



Wagner

Siegfried - Metropolitan Opera, 1937



We are very fortunate that this broadcast of Siegfried survives as it preserves a golden age of Wagnerian singing at New York in the 1930s. The opera is notoriously difficult to cast. The title role is one of the most demanding in the tenor repertoire as Wagner demanded superhero levels of stamina from his superhero character. Not only is the role incredibly long, once calculated as twice the length of Verdi's Otello, it demands a singer who can be boisterous in Act 1, reflective in Act 2, and both lyrical and heroic in Act 3. Fortunately this broadcast captures Danish heldentenor Lauritz Melchior in one of his signature roles. Melchior had learned the role under the composer's son, Siegfried, and widow, Cosima, at Bayreuth in the 1920s, so his interpretation has an historic authenticity that few other tenors can offer. Far more than that, however, is Melchior's powerful and beautiful instrument. All the authenticity in the world would mean little if it could not be conveyed vocally. Melchior has the vocal agility for Siegfried's Act 1 flightiness, the sensitivity for the Forest Murmurs in Act 2, and the sheer power for the confrontation with the Wanderer in Act 3. His bright tenor has none of the roughness that is often associated with heldentenors. He also sounds just as fresh for the final long duet with Brunnhilde as he did in Act 1. Quite simply, no other tenor has been able to sing Siegfried like this - how the role was meant to be sung.

Two other cast members stand out. Hungarian baritone Friedrich Schorr was the leading interpreter of Wotan / Wanderer in the inter-war years. Although he was in the later stages of his career by 1937 there is little evidence of vocal decline in his portrayal of the Wanderer. His nuanced use of the text to convey the world-weariness of the character has been matched only occasionally since. Hans Hotter is perhaps the closest comparison. Norwegian soprano Kirsten Flagstad as Brunnhilde was the dominant Wagnerian soprano at the Met between 1935 and 1941 and Melchior and Flagstad together were the hottest opera ticket in New York, particularly in Tristan und Isolde. Brunnhilde in Siegfried is a comparatively short role, only about 30 minutes in the final act, and the role holds no terrors for a soprano accustomed to singing Isolde. The voice is beautifully controlled, delivering golden tone with ease. Usually the soprano sings with a vocally exhausted Siegfried but here Flagstad's resplendent tone is easily matched by Melchior.

This is the only complete recording of Melchior in Siegfried, and it is the only recording of Melchior and Flagstad together in the opera. The conductor, Artur Bodansky, presided over the Met's German wing and his swift tempi mean that the long opera rattles along a decent pace. Acts 1 and 2 are uncut, but Act 3 has two cuts. Siegfried actually suffered far fewer cuts than some other Wagnerian operas at the time - large parts of acts 2 and 3 of Tristan were cut in performance.

The recording was made on 16 inch transcription discs by NBC using a direct line feed to a series of cutting machines. NBC recorded all of its Met opera broadcasts, starting in 1931, but most were lost or destroyed. The 1936-1937 season is the first one where line recordings (rather than airchecks) of most of the performances still exist.



- CD 1
- ACT 1
- [1] Act I, Vorspiel (3:35)
 - [2] Act I, Scene I - Zwangvolle Plage! Müß ohne Zweck! (3:44)
 - [3] Act I, Scene I - Hoiho! Hoiho! Hau ein! Hau ein! (1:30)
 - [4] Act I, Scene I - Da hast du die Stücken, schändlicher Stümper (2:11)
 - [5] Act I, Scene I - Als zullendes Kind zog ich dich auf (1:22)
 - [6] Act I, Scene I - Vieles lehrtest du, Mime (7:03)
 - [7] Act I, Scene I - Einst lag wimmernd ein Weib (4:35)
 - [8] Act I, Scene I - Und diese Stücken sollst du mir schmieden (1:14)
 - [9] Act I, Scene I - Da stürmt er hin! (1:28)
 - [10] Act I, Scene 2 - Heil dir, weiser Schmied! (3:19)
 - [11] Act I, Scene 2 - Hier sitz' ich am Herd und setze mein Haupt (8:41)
 - [12] Act I, Scene 2 - Was zu wissen dir frommt, solltest du fragen (6:31)
 - [13] Act I, Scene 2 - Die Stücken! Das Schwert! O weh! Mir schwindelt! (2:26)
 - [14] Act I, Scene 3 - Verfluchtes Licht! (0:55)
 - [15] Act I, Scene 3 - Heda! Du Fauler! (2:45)
 - [16] Act I, Scene 3 - Fühltest du nie im finstern Wald (3:53)
 - [17] Act I, Scene 3 - Her mit den Stücken, fort mit dem Stümper! (2:57)
 - [18] Act I, Scene 3 - Notung! Notung! Neidliches Schwert! (7:01)
 - [19] Act I, Scene 3 - Hoho! Hoho! Hahe! (5:48)

