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DIGITAL AUDIO
PACO 135

NILSSON - VINAY - BÖHM

Wagner - Tristan und Isolde

Pristine
XR

Birgit Nilsson as Isolde Flashes Like New Star in 'Met' Heavens

*Swedish Soprano's Voice in Debut Is
Compared With Kirsten Flagstad's Best*

by HOWARD TAUBMAN
New York Times, 19 December 1959 (*excerpt*)

Birgit Nilsson filled the Metropolitan Opera House last night with the glory of the finest Isolde since the unforgettable days of Kirsten Flagstad two decades ago.

In her New York debut the Swedish soprano assumed one of the most demanding roles in the repertory and charged it with power and exaltation. With a voice of extraordinary size, suppleness and brilliance, she dominated the stage and the performance. Isolde's fury and Isolde's passion were as consuming as cataclysms of nature.

Before the first act was over a knowing audience at the Met's new production of "Tristan und Isolde" was aware that a great star was flashing in the operatic heavens. At the end of the act the crowd remained in their seats, waiting for Miss Nilsson to take a solo bow. And when she came out alone, they roared like the Stadium fans when Conerly throws a winning touchdown pass.

It was an audience that knew its Wagnerian manners. It did not break into applause during the performance, but again at the end of the second act it manifested its enthusiasm with sustained applause and cheers for the newcomer.

At the final curtain the audience began a thunderous demonstration. As the principals came out for repeated bows all eyes were on the soprano. An ovation was building up for her, and it broke out into a thunderous shout as she came out alone.

People seemed disinclined to go home. The lights in the theatre were dimmed, but men and women throughout the house remained near their seats, applauding for Miss Nilsson's return. After more than fifteen minutes of plaudits, the enthusiasts let Miss Nilsson return to her dressing room.

Like Miss Flagstad, who created a similar sensation in her 1935 debut, Miss Nilsson relied first and foremost on the voice, for the soprano has apparently limitless reserves of tone. In a range well over two octaves, no note loses its quality, and the highest emerge with stunning impact.

wagner

tristan und isolde

PACO 135 - CDs 1 & 2

ramon vinay
tristan

birgit nilsson
isolde

with
walter cassel
irene dalis
jerome hines
calvin marsh
paul franke
louis sgarbo

metropolitan opera orchestra & chorus
karl böhm, conductor

metropolitan opera house
january 9, 1960 matinee broadcast



Pristine
XR

wagner

tristan und isolde

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Birgit Nilsson as
Isolde, Met Opera, 1959/60

Wagner Tirtan und Isolde
Presenter: Milton Cross
Broadcast live from
The Metropolitan Opera House
New York City, 9, January 1960

Total duration: 3hr 22:30

- CD 1
- 1 Radio Introduction (2:01)
 - 2 **Act 1** - Prelude (15:37)
 - 3 Scene 2 - Frisch weht der Wind der Heimat zu (3:41)
 - 4 Hab acht, Tristan! (5:18)
 - 5 Scene 3 - Weh, ach wehe! (1:42)
 - 6 Wie lachend sie mir Lieder singen (6:20)
 - 7 O blinde Augen! (9:47)
 - 8 Scene 4 - Auf! Auf! Ihr Frauen! (1:12)
 - 9 Herrn Tristan bringe meinen Gruss (5:41)
 - 10 Scene 5 - Begehrt, Herrin, was Ihr wünscht (8:05)
 - 11 War Morold dir so wert (9:35)
 - 12 Tristan! Isolde! (6:25)
 - 13 Radio conclusion (1:00)

- CD 2
- 1 Radio Introduction (0:32)
 - 2 **Act 2** - Prelude (2:32)
 - 3 Scene 1 - Hörst du sie noch? (11:06)
 - 4 Scene 2 - Isolde! Geliebte! (7:34)
 - 5 O sink hernieder, Nacht der Liebe (7:25)
 - 6 Lausch, Geliebter! (3:53)
 - 7 Doch unsre Liebe (9:32)
 - 8 Scene 3 - Rette dich, Tristan! (1:40)
 - 9 Tatest du's wirklich? (11:01)
 - 10 O König, das kann ich dir nicht sagen (7:40)
 - 11 Radio conclusion (1:21)

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NILSSON - VINAY - BÖHM

Wagner - *Tristan und Isolde*

Pristine
XR

When Birgit Nilsson walked offstage at the Metropolitan last night after her triumphant New York debut as Isolde, she announced coolly — but far from haughtily — “I could sing Turandot right now.”

