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DIE WALKÜRE

CD 1 [75:16]

ACT I

ACT II

CONCLUDED ON CD2

CD 2 [67:35]

ACT II

CD 3 [64:25]

ACT III

THE DREAM RING CYCLE

IMMORTAL PERFORMANCES



SCHORR
FLAGSTAD
MELCHIOR
LEHMANN

in
Richard Wagner's

DIE WALKÜRE

COMPLETE OPERA



Others, Vocal Ensemble
& Orchestra of the
Metropolitan Opera

ERICH LEINSDORF



THE DREAM RING CYCLE

IMMORTAL PERFORMANCES
presents
Metropolitan Grand Opera Season
Edward Johnson General Manager
Edward Ziegler Assistant General Manager
Earle R. Lewis Assistant General Manager

DIE WALKÜRE
Music Drama in Three Acts
Book and Music by Richard Wagner

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Siegmund | Lauritz Melchior |
| Sieglinde | Lotte Lehmann |
| Hunding | Emanuel List |
| Wotan | Friedrich Schorr |
| Brünnhilde | Kirsten Flagstad |
| Fricka | Karin Branzell |
| Gerhilde | Thelma Votipka |
| Waltraute | Maxine Stellman |
| Schwertleite | Doris Doe |
| Ortlinde | Irene Jessner |
| Helmwige | Dorothy Manski |
| Siegfrune | Helen Olheim |
| Rosswaise | Lucielle Browning |
| Grimgerde | Winifred Heidt |

Conductor Erich Leinsdorf
Stage Director Lorhar Wallerstein

Scenic Production designed by Jonel Jorgulesco and painted by Koeck-Meyer Studios

ACT I. Interior of Hunding's Hut
ACT II. A Wild, Rocky Height
ACT III. The Summit of a Mountain, Rock of the Valkries

1940 Re-creation

- Series Producer: Jonathan Wearn
- Restoration: Richard Caniell, IPRMS, British Columbia, Canada
- Source: Immortal Performances Recorded Music Society, a Non-Profit, Educational Organization, British Columbia and Irwin Elkins, Omega Opera Archives
- Equipment: HHB CDR; Sony mixer; Prism 24 bit A to D and D to A converters; Noise shaped to 16 bits using Prism SNS System. No equalization, filtering, compression, limiting has been made on this recording.
- Mastering and transfer to Exabyte: P.J. Reynolds Mastering, PO Box 5092, Colchester CO1 1FN, UK
- QC for Guild Music Limited: P.J. Reynolds Mastering
- Design: Paul Brooks, Design & Print – Oxford
- Executive co-ordination & Art direction: Guild Music Limited
- Series consultant: Keith Hardwick
- Front Cover: *Wotan's Farewell to Brünnhilde* - from a painting by Konrad Dielitz, c.1890
- Back Cover & Inlay: *Brünnhilde Bearing Wounded Warrior to Valhalla* - from a painting by Konrad Dielitz, c.1890
- Booklet Cover: Friedrich Schorr as Wotan, Kirsten Flagstad as Brünnhilde, *Die Walküre*, Act III, IPRMS Archive
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SOURCE AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

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I would hope that you might eventually offer this on CD, with full notes explaining the rationale and the process motivating it. To hear Lehmann, Flagstad, Melchior and Schorr, all together in their prime and in these roles that made them immortal, offers us an exceptional opportunity. Nowhere else, not on commercial disc, not from other live performances, will we hear them in a complete performance of *Walküre*. I really believe a release of this unique composite would sell itself. This is an eminently "right" recording that corrects an inexcusable omission in recording history."

Thus, we were persuaded that this performance would not only yield great pleasure to many music lovers but that it well could become a step towards a complete *dream* Ring. This very thing was in the air, so to speak. Conrad Osborne had written a fascinating article in *Opera News* (Met) entitled, "Fantasy Ring: Create your own Ring Cycle", in which the subtitle of the article states: "Admit it— you're never 100 percent happy with the way Wagner's Ring is sung. Wouldn't it be nice, just once, to assemble a luxury cast from beginning to end of the Nibelungen Saga?" In Osborne's fantasy, Schorr, Melchior, and Flagstad headed his Ring. In another instance, the renowned music critic Alan Blyth had urged the coterie of writers who critiqued the opera recordings in his important *Opera on Record* (3 volumes) to suggest their dream casts drawn from the recordings they reviewed; but these were only tantalizing suggestions. The crucial question was, could such a fantasy Ring Cycle really be assembled? In the *Walküre* now in your hands, the sound is superb, the singing is glorious, the performance is ideal — truly a dream fulfilled.

