danilo (*Die lustige Witwe*), oltre a includere il ruolo di protagonista di *Man of La Mancha* nel West End di Londra. Il cantante è comparso inoltre con la Welsh National Opera, il Châtelet théâtre musical, la Canadian Opera Company, la San Francisco Opera, e la Seattle Opera dove ha cantato Tristano. Il suo repertorio contemporaneo comprende *The Violins of Saint-Jacques* e *Lucky-Peter's Journey* di Malcolm Williamson, *A Penny for a Song* di Sir Richard Rodney Bennett, *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* di Iain Hamilton e *Toussaint L'Ouverture* di David Blake.

Nato nell'Essex, dopo aver frequentato l'università di Oxford, **Robert Lloyd** ha abbandonato lo studio della storia per dedicarsi al canto a 28 anni. Veniva nominato basso solista presso The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, dove ha interpretato un repertorio vastissimo ed è stato il primo basso britannico a interpretare il ruolo di protagonista nel *Boris Godunov*, nell'allestimento del compianto Andrei Tarkovsky. L'allestimento, con Robert Lloyd nelle vesti di Boris, più tardi si sarebbe trasferito alla Kirov Opera di Leningrado, dove è stato trasmesso a livello internazionale, e all'Opera di Vienna, dove è stato diretto da Claudio Abbado. Il cantante ha portato il ruolo anche ad Amsterdam e Firenze. Oltre alle ultime apparizioni al Covent Garden (che comprendono *Roméo et Juliette*, *Chérubin* e *Samson et Dalila*), ha fatto visita al Teatro alla Scala di Milano (*Der fliegende Holländer* e *Parsifal*), alla Deutsche Oper di Berlino (*Tristan und Isolde*), all'Opera dei Paesi Bassi (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), al Festival di Salisburgo (*Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* e *Les Troyens*), alla Metropolitan Opera di New York (*Die Zauberflöte*, *Fidelio*, *Rigoletto*, *Aida* e *Faust*), all'Opera di San Francisco (*L'incoronazione di Poppea* e *Don Carlos*) e la Lyric Opera di Chicago (*Simon Boccanegra*).

Ha lavorato con i più grandi direttori d'orchestra del mondo e svolge un'eccezionale attività concertistica, partecipando anche a moltissime registrazioni e trasmissioni. Nel 1991 ha ricevuto l'onorificenza CBE.

Il cantante basso australiano **Clifford Grant** ha studiato a Sydney, Melbourne e Londra, ed ha fatto la sua prima comparsa in un'opera con la New South Wales Opera Company nel ruolo di Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. È entrato nella Sadler's Wells Opera (che più tardi diventò l'English National Opera), dove è comparso nella parte di Seneca (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), del Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*), di Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), di Silva (*Ernani*), del Padre Guardiano (*La forza del destino*), di Filippo II (*Don Carlos*), di Re Enrico (*Lohengrin*), di Pogner (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), di Fafner, Hunding e Hagen (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*) e nei ruoli principali ne *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon*, *Oedipus Rex* e *Peter Grimes*. È comparso anche alla Royal Opera, Covent Garden, la Welsh National Opera, la Glyndebourne Festival Opera, l'Opéra de Marseille, la San Francisco Opera, e a Sydney. Dopo essere comparso ne *Les Huguenots* di

Meyerbeer con l'Opera Australia nel 1990, ha lasciato l'opera, ritornando però a cantare nel 1993 come Alvis Badoero ne *La Gioconda* con l'Opera North. Ha collaborato con artisti insigni quali Dame Joan Sutherland, Otto Klemperer, Sir Adrian Boult e Sir Colin Davis.

Il baritono inglese **Derek Hammond-Stroud** ha studiato con Elena Gerhardt e Gerhard Hüsch a Monaco e a Londra; la sua carriera lo ha portato sulle pedane del recital e sulle scene del teatro lirico. Ha cantato con le principali compagnie liriche britanniche; in Europa è stato impegnato, tra l'altro, con l'Opera nazionale della Baviera di Monaco, il Theater an der Wien, il Theater am Gärtnerplatz, e con l'Opera dei Paesi Bassi per tre stagioni. Nell'America del nord e del sud ha cantato al Teatro Colón di Buenos Aires, al Metropolitan Opera di New York e all'Opera di San Diego, tra l'altro. Tra i suoi ruoli principali vanno ricordati Dottor Bartolo, Rigoletto, Fra Melitone (*La forza del destino*), Sharpless, Tonio (*Pagliacci*), Papageno, Alberich, Beckmesser, Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Krušina (*La sposa venduta*) e Sir Robert Cecil (*Gloriana*) oltre a numerosi personaggi delle opere di Gilbert e Sullivan e di Offenbach. Ha

partecipato a diverse prime teatrali britanniche, tra cui quelle di *Orfeo ed Euridice* di Haydn (nel ruolo di Creonte), *La pietra del paragone* di Rossini (Pacuvio), *Guerra e Pace* di Prokof'ev (nel ruolo di Napoleone, con l'English National Opera) e *Der Besuch der alten Dame* di Gottfried von Einem (nelle vesti del Maestro a Glyndebourne). Ha creato il ruolo del Vecchio pescatore nella prima mondiale di *The Violins of Saint-Jacques* di Malcolm Williamson a Sadler's Wells. Ha ricevuto numerose onorificenze, tra cui un OBE nel 1987.

Il tenore australiano **Gregory Dempsey**, nato a Melbourne, ha esordito nelle vesti di Don Ottavio per la National Opera Company della sua città, prima di entrare a far parte della Elizabethan Trust Opera Company. In seguito alla sua apparizione nel ruolo di Jenik nella *Sposa venduta* con la Sadler's Wells Opera (poi divenuta English National Opera) veniva nominato tenore stabile della compagnia. Tra i suoi numerosi ruoli vanno ricordati Florestan, Max, Erik (*Der fliegende Holländer*), David (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Mime, Don José, Canio, Gregor (*L'affare Makropulos*), Skuratov (*Da una casa di morti*), Tom Rakewell ed Essex (*Gloriana*). È stato inoltre

frequente ospite della Royal Opera, Covent Garden, della Welsh National Opera e della Scottish Opera; ha cantato al Festival di Edimburgo e al Festival di Aldeburgh. All'estero è comparso con la San Francisco Opera oltre che a Bruxelles, Stoccarda e altre città europee. Oggi abita in Australia, dove si è esibito spesso con l'Australian Opera (poi divenuta Opera Australia) e con la Victoria State Opera. Inoltre è apparso al Festival di Adelaide (protagonista en titre, *Viaggi del signor Brouček*, e Mark in *The Midsummer Marriage* di Tippett).

Il mezzosoprano **Katherine Pring** ha studiato presso il Royal College of Music di Londra e presso il Conservatorio di Ginevra, e ha fatto un esordio spettacolare nelle vesti di Flora (*La traviata*) presso il Grand Théâtre di Ginevra. Dopo essere entrata alla Sadler's Wells Opera (oggi English National Opera), ha interpretato, tra l'altro, i ruoli di Ottavia (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Azucena (*Il trovatore*), Eboli (*Don Carlos*), Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*), il principe Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*), Carmen, Jocasta (*Oedipus Rex*), e Agave nella prima teatrale britannica di *The Bassarids* di Henze. Ha esordito alla Royal Opera, Covent Garden nel

ruolo di Thea in *The Knot Garden* di Tippett, e vi ha fatto ritorno con Preziosilla (*La forza del destino*) e Kate Julian (*Owen Wingrave* di Britten). È stata Baba la turca (*The Rake's Progress*) al festival di Glyndebourne, Dalila (*Samson et Dalila*) con l'English National Opera North (oggi Opera North), Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*) a Düsseldorf, la principessa Marina (*Boris Godunov*) a Francoforte e Preziosilla all'Opéra di Parigi. L'esordio americano è stato nelle vesti di Carmen all'Opera di San Diego, dove la cantante è ritornata due anni dopo nel ruolo di Eboli. Katherine Pring è un'affermata interprete di concerti e recital e si è esibita con direttori del calibro di Claudio Abbado, Christoph von Dohnanyi e Sir Charles Mackerras.

Il soprano canadese **Lois McDonall** ha conquistato una reputazione speciale per la naturale bellezza della sua voce e la tecnica sicura che le ha consentito di interpretare con altrettanta eleganza la musica di Mozart e quella di Richard Strauss. Ha esordito con la Canadian Opera Company nel *Segreto di Susanna* di Wolf-Ferrari. Alle Städtische Bühnen di Flensburg ha cantato i ruoli di Constanze (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*),

Elsa (*Lohengrin*), Tosca e Arabella prima di esordire con la Sadler's Wells Opera (oggi English National Opera) nelle vesti della Semele di Handel. I ruoli seguenti con la compagnia comprendono Ilia (*Idomeneo*), la Contessa (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Donna Elvira e Donna Anna, Fiordiligi, la protagonista di *Euryanthe*, Lucrezia Contarini (*I due Foscari*), Gilda, Violetta, Manon (Massenet), Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*), la Marschallin (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Jenny (*The Mines of Sulphur* di Sir Richard Rodney Bennett) e il ruolo di protagonista alla prima mondiale di *Anna Karenina* di Iain Hamilton, oltre a Freia nel famoso ciclo del *Ring* diretto da Reginald Goodall. Oltre alla Royal Opera, Covent Garden, è comparsa con la Welsh National Opera, la Scottish Opera, la Dublin Grand Opera, e ha partecipato ai Promenade Concerts della BBC. La sua discografia comprende *Maria Padilla* di Donizetti per Opera Rara.

Il contralto **Anne Collins** ha studiato presso il Royal College of Music e ha esordito a Londra con un recital presso la Purcell Room. Poco dopo entrava alla Sadler's Wells Opera (oggi English National Opera) dove il suo repertorio ha compreso ruoli ne *L'incoronazione di*

Poppea, *Le Comte Ory*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Madama Butterfly* e *Arabella* oltre a Dame Quickly (*Falstaff*), Katisha (*The Mikado*), Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*) e altre parti, tra cui soprattutto quella di Erda, nel ciclo del *Ring* di Wagner. Ha cantato spesso con The Royal Opera, Covent Garden e si è anche esibita con la Welsh National Opera (Filippievna nell'*Eugenio Onieghin*), Opera North (la nutrice in *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* e Auntie in *Peter Grimes*) e la Scottish Opera (*Ines de Castro* di James MacMillan), ed è comparsa ai festival di Glyndebourne, Aldeburgh, Wexford e Camden e ai Promenade Concerts, i concerti estivi della BBC. Ha partecipato a concerti, festival e con le compagnie liriche di tutta Europa, nei teatri di Lione, Strasburgo, Ginevra e Amburgo, presso l'Opéra di Parigi e il Châtelet théâtre musical, il Théâtre royal de la Monnaie di Bruxelles e il Teatro alla Scala di Milano. Le sue apparizioni americane l'hanno portata anche alla Metropolitan Opera di New York. Ha al suo attivo numerose registrazioni. Tra esse, per Chandos, *Peter Grimes* diretto da Richard Hickox, che ha vinto un premio *Grammy*.

Nata a Birkenhead, dopo aver vinto borse di studio a Londra e a Milano, il soprano **Valerie Masterson** ha cantato per una stagione presso

il Salzburger Landestheater, prima di entrare alla D'Oyly Carte Opera Company come soprano solista. Ha cantato con le principali compagnie liriche britanniche, tra cui la Glyndebourne Festival Opera. All'estero è comparsa al festival di Aix-en-Provence, all'Opéra di Parigi e nei teatri lirici di Tolosa, Nancy, Montpellier, Ginevra, Praga, Monaco, Milano, Barcellona, Dublino, Santiago, San Francisco, Houston, Chicago e New York. Il suo vasto repertorio spazia da *L'incoronazione di Poppea* di Monteverdi a *The Turn of the Screw* di Britten; inoltre ha preso parte alla prima mondiale di *We Come to the River* di Henze e alla prima britannica di *The King Goes Forth to France* di Sallinen, entrambe presso la Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. La sua ricca discografia comprende, *Giulio Cesare* e *La traviata* per Chandos, entrambe in associazione con la Peter Moores Foundation. Nel 1989 ha ricevuto il CBE, un'onorificenza reale.