- CD 2
- ACT 2
- [1] Act 2, Vorspiel (5:27)
 - [2] Act 2, Scene 1 - In Wald und Nacht (2:08)
 - [3] Act 2, Scene 1 - Zur Neidhöhle fuhr ich bei Nacht (5:48)
 - [4] Act 2, Scene 1 - Mit mir nicht, hadre mit Mime (2:31)
 - [5] Act 2, Scene 1 - Fafner! Fafner! Erwache, Wurm! (2:54)
 - [6] Act 2, Scene 1 - Nun, Alberich, das schlug fehl (3:35)
 - [7] Act 2, Scene 2 - Wir sind zur Stelle! (5:15)
 - [8] Act 2, Scene 2 - Daß der mein Vater nicht ist (3:43)
 - [9] Act 2, Scene 2 - Meine Mutter, Ein Menschenweib! (5:57)
 - [10] Act 2, Scene 2 - Haha! Da Hätte Mein Lied (5:20)
 - [11] Act 2, Scene 2 - Wer Bist Du, Kühner Knabe, Der Das Herz Mir Traß! (4:25)
 - [12] Act 2, Scene 2 - Zur Kunde Taugt Kein Toter (1:59)
 - [13] Act 2, Scene 3 - Wohin Schleichst Du Eilig Und Schlaw (2:46)
 - [14] Act 2, Scene 3 - Was Ihr Mir Nützt, Weiß Ich Nicht (2:14)
 - [15] Act 2, Scene 3 - Willkommen, Siegfried! (7:43)
 - [16] Act 2, Scene 3 - Da Lieg Auch Du, Dunkler Wurm! (8:01)

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra *Artur Bodanzky*

COMPACT
disc
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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph
of Lauritz Melchior as Siegfried

ACT 1: 70:58
ACT 2: 69:45
ACT 3: 65:07

Total duration: 3hr 25:51

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Wagner

Siegfried - Metropolitan Opera, 1937

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CAST

Siegfried - Lauritz Melchior
Mime - Karl Laufkötter
Wanderer - Friedrich Schorr
Brünhilde - Kirsten Flagstad
Alberich - Eduard Habich
Erda - Kerstin Thorborg
Fafner - Emanuel List
Waldvogel - Stella Andrevá

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Bodanzky
Broadcast recording live from the Metropolitan Opera, 30 January 1937

Producer's Note

This live performance from the Metropolitan Opera in New York City was broadcast on 30th January 1937, and is regarded by many as the ultimate recording of Wagner's *Siegfried*, with Melchior's performance in the hugely demanding title role perhaps unsurpassed. Reviewing the performance in The New York Times, Olin Downes wrote:

"After many appearances of the leading pair of artists in the roles they took yesterday this writer fails to recall an occasion when they sang the final duet of the opera in such fashion, with such wealth of tone and heroic passion. There is no need to speak of the demands of the grand but terribly exacting music. And it was sung, not howled; sung with light and shade, with tenderness as well as fire, and with exceptional histrionic significance on the part of Mme. Flagstad. Less than a performance of this character gives the music a pompous and artificial air. Yesterday it was the lyrical flight of eagles... Mr. Schorr's Wanderer of "Siegfried" is perhaps the greatest of his Wotan roles in the "Ring," and he was at his best yesterday... Mr. Bodanzky's conducting of "Siegfried" is not the interpretation of one but of every part of the opera. It is not to be taken for granted, for it represents the very essence of the score. It was a performance which in accent, color and sense of form established the mood and significance of the occasion. The fact was appreciated by the public, which gave the conductor special applause."

The restoration work required for this recording has constituted one of the most difficult and lengthy of my career, with wild variation in quality in the original source recordings to cope with and severe damage in places. Progress was slow and the work was painstaking. I've attempted to retain as much of the original frequency range as possible, keeping voices as clear as possible and minimising distractions from the damaged disc surfaces. I have to admit that when I began work on restoring this remarkable recording I wasn't sure I could do it justice. Sixteen months later I think I may have succeeded.

Andrew Rose



wagner

siegfried

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Cover artwork based on a photograph
of Lauritz Melchior as Siegfried

- CD 3 1 Act 3, Vorspiel (1:55)
- ACT 3 2 Act 3, Scene 1 - Wache, Wala! Wala! Erwach! (1:50)
- 3 Act 3, Scene 1 - Stark ruft Das Lied (9:34)
- 4 Act 3, Scene 1 - Dir Unweisen ruf ich ins Ohr (4:29)
- 5 Act 3, Scene 2 - Mein Vöglein schwebte mir fort! (3:41)
- 6 Act 3, Scene 2 - Mit zerfochtner Waffe wich mir der Feige! (4:19)
- 7 Act 3, Scene 3 - Selige Öde auf sonniger Höh'! (6:17)
- 8 Act 3, Scene 3 - Das ist kein Mann! (5:49)
- 9 Act 3, Scene 3 - Heil dir, Sonne! Heil dir, Licht! (5:32)
- 10 Act 3, Scene 3 - O Siegfried! Siegfried! Seliger Held! (9:34)
- 11 Act 3, Scene 3 - Ewig war ich, ewig bin ich (10:11)
- 12 Radio applause and final commentary (1:55)

ACT 1: 70:58
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Metropolitan Opera Orchestra
conducted by **Arthur Bodanzky**

Performance of 30 January, 1937

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