



Furtwängler

Wagner *Götterdämmerung*



Legends when closely investigated do not always live up to their reputations; not so with this Furtwängler-Scala *Ring*. Snippets heard on 'pirated' records in wretched sound had not prepared me for the glory of the whole. Indeed I will go as far as to say that this is simply the greatest performance of the whole cycle I have ever heard. It is emphatically not for those who require perfect sound, even less for those who object to audience coughs (the Italians sometimes seem unforgivably inattentive to the aural feast they are receiving), abrupt tape joins, changes of sound level, insensitive side-changes, audible prompts, even the occasional missed entry. It is for anyone who can overcome and forget these fallibilities and hear a conductor at the peak of his powers delivering interpretations of a lifetime.

Ah, I can hear someone asking, but haven't we already a perfectly adequate Furtwängler *Ring* (HMV mono RLS702, 9/72) in better sound from Rome three years later? Indeed we do have that radio performance which is already an improvement over what Furtwängler achieved in the studio (where, as many eyewitnesses will tell you, he was never entirely himself), but he was at his most inspired only in the theatre. The incandescence of his conducting right from the announcement of the gold motif in the opening scene of *Rheingold* through to the nobility of the Immolation is unforgettable. That, and his command of Wagner's unendliche melodic, heard at its most potent throughout the first act and final scene of *Die Walküre*, are the crux of Furtwängler's art. They are enhanced by the wonderfully refulgent sound he seemed able to draw from any orchestra. The Scala players, much more accomplished than their colleagues of Rome Radio, enable him to knit together scenes with unerring breadth at fundamentally fast speeds, here quicker than those in either the Rome performance or in his Bayreuth *Ring* in 1936.

His approach was at once romantic and tragic, elemental and profound. As DC said in reviewing the previous set: there is "his ability to make the music surge, or seethe, or melt, so that one had left the world of semiquavers altogether"—although nobody is in fact more apt at making Wagner's semiquavers tell than Furtwängler—and is swept up in a great spiritual experience". What was true on that occasion is even more so in this theatre reading. You can hear it in the glowing outburst after Freia is saved, in the "sehr ausdrucksvoll" passage just before the Walsungs arrive in Act 2, in the whole of the Waltraute scene in *Götterdämmerung*, and, of course, in the Funeral March and Immolation, where he is joined by Flagstad in an inspired account of the familiar music, both artists in the words of the old *Record Guide* in discussing their 1952 HMV version "magnificently at one in realizing the spaciousness and melodic richness of Wagner's immense peroration"...

A.B., *The Gramophone*, October 1976 (excerpt - continues in second CD cover)

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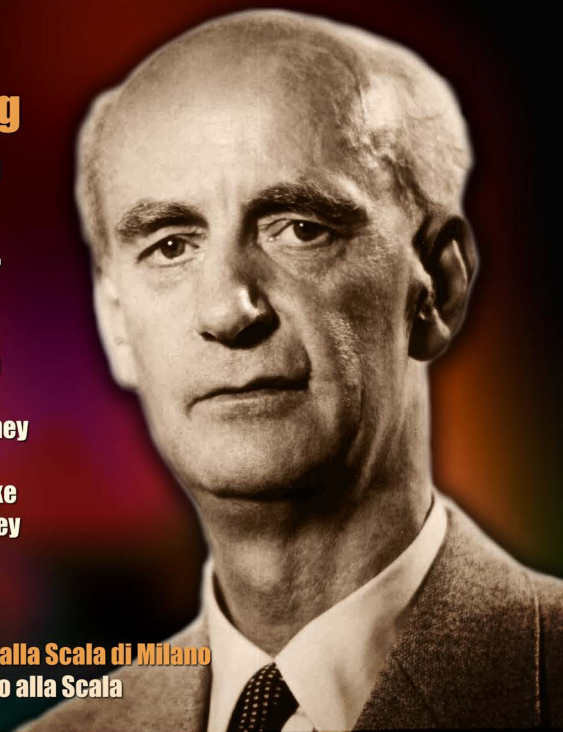


