



WAGNER *Die Walküre*

Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma della RAI Wilhelm Furtwängler



Some people resent Wagner and his wide knowledge of effects. But as long as this knowledge sustains and promotes true creativity, rather than replaces it, then it is a blessing. (*Wilhelm Furtwängler, 1946*)

A beautiful voice is not enough for a successful interpretation, especially in Wagner and hence cannot in itself be decisive: conveying the meaning of the text is almost as important. (*Wilhelm Furtwängler, 1949*)

Restoration notes

There are two full recordings of Wagner's *Ring* cycle conducted by Furtwängler, but neither is the full studio recording planned by EMI to begin in 1954 and left incomplete by the conductor's death at the age of 68 on 30th November of that year. There is a 1950 recording of his La Scala cycle, and this, a series of recordings made for broadcast on Italian radio (RAI) across ten sessions in October and November 1953 in front of a very quiet invited audience.

The final broadcasts were cut from both these recordings and taped rehearsal sessions, as chosen by Furtwängler and the RAI engineers the day after recording. The recordings were broadcast a short time after but were not commercially issued until the early 1970s on LP by EMI.

Two CD reissues I've examined closely - EMI in 1990 (reissued without apparent alteration in 2011) and Gebhardt in 2005 - managed between them to reduce the quality achieved by those 1972 LPs. EMI's issue has come under criticism for its dull and rather dead sound, whilst the Gebhardt's choice equalisation is at best unusual, and the sound quality is - according to one's tastes - either improved or severely degraded by the kind of dynamic compression which more usually graces rock music recordings. The latter, which raises the levels of everything by squashing them all into a smaller dynamic space, has the additional side effect of boosting hiss levels throughout.

Pristine's 32-bit XR remastering aims to avoid these pitfalls - using predictive, ultra-sensitive re-equalisation to tease out of the recording the precise frequencies expected from *Die Walküre* in the proportions expected of them, it expands the lower frequencies to provide a fuller and more convincing bass whilst extending the upper treble to produce natural clarity and sparkle, whilst avoiding excessive noise or hiss. Although this recording had a number of shortcomings: a tendency to peak distortion in places; a large number of bass thuds and bumps; these have largely been eradicated or ameliorated, and the result is particularly satisfying and enjoyable - especially if you have the Ambient Stereo version!

NB. Downloads, both in FLAC and MP3 format, of each act of this recording are continuous throughout, with no gaps. However in order to accommodate the timing shortcomings of the medium, short fades have been applied to CD starts and finishes as appropriate. I have however retained the musical timing of the original performances - thus the precise start point of CD2 continues from the precise end point of CD1, and so on. **AR**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES, SCORES ETC. CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM

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FURTWÄNGLER



CONDUCTS
WAGNER *Der Ring des Nibelungen*
2. *Die Walküre*



THE ROME SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF RAI

RECORDED IN ROME, OCTOBER-NOVEMBER, 1953

SIEGMUND WOLFGANG WINDGASSEN
HUNDING GOTTLOB FRICK
WOTAN FERDINAND FRANTZ
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WAGNER Die Walküre

Disc One

- [1] **Act I: Prelude** (3:06)
- [2] **Scene 1: Wes Herd dies auch sei, hier muss ich rasten** (3:41)
- [3] **Kühlende Labung Gab Mir Der Quell!** (4:54)
- [4] **Einen Unseligen labtest du** (4:38)
- [5] **Scene 2: Müd am Herd fand ich den Mann** (5:20)
- [6] **Friedman darf ich nicht heissen** (6:03)
- [7] **Die so leidig Los dir beschied** (4:30)
- [8] **Ich weiss ein wildes Geschlecht** (6:33)
- [9] **Scene 3: Ein Schwert verhiess mir der Vater** (5:29)
- [10] **Schläfst du, Gast?** (7:07)
- [11] **Winterstürme wichen dem Wonnemond** (3:00)
- [12] **Du bist der Lenz, nach dem ich verlangte** (2:12)
- [13] **O süsseste Wonne! Seligstes Weib!** (6:35)
- [14] **Siegmund heiss ich und Siegmund bin ich!** (4:06)

- [15] **Act II: Prelude - Nun zäume dein Ross, reisige Maid!** (2:34)
- [16] **Scene 1: Ho-jo-to-ho! Ho-jo-to-ho!** (2:23)
- [16] **Der alte Sturm, die alte Muh'!** (3:37)