Shelagh Squires ha studiato presso la Guildhall School of Music and Drama. È comparsa con la English National Opera, la Glyndebourne Festival Opera e la Touring Opera, e con la Metropolitan Opera di New York tra l'altro; inoltre si è esibita al festival

internazionale di Bergen, a Vienna e in Giappone. Il suo vasto repertorio include Ottavia (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Ulrica (*Un ballo in maschera*), Magdalene (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Herodias (*Salome*), Annina (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Adelaide (*Arabella*), Martha (*Faust*), la strega (*Rusalka*) e Filippievna (*Eugenio Onieghin*).

Il contralto **Helen Attfield** ha studiato presso la Royal Academy of Music, dove ha vinto molti premi. Con l'English Opera Group ha cantato in occasione della prima mondiale di *Death in Venice* di Britten. Oltre ad interpretare diversi ruoli con la English National Opera, è comparsa nelle vesti di Maddalena (*Rigoletto*) con la Welsh National Opera e si è esibita con la Handel Opera Society e con l'Opera di Bruxelles.

Acclamata dalla critica e dal pubblico, l'**Orchestra di English National Opera**, primo violino Barry Griffiths, ha ricevuto negli ultimi anni diversi premi prestigiosi, tra cui il *Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award* e un *Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera*. L'Orchestra è al centro della vita

artistica dell'Opera e, oltre a esibizioni liriche al Coliseum di Londra è stata anche vista sul palco in concerto. Inoltre molti dei musicisti partecipano al lavoro del Baylis Programme del dipartimento di educazione e "outreach" dell'Opera e con l'English National Opera Studio allo sviluppo di nuove opere, in particolare *The Silver Tassie* di Mark-Anthony Turnage che è stata uscita in prima mondiale nel febbraio 2000. L'Orchestra appare in numerose registrazioni, tra cui la sua registrazione dell'*Otello* di Verdi diretto da Mark Elder, che apparirà presto su Chandos con il patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation. Altre registrazioni per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation sono *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto* (produzione di Jonathan Miller), *La traviata* e *Werther*.

Il direttore d'orchestra inglese **Reginald Goodall** nacque nel 1901 e studiò con Malcolm Sargent e Constant Lambert al Royal College of Music. Dal 1929 al 1936 fu organista e maestro del coro a St Alban the Martyr, Holborn, dove condusse le prime esecuzioni in Inghilterra delle composizioni corali di Bruckner, Stravinsky e Szymanowski, oltre che le prime composizioni

di Britten. Verso la fine degli anni '30 lavorò per assistere, tra gli altri, Albert Coates e Malcolm Sargent. All'inizio della seconda guerra mondiale diventò direttore della Wessex Philharmonic Orchestra con base a Bournemouth.

Durante il mese di giugno 1945, facendo parte della Sadler's Wells Opera (che più tardi diventò l'English National Opera), diresse la prima esecuzione di *Peter Grimes* al Sadler's Wells Theatre appena riaperto. L'anno seguente prese parte con Ernest Ansermet alle prime esecuzioni del *Rape of Lucretia* di Britten durante la prima stagione del dopoguerra del Glyndebourne Festival. Immediatamente dopo si associò al Covent Garden, dove per venticinque anni successivi diresse un repertorio che andava da *Il trovatore* a *Troilus and Cressida*.

Solo raramente ebbe la possibilità di dirigere opere del compositore che più ammirava, Richard Wagner. Questa lacuna fu colmata nel 1968, non dalla Royal Opera ma dalla Sadler's Wells, che lo invitò a dirigere una nuova produzione dei *Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Il suo successo fu così straordinario che ritornò alla compagnia per dirigere quella leggendaria produzione completa del *Ring des Nibelungen*, costruita tra il 1970 ed il 1973 e la prima data

in inglese per molti anni. Continuò poi a dirigere *Das Rheingold* e *Die Walküre* per la Royal Opera, *Tristan und Isolde* e *Die Walküre* per la Welsh National Opera e *Tristano* e

Parsifal alla English National Opera. Ottenne l'onorificenza del CBE nel 1975 e fu fatto cavaliere nel 1985. Reginald Goodall morì nel 1990 ad ottantotto anni.



Alberich and Loge,
with the Rhinegold,
Scene 3

Anthony Crickmay/Theatre Museum, V&A



John Garner/English National Opera Archive

Wotan (Raimund Herincx) with the ring, Scene 4

132



Anthony Crickmay/Theatre Museum, V&A

Fafner, Fasolt and Freia with the Rhinegold, and with Donner and Froh in the background, Scene 4

133

COMPACT DISC ONE

Scene 1

On the bed of the Rhine

Greenish twilight, brighter towards the top, darker below. The upper part of the stage is filled with swirling waters that flow restlessly from right to left. Towards the bottom, the waters dissolve into an increasingly fine damp mist, so that a space a man's height from the ground seems to be completely free of the water, which flows like a train of clouds over the dusky bed. Craggy points of rock rise everywhere from the depths and mark the confines of the stage. The whole river-bed is broken up into a craggy confusion, so that nowhere is it completely flat, and on all sides, in the dense darkness, there seem to be deeper gorges. The orchestra begins while the curtain is still closed.

When the curtain rises, the watery depths are in full flood. In the centre of the stage, round a rock whose slender point reaches up into the brighter area of densely swirling water, one of the Rhinemaidens is circling with a graceful swimming motion.

Woglinde

- [2] Weia! Waga!
Wandering waters,
lulling our cradle!
Wagalaweia!
Wallala, weiala weia!

Wellgunde's voice (*from above*)
Woglinde, watching alone?

Woglinde

Till Wellgunde joins me down here.

Wellgunde (*dives down from the waters to the rock*)

Let's see how you watch!

(*She tries to catch Woglinde.*)

Woglinde (*swims away from her*)

Safe from your grasps!

(*They tease and playfully try to catch one another.*)

Flosshilde's voice (*from above*)

Heiala weia!

Careful, my sisters!

Wellgunde

Flosshilde, swim!

Woglinde flies:

hurry and help me to catch her!

Flosshilde (*dives down and comes between them in their play*)

The sleeping gold
calls for your care!

Back to your task
of guarding its bed,

or else you'll pay for your games!

(*With merry cries the other two separate: Flosshilde tries to catch first one, then the other; they elude her and finally combine in joint pursuit of her; thus*

they dart like fish from rock to rock, joking and laughing.

Meanwhile Alberich, clambering up a rock, has emerged from a dark chasm at the bottom. He pauses, still surrounded by darkness, and with increasing pleasure watches the water-maidens at play.)

Alberich

- [3] He, he! You nixies!
What a delightful,
delicate sight!
From Nibelheim's night
I would draw near
if I thought you'd be kind.

(*At the sound of Alberich's voice, the maidens stop their play.*)

Woglinde

Hi! Who is there?

Wellgunde

Look who is below!

Flosshilde

A voice in the dark.

(*They dive down deeper and recognise the Nibelung.*)

Woglinde and Wellgunde

Pfui! He's horrible!

Flosshilde (*swiftly darting upwards*)

Be on your guard!
Father warned us
about such a foe.

(*The others follow her, and all three gather swiftly round the central rock.*)

Alberich

You, above there!

Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde

What want you, below there?

Alberich

Only to stand
admiring your charming games;
then if you're friendly
you'll dive down
to the bottom, so I can join in!

Woglinde

He wants us to join him?

Wellgunde

He must be mad!

Alberich

You shine and gleam
in the watery gloom!
How I would love
to enfold such maids in my arms:
please come join me below!

Flosshilde

I laugh at my fears:
the dwarf is in love!

Wellgunde

The languishing dwarf!

Woglinde

Teach him a lesson!

(She lowers herself onto the top of the rock, to the foot of which Alberich has reached.)

Alberich

She sinks to the rock!

Woglinde

Come closer to me!

Alberich *(climbers with gnome-like agility towards the top of the rock, but is repeatedly held back)*

4 Slimy, slippery,
slithery smoothness!
The slope's too steep!
My hands and my feet
cannot get any grip
on the slippery surface!
And the water
tickles my nostrils:
oh, curse this sneezing!

(He has got close to Woglinde.)

Woglinde *(laughing)*

Sneezing tells me
my lover is near!

Alberich

You're mine at last,
you beautiful child!

(He tries to embrace her.)

Woglinde *(eluding him)*

If I am yours,
then follow me here!

(She dives to another rock.)

Alberich *(scratches his head)*

Alas! You escape?
Ah, come nearer!
You can swim,
but I stumble and slide.

Woglinde *(swims off to a third rock, further down)*

Would you prefer
this place at the bottom?

Alberich *(climbers down hastily)*

It's certainly safer!

Woglinde *(darts upwards to a high rock at the side)*

Now let us go high!

Wellgunde and Flosshilde

Hahahahaha!

Alberich

Oh, how can I catch
this flighty fish?
Wait for me, false one!

(He scrambles up after her.)

Wellgunde *(has sunk to a deeper rock on the other side)*

Heia! Fair lover,
turn you this way.

Alberich *(turning towards her)*

Calling to me?

Wellgunde

And hear this advice:
why chase Woglinde?
Wellgunde calls you!

Alberich *(hastily clambering over the bottom towards Wellgunde)*

And you are fairer still
than your sister,
who gleams less brightly,
who's far too sleek.
Now come towards me
so I can clasp you!

Wellgunde *(descending a shade closer still towards him)*

Well, now am I near?

Alberich

Not near enough!
Those lovely arms
come twine round my neck,
so I can touch you
and play with your tresses,
and fondle your breasts
in my passionate, burning embraces!

Wellgunde

So you're in love and
longing to hold me;
let's see, my beauty,

just what you are like?
Pfui! You hairy old
hideous imp!
Scaly, spotted
and sulphurous dwarf!
Look for a sweetheart
black as yourself!

Alberich *(trying to hold her by force)*

What though I am black –
you're tight in my grasp!

Wellgunde *(swiftly diving away to the central rock)*

So tight, I slip from your hands!

Woglinde and Flosshilde

Hahahahaha!

Alberich

Faithless thing!
Bony, cold-blooded fish!
So I'm not handsome,
pretty and playful,
slim and sleek –
Hei! Make love with an eel, then,
if he's more to your taste!

Flosshilde

Stop grumbling, dwarf.
So soon dismayed?
With two you have failed!
Now try the third one.
Seek her love;
she may console your grief!

Alberich

Lovely sounds
ravish my ears!
What luck to find
three of them here;
for one of the three may accept me
while one alone would reject me!
Show I can trust you,
and glide to my arms!

Flosshilde (*dives down to Alberich*)

Oh, foolish sisters,
blind to beauty,
can't you see that he's fair?

Alberich (*approaching her*)

And I declare them
stupid and ugly,
now that the loveliest is mine!

Flosshilde (*cajolingly*)

Oh, sing your song
so soft and sweet,
your voice bewitches my ear!

Alberich (*caressing her fondly*)

My heart bounds
and flutters and burns,
hearing this praise from your lips.

Flosshilde (*gently restraining him*)

Oh, how your beauty
delights my eyes,
and your smile so tender
inspires my soul!

(*She draws him tenderly towards her.*)

Dearest of men!

Alberich

Sweetest of maids!

Flosshilde

Now you are mine!

Alberich

Faithful for ever.

Flosshilde (*holding him close in her arms*)

Oh, the sting of your glance,
and the prick of your beard –
oh, how they have captured my heart!
And the locks of your hair,
so shaggy and sharp,
must float round Flosshilde ever!
And your shape like a toad,
and the croak of your voice –
oh, how they ravish my soul:
I want nothing but these!

Woglinde and Wellgunde

Hahahahahaha!

Alberich (*starting from Flosshilde's embrace in alarm*)

Are they daring to laugh?

Flosshilde (*suddenly darting away from him*)

And laughter's the end of my song!

(*She dives quickly upward with her sisters.*)

Woglinde and Wellgunde

Hahahahahaha!

Alberich (*in a screeching voice*)

Sorrow! Oh, sorrow!
Oh, shame! Oh, shame!
The third one, so dear,
betrays me as well.
You shameless, slippery
underhand, infamous wretches!
Shifty and sly,
you treacherous watery tribe!

Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde

Wallala! Lalaleia! Leialalei!

Heia! Heia! Haha!