Richard Daniell

DIE WALKÜRE

CD 1 [75:16]

| | | |
|------------------|---|------|
| 1 | Commentary - Milton Cross | 1:30 |
| ACT I | | |
| Scene I | | |
| 2 | Orchestervorspiel | 3:03 |
| 3 | Wess' Herd dies auch sei, hier muß ich rasten | 3:52 |
| 4 | Kühlende Labung gab mir der Quell | 7:19 |
| Scene II | | |
| 5 | Müd' am Herd fand ich den Mann | 4:55 |
| 6 | Friedmund darf ich nicht heißen | 3:09 |
| 7 | Aus dem Wald trieb es mich fort | 5:05 |
| 8 | Ich weiß ein wildes Geschlecht | 5:17 |
| Scene III | | |
| 9 | Ein Schwert verhiß mir der Vater | 5:53 |
| 10 | Der Männer Sippe saß hier im Saal | 4:45 |
| 11 | Mässig bewegt - Winterstürme wichen dem Wonnemond | 8:10 |
| 12 | Wehwalt heißt du fürwahr? | 4:15 |
| 13 | Commentary - Milton Cross | 1:51 |
| ACT II | | |
| Scene I | | |
| 14 | Nun zäume dein Roß | 4:16 |
| 15 | Der alte sturm! Die alte Müh'! | 3:06 |
| 16 | Heut'—hast du's erlebt! | 8:50 |

CD 2 [67:35]

Scene I

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|------|
| 1 | Er geh' seines Weg's | 4:30 |
|---|----------------------|------|

Scene II

- | | | |
|---|--|-------|
| 2 | Schlimm, fürcht ich, schloß der Streit | 3:09 |
| 3 | Laß' ich's verlauten | 5:49 |
| 4 | Ein Andres ist's; achte es wohl | 11:51 |
| 5 | So—sah ich Siegvater nie | 6:40 |

Scene III

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|------|
| 6 | Hinweg! Hinweg! Flieh die Entweihte! | 6:43 |
|---|--------------------------------------|------|

Scene IV

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 7 | Siegmund! Sieh' auf mich! | 9:22 |
| 8 | Du sahest der Walküre Sehrenden Blick: | 7:35 |

Scene V

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 9 | Zauberfest bezähmt ein Schlaf der Holden Schmerz und Harm | 9:05 |
| 10 | Commentary | 2:49 |

infinitely grateful for the opportunity to hear this wonderful performance. I urge you to have it transferred to CD with the widest possible dissemination!"

Mr. Cathey wrote:

"I write to you about the composite 1940 *Die Walküre* which you were good enough to send me recently. This is a truly marvelous production! Very simply this may be the finest *Walküre* available anywhere. I do hope Guild will consider this as one of its historical releases — perhaps as part of a special "Opera House of Our Dreams" series (which might also include the Ljungberg-Melchior *Tristan* material, the Melchior *Götterdämmerung* 1948 Commemorative issue, and some other very special composites).

Of course, this special issue brings together two immortal Metropolitan performances of the same season; one broadcast 17 February 1940 (in season) and the other broadcast 30 March 1940 (in Boston on tour), each wonderful. But this composite is even more impressive and more significant.

Fortunately, I was able to share your composite with some friends who are familiar with both the February 17 and March 30, 1940 broadcasts and have quite a bit of experience in opera and in Wagnerian opera, particularly. They were, like myself, bowled over by this listening experience, by the naturalness and rightness of this composite.

Somehow, the combination of these singers "fit" — it makes sense artistically and historically. Shouldn't these immortal artists who sang together repeatedly during the same season, but due to broadcasting schedules weren't able to be recorded live in the same performance, be heard by posterity as they would have been heard by operagoers at the old Met?