WAGNER

Götterdämmerung

Brünnhilde Kirsten Flagstad
Siegfried Max Lorenz
Hagen Ludwig Weber
Alberich Alois Pernerstorfer
Gunter Josef Herrmann
Gutrune Hilde Konetzni
Waltraute Elisabeth Höngen
Woglinde Magda Gabory
Wellgunde Margherita Kenney
Floßhilde Sieglinde Wagner
1st Norn Margret Weth-Falke
2nd Norn Margherita Kenney
3rd Norn Hilde Konetzni

Orchestra e Coro del Teatro alla Scala di Milano
Live recording, April 4, Teatro alla Scala



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WAGNER GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG (CD1 & CD2)
FURTWÄNGLER, LA SCALA

Wagner Götterdämmerung

DISC ONE - PROLOGUE - ACT 1

- 1 Prologue - Welch Licht leuchtet dort? (7:10)
- 2 Treu beratner Verträge Runen (2:02)
- 3 Es ragt die Burg, von Riesen gebaut (7:53)
- 4 Zu neuen Taten, teurer Helde (6:13)
- 5 Willst du mir Minne schenken (5:35)
- 6 O heilige Götter! (2:24)
- 7 Siegfrieds Rheinfahrt (5:11)
- 8 Act I, Scene I - Nun hör', Hagen (2:15)
- 9 Wen rätst du nun zu frein (7:22)
- 10 Jagt er auf Taten wonnig umher (3:26)
- 11 Act I, Scene II - Wer ist Gibichs Sohn? (2:06)
- 12 Begrüße froh, o Held (3:34)
- 13 Willkommen, Gast, in Gibichs Haus! (3:28)

DISC TWO - ACT 1 cont'd

- 1 Deinem Bruder bot ich mich zum Mann (4:23)
- 2 Blühenden Lebens labendes Blut (3:57)
- 3 Frisch auf die Fahrt! (2:19)
- 4 Hier sitz' ich zur Wacht (8:48)
- 5 Scene III - Altgewohntes Geräusch (7:22)
- 6 Höre mit Sinn, was ich dir sage! (10:05)
- 7 Welch' banger Träume Mären (7:08)
- 8 Was leckt so wütend (1:46)
- 9 Brünnhild! Ein Freier kam (9:02)

Orchestra e Coro del Teatro alla Scala di Milano
conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler

COMPACT
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PACO 093

XR remastering by
Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photo
of **Wilhelm Furtwängler**

Live recording, 4 April, 1950
Teatro alla Scala, Milan, Italy

Total duration: **4hr 8:09**

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FURTWÄNGLER, LA SCALA

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Wagner *Götterdämmerung*



Flagstad's complete Brünnhilde is at last preserved for posterity. Modi and Varnay in the immediately succeeding generation may have extracted more intense responses from the text and so conveyed more of Brünnhilde's anguish, as in the passage just before Wotan's Narration and in much of *Götterdämmerung*, but neither they nor anyone since, even Nilsson, could match the sheer vocal ease and lyrical beauty of Flagstad's singing as exemplified in the passage "Der diese Liebe" in the final scene of *Walküre*. Furtwängler, on this and other evidence, seemed to draw from her a more ready response to words, a more eloquent manner of phrasing, and that is apparent throughout, nowhere more so than at "Oh, Siegfried! Dein war ich von je!" in *Siegfried*...

Höngen's Erda is admirable for the same qualities as her Fricka, but her greatest performance comes as Waltraute in *Götterdämmerung*, remarkable for its urgency and gravity of utterance. This final opera is distinguished by Max Lorenz's eager, young-sounding (remarkable when you consider he was nearly fifty at the time) Siegfried, and a kind of ecstatic wonder in his third-act Narrative. Weber's plausible, but rather roughly sung Hagen, Herrmann's virile Gunther, Konetzni's comely Gutrune, and good Norns all positively second Flagstad's glorious Brünnhilde. The Scala chorus suggest raw energy without resorting to coarseness.

In summing up, I must again emphasize the technical faults of the recording. Against that can be set a very natural balance between voice and orchestra, and the absence of any distortion, even though, to get the cycle on eleven discs, some sides are more than 40 minutes long...