Shame on you, Alberich!
Stop your complaining!
Wait, and hear what we tell you!
You foolish Niblung,
you should have held us
tightly while you could.
You'll find
that we can be true
and faithful, once we are caught!
Back to the chase
and grab without fear!
In the waves it's hard to escape.
Wallala! Lalaleia! Leialalei!
Heia! Heia! Hahei!

(*They swim apart, hither and thither, now deeper,
now higher, to incite Alberich to pursue them.*)

Alberich

Passionate fevers,
fervid desires,
have set me on fire!
Rage and longing,
wild and frantic,
drive me to madness!

Though you may laugh and lie,
yearning conquers my heart
and I'll not rest till I've caught you!

(*He prepares himself with desperate efforts for the chase; with terrible agility he clammers from rock to rock, leaps from one to another, tries to catch first one, then another of the maidens, who always elude him with merry cries. He stumbles, plunges down to the bottom, then climbs quickly up to the heights again for a further chase. They lower themselves a little. He almost reaches them but again plunges down, and tries once more. At last he stops, foaming with rage and breathless, and shakes his clenched fist up at the maidens.*)

Alberich (*almost out of control*)

One, I swear, shall be mine...

(*He remains speechless with rage, looking upwards, and then is suddenly attracted and spellbound by the following spectacle. Through the waters an increasingly bright light penetrates from above, gradually kindling, on a high point of the central rock, to a blindingly brightly-beaming gleam of gold; a magical golden light breaks through the waters from this point.*)

Woglinde

[5] Look, sisters!
The sunlight is greeting the gold.

Wellgunde

Through the watery gloom
she calls to the sleeper to wake.

Flosshilde

She kisses his eyelids,
tells them to open.

Wellgunde

See him smile now
with gentle light.

Woglinde

Through the floods afar
shine his glittering beam!

Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde (*swimming
together gracefully round the rock*)

Heiajaheia!

Heiajaheia!

Wallalalalala leiajahei!

Rhinegold!

Rhinegold!

Radiant joy!

We laugh in your joyful shine!

Glorious beams

that glitter and gleam in the waves!

Heiajahei!

Heiajaheia!

Waken friend!

Wake in joy!

Wonderful games
we'll play in your praise:
flash in the foam,
flame in the flood,
and floating around you,
dancing and singing,
in joy we will dive to your bed!

Rhinegold!

Rhinegold!

Heiajaheia!

Wallalaleia heiajahei!

*(With increasingly abandoned joy, the maidens
swim round the rock. All the waters are a-glitter
with golden radiance.)*

Alberich (*whose eyes are powerfully attracted to the
gleam, stares fixedly at the gold*)

[6] What's that, you nixies,
I see that shines and gleams?

Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde

Ignorant dwarf, where've you lived?

Of the Rhinegold have you not heard?

Wellgunde

The dwarf's not heard
of the golden radiance
which sleeps and wakes in turn?

Woglinde

In the watery deeps
this wonderful star
shines forth and brightens the waves.

Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde

Ah, how gladly
we glide in its radiance!
Come to join us
and bathe in brightness,
come sport and swim in the shine!
Wallalalala leialalei!
Wallalalala leiajahei!

Alberich

Is that all it's good for,
to shine at your games?
Why, then it is worthless!

Woglinde

This golden charm
you would revere,
oh, if you knew of its marvels.

Wellgunde

The world's wealth can
be won by a man who,
seizing the Rhinegold,
fashions a ring:
that ring makes him lord of the world.

Flosshilde

Our father told us,
but then he warned us
we should guard it
and keep it safe,
lest some false one should wickedly steal it:
be quiet, you chattering fools!

Wellgunde

My prudent sister,
no need to be cross!
Surely you know
all that's required
of him who'd master the gold?

Woglinde

He must pronounce
a curse on love,
he must renounce
all joys of love,
before he masters the magic,
a ring to forge from the gold.

Wellgunde

And that's a thing
that will never be:
all men who live must love;
no one could ever renounce it.

Woglinde

And least of all he,
that lecherous dwarf,
all hot desire,
panting with lust!

Flosshilde

Well, I admit
we've nothing to fear.
I was nearly scorched
when he came near.

Wellgunde

A sulphur-brand
in the swirling waves,
inflamed with longing,
sizzling loud!

Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde

Wallala! Wallaleialala!
Loveliest Niblung,
share in our joy.
In the golden radiance,
how handsome you seem!

Oh, come, lovely one, laugh and be glad!
Heiajaheia! Heiajaheia!
Wallalalala leiajahei!

*(They swim up and down in the brightness,
laughing.)*

Alberich *(his eyes fixed on the gold, has listened
attentively to the sisters' chatter)*

- [7] The world's wealth
can be mine if I utter the curse?
Though love be denied me,
yet cunning can bring me delight?
(terribly loud)

Laugh if you will!
the Niblung's near to your toy!

*(Furiously, he leaps across to the central rock and
climbs up towards its summit with dreadful haste.
The maidens separate with screams and swim
upwards in various directions.)*

Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde

Heia! Heia! Heiajahei!
Save yourselves!
The dwarf has gone mad;
and the water swirls
where he has leapt.
His love has cost him his wits!

(They laugh with the wildest bravado.)

Alberich *(reaches the summit of the rock with one
last bound)*

- [8] Still not afraid?
Then laugh in the darkness,
nymphs of the waves!
(He stretches out his hand towards the gold.)
Your light yields to my hand;
I'll seize from the rock your gold,
forge that magical ring;
now hear me, you floods:
Love, I curse you for ever!

*(With terrible force, he tears the gold from the rock
and hastily plunges down with it into the depths,
where he quickly disappears. Dense night suddenly
descends everywhere. The maidens dive down after
the robber into the depths below.)*

Flosshilde

Capture the robber!

Wellgunde

Rescue the gold!

Woglinde and Wellgunde

Help us!

Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde

Woe! Woe!

*(The waters sink down with them into the depths;
from the lowest depth, Alberich's harsh, mocking
laughter is heard. The rocks vanish in thickest
darkness; the whole stage is filled from top to
bottom with black waving waters which for some
time seem to go on sinking.)*

Scene 2

*The waves are gradually transformed into clouds,
which, as an increasingly brighter dawn light passes
behind them, resolve into fine mist. When the mist
has completely vanished aloft in gentle little clouds,
in the dawning light an*

Open space on a mountain height

*becomes visible. The daybreak illuminates with
increasing brilliance a castle with gleaming
battlements, which stands on a rocky summit in the
background. Between this castle-crowned
mountain-top and the foreground of the stage a
deep valley is to be imagined, through which the
Rhine flows. Wotan and, beside him, Fricka, both
asleep, are lying on a flowery bank at one side. The
castle has become completely visible.*

Fricka *(wakes; her eyes fall on the castle; she starts
in astonishment)*

- [9] Wotan, my lord! Awaken!

Wotan *(gently, still dreaming)*

The sacred hall of the gods
is guarded by gate and door:
manhood's honour,
unending power,
rise now to endless renown!

Fricka *(shakes him)*

Up from your dreams
of flattering deceit!
My husband, wake and consider!

Wotan *(wakes and raises himself a little; his eye is
at once attracted by the sight of the castle)*

Completed, the eternal work!

On mountain summits
the gods will rule!
Proudly rise
those glittering walls
which in dreams I designed,
which my will brought to life.
Strong and lordly
see it shine;
holy, glorious abode!

Fricka

Though it delights you,
I am afraid!
You have your hall,
but I think of Freia!
Can I believe you've forgotten
the price you still have to pay?
The work is finished,

the giants must be paid;
remember it, all that you owe!

Wotan

I've not forgotten the bargain,
the giants shall have their reward;
for that proud race
was subdued by my spear;
graved on its shaft
the terms for the castle;
it stands now – thank the giants
and forget what it will cost.

Fricka

What carefree, frivolous lightness!
Loveless, coldhearted folly!
If I had known of your deal,
I might have stopped it in time;
but slyly you men
did your talking in secret,
and kept us women away,
alone you discussed with the giants.
Then to your shame
you promised to give them
Freia, my beautiful sister;
oh, how pleased you were then!
Nothing is sacred,
you harden your hearts,
when you men lust for power!

Wotan (*calmly*)

And is Fricka
free from reproach?
Remember, you begged for the hall!

Fricka

- [10] For I wished you faithful and true;
my thoughts were for my husband,
how to keep him beside me,
when far away to roam:
safe in our castle,
calm and contented,
there I might keep you
in peaceful repose.
But you, when you planned it,
thought of war and arms alone:
glory and might
all that you cared for;
you built it for storm and adventure,
constructed a fort, not a home.

Wotan (*smiling*)

Wife, though you wish me
confined in the castle,
some freedom still you must grant me;
though I may stay
beside you, yet
from our home I must rule all the world;
wandering and change
inspire my heart;
that sport I cannot relinquish!

Fricka

Ruthless, heartless,
scornful man!
for the vain delights of
ruling the world,
you'd carelessly gamble away
love and woman's worth?

Wotan (*serious*)

Recall the days when I wooed you,
when I for Fricka
paid the price of an eye.
Your scolding's wide of the mark!
I worship women
much more than you'd like;
and Freia, the fair one,
I shall not yield;
such thoughts were far from my mind.

Fricka (*with anxious tension, looking off-stage*)

- [11] Then shelter her now;
defenceless, afraid,
see how she runs here for help!

Freia (*enters as if in hasty flight*)

Help me, sister!
Shelter me, brother!
On yonder mountain
Fasolt is threatening,
and now he's coming to take me.

Wotan

Let him come!
Saw you not Loge?

Fricka

In that infamous rogue
do you still give your trust?
Much harm he's done to the gods,
yet time and again you still use him.

Wotan

Where simple truth serves,

I need no one to help me;
but to use the hate
of foes to serve me,
that needs guile and deceit;
then Loge's the one for the deed.
He said he'd think of a plan
to keep our Freia in safety;
so I rely on him now.

Fricka

And he leaves you alone!
Here come the giants
seeking their pay,
while Loge loiters afar!

Freia

Come here to me, my brothers,
oh, help me and save me,
now that Wotan abandons the weak!
Oh, help me, Donner!
Hear me, help me!
Rescue Freia, my Froh!

Fricka

The disgraceful men who betrayed you
have all abandoned you now!

(*Fasolt and Fafner enter, both of gigantic stature,
and armed with stout staves.*)

Fasolt

- [12] Soft sleep
closed your eyes,
while we were working
hard to build your hall.

Working hard,
day and night,
heavy stones
we heaped up high,
lofty towers,
gates and doors,
guard and keep
your castle walls secure.

There stands
what you ordered,
shining bright
in morning's light:
there's your home;
we want our wage!

Wotan

You've earned your reward;
what wages are you asking?

Fasolt

The wage was fixed,
our bargain was made;
have you so soon forgot?
Freia, the fair one,
Holda, the free one –
your hall is built –
and Freia is ours.

Wotan (*quickly*)

Plainly your work
has blinded your wits.
Ask some other wage;
Freia cannot be sold.

Fasolt (*utterly amazed, is for a moment speechless*)

What's this now? Ha!
Breaking your bonds?
Betraying your word?
On your spear shaft,
see what is graved;
will you dare to break your bargains?

Fafner (*scornfully*)

My trusting brother,
now you see his deceit?

Fasolt

[13] God of light,
light of spirit!
Hear a giant's advice,
and learn to keep your word!
What you are,
you became by your bargains:
and all your power
is contained in your bonds.
Since you are wise,
we giants were bound;
freely we promised
to keep the peace;
yet I shall curse your wisdom,
war, not peace, shall reward you
if you don't fairly,
frankly uphold
the terms of the bargain you swore!
This simple giant
speaks his mind:
you, wise one, learn now from him!

Wotan

How sly to take in earnest
what as a joke we decided!
The beautiful goddess,
fair and bright,
what use can she be to you?

Fasolt

Mockery!
What injustice!
You who through beauty reign,
glittering, glorious race,
like fools you yearned
for your towers of stone,
pledged as pay for your hall
woman's beauty and grace.
We dull ones toil away,
see, with the sweat on our hands,
a woman, as payment,
who, charming and fair,
might grace our poor dwelling;
and you say all was a joke?

Fafner

Stop your foolish chatter,
the maid's not what we want.
Freia's charms
mean nothing,
but we gain
as soon as the gods have lost her.
Golden apples
ripen within her garden;
she alone

knows how they are tended!