And what of the quality of the composite? As I said earlier, we were bowled over by it. It is nothing less than a miracle. The in-season and Boston performances offer somewhat different acoustics. Although the first act presents no problems (it is the Boston performance), Act II and Act III require an enormous deal of precision splicing and matching up — I must admit I lost count after around forty exchanges which required new and exact joins! Act II, in particular, must have been incredibly difficult to master. Nevertheless, in playing this act through repeatedly, what came through is the naturalness of the sound and the seamlessness of most of the transitions. A balanced acoustic is maintained throughout the composite.

without laboring the point with a long list of examples, it has been a relatively common practice, as in combining recording sessions months or even years apart, with public performances (Toscanini's *Aida* and *Ballo*) or many performances fused for one representative broadcast (1951 Bayreuth *Meistersinger* and *Parsifal*). These confluences produced an ideal performance, as conceived in the minds of the record producer and issued by Decca / London. In the case of this *Walküre*, no such premises apply — the singers are heard, unaltered, in their complete roles; we have only moved the microphone, so to speak, from the Saturday afternoon broadcasts we know so well to a weekday evening.

The fusion included interweaving the broadcast commentary so that a valid sense of how the broadcast of Schorr, Flagstad, Melchior, Lehmann and Branzell might have sounded had one of the actual performances been transmitted. The work on Act II took 47 hours; Act III took 36 hours. During the time I was working on it some years back, I had the opportunity to present it to Keith Hardwick, Senior Sound Engineer emeritus for EMI (in charge of Historic Recordings) who was thrilled with it.

Copies were also sent to Walter Levin, first violinist and founder of the Rose Quartet (D.G. recordings) and Dr. Boyd Cathey, noted archivist who played it for a number of music lovers including Bill Youngren, the Wagner critic for *Fanfare*. Both Levin and Cathey, on behalf of his group, wrote letters strongly urging its release, rather than restricting it to our Music Society membership. Mr. Levin wrote:

"This is, without a doubt, one of the most outstanding performances one is able to hear today. From the quality and clarity of the sound it is hard to believe this is a live performance of nearly 50 years ago! But the greatest achievement is the musical quality, the burning intensity of a public performance with a cast of superior singers the like of which we can only dream of hearing again.

You have made a splendid fusion of two performances which bring together a stellar cast that did in fact sing together but, unfortunately, not on a Saturday broadcast. To deny to those of us who are interested in the performance qualities and the overwhelming experience and infinite pleasure of listening to this uniquely great performance would be an unforgivable loss.

In all honesty, I believe that a vast majority of music lovers and Wagnerians will be

CD 3 [64:25]

1 Commentary 0:26

ACT III

Scene I

2 Hojotoho! Heiaha! 6:59

3 Schützt mich und helft in höchster Noth 2:32

4 Nicht sehre dich Sorge um mich 8:51

Scene II

5 Hier bin ich, Vater 7:24

Scene III

6 Was es so schmäählich, was ich verbrach 11:36

7 Deinen leichten Sinn laß' dich denn leiten 3:24

8 Du zeugtest ein edles Geschlecht 4:21

9 Leb' wohl, du kühnes, herrliches Kind! 11:41

10 Loge, hör! Lausche hieher! 4:43

11 Commentary 2:23



Ferdinand Leckie (1859-1925)

Wotan and Brünnhilde

observance that only the casts broadcast deserve enshrinement in recordings issued to the public. Indeed, a higher fidelity encompasses this restricted record with the recognition that had the public cultural interests predominated, one of these performances would have been broadcast and recorded. This is the very position presented in connection with the Melchior - Flagstad *Parsifal*, the dismaying history of which was set forth in the booklet included in the Guild issue of the complete Act II.

The Dream *Walküre* which we offer, then, is a fusion of the two broadcasts using the identical orchestra and conductor and singers accustomed to productions in which they starred together, but which we were prevented from hearing due to the then current broadcast policies. We greatly regret the fact that the length of Act II of this *Walküre* (81:10), exclusive of all commentary, required us to break the act, with the first 16 minutes on CD-1. Had Act II been but 4 minutes shorter, each act would have been complete on a CD (and we simply could have omitted the commentary and curtain calls after Act I).

This *Walküre* is part of our Dream Ring Cycle in which Schorr's Wotan, Flagstad's Brünnhilde, Melchior's Siegmund and Siegfried, Lehmann's Sieglinde, Branzell's Fricka, Thorborg's Erda, Laufkötter's Mime and Habich's Alberich are heard *complete*. For those who have heard this *Walküre* in a preview edition, the responses have been consistent: "The greatest *Walküre* I ever heard," "Amazing, it sounds positively like one performance." "An uncanny fusion; if you hadn't told me I'd have never known but would have believed it was a newly discovered broadcast or some grand private recording about which I had never heard."

