

The rest of the cast should not be overlooked either. Gré Brouwenstijn is a gleaming, impassioned, youthful Sieglinde, her voice true throughout, and she makes a seductive and scheming Guttrune as well. Josef Greindl, a singer whose reputation I have often had difficulty relating to, is here more than solid. He sings with a steadier tone than was often the case, and he is a vocal and dramatic presence, though greater variety of shade and light would have made his Hunding and his Hagen more interesting. Gustav Neidlinger is the ideal Alberich, the music sung with precision and attention to Wagner's dynamic marks, and the character vividly drawn. One cannot imagine a *Ring* cast nearly this well, from top to bottom, today.

As for Knappertsbusch, this *Ring* may be his crowning achievement on disc (though he didn't know it was being preserved for disc at the time). It is not without its problems. Youngren points out some of them (the huge *ritards* at key points in two appearances of the "Ride of the Valkyries" music, for instance). There are times when momentum and/or thrust are lost: sometimes this seems to be due to a lapse in concentration, and at other times from a willful change in tempo that makes neither musical nor dramatic sense. The orchestral ending of act I of *Walküre* seems quite badly organized from the podium, and the intensity that had been built up for an hour is somewhat dissipated by oddly directionless conducting in the final minute. At Donner's "Heda, Heda Hedo" near the end of *Rheingold* Knappertsbusch again loses the momentum for just a moment; but it's a key loss, one that jars. Those, however, are moments in the minority. For the most part, this is conducting of scope, grandeur, and richness, and conducting that keeps moving forward. Most critical commentary on Knappertsbusch centers around matters of tempo (actually, most critical commentary about conducting in general suffers from the same limitation). Tempo is important, but cannot be separated from other interpretive decisions and other aspects of a performance. Central to any performance of a large-scale musical-dramatic work are matters of phrasing, of color, and, most importantly, matters of intensity, of sustenance of tone. It is here where Knappertsbusch scores so compellingly. Listen to the strings repeat the music of "Der Augen leuchtendes Paar" in Wotan's farewell, curving themselves lovingly around the theme with just the right touch of portamento and the right degree of vibrato to bring out the poignancy of the moment. Listen to the perfect sense of proportion of the various themes at the end of *Götterdämmerung*, a moment that, in fact, very few conductors manage to get right because of the care that needs to be taken with balances. There is a sweep and grandeur to the whole, but that sweep is the result of carefully thought-through decisions over the 15-hour span of these scores. It is the result of a balancing of textures, a rich palette of colors, and a sustained intensity of tone that the conductor calls forth from his players—and it is also the result of a company (conductor, singers, orchestra players) who know this music intimately and yearn to convey its power to the listener.

Henry Fogel, *Fanfare* magazine, 1998 (Part 2 - review continued from notes to *Die Walküre*)



disc one
(57:24)

ACT ONE

1. Vorspiel (3:45)

SCENE ONE

2. Zwangvolle Plage! Müh ohne Zweck! (4:17)
3. Hoiho! Hoiho! Hau ein! Hau ein! (2:04)
4. Da hast du die Stücken, schändlicher Stümper (2:31)
5. Als zullendes Kind zog ich dich auf (1:31)
6. Vieles lehrtest du, Mime (8:48)
7. Einst lag wimmernd ein Weib (5:19)
8. Und diese Stücken sollst du mir schmieden (1:40)
9. Da stürmt er hin! (1:48)

SCENE TWO

10. Heil dir, weiser Schmied! (3:40)
11. Hier sitz' ich am Herd und setze mein Haupt (10:40)
12. Was zu wissen dir frommt, solltest du fragen (8:09)
13. Die Stücken! Das Schwert! O weh! Mir schwindelt! (3:12)

disc two
(70:54)

SCENE THREE

1. Verfluchtes Licht! (1:11)
2. Heda! Du Fauler! (0:34)
3. Bist du es, Kind! (3:19)
4. Fühltest du nie im finstren Wald (5:21)
5. Her mit den Stücken, fort mit dem Stümper! (4:03)
6. Notung! Notung! Neidliches Schwert! (8:30)
7. Hoho! Hoho! Hahei! (3:44)
8. Den der Bruder schuf (3:33)

ACT TWO

9. Vorspiel (4:55)

SCENE ONE

10. In Wald und Nacht (2:21)
11. Zur Neidhöhle fuhr ich bei Nacht (6:56)
12. Mit mir nicht, hadre mit Mime (2:50)
13. Fafner! Fafner! Erwache, Wurm! (3:07)
14. Nun, Alberich, das schlug fehl (3:33)

SCENE TWO

15. Wir sind zur Stelle! (6:30)
16. Daß der mein Vater nicht ist (1:44)
17. Aber Wie Sah Meine Mutter Wohl Aus! (2:32)
18. Meine Mutter, Ein Menschenweib! (6:13)

Chorus and Orchestra of the Bayreuther Festspiele
conducted by Hans Knappertsbusch

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wagner

siegfried

CAST

Siegfried - Wolfgang Windgassen

Mime - Paul Kuen

Brünnhilde - Astrid Varnay

Wanderer - Hans Hotter

Alberich - Gustav Neidlinger

Fafner - Arnold van Mill

Erda - Jean Madeira

Waldvogel - Ilse Hollweg

Chorus and Orchestra of the Bayreuther Festspiele
conducted by Hans Knappertsbusch

Recorded live at Bayreuth, 15 August, 1956

Ambient Stereo XR remastering by: Andrew Rose

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Total duration: 4hr 10:55



disc three
(53:06)

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO (continued)

1. Haha! Da hätte mein Lied (5:53)
2. Wer bist du, kühner Knabe, der das Herz mir traf? (4:52)
3. Zur Kunde taugt kein Toter (2:09)

SCENE THREE

4. Wohin schleichst du eilig und schlau, schlimmer Gesell? (2:58)
5. Was ihr mir nützt, weiß ich nicht (2:40)
6. Willkommen, Siegfried! (9:11)
7. Da lieg auch du, dunkler Wurm! (9:41)

ACT THREE

8. Vorspiel (2:17)

SCENE ONE

9. Wache, Wala! Wala! Erwach! (2:02)
10. Stark ruft das Lied (11:24)

disc four
(69:31)

1. Dir Unweisen ruf' ich ins Ohr (5:13)

SCENE TWO

2. Wohin, Knabe, heißt dich dein Weg! (6:17)
3. Kennstest du mich, kühner Spross (5:29)
4. Mit zerfochtner Waffe wich mir der Feige! (4:06)

SCENE THREE

5. Selige Öde auf sonniger Höh'! (6:12)
6. Das ist kein Mann! (7:14)
7. Heil dir, Sonne! Heil dir, Licht! (5:51)
8. O Siegfried! Siegfried! Seliger Held! (7:05)
9. Dort seh' ich Grane (8:36)
10. Ewig war ich, ewig bin ich (13:26)

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