That golden fruit
given to her kinsmen
each day renews
youth everlasting;
pale and grey
they'll lose all their beauty,
wan and weak
they will grow old,
when that fruit is denied them.
And that's why we'll take her away!

Wotan (*aside*)

Loge lingers long!

Fasolt

Well, what shall it be?

Wotan

Ask some other wage!

Fasolt

No other: Freia alone!

Fafner

You there! Come with us!

(*They make towards Freia. Donner and Froh rush in.*)

Freia (*fleeing*)

Help! Help from these hard ones!

Froh (*clasping Freia in his arms*)

[14] To me, Freia!
Back from her, giant!
Froh shields the fair one!

Donner (*placing himself in front of the two giants*)

Fasolt and Fafner,
know you the weight
of my hammer's heavy blow?

Fafner

What is this threat?

Fasolt

What brings you here?
We've not come to fight,
but all we want is our pay.

Donner

And I know
how giants should be paid.
Come here, receive your wage,
weighed with a generous hand.
(*He swings the hammer.*)

Wotan (*stretching out his spear between the disputants*)

Back, you wild one!
Force will not serve!

COMPACT DISC TWO

Wotan

- [1] This bond is graved
on my spear's strong shaft:
spare them your hammer's blow!

Freia

Help me! Help me!
Wotan forsakes me!

Fricka

Is this your resolve,
merciless man?

Wotan (*turns round and sees Loge approaching*)

There is Loge!
Where have you been,
you who assured me
that I'd escape from this contract?

Loge (*has climbed up from the valley in the background*)

- [2] What? How am I
concerned in a contract?
You mean that agreement
you have made with these giants?
I roam through the whole wide
world as I please:
I'm not held
by house or home.
Donner and Froh
are dreaming of household joys!
If they would wed,
a house first they must own.
And castle walls,
and lofty halls,
they were what Wotan craved.
Lofty halls,
castle walls,
a home for the gods,
it stands here, strongly built.
I inspected all
the place myself;

it's firmly made,
safe and secure:
Fasolt and Fafner,
excellent work!
No stone stirs on its bed.
So I wasn't lazy,
like others here;
he lies, who says that I was!

Wotan

Don't try
to escape from the point!
If you betray me,
if you have tricked me, beware!
Recall that I
am your only friend,
I took your part
when the other gods were unkind.
So speak, I need your help!
When first those giants made terms
and asked Freia as payment,
you know I only
gave my consent
because you promised you'd find
something else that they'd rather have.

Loge

I merely promised
I'd consider
how we might save her,
and that's all I said.
But to discover
what can't be found,

what never was,
who'd ever make such a promise?

Fricka (*to Wotan*)

That's the knave
whom you thought you could trust!

Froh

Loge, hear me,
your name should be Liar!

Donner

Accursed Loge,
I'll quench your flame!

Loge

To conceal his blunders
every fool blames me!

(*Donner attacks Loge.*)

Wotan (*intervening*)

Now cease reviling my friend!
You know not Loge's ways:
his advice
is worth all the more,
when we wait on his words.

Fafner

Wait no longer!
Pay our wage!

Fasolt

Come, no more delay!

Wotan (*turning sharply to Loge, urgently*)

Speak out, stubborn one!
Keep your word!
And tell me now where you've been.

Loge

- [3] Never one word
of praise or thanks!
For your sake alone,
hoping to help,
I restlessly roamed
to the ends of the earth,
to find a ransom for Freia,
one that the giants would like more.
In vain sought I
and now I can see:
in this whole wide world
nothing at all
is of greater worth to a man
than woman's beauty and love!
(*All express astonishment and diverse forms of bewilderment.*)
I asked every one living,
in water, earth, and sky,
one question,
sought for the answer
and all whom I met,
I asked them this question:
What in this world
means more to you
than woman's beauty and love?
But wherever life was stirring

they laughed at me
when they heard what I asked:
in water, earth, and sky,
none would forego
the joys of love.

- [4] But one I found then
who scorned the delights of love,
who valued gold
more dearly than woman's grace.
The fair and shining Rhinemaidens
came to me with their tale:
the Nibelung dwarf,
Alberich,
begged for their favours,
but he begged them in vain;
the Rhinegold
he tore in revenge from their rock;
and now he holds it
dearer than love,
greater than woman's grace.
For their glittering toy,
thus torn from the deep,
the maidens are sadly mourning:
return, Wotan,
in anguish, you,
for they ask that you will avenge them;
the gold, they pray
that you'll restore it,
to shine in the waters for ever.
[5] So I promised
I'd tell you the story:
and that's what Loge has done.

Wotan

Are you mad,
or simply malicious!
You know I am in need:
how can I help someone else?

Fasolt (*who has been listening attentively, to Fafner*)

That gold I begrudge to Alberich;
we've suffered much from the Niblung,
and yet that crafty dwarf
has always slipped through our hands.

Fafner

We shall suffer
more in the future,
now he's gained the gold.
You there, Loge!
Tell me the truth;
what glory lies in the gold,
that the Niblung holds so dear?

Loge

- [6] A toy, while
it was in the waters,
lighting the Rhinemaidens' games;
but when as a shining
ring it is fashioned,
helped by its magic power,
its owner conquers the world.

Wotan (*reflectively*)

I have heard men tell
of the Rhinegold:
charms of riches

lurk in that golden gleam;
mighty powers
are his who can forge that ring.

Fricka (*softly to Loge*)

Could a woman use
the golden ring
for herself
and wear it to charm her lord?

Loge

No husband dare
be false to his wife
when she commands
that glittering wealth,
that busy dwarves are forging,
ruled by the power of the ring.

Fricka (*cajolingly, to Wotan*)

Oh, how can my husband
win us the gold?

Wotan (*as if in a state of increasing enchantment*)

- [7] And I should possess it!
Soon this ring should be Wotan's.
But say, Loge,
what is the art
by which the gold can be forged?

Loge

A magic spell
will change the gold to a ring.
No one knows it,
but he can use the spell
who only love forswears.

(*Wotan turns away in ill-humour.*)

Could you do that?
Too late, in any case,
Alberich did not delay;
he cursed and mastered
the magic spell;
and he is lord of the ring!

Donner (*to Wotan*)

We shall all
be slaves to the dwarf
unless the ring can be captured.

Wotan

The ring, I must have it!

Froh

Easily done
now that love you need not renounce.

Loge

Child's play!
At a stroke you can make it yours!

Wotan (*harshly*)

Then tell me, how?

Loge

By theft!
What a thief stole,
you steal from the thief:
you seize it and make it your own.
But you'll need your wits
fighting Alberich;
he'll defend

what he has stolen,
so be skilful, swift and shrewd
if you'd please the Rhinemaidens,
and then restore
their gold, back to the waters;
they yearn and long for their gold.

Wotan

To please the Rhinemaidens?
That's not what I plan!

Fricka

Leave that watery brood
weeping and wailing;
to my distress
many a man
they've lured by their charms to the Rhine.

(*Wotan is struggling silently with himself. The other gods, tense and silent, fix their eyes on him. Meanwhile, to one side, Fafner has quietly been conferring with Fasolt.*)

Fafner (*to Fasolt*)

Trust me, more than Freia
we can gain from the gold:
eternal youth can be ours,
when we lay our hands on that gold.
(*Fasolt's demeanour suggests that he has been persuaded against his will. Fafner, with Fasolt, returns to Wotan again.*)

[8] Hear, Wotan,
I'll speak my last word!
We will leave you with Freia;

we will take less
for our payment:
for us rude giants, enough
is Nibelheim's shining gold.

Wotan

Have you gone mad?
For how can I give you
what is not mine, as your payment?

Fafner

Hard labour
built you those walls;
your cunning
can lightly achieve
what has proved too hard for our strength:
to capture the Niblung foe.

Wotan

For you I must
deal with the Niblung?
For you, capture the foe?
Unashamed, you dare
to propose it,
stupid, insolent pair!

Fasolt (*suddenly seizes Freia and, with Fafner, pulls her to one side*)

Come here, maid!
You're in our power!
We'll hold you as a hostage
till all has been paid!

Freia (*crying out in dismay*)
Save me! Save me! Woe!

(*All the gods stand in shocked amazement.*)

Fafner

We shall take
Freia with us!
Till evening, mark me well,
she remains in our hands;
then we'll come back here;
but when we come,
if we don't find what we've asked for,
the Rhinegold heaped on high –

Fasolt

– our truce then is over,
Freia is forfeit:
for ever she stays with us!

Freia (*screaming*)

Sister! Brother!
Save me! Help!

(*She is dragged away by the hastily departing giants.*)

Froh

On, to her aid!

Donner

Everything's ended!
(*They look inquiringly at Wotan.*)

Freia (*from the distance*)

Save me! Help!

Loge (*gazing after the giants*)

[9] Over rock and stone they stride
down to the vale;

through the Rhine they forge ahead,
waddling and wading.
Sad at heart
hangs Freia,
while borne on the backs of those ruffians!
Heia! Ha! Hei!
They stumble and stride on their way!
Now they're through, climbing the slope.
They'll not rest till they've reached
rough Riesenheim's bounds.

(He turns to the gods.)

Why is Wotan brooding and sad?
Alas, what's troubling the gods?
(A pale mist, with growing density, fills the scene: it gives the gods an increasingly wan and aged appearance: fearful and expectant they all stand gazing at Wotan, whose eyes are fixed thoughtfully on the ground.)

Mists, d'you deceive me?
Is this a dream?
How grey you've grown,
so weary and weak!
From your cheeks the bloom dies out;
the flash from your eyes fades away!
Come, my Froh!
Day is still young!
From your hand, Donner,
you're dropping the hammer!
What's wrong with Fricka?
Can she be mourning
that Wotan, gloomy and grey,
should seem so suddenly old?

Fricka
Sorrow! Sorrow!
What can it mean?

Donner
My hand is weak!

Froh
My heart is still!

Loge
[10] I see now! Hear what is wrong!
Of Freia's fruit
you've not yet eaten today.
The golden apples
that grow in her garden,
they kept you so vigorous and young,
eating them every day.
But she who tended them
now is a hostage;
on the branches droops
and dies the fruit:
it rots, falls to the ground.
To me it's nothing;
because to Loge
Freia was mean;
I never tasted her fruit:
so I'm not god-like,
I'm not so glorious as you!
But you staked your future
on that youth-giving fruit;
the giants knew that all too well;
and at your lives
this blow has been aimed;

so think how to escape!
Lacking the apples,
old and grey,
worn and weary,
withered and scorned by the world,
the gods grow old and die.

Fricka
Wotan, my lord!
Unhappy man!
See how your selfish
folly has brought us
sore disgrace and shame!

Wotan *(starts up with sudden resolve)*
[11] Come, Loge,
descend with me!
To Nibelheim we'll go together:
and there I'll win me the gold.

Loge
The Rhinemaidens
called for your help:
so will you return them their treasure?

Wotan
Stop your chatter!
Freia, the fair one,
Freia has to be rescued!

Loge
As you command,
down we shall go.
Choose your way:
shall we descend through the Rhine?

Wotan
Not through the Rhine!

Loge
Then follow my steps
through this smoky cleft:
and slip down there after me!

(He goes on in front and disappears sideways into a crevice, from which a sulphurous steam at once issues forth.)

Wotan
You others wait
till evening falls:
the youth we're losing
I'll buy back again with the gold!

(He descends through the crevice after Loge. The sulphurous steam emerging from it spreads across the entire stage and quickly fills it with thick clouds. The remaining gods are already invisible.)

Donner
Fare you well, Wotan!

Froh
Good luck! Good luck!

Fricka
And soon return
to your sorrowing wife!

(The sulphurous vapour darkens into completely black cloud which rises from below to above. This is then transformed into a hard, rocky crevice, moving

continually upwards so as to give the impression that the stage is sinking ever deeper into the earth. A growing clamour, as of forging, is audible from all sides.)

Scene 3

A dark red light glows distantly from several sides.

A subterranean cavern

stretching farther than the eye can see, becomes visible. It seems to open on every side into narrow shafts. Alberich tugs Mime, who is screeching, by the ear out of a shaft to one side.

Alberich

- [12] Hehe! Hehe!
Come here! Come here!
Traacherous imp!
You will be pinched,
painfully pricked
if it's not ready,
flawlessly forged,
that helm I told you to make!