Of course, the fusion of broadcasts for the purpose of improved sound or continuity is very common. The Met fused portions of the 1940 and 1941 broadcasts for their set of the Melchior-Flagstad *Tristan*. Reputable record companies have mixed different singers and conductors in one performance as when Ella Flesch sang Brünnhilde in place of Marta Fuchs and Alfred Yerger sang Wotan in place of Hotter to complete the (1939) Act II of *Walküre* issued by RCA Victor. Yet no notice was given of this in the advertising. Neither was it advertised in magazine displays that the conclusion of Act I of the Beecham *Tristan* (1937 Covent Garden) was sung by a different Kurvenal and Brangäne though, quite properly, this substitution was set out in the notes. Thus,

THE DREAM WALKÜRE

Schorr, Flagstad, Melchior and Lehmann were among the greatest Wagnerian singers of their time, and sang together, in various combinations, at the Met, at San Francisco, and at Covent Garden. But we lack access to the performances, or they were just another Tuesday or Thursday evening subscription performance at the Met and so went unrecorded.

When the Met did broadcast *Walküre*, Flagstad did not sing Brünnhilde to Schorr's Wotan, she had the lesser-voiced Huehn in the role, while a little more than thirty days later when Schorr did sing Wotan, Marjorie Lawrence was his Brünnhilde. The two 1940 broadcasts were

February 19, 1940 - Huehn, Flagstad, Melchior,
Lawrence, Branzell, List / Leinsdorf
March 30, 1940 - Schorr, Lawrence, Melchior,
Lehmann, Thorborg, List / Leinsdorf

However, Flagstad and Schorr were singing Brünnhilde and Wotan together at the Met with Melchior as Siegmund during this time. They did on January 22, 1936, December 21, 1936, February 17, 1937 (including Branzell as Fricka), March 16, 1937 (also with Branzell), April 5, 1937 (also Branzell), January 10, 1938, February 17, 1938, March 5, 1938, March 10, 1938, February 16, 1939, March 20, 1939, May 8, 1939, December 28, 1939, January 29, 1940, February 8, 1940 and on February 12, 1941, thus we missed hearing this combination simply because of how the broadcast schedule fell upon the repertoire; it might well have given us what we lost. Similarly Schorr, Flagstad and Melchior sang in *Walküre* four times in 1935 and 1936 (along with Lehmann) at the San Francisco Opera. Schorr, Flagstad and Melchior sang together in *Walküre* some 20 times in a five-year period, yet the broadcast schedule never managed to capture this magnificent trio of opera singers together except for the 1937 *Siegfried*.

This historical record thus represents some strange opera house policies with some fidelity, but what was wrong-headed then should scarcely be honored today by a strict

Wagner DIE WALKÜRE



Wotan (Schorr) tells Brünnhilde (Flagstad) his woes

With our release of this dream *Walküre* in remarkably good sound, we have taken a major step forward in the completion of our long-envisioned Ring Cycle. The combination of Melchior, Lehmann, Flagstad and Schorr (suggested to us in the sonically compressed 1936 broadcast of Act II), is a stunning experience when one hears these supreme vocal personages in the *complete* opera in such resplendent sonics. The voices, the reproduction, put a focus on one of Wagner's greatest inspirations, a *Walküre* that gives us each character in his or her most ideal vocal and dramatic form. Perhaps the cast would have been sheer perfection had

Thorborg sung Fricka, but she is the Erda in our Dream Series *Rheingold* and *Siegfried* so Branzell is heard in this *Walküre*. The surprise is how superbly Branzell sings this role and the degree of dramatic validity she achieves in her confrontation with Wotan. This Dream series cast creates a summit performance that corresponds to actual appearances together in these very roles in performances that were never broadcast. It is a performance that should have been broadcast (like the 1948 *Götterdämmerung*, which will also be issued by Guild) but which was never brought together until we decided to include it in our Dream Ring. To hear Schorr, Flagstad and Lehmann in Act III is one of the most electrifying operatic experiences. This along with Act II is stupendous in its vocal and dramatic values, chiefly because, to us, each voice is the perfect embodiment of Wagner's characters.