“She’s not even winded,” a stagehand exclaimed, as the smiling Swedish soprano curtsied graciously and threw kisses to an ecstatic audience that greeted each curtain call appearance with thunderous “Bravos.”

Behind the curtain, as the cast clamored to congratulate her, Miss Nilsson acknowledged their praise trilingually. “You’re so kind,” in English, “Danke, sehr erfreut,” in Wagner’s tongue. Then words of thanks to admirers from her native Sweden.

The indefatigable soprano trilled snatches from the opera while Tristan (Karl Liebl) and the others answered their curtain calls. She had lived up to the reputation gained in rehearsals — that of a star ready to begin all over again after singing the closing “Liebestod.”

In a dressing room overflowing with flowers, Miss Nilsson dropped some of her reserve. “That wonderful public,” she sighed. “They carried me.”

It was then that she said she was ready to sing “Turandot,” the Puccini opera she had just signed a contract to sing during the Met’s next season.

In a standard questionnaire sent by the Met to all its performers, Miss Nilsson had written that “Tristan und Isolde” and “Turandot” were her favorite operas. She had already played Isolde this year in five cities: in Lisbon, at La Scala in Milan, in Rome, Vienna and Bayreuth.

Was this her best performance of Isolde? She shrugged. “You’re never satisfied,” she said.

Then, as flashbulbs flickered, her husband, Bertil Niklasson, a Swedish businessman, was asked the same question. His reply: an excited, “Ja, Ja, Ja, Ja!”

Despite her aplomb, Miss Nilsson was coyly feminine when asked her age. “In Europe,” she smiled, “nobody asks a lady that.” Her answers to the Met questionnaire indicated she was in her early thirties. But in the space after “date of birth” she had written, “May 17.”

John Sibley, New York Times, 19 December 1959

Producer’s Note

This stunning performance of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* was broadcast live from the Metropolitan Opera just three weeks after Birgit Nilsson’s astonishing debut in the role of Isolde in New York made front page news and produced reams of adoring copy. It marks her first matinee broadcast as well as the only time Böhm, whose 1966 Bayreuth *Tristan und Isolde* is widely regarded as among the very best, broadcast the opera from the Met. Working from two high quality source, this XR remastering brings us the full glory of this remarkable debut in superb Ambient Stereo sound. Announcements from Milton Cross at the start and finish of each act (one act per CD) add to the sense of grand occasion as does the rapturous applause of the Metropolitan Opera audience.

Andrew Rose

wagner

tristan und isolde

PACO 135 - CD 3

ramon vinay
tristan

birgit nilsson
isolde

with
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jerome hines
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paul franke
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metropolitan opera orchestra & chorus
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PACO 135

WAGNER TRISTAN UND ISOLDE
NILSSON, VERNAY, MET OPERA, BÖHM

- CD 3
- 1 Radio introduction (0:29)
 - 2 Act 3 - Prelude (7:01)
 - 3 Scene 1 - Kurwenal! He! (9:36)
 - 4 Wo ich erwacht - weilt' ich nicht (6:28)
 - 5 Noch losch das Licht nicht aus (19:22)
 - 6 Scene 2 - O diese Sonne! (3:05)
 - 7 Ha! ich bin's, ich bin's (2:18)
 - 8 Scene 3 - Kurwenal! Hör! Ein zweites Schiff (6:41)
 - 9 Mild und leise wie er lächelt (6:18)
 - 10 Radio conclusion (0:34)

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Birgit Nilsson as Isolde, Met Opera, 1959/60

Wagner Tirtan und Isolde
Presenter: Milton Cross
Broadcast live from
The Metropolitan Opera House
New York City, 9, January 1960

Total duration: 3hr 22:30

CAST

Tristan..... Ramon Vinay
Isolde..... Birgit Nilsson
Kurwenal..... Walter Cassel
Brangäne..... Irene Dalis
King Marke..... Jerome Hines
Melot..... Calvin Marsh
Sailor's Voice..... Charles Anthony
Shepherd..... Paul Franke
Steersman..... Louis Sgarro

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra & Chorus
Conductor..... Karl Böhm

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