Mime (*howling*)

Ohe! Ohe!
Ow! Ow!
Leave me alone!
All's been done,
just as you asked;
I toiled away,
finished the work.
Only stop twisting my ear!

Alberich (*letting him go*)

Then why did you wait?
I want it now!

Mime

I wasn't certain
of every detail.

Alberich

And what is not finished?

Mime (*embarrassed*)

Here – and there –

Alberich

What 'here' and 'there'?

Give me the thing!

(He makes for Mime's ear again. In his terror Mime lets fall a piece of metalwork which he was clutching tightly in his hands. Alberich rapidly picks it up and examines it closely.)

- [13] Ha, you rogue!
Everything's perfect
and carefully forged,
just as I asked!
But maybe the fool
thought he could trick me,
and keep this wonderful
work for himself,
work which my cunning
had taught him to forge!
Villain, do I read your mind?
(He puts the metalwork on his head, as a 'Tarnhelm'.)

The helm fits on my head:
now will the spell do its work?
'Night and darkness,
fade from sight!'

(His form disappears. In its place is seen a column of mist.)

Where am I, brother?

Mime (*looks around in puzzlement*)

Where are you? You've gone from my sight.

Alberich (*invisible*)

Then feel me instead,
you lazy rogue!

I'll teach you to steal from me!

Mime (screams, and writhes under the blows of a scourge, whose strokes can be heard, though it is invisible)

Ohe! Ohe!
Ow! Ow! Ow!

Alberich (*laughing, invisible*)

Hahahahahaha!

I thank you, brother!

Your work was true and good.

Hoho! Hoho!

Niblungs below,

bow down to Alberich!

I shall be watching

to see that you're working;

day and night

you must be toiling,

sweating to serve

your invisible lord,
who can watch you unseen
and spy on his subjects!
You are my slaves now for ever!
Hoho! Hoho!
Hear me, I'm near:
the Niblungs' great lord!

(The column of mist disappears towards the back. Alberich's raging and scolding are heard from an ever greater distance. Screams and cries answer him, from farther and farther away, until at last they are inaudible. Mime has cowed down with pain. Wotan and Loge descend through a crevice.)

Loge

- [14] Nibelheim here.
The murky darkness
is broken by fiery flashes!

Mime

Ow! Ow! Ow!

Wotan

But what's that groan?
Who lies at our feet?

Loge (*bends over Mime*)

What have we whimpering here?

Mime

Ohe! Ohe!
Ow! Ow!

Loge

Hei, Mime! Cheerful dwarf!
And what's the trouble with you?

Mime

Leave me in quiet!

Loge

That I'll do gladly.
Not just that, but
help I'll offer you, Mime!

(With difficulty, he sets him on his feet.)

Mime

¹⁵ What help for me?
I must obey
the commands of my brother,
for he has made me his slave.

Loge

But, Mime, what gave him
the power to command?

Mime

The Rhine's bright gold,
seized by Alberich,
was shaped and forged
to a shining ring:
at its magic spell
the Nibelungs tremble;
that ring makes him our master;
we Nibelungs are now his slaves.
Once we were carefree,
worked at our anvils,

forged for our women,
trinkets and jewels,
delicate Nibelung toys;
we merrily hammered away.
But now he compels us
to creep through the mineshafts,
for him alone
we sweat and we slave.
And the golden ring
has magical power
to show where the treasure
lies hid in the rocks;
then we must mine it,
forge and refine it
and smelt the ore down
to pure, shining gold;
so by day and night
we serve the greed of our lord.

Loge

And you were so idle
that you were whipped?

Mime

Poor Mime, ah,
my fate was the hardest.
A magic helm
I had to make him;
he gave me detailed,
careful instruction.
And so I guessed
some wondrous spell
must lie in the work

that I forged so well;
I thought I'd keep
one thing for myself,
and use the spell
to free me from Alberich's power;
perhaps, yes, perhaps,
the tyrant himself could be conquered;
by using the helm I might catch him;
that ring, could I but seize it,
when, though I'm forced now to serve him,
when free, I could make him my slave!

Loge

Your plan was clever;
why did it fail?

Mime

Ah! When the helm was finished,
the magic that makes it work,
that magic I could not guess right:
then he seized the helm
and spoke the charm;
he showed me – alas,
I learnt it too late –
mighty spells lay in that helm.
From my sight he vanished;
and out of the darkness
dealt invisible blows.
And that's all the thanks
my work has won!

(He rubs his back. Wotan and Loge laugh.)

Loge *(to Wotan)*

Admit, your task
may well be hard.

Wotan

We'll succeed at last,
thanks to your wits.

Mime *(perplexed by the gods' laughter, observes them more closely)*

But why all these questions?
Who are you, you strangers?

Loge

Friends to you;
we can set free
the suffering Nibelung folk.

Mime *(shrinks back in terror as he hears Alberich approaching)*

¹⁶ Better take care!
Alberich's near.

Wotan

We'll wait for him here.

(He seats himself calmly on a stone. Loge leans at his side. Alberich, brandishing a whip, enters, driving a team of Nibelungs in front of him out of a cavern lying farther below. He has removed the Tarnhelm from his head and hung it from his belt. The Nibelungs are laden with golden and silver work, which, under Alberich's constant supervision, they pile up in a heap.)

Alberich

Hither! Thither!
 Hehe! Hoho!
 Lazy herd!
 Pile the gold,
 there in a heap!
 You there, get up!
 On with your work!
 Indolent dogs!
 Stack up the treasure!
 Want me to help you?
 There in a heap!
 (*He is suddenly aware of Wotan and Loge.*)

Hey, who is there?
 Who's broken in?
 Mime, come here!
 Pestilent imp,
 chattering away
 with that scoundrelly pair?
 Off, you idler!
 Back to your welding and whining!
 (*He drives Mime with blows of his whip into the crowd of Nibelungs.*)

Hey! To your labour!
 Back to the forges.
 Back to the mines!
 From the new-dug shafts
 go fetch me more gold!
 And if you're lazy
 you shall be whipped.
 Let no one be idle;
 Mime will watch you

or else he shall find
 that my whip rewards him.
 I'll be everywhere, spying
 where no one expects;
 ask Mime; he can explain!
 Off to your work!
 Linger still?
 (*He draws the ring from his finger, kisses it, and holds it out threateningly.*)

Tremble in terror,
 you wretched slaves:
 and obey
 the ring's great lord!
 (*With howling and shrieking the Nibelungs, Mime among them, scatter and scuttle away into the shafts. Alberich gives a long, suspicious look at Wotan and Loge.*)

17 What brought you here?

Wotan

Of Nibelheim's dusky land
 we've heard a most marvellous tale:
 mighty works
 achieved here by Alberich;
 and, eager to see them,
 we arrive as your guests.

Alberich

Attracted by
 Nibelheim's gold:
 I know
 the sort of guests that you are!

Loge

Well, if you know,
 impudent dwarf,
 then say, who am I?
 Why do you bark?
 In chilly caves
 you shivered and froze;
 who gave you light
 and who lit your fires then?
 Was Loge not once your friend?
 What use are your forges
 until they are heated by me?
 I am your kinsman
 and once was kind:
 for that you owe me your thanks!

Alberich

The gods have
 befriended Loge,
 that crafty rogue:
 are you, schemer, their friend,
 as my friend once you were?
 Haha! I laugh!
 In that case, what need I fear.

Loge

And so, instead, you can trust.

Alberich

I can trust your untruth,
 never your truth!
 (*assuming a defiant attitude*)
 Yet today I can defy you!

Loge

You've grown
 so daring and bold?
 Have you gained
 such mighty power?

Alberich

See all the gold
 that my slaves
 heaped over there?

Loge

I've never seen so much before.

Alberich

That's just today's;
 the merest trifle:
 in the future
 it will tower far more grandly.

Wotan

But what's the use of your wealth?
 In joyless Nibelheim,
 with gold there's nothing to buy!

Alberich

Gold can be mined here,
 and gold can be stored here,
 deep in Nibelheim's caves.
 Then with my wealth
 from the darkness I'll rise,
 rise and be master of all things;
 the whole wide world
 I'll buy for myself with the treasure.

Wotan

My good Niblung, how would you start?

Alberich

- [18] In the clouds, you great ones
far above us may live,
laugh, and love.
My golden gras
will seize on you gods and destroy you!
Once I renounced all joys of love.
All those who live,
all shall renounce them!
Enchanted by gold,
your greed for gold shall enslave you!
On glorious heights
you gods live in gladness,
lulled by ease,
despising those
who work below, sure you're eternal!
Beware! Beware!
For first your men
shall yield to my might,
then your lovely women,
who despise me and jeer,
shall grant to Alberich's force
what love could not win!
Hahahaha!
You have been warned!
Beware!
Beware of my armies of night,
beware the day when the Niblung's gold
shall vanquish the world!

Wotan (*vehemently*)

No more, impious wretch!

Alberich

What says he?

Loge (*stepping between them; to Wotan*)
Try to be patient!
(*to Alberich*)

- [19] All must stand in amazement,
beholding Alberich's work!
If only your craft can achieve
all that you plan with your treasure,
then all would acclaim you as master:
the moon and stars
and the sun in his splendour,
how could they not obey you,
serve you, bow to your will?
But, most of all, it's important
that your army of workers,
your Nibelung slaves,
never should rebel!
By your ring you can command;
your people trembled in fear.
But, while you sleep,
a thief might approach;
the ring he'd steal from your hand:
so guard yourself, wise one, from that!

Alberich

So no one is wise like Loge?
He can see where
others are blind?

You give me a warning
and hope I'll beg
for your advice.

Well, I do not need your help!

This magical helm,
invented by me,
was skilfully forged.

Mime made it to guard me.

It can transform me;

I can assume
any shape that I wish for,
through this helm.

None can see me,

search as he will;

invisible master

and all-seeing lord!

So I'm protected;

even from you I am safe,

my kind, provident friend!

Loge

Many marvels

I have encountered,

but such a marvel

is new to me.

This work without equal –

I don't believe it!

If you could work this wonder,

then your power'd be everlasting!

Alberich

I do not lie
or boast like Loge.

Loge

Show me a proof,
and then I'll believe your boast.

Alberich

You're puffed up with prudence
and pride till you're bursting!

Well, envy me now!

Command, and tell me what shape
you would like me to be!

Loge

Oh, choose for yourself,
but make me dumb with surprise!

Alberich (*has put on the Tarnhelm*)

'Dragon dread,
curling and coiling!'

COMPACT DISC THREE

(*He disappears instantly. In his place an enormous
dragon writhes on the ground; it rises up and
stretches its open jaws at Wotan and Loge.*)

Loge (*pretends to be seized with terror*)

- [1] Ohe! Ohe!

Terrible dragon,

have mercy on me!

Spare my life, do not eat me!

Wotan

Hahaha! Good, Alberich!
Good, you rascal!

Your change from dwarf
to dragon was skilful and swift!

*(The dragon disappears. In its place, Alberich
reappears in his own form.)*

Alberich

Hehe! You doubters!
Now d'you believe?

Loge

My trembling proves it too clearly!
A giant dragon
rose in your place;
now that I've seen,
how can I not believe you?
You can grow larger –
can you be tiny,
a little creature:
the safest way I know
to hide yourself from your foes?
That, maybe, that would be hard?

Alberich

Too hard for you,
ignorant fool!
How small shall I be?

Loge

So the smallest chink could conceal you,
where a frightened toad could be hid.

Alberich

Pah! That's easy!
Look at me now!

(He puts on the Tarnhelm again.)

'Tiny toad,
creeping and crawling!'

*(He disappears; the gods perceive a toad on the
rocks, creeping towards them.)*

Loge *(to Wotan)*

There, the toad!
Capture it quick!

*(Wotan puts his foot on the toad. Loge catches it by
the head and holds the Tarnhelm in his hand.)*

Alberich *(suddenly becomes visible in his true
form, writhing under Wotan's foot)*

Ohe! Ohe!
Now they have caught me!

Loge

Hold him tight,
till he is bound.

*(He has brought out a rope, and with it he binds
Alberich hand and foot; then both seize the captive,
who tries furiously to defend himself, and drag him
with them to the crevice down which they came.)*

^[2] Now swiftly up!
He is our prisoner!