A.B., *The Gramophone*, October 1976 (excerpt - continued from first CD cover)

Transfer notes

As with the previous three operas in this Ring Cycle, *Götterdämmerung* has responded remarkably to the Pristine XR remastering treatment, with a sound that's full, rich, clear and bright. In this instance tape hiss is very slightly higher than in the other operas, though at a level the listener will soon cease to notice. I felt that any further noise reduction would prove too destructive to the wonderfully clear delivery of the soloists heard throughout the opera. Unlike the others in this *Ring* there are no technical lapses, and sound quality is thus even throughout. Those listening to a FLAC download will appreciate no mid-scene gap in the first act - continuity can be reconstructed with the CDs, which do not fade out or in at this crucial join point. This recording has been pitched using residual mains electrical hum indicators, which indicate a performance pitch of A4=447Hz.

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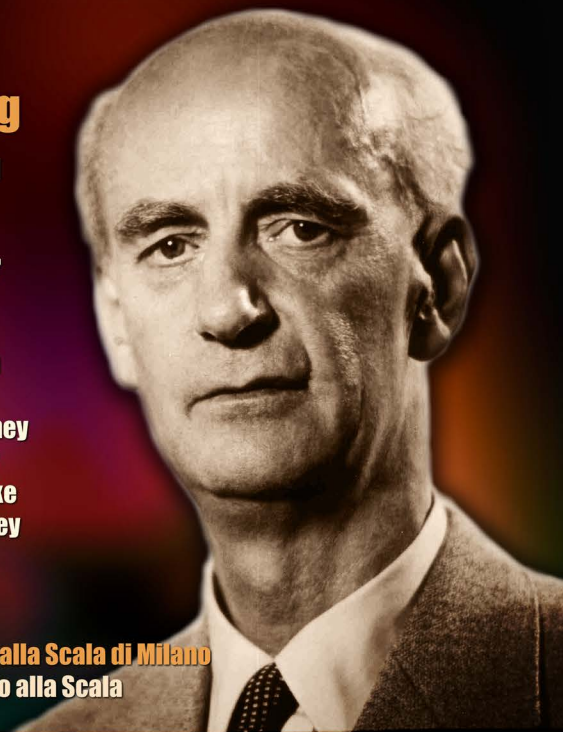
Furtwängler



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DISC THREE - ACT 2

- 1 Act II - Vorspiel (2:35)
- 2 Scene I - Schäfst du, Hagen, mein Sohn! (8:29)
- 3 Scene II- Hoiho, Hagen! Müder Mann! (2:16)
- 4 Heiß' mich willkommen, Gibichskind! (3:30)
- 5 Scene III- Hoiho! Hoihohoho! (8:16)
- 6 Scene IV- Heil dir, Gunther! (3:00)
- 7 Gegrüßt sei, teurer Held (3:51)
- 8 Einen Ring sah ich an deiner Hand (3:02)
- 9 Heil'ge Götter, himmlische Lenker! (5:07)
- 10 Helle Wehr! Heilige Waffe! (2:41)
- 11 Gunther, Wehr' deinem Weibe (2:48)
- 12 Scene V- Welches Unholds List liegt hier werhohlen! (3:46)
- 13 Vertraue mir, betrog'ne Frau! (3:18)
- 14 Auf, Gunther, edler Gibichung! (7:57)

DISC FOUR - ACT 3

- 1 Act III - Vorspiel (2:00)
- 2 Scene I - Frau Sonne sendet lichte Strahlen (4:32)
- 3 Ein Albe führte mich irr (3:45)
- 4 Was leid' ich doch das karge Lob! (1:29)
- 5 Siegfried! Siegfried! Siegfried! (8:26)
- 6 Scene II - Hoiho! (3:24)
- 7 Trink', Gunther, trink'! (2:14)
- 8 Mime hiess ein mürrischer Zwerg (4:12)
- 9 In Leid zu dem Wipfel lausch' ich hinauf (4:59)
- 10 Brünnhilde! Heilige Braut! (4:41)
- 11 Trauermusik beim Tode Siegfrieds (5:29)
- 12 Scene III - War das sein Horn! (2:32)
- 13 Hoiho! Hoiho! (2:32)
- 14 Nicht klage wider mich! (1:54)
- 15 Schweigt eures Jammers (3:45)
- 16 Starke Scheite schichtet mir dort (8:20)
- 17 Mein Erbe nun nehm' ich zu eigen (2:22)
- 18 Fliegt heim, ihr Raben! (7:28)

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