The profundity of Wagner's later operas, and especially the Ring dramas, stems not only from the titanic philosophical and musical conception, but also from the dimensional correspondence the Ring characters have to the shallows and depths of human nature. This is as true now as it ever was in the past. Few of Wagner's characters are pure or prototypes. Most have qualities which are mixed, blurred, though each has some major elements of character to the fore. The injurious, wantonly hate-filled, power-seeking element personified by Alberich is still pitiable, in that, even amidst his evident wrongs there nevertheless vibrates some palpable equity that stems from how long he has been mocked. This alternating sense of a mixed right and wrong is also true of Fricka, of Hagen, of Hunding, even of Wagner's beloved Brünnhilde, who eventually falls so low in her descent into ordinary humanness as to hate Siegfried and conspire in his death, but it is particularly true of the enigmatic Wotan, the grandest character in the Ring Cycle.

Wotan puzzles, provokes, fascinates and inspires. He is in some way a prototype man by the time *Die Walküre* ends. His mistakes, his failures have been burned away in the radiance of a grandeur so immense as to be sublime. The complexity of Wotan has been given us by many of our great singing actors, especially by the performance of Hans Hotter in the late 1930s and again in 1952

Orfeo ed Euridice with Thorborg and, in 1940, also conducted the NBC Symphony Orchestra. The young Leinsdorf was quite different than the older man who returned to conduct the Met orchestra in the 1960s. A certain vitality, impetuosity, élan, a passion, if you will, had diminished, replaced by other attributes, though nothing from his second sojourn at the Met comes near the remarkable work of his youth in the 1940s.





ERICH LEINSDORF was 28 years old when he conducted this vital, passionate, entirely remarkable *Die Walküre*. He entered into serious music-making at the age of 22 when Bruno Walter selected him as his assistant at the Salzburg Festivals 1934. He then became Toscanini's assistant for the Maestro's performances of *Fidelio* and the Beethoven Ninth. During this same period Leinsdorf also travelled to Florence to assist Bruno Walter at the Florence Music Festival and there also aided the famed stage director, Herbert Graf, for a production of *Alceste*. Returning to Salzburg, he assisted

Toscanini at the rehearsals of *Die Meistersinger* and the Brahms *Requiem*. It was Toscanini who recommended he be engaged by the Metropolitan Opera. Leinsdorf made his debut on January 21, 1938 in *Die Walküre*.

Lawrence Gilman, music critic for the *World Telegraph* wrote:

"Leinsdorf soon made it evident that he was at home in the great work before him and that he possessed an exceptional gift for eliciting its substance from the players under his command. His beat was clear, firm and intelligible. He knew what he wanted from the orchestra and how to get it. He was apparently without self-consciousness — wholly concerned with the music. It was impossible to doubt that his ability was extraordinary, that he had musical feeling, taste, authority. He accomplished a vital, lucid, admirably rhythmmed performance of the score — a performance remarkable for power, intensity and dramatic purpose."

These words "power, intensity and dramatic purpose" characterized his debut performance just as it can also be heard in his direction of the second act of *Parsifal* 1938 with Melchior and Flagstad. These are the very terms that come to mind when hearing his commanding direction of the 1940 broadcasts of *Die Walküre*. By 1940, Bodanzky, the director of the German wing at the Met, had died. Leinsdorf took over the direction of all the Wagnerian operas at the Met. In addition, he could be heard directing Gluck's

and 1953. A heroic power and immensity-of-being can be heard in Sigurd Björling's unforgettable realization of the role in the 1951 *Walküre* at Bayreuth. We also prize Joel Berglund's Wotan in the 1946 performance with Melchior and Traubel. But no one has ever given us the essential nobility of this profound character as does Friedrich Schorr, the foremost Wotan of the Golden Age of Wagnerian Opera.

The perfection of Schorr's Wotan stems from an undeniable nobility of tone. The elevation-of-being which the timbre of Schorr's voice suggests allows us to hear what must be an underlying quality in Wotan's character, an element which would form the basis for him being considered the most developed being in this primeval world. This tonal color is pervasive, foundational. Thus when Wotan stoops to immoral means to further serve the power he seeks, we perceive this activity as a problem in personality or psychology which is like an obscuring film upon the deeper truth of Wotan's essential character.

Our admiration for this troubled half-god derives from his warmth and essential poetry-of-expression; this underlying spirit of the man that only Schorr's voice gives us. It makes us sympathetic, responsive, believing in his high calling and capacities, in Wotan's greatness if you will, even while his present actions contradict our best belief.