(They disappear, climbing upwards.)

Scene 4

*The scene changes as before, but in the opposite
direction. The transformation again leads past the*

*forging. There is continual upward motion. Finally,
there reappears the*

Open space on a mountain height

*as in the second scene; but now it is still veiled in
thin mist, as at the end of Scene 2, after Freia's
abduction. Wotan and Loge, bringing Alberich,
bound, with them, climb up out of the crevice.*

Loge

^[3] There, Alberich,
sit on your throne!
Look around you,
there lies the world
that you thought you would rule as your own:
what place for me
has been reserved in your realm?

(He dances round him, snapping his fingers.)

Alberich

Infamous schemer!
You knave! You thief!
Loosen my bonds,
let me go free
or else for your crime you will suffer!

Wotan

You're now my captive,
bound in my fetters,
you, who declared
you'd bind the world,
and lay it in chains before you;
my captive, bound at my feet.

I have you now at my mercy!
So if you'd be free,
then pay for your freedom.

Alberich

I was blind
and lost in my dreams!
A fool, caught by
that cowardly trick!
I shall have vengeance,
cruel and keen!

Loge

Well, dream of your vengeance,
but first, set yourself free:
when a man's a captive,
no one cares if he curses.
Still planning your vengeance?
Better think quickly,
think of the ransom we need!

Alberich

Then say what you demand.

Wotan

The gold, all your shining gold.

Alberich

Greedy and criminal pair!
(aside)
But so long as I keep the ring,
the rest can be given away;
I can quickly replace it
again and again

by commanding the powerful ring.
Now a lesson I've learnt,
and wiser I'll be;
the warning is cheap at the price,
though it has cost me so much gold.

Wotan

You'll give me the gold?

Alberich

Loosen my hand;
I'll summon it here.

(Loge unties the rope from his right hand. Alberich puts the ring to his lips and secretly murmurs a command.)

- [4] And now the Nibelungs
will come to my call,
for their lord commands them;
up from the depths
of the darkness they'll bring you the gold:
so now set me free from my bonds!

Wotan

Not yet, till all has been paid.

(The Nibelungs climb up out of the crevice, laden with the treasures of the hoard. During what follows, they pile up the treasure.)

Alberich

O shameful disgrace!
That my shrinking servants
should see me bound like a slave!
(to the Nibelungs)

Put it down there,
as I command!
In a heap
pile up the gold!
Want me to help you?
No, don't look at me!
Hurry! Quick!
Then back to your labour!
Off to the mines!
Off to the forges!
Idlers, back to your work!
For your lord comes hard on your heels!
(He kisses his ring and stretches it out commandingly. As if struck by a blow, the Nibelungs hurry in fear and trembling to the crevice and quickly scuttle down it.)

- [5] The gold lies there;
now let me go:
and the Tarnhelm there,
which Loge still holds,
now kindly return it to me!

Loge *(throwing the Tarnhelm on to the hoard)*
The Tarnhelm is part of the ransom.

Alberich

Accursed thief!
Yet, wait a while!
He who forged me the first
can make me another.
I still hold the power
that Mime obeys.
Yet it's sad

that crafty foes
should capture my cunning defence!
Well then! Alberich's
paid his ransom;
untie, you tyrants, my bonds!

Loge *(to Wotan)*

Are you contented?
Can he go free?

Wotan

A golden ring
shines on your finger:
well, my dwarf,
that also is part of the price.

Alberich *(appalled)*

The ring?

Wotan

To win your freedom
you'll have to yield it.

Alberich *(trembling)*

My life, but not the ring!

Wotan *(more violently)*

The ring surrender:
with your life, do what you will!

Alberich

But if my life is spared me,
the ring must stay on my finger;
hand and head,
eye and ear

are not mine more truly
than mine this golden ring!

Wotan

What right have you to the ring?
Insolent, impudent Niblung!

Tell me now,
where did you get the gold
from which you created the ring?

Did you own it,
when you grasped it,
the Rhinemaidens' radiant toy?
Let those Rhinemaidens answer:
will they declare
that they gave you
their gold as a present,
or did you seize it by theft?

Alberich

Infamous schemer!
Shameful deceit!
Thief, you blame me
for doing that crime
which you were burning to do!
Though you lusted
to steal the gold for yourself,
you'll never pay
the price that alone would suffice.
It serves you well,
you smooth, sneering rogue,
that the Niblung, I,
in shameful distress,
in a frenzied outburst,

did win for myself, by a curse,
this gold that smiles on you now!
And my sacrifice,
all I suffered,
my criminal,
curse-laden deed –
have they merely served
to procure you a plaything?
Will you win the world by my curse?
Guard yourself,
proud, cruel god!
If I have sinned,
I sinned but against myself;
but against all that was,
is, and shall be,
you are planning a crime
by laying your hand on the ring!

Wotan

Yield the ring!
No chatter can prove
your right to the ring!

(He seizes Alberich and violently tears the ring from his finger.)

Alberich *(with a terrible cry)*

Ha! Defeated! And tricked!
Of wretches, the wretchedest slave!

Wotan *(contemplating the ring)*

It shines there, lifts me on high,
of mighty ones, mightiest of all!

(He puts on the ring.)

Loge

Can he be freed?

Wotan

Set him free!

Loge *(frees Alberich from his bonds)*

Slip away home!

Not a fetter holds you:
free, Alberich, free!

Alberich *(raising himself)*

6 Am I now free?
Truly free?

I greet you then
in my freedom: mark my words!
Since a curse gained it for me,
my curse lies on this ring!

Though its gold
brought riches to me,
let now it bring

but death, death to its lord!

Its wealth shall yield
pleasure to none;
let no fortunate owner
enjoy its gleam.

Care shall consume
the man who commands it,
and mortal envy
consume those who don't,
striving vainly
to win that prize!
And he who obtains it
shall find no joy!

It will bring no gain to its lord;
only death is brought by its gleam!

To death he is fated,

doomed by the curse on the ring:

and while he lives,
fears will fill all his days.

Who owns the ring
to the ring's a slave,
till the gold returns
to this hand from which you have torn it!

In anguish
and sore distress,
the Niblung blesses the ring!

You hold it now;
guard it with care!

From my curse you can't escape!

(He disappears quickly into the crevice. The thick mists in the foreground gradually clear.)

Loge

Did you hear
Alberich's loving song?

Wotan *(lost in contemplation of the ring on his finger)*

Let him give way to his wrath!

(It continues to get lighter.)

Loge *(looking off-stage to the right)*

7 Fasolt and Fafner
come this way:
Freia soon shall be freed.

(Through the mists, which continue to disperse, Donner, Froh and Fricka emerge and hasten towards the foreground.)

Froh

So you have returned!

Donner

Be welcome, brother!

Fricka *(to Wotan, anxiously)*

Have you gained the ransom?

Loge *(points to the treasure)*

By cunning and force
the deed was done:
behold, here's Freia's price.

Donner

From the giant's power
soon we can free her.

Froh

How sweetly the air
charms us again;
joy and contentment
steal through my heart!
Life indeed would be wretched
if we were parted from her;
she brings us youth eternal,
fills us with joy and delight.

(The foreground is now completely clear again. The appearances of the gods have regained their pristine freshness. The veil of mist still hovers over the background, however, so that the castle remains

invisible. Fasolt and Fafner enter, bringing Freia between them.)

Fricka (*hurries joyfully to her sister, to embrace her*)

Loveliest sister!

Sweetest delight!

Now once again I can greet you.

Fasolt (*restraining her*)

^[8] Wait! Don't touch her yet!

Freia still is ours.

On Riesenheim's
far rocky heights,
there we did rest;
we guarded her
and we kept our word
faithfully.

Though sore at heart,
I now return her;
so keep your bargain
and pay our wage.

Wotan

Behold, there's the ransom:
the golden heap
will reward you most generously.

Fasolt

To lose the woman
sorely distresses my heart.
If I am forced to forget her,
you must pile the gold,
heap up the hoard,
till you conceal
her beauty and charms from my sight.

Wotan

Then heap the gold
till Freia is hid.

(The two giants place Freia in the middle. Then they thrust their staves in the ground on each side of Freia, so as to measure her height and breadth.)

Fafner

We've planted our poles here
to frame her form;
now heap your gold to her height!

Wotan

On with the work:
oh, this is shameful!

Loge

Help me, Froh!

Froh

Freia's shame
soon shall be ended.

(Loge and Froh quickly pile up the treasure between the staves.)

Fafner

^[9] Far too loose
you're piling the gold.
(Roughly, he presses the treasure together tightly.)
Firm and hard,
pack it up tight!
(He stoops down to look for crevices.)
Look, here is a chink:
and stop up this crevice!

Loge

Stand back, you ruffian!

Fafner

Look here!

Loge

Off with your hands!

Fafner

And here! This crack must be closed!

Wotan (*turning away in dejection*)

Deep in my breast
burns the disgrace!

Fricka (*her eyes fixed on Freia*)

See where she stands;
how can she bear this shame?
For a glorious maid
pleads in silence for help.
Heartless man!
For you she endures this disgrace!

Fafner

Still more! Heap on some more!

Donner

I'll stand no more;
furious rage
rouses my heart to revenge!
Come here, you cur!
If you'd measure,
then try your measure with me!

Fafner

Patience, Donner!
Roar where it helps,
but here you thunder in vain!

Donner (*preparing to strike*)

Not in vain, since it can crush you!

Wotan

Patience, friend!
I think that Freia is hid!

Loge

The gold runs out.

Fafner (*measures the treasure closely with his eye, looking for crevices*)

But still I can see her hair!
You have some gold,
add it to the pile!

Loge

What? Not the helm?

Fafner

Quickly, give it us.

Wotan

Give them the Tarnhelm!

Loge (*throws the Tarnhelm on the pile*)

At last we have finished!
Are you contented?

Fasolt

^[10] Freia, the fair one,
see I no more:

the ransom is paid?
 Fasolt must lose her?
(He goes up close and peers through the pile.)
 Ah! Her glance
 still pierces my heart;
 her eyes like stars
 shine on me still,
 for through this crack
 I look on their light.
 I cannot turn from this maiden,
 while her eyes inspire me with love.

Fafner
 Hey! I charge you,
 now stop up this crevice!

Loge
 Never contented!
 Surely you see
 our gold's at an end?

Fafner
 Not wholly, friend!
 On Wotan's finger
 gleams the gold of a ring,
 and that will fill up this crevice!

Wotan
 What? Give my ring?

Loge
 Just a moment!
 The Rhinemaidens
 must have that gold,
 and to them Wotan will give it.

Wotan
 What chatter is this?
 This prize which I have won me,
 without fear I'll keep for myself!

Loge
 But then how will I
 keep the promise
 I gave those sorrowful maids?

Wotan
 What you promised's nothing to me:
 I took the ring for myself.

Fafner
 And now you'll yield it,
 paying the ransom.

Wotan
 Freely ask what you want:
 all I shall grant you;
 but for the world
 I will not surrender the ring!

Fasolt *(angrily pulling Freia out from behind the pile)*
 Keep your gold,
 and keep your ring;
 and we'll keep Freia for ever!

Freia
 Help me! Help me!

Fricka
 Cruel god!
 Do what they ask!

Froh
 Pay them the ransom!

Donner
 Give them the ring, too!

(Fafner restrains Fasolt, who is making off. All stand stunned.)

Wotan
 Leave me in peace!
 The ring stays with me!

(Wotan turns angrily away. The stage has again become dark. A bluish light breaks forth from the rocky cleft at the side. In it Erda suddenly appears, rising from below to half her height. Her noble features are ringed by a mass of black hair.)

Erda *(commandingly stretching out her hand to Wotan)*

^[11] Yield it, Wotan, yield it!
 Yield the accursed ring!
 Wretchedness,
 doom and disaster
 lie there in the ring.

Wotan
 Who brings this warning of doom?

Erda
 All of the past, know I;
 all things that are,
 all things that shall be,
 all I know:

the endless world's
 all-wise one,
 Erda, bids you beware.
 My three daughters,
 born in Erda's
 primeval womb,
 shape my visions,
 tell you each night of the future.
 Today I myself,
 drawn by dread,
 come to advise.
 Hear me! Hear me! Hear me!
 All things that are, perish!
 An evil day
 for the immortals:
 I warn you, yield up the ring!