Disc Two

- [1] **Heut hast du's erlebt** (1:04)
- [2] **So ist es denn aus mit den ewigen Göttern** (3:12)
- [3] **Nichts lernst du** (7:46)
- [4] **Heiaha! Heiaha! Hojotoho!** (2:54)
- [5] **Scene 2: Schlimm, fürcht ich, schloss der Streit** (5:51)
- [6] **Als junger Liebe Lust mir verblich** (5:06)
- [7] **Ein andres ist's: achte es wohl** (6:42)
- [8] **So nimmst du von Siegmund den Sieg?** (3:59)
- [9] **So nimm meinen Segen, Niblungen-Sohn!** (5:01)
- [10] **So sah ich Siegvater nie** (3:13)
- [11] **Scene 3: Raste nun hier; gönne dir Ruh!** (3:49)
- [12] **Hinweg! Hinweg! Flieh die Entweihte!** (7:34)
- [13] **Scene 4: Siegmund! Sieh auf mich!** (9:08)
- [14] **Erdenluft muss sie noch atmen** (4:01)
- [15] **Weh! Weh! Süssestes Weib** (4:22)
- [16] **Zwei Leben lachen dir hier** (2:22)

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XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Transfers from EMI box set
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photograph of **Wilhelm
Furtwängler** with the Rome
Symphony Orchestra,
taken 26 October, 1953

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material edited in from earlier
rehearsals during this period)
Auditorio del Foro Italico, Rome

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"Das Rheingold proceeded at a brisk pace, giving us a great deal of plot and argument, and all in one unbroken span of about two and a half hours - an unrivalled feat. Though it is largely concerned with the renunciation of love and the consequences of that, nothing much is said about love itself. Indeed, one might claim that what Alberich is renouncing is lust, not love, since all he is interested in is the Rhinemaidens' bodies - they can hardly be said to have minds. There is sensuality in Das Rheingold, but very little warmth.

As soon as we move to **Die Walküre**, however, we find Wagner lavishing all his arts showing love being born and growing under unpropitious circumstances - love, moreover, that is not only sexual but incestuous, between twins. In Act II he shows a different kind of love, that of a father for his daughter, and hers for him, and the awakening in her - Brünnhilde, the Valkyrie of the title - of an understanding of what loving tenderness between human beings (she is a goddess) might be, and what actions it might result in.

In Act III we see Wotan's love turned to bitter fury and destructiveness, in the face of his daughter's disobedience. We see too how she slowly softens him: his farewell to her is one of the most overpowering expressions of anguished love in all the arts, one that shows the continuity of the paternal and the erotic. We should be shocked by the penetrating candour of **Die Walküre** more than we are, given what our society regards as the permissible forms of love." **Michael Tanner**, *The Faber Pocket Guide to Wagner*

"Although **Die Walküre** is the second of the Ring operas, it was the third in order of conception. Wagner worked backwards from planning an opera about Siegfried's death, then deciding he needed an other opera to tell of Siegfried's youth, then deciding he needed to tell the tale of Siegfried's conception and of Brünnhilde's attempts to save his parents and finally deciding he also needed a prelude that told of the original theft of the Rheingold and creation of the ring.

Wagner intermingled development of the text of these last two planned operas, i.e. **Die Walküre**, originally entitled Siegmund und Sieglinde: der Walküre Bestrafung (Siegmund and Sieglinde: the Valkyrie's Punishment) and what became Das Rheingold. Wagner had first written of his intention to create a trilogy of operas in the August 1851 draft of "Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde" (A Communication to My Friends), but did not produce any sketches of the plot of Siegmund and Sieglinde until November. The following Summer, Wagner and his wife rented the Pension Rinderknecht, a pied-à-terre on the Zürichberg (now Hochstrasse 56-58 in Zürich). There he worked on the prose draft of **Die Walküre**, an extended description of the story including dialogue between 17 and 26 May 1852 and the verse draft between 1 June and 1 July. It was between these drafts that Wagner made the decision not to introduce Wotan in Act I, instead leaving the sword he had been going to bring on stage already embedded in the tree before the action starts. The fair copy of the text was completed by 15 December 1852.

Even before the text of the Ring was finalised, Wagner had begun to sketch some of the music. On 23 July 1851 he wrote down on a loose sheet of paper what was to become the best-known leitmotif in the entire cycle: the theme from the "Ride of the Valkyries" (Walkürenritt). Other early sketches for **Die Walküre** were made in the summer of 1852. But it was not until 28 June 1854 that Wagner began to transform these into a complete draft of all three acts of the opera. This preliminary draft (Gesamtenwurf) was completed by 27 December 1854. Much of the work of this stage of development of the opera overlapped with work on the final orchestral version of Das Rheingold.

As Wagner had included some indication of the orchestration in the draft, he decided to move straight on to developing a full orchestral score in January 1855 without bothering to write an intermediate instrumentation draft as he had done for Das Rheingold. This was a decision he was soon to regret, as numerous interruptions including a four month visit to London made the task of orchestrating more difficult than he had expected. If he allowed too much time to elapse between the initial drafting of a passage and its later elaboration, he found that he could not remember how he had intended to orchestrate the draft. Consequently some passages had to be composed again from scratch. Wagner, nevertheless, persevered with the task and the full score was finally completed on 20 March 1856. The fair copy was begun on 14 July 1855 in the Swiss resort of Seelisberg, where Wagner and his wife spent a month. It was completed in Zürich on 23 March 1856, just three days after the completion of the full score." **Notes from Wikipedia**

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