This tone of elevation cannot be faked, copied or assumed. If it is to have any communicable truth, it must reside naturally in a person's voice and character. Because Schorr has this, when Wotan stoops to the dirty business of compounding Alberich's crime with his own, we nevertheless believe better things of this King. Somehow we hear in such a voice how it was he came to have such authority, for Schorr's voice is the vocal equivalent of the wisdom and strength Wotan had to possess in order to gain the power we find him to have. Thus as Wotan greets Valhalla in *Das Rheingold*, he has taken a moral step forward by quitting himself of the Ring. His contemplation of the abode built for Wotan draws from him the recognition, "A shameful price pays for this shrine." In this he acknowledges the

urgings of the oracle, Erda, the Earth Goddess. She had warned him of the dangers of the Ring and the direction in which he was embarked, reminding him of essentials close to the root of things, from which his concerns for power, and indifference to the contracts he made, had removed him.

All this is corroborative of the tonal beauty we hear in Schorr's Wotan as his nobility takes substance from the unforgettable timbre of Schorr's voice and the shape and emphasis Schorr's perceptive artistry puts on every sentence. Thus while watching and hearing Wotan betray his own high calling, we are also apprehending the profound spirit of the man to whom Wotan's lesser concerns and actions are a traitor.

One music critic (Neville Cardus) wrote, "Friedrich Schorr is still the most moving of all Wotans. (He) pierces to the heart of Wotan and time after time he shakes us with the suggestion of a burdened divinity, of a struggle within which might resolve itself less by philosophy than by tears and suffering."

Die Walküre puts Wotan into central focus, especially in his long Act II narrative which is the psychological center of the Ring drama and its turning point. Wagner wrote of this scene (to Liszt) that "it is the most important in the whole progression of the great four-part drama." But it will never reveal this importance unless it is sung with a clarity and depth of expression which can only be brought to the text by a truly great singer. Of those I've heard, Schorr is supreme.



Friedrich Schorr as Wotan



beginning in 1918. She also sang at the Metropolitan between 1924 and 1944, though she returned to the Met to sing Fricka in the 1951 Ring Cycle. She also sang Fricka and Waltraute at Bayreuth. She became internationally revered for her singing, particularly in Wagnerian roles and on the concert stage. Branzell commenced her Met career on February 6, 1924 singing Fricka. In all, she sang in twenty-two seasons appearing in 21 roles. Recordings exist of her Met broadcasts as Ortrud in *Lohengrin*, Brangaene in *Tristan*, Fricka in *Rheingold* and *Walküre* and Erda in *Siegfried*. Hers was a rich and evocative voice which, together with the dramatic absorption she brought to each of her roles, made her a favorite at the Met.



EMANUEL LIST, bass, was born in Vienna. As a boy, his attractive soprano voice brought him a post as chorister in the historic Theater - ander - Wien. He rose quickly from the ranks of the chorus to small roles, and somewhat later he became a member of a vocal quartet which toured Germany, Austria and Russia. When this tour ended he accepted concert engagements in England, Australia and New Zealand.

Up to this time he had received no instruction in singing. When he came to America, however, his friends urged him to accept coaching from Josiah Zuro. Through Zuro's influence List became a featured singer at several leading motion picture houses in New York. But he aspired to enter the opera. In 1922 he returned to Europe, sang for Felix Weingartner, and was engaged for the Volksoper in Vienna, making his debut there in Faust. Max von Schillings heard him sing and immediately engaged him for the Berlin State Opera. One year after his debut in Vienna, List became a permanent member of the Berlin State Opera. There he remained for ten years, achieving a great reputation. His greatest successes came to him for his interpretations of Hunding in *Die Walküre* and Baron Ochs in *Der Rosenkavalier*.



LOTTE LEHMANN, this beloved soprano was born February 27, 1885 in Perleburg, Germany. She made her stage debut as Elsa in 1910 and later made her artistic home at the Vienna State Opera. On October 10, 1919 she created the role of the Dyer's wife in Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and took the lead in the world premiere of Strauss' *Intermezzo*. She became a much revered singer at Covent Garden, Stockholm, Paris, Berlin and Dresden. Lehmann made her Met debut as Sieglinde to Lauritz Melchior's Siegmund in 1934. She was also much celebrated for her performances under Toscanini's

direction with the Vienna Philharmonic concerts and as Eva in *Meistersinger* and Leonore in *Fidelio* in Toscanini's Salzburg Festival productions.

Her career at the Met encompassed 12 seasons, 61 roles in 73 performances but none were preserved on broadcasts except her Sieglinde, her