(Erda sinks slowly to breast level, as the bluish light begins to fade.)

Wotan
 Mysterious doom
 sounds in your words:
 stay here, and warn me further!

Erda *(disappearing)*
 You heard my words;
 you know enough:
 brood in dread and fear!
(She disappears completely.)

Wotan
 But if dread will torment me,

then I must hold you;
all you must tell me!

(He tries to follow and stop her as she disappears into the crevice. Froh and Fricka throw themselves towards him and hold him back.)

Fricka

Be careful, calm yourself!

Froh

Be wise, Wotan!
Erda is holy,
do as she says!

(Wotan gazes thoughtfully before him.)

Donner *(turning decisively to the giants)*

^[12] Hear, you giants!
Come back, be patient!
The gold, Wotan will give you.

Freia

Ah, dare I hope it?
Is your Freia
worth such a great reward?

(All look anxiously at Wotan. After thinking deeply, he rouses himself, seizes his spear and brandishes it as the sign of a bold decision.)

Wotan

To me, Freia!
You shall be freed.
Bought with the gold,
bring us our youth once again!
You giants, there is your ring!

(He throws the ring on the pile. The giants release Freia. She hurries happily over to the gods, who spend some time embracing her in turn with the utmost delight. Fafner at once spreads out an enormous sack and stands over the pile, ready to stow it away.)

Fasolt *(throwing himself at his brother)*

^[13] Stop, you greedy one!
What about my share?
Fairly and squarely
we'll divide it.

Fafner

You'd set your heart on the maid.
What do you care for the gold?
You hoped for love
and I wanted riches;
if you had won her,
would you have shared her with me?
Since it's the gold,
trust me to seize
on the greater part for myself!

Fasolt

Shame on you, thief!
Mocking me so!
You gods be the judges:
how should this gold
be shared into two?

(Wotan turns contemptuously away.)

Loge *(to Fasolt)*

Let him keep the treasure;
all that you need is the ring!

Fasolt *(hurls himself upon Fafner, who has been busily packing away)*

Stand back, you robber!
Mine is the ring;
I won it for Freia's glance!

(He snatches hastily at the ring. They struggle.)

Fafner

Off with your hands!
The ring is mine!

(Fasolt wrests the ring from Fafner.)

Fasolt

I have it, I shall keep it!

Fafner *(striking out at Fasolt with his staff)*

Hold it fast, else it may fall!
(He strikes Fasolt to the ground with a single blow, then wrenches the ring quickly from the dying giant.)

Now dream of your Freia's glance!
For the ring you'll see no more!

(He puts the ring in the sack, and then calmly packs up the rest of the treasure. All the gods are appalled. A long, solemn silence.)

Wotan

Fearful power
lies hid in that fatal curse!

Loge

^[14] Your luck, Wotan,
what could surpass it?
Much you gained from
the ring and the gold;
but that now you have lost them,
that's better still:
for your enemies, see,
murder each other
for the gold that you let go.

Wotan *(profoundly shaken)*

Dark forebodings oppress me!
Fear and dread
seize on my soul.
Erda can teach me
how I can end them:
to her, I must descend!

Fricka *(caressing him, cajolingly)*

What keeps you, Wotan?
See where our home
awaits you there,
shining and glorious,
glad to welcome its lord.

Wotan *(gloomily)*

An evil wage
paid for the work!

Donner *(pointing to the background, which is still enveloped in mists)*

^[15] Sweltering mists
hang in the air;

we're oppressed
by their gloomy weight.
I'll gather the clouds,
summon the lightning and thunder
to sweep the mist from the sky!
(He climbs onto a high rock by the precipice and there swings his hammer. Mists gather around him.)

Heda! Heda! Hedo!
Now come to my call!
You vapours, to me!
Donner, your lord,
summons you here!
As my hammer swings,
sweep from the sky:
vapours and cloud,
wandering fog!
Donner, your lord, summons you here!
Heda! Heda! Hedo!

(Donner vanishes completely behind a thundercloud which grows ever thicker and blacker. His hammer-blow is heard striking hard on the rock. A large flash of lightning shoots from the cloud, followed by a violent clap of thunder. Froh has vanished with him into the cloud.)

Donner *(invisible)*
Brother, to me!
Show them the bridge to the hall.

(Suddenly the clouds lift. Donner and Froh are visible. From their feet a rainbow bridge of blinding radiance stretches across the valley back to the castle, which now glows in the rays of the

evening sun. Fafner has at last collected up all the treasure lying near his brother's corpse, put the enormous sack on his back, and left the stage during Donner's conjuration of the thunderstorm.)

Froh *(to the gods, indicating with outstretched hand the way, over the bridge, across the valley)*

^[18] The bridge leads you homeward,
light, yet firm to your feet:
so boldly tread
on that shining path!

(Wotan and the other gods are lost, speechless, at the glorious sight.)

Wotan

^[17] Evening rays flood
the sky with splendour;
those glorious beams
shine there on my hall.
In the morning radiance
bravely it glistened,
standing masterless,
proud, awaiting its lord.
From morning till evening,
in fear and dread
I worked dark deeds till I'd gained it!
The night is near:
from all its ills
we have our refuge now.
(very resolutely, as if seized by a grand thought)
So greet I the hall,
safe from all fear and dread.

(He turns solemnly to Fricka.)

Follow me, wife:
in Walhall, reign there with me!

Fricka

What name did you call it?
No name that I've ever heard of.

Wotan

When all that I dreamed
and planned comes to pass,
then victory is mine,
you'll understand that name!

(He takes Fricka by the hand and with her strides slowly towards the bridge. Froh, Freia and Donner follow.)

Loge *(remaining in the foreground and glancing after the gods)*

They are hastening on to their end,
though they think they are great in their grandeur.
Ashamed I'd be
to share in their dealings;
I feel temptation
to turn and destroy them,
change to flickering fire,
and burn those great ones
who thought I was tamed,
rather than blindly
sink with the blind,
unworthy the godliest of gods!
I think that might be best!
I must consider:
who knows what I'll do?

(He goes nonchalantly to join the gods. From deep below, the singing of the Rhinemaidens is heard rising up.)

Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde *(in the depths of the valley, invisible)*

^[18] Rhinegold! Rhinegold!
Shining gold!
How brightly and clear
glittered your beams on us!
For your true radiance
we are mourning;
give us the gold!
Oh, give us its glory again!

Wotan *(in the act of setting foot on the bridge, pauses and turns round)*
What cries arise from the deep?

Loge *(peering down into the valley)*
The mournful Rhinemaidens
cry for their stolen gold.

Wotan

Accursed nixies!
Stop their tiresome lament!

Loge *(calling down into the valley)*
You in the water,
stop waiting to us!
Hear what Wotan decrees!
Never more
will you see your gold;
let the gods' new golden splendour
shine upon you instead!

(The gods laugh and then stride on to the bridge.)

Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde

Rhinegold! Rhinegold!

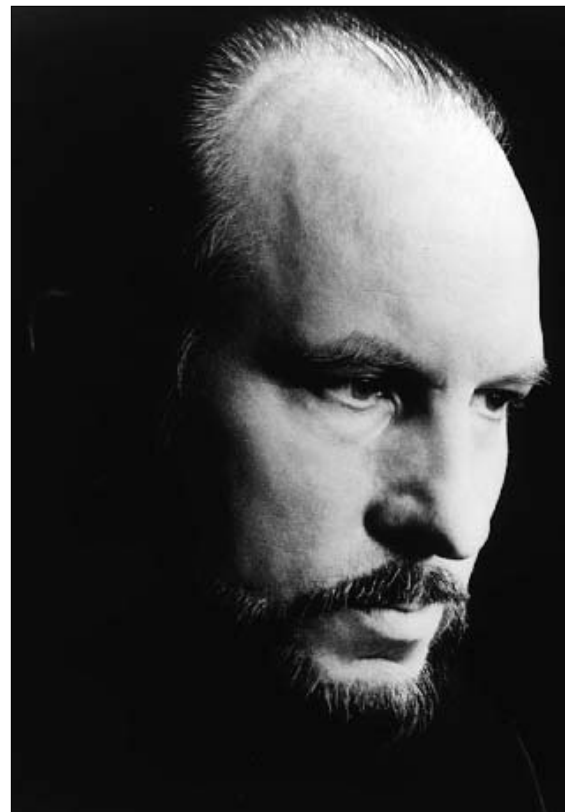
Shining gold!

Return to the deep,
let us bathe in your light again!

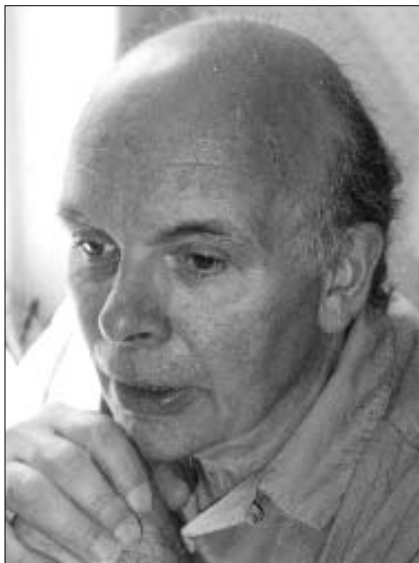
Goodness and truth
dwell but in the waters:
false and base
all those who dwell up above!

*(As the gods cross the bridge to the castle, the
curtain falls.)*

Translation © 1976 by Andrew Porter
Reproduced by permission of
Faber Music Ltd, London



Norman Bailey

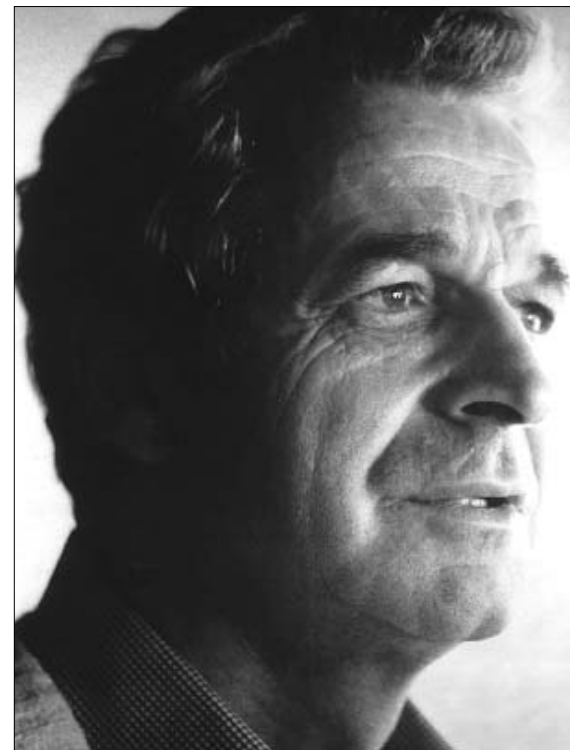


Norman Welsby



Robert Ferguson

Courtesy English National Opera Archive

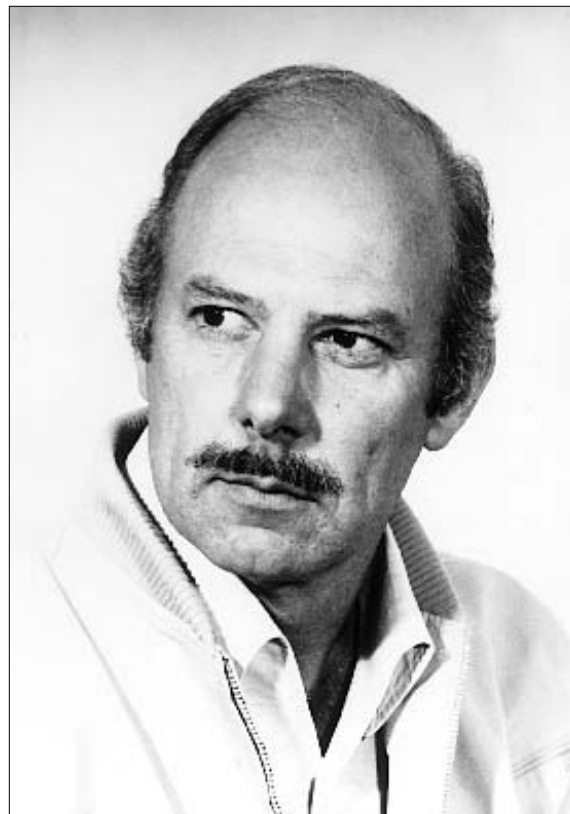


Emile Belcourt



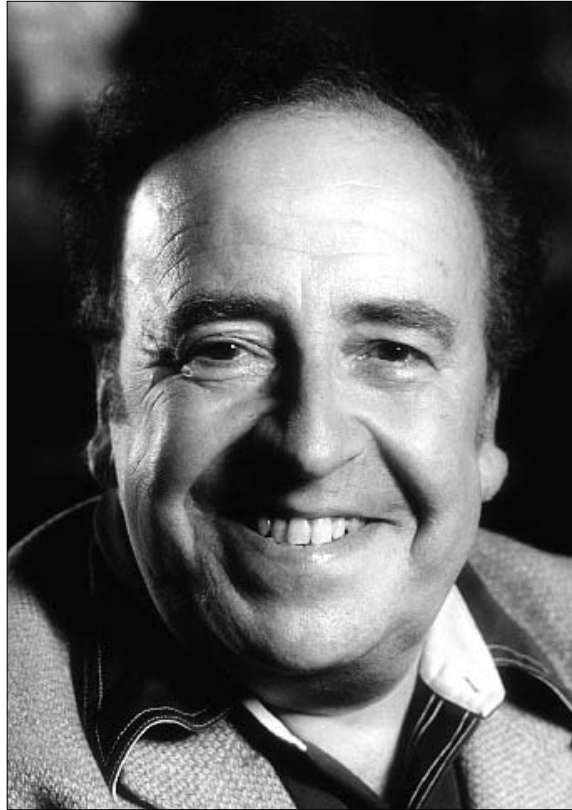
Robert Lloyd

182



Clifford Grant

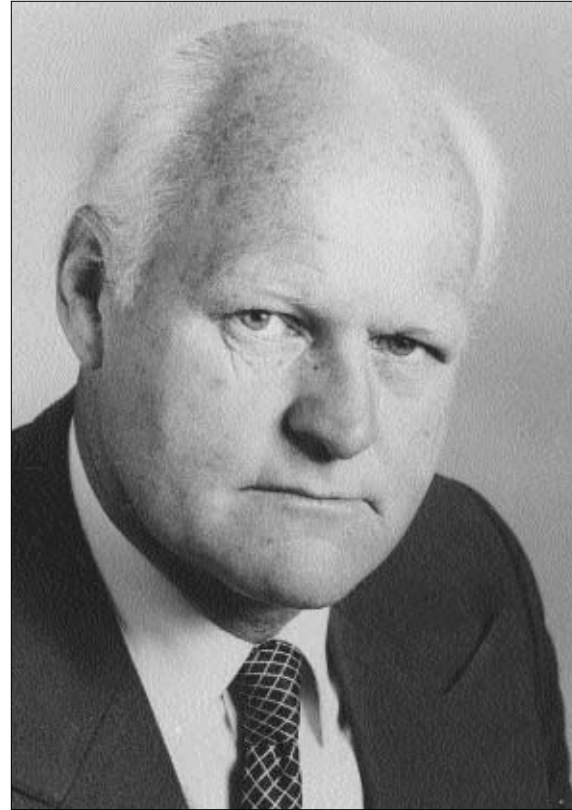
183



Clive Borda

Derek Hammond-Stroud

184



Courtesy Opera Australia

Gregory Dempsey

185



Katherine Pring

186

John Garner/English National Opera Archive



Lois McDonall

187



Anne Collins

188



Andrew March

Valerie Masterson

189



Shelagh Squires

Courtesy English National Opera Archive



Helen Attfield

Opera in English on Chandos



Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3004



CHAN 3003

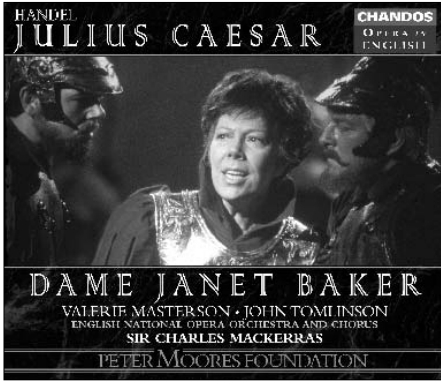


CHAN 3029

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3017(2)

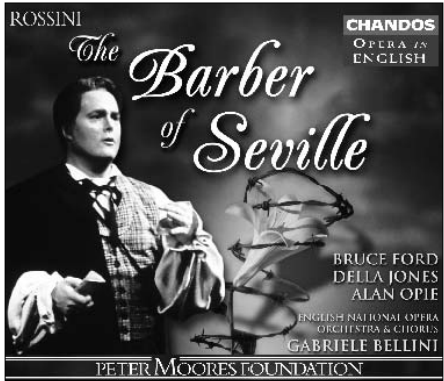


CHAN 3019(3)



CHAN 3023(2)

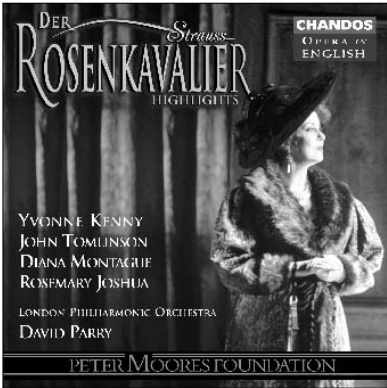
Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3025(2)



CHAN 3007



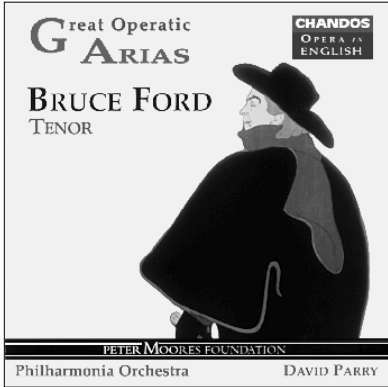
CHAN 3022



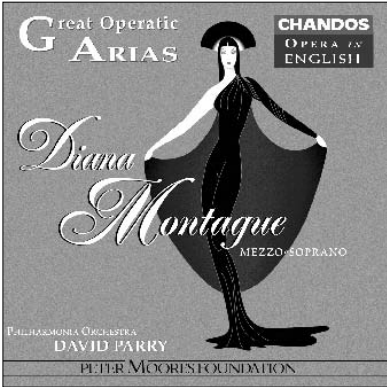
CHAN 3011(2)



CHAN 3027(2)



CHAN 3006



CHAN 3010

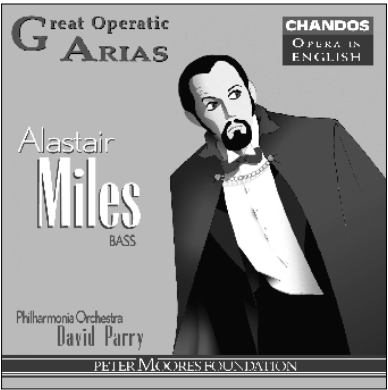
Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3013



CHAN 3035



CHAN 3032



CHAN 3044

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3049



CHAN 3005(2)



CHAN 3030(2)

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3033(2)

CHAN 3036(2)



Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3000(2)



CHAN 3008(2)



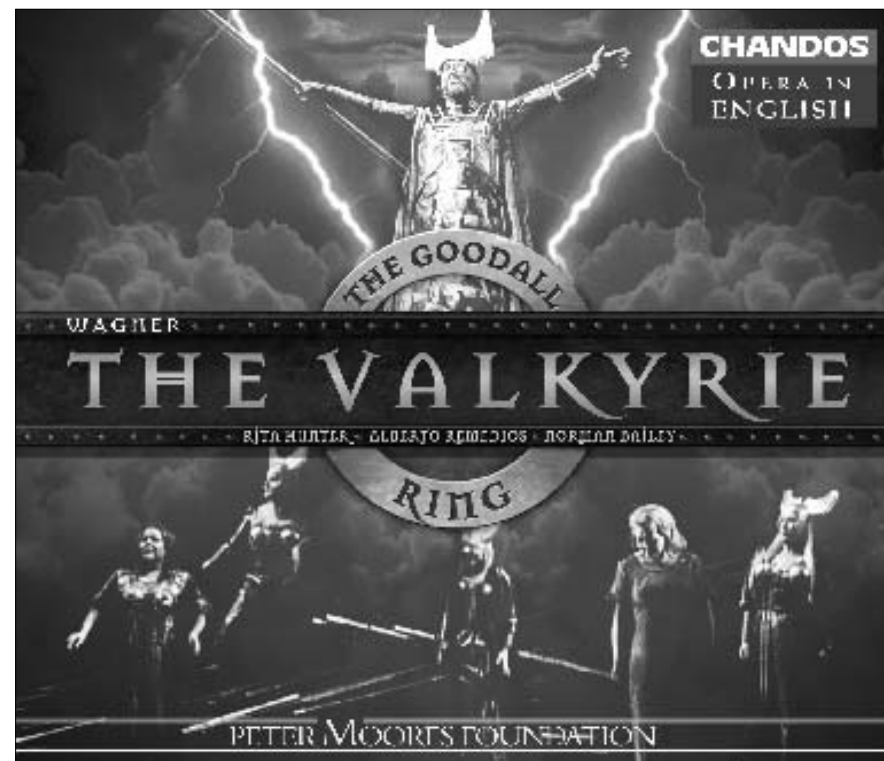
CHAN 3014(3)

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3042(2)

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3038(4)

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3045(4)

202

You can now purchase Chandos CDs directly from us. For further details please telephone +44 (0) 1206 225225 for Chandos Direct. Fax: +44 (0) 1206 225201. Chandos Records Ltd, Chandos House, Commerce Way, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HQ, UK E-mail: enquiries@chandos.net website: www.chandos.net

Any requests to license tracks from this or any other Chandos disc should be made directly to the Copyright Administrator, Chandos Records Ltd, at the above address.

All booklet photographs from the English National Opera production of *The Rhinegold* conducted by Reginald Goodall

Recording producer John Mordler

Sound engineer Robert Gooch

Recording venue London Coliseum, live; 10, 19, 25 & 29 March 1975

Front cover Montage of photographs by Anthony Crickmay, courtesy of the Theatre Museum, V&A, from the English National Opera production of *The Rhinegold* conducted by Reginald Goodall

Back cover Photograph of Reginald Goodall by John Garner

Design Cass Cassidy

Booklet typeset by Dave Partridge

Booklet editor Finn S. Gundersen

© 2001 Chandos Records Ltd digitally remastered from a © 1975 recording

© 2001 Chandos Records Ltd

Chandos Records Ltd, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HQ, England

Printed in the EU

203

WAGNER: THE RHINEGOLD

CHANDOS DIGITAL 3-disc set **CHAN 3054(3)**

RICHARD WAGNER (1813–1883)

THE RHINEGOLD

Preliminary Evening to the Festival Play *The Ring of the Nibelung*

Music drama in four scenes

Poem by Richard Wagner

English translation by Andrew Porter



Wotan.....Norman Bailey *bass-baritone*
DonnerNorman Welsby *baritone*
FrohRobert Ferguson *tenor*
LogeEmile Belcourt *tenor*
FasoltRobert Lloyd *bass*
FafnerClifford Grant *bass*
Alberich.....Derek Hammond-Stroud *baritone*
Mime.....Gregory Dempsey *tenor*
FrickaKatherine Pring *mezzo-soprano*
FreiaLois McDonall *soprano*
ErdaAnne Collins *contralto*
WoglindeValerie Masterson *soprano*
WellgundeShelagh Squires *mezzo-soprano*
Flosshilde.....Helen Attfield *contralto*
Nibelungs

English National Opera Orchestra

English National Opera Movement Group

REGINALD GOODALL

COMPACT DISC ONE

TT 52:57

COMPACT DISC TWO

TT 56:54

COMPACT DISC THREE

TT 64:08

(ADD)

CHANDOS

CHANDOS RECORDS LTD
Colchester . Essex . England

QC 7038

© 2001 Chandos Records Ltd digitally remastered from a © 1975 recording
© 2001 Chandos Records Ltd Printed in the EU

SOLOISTS/ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA ORCHESTRA/GOODALL

CHAN 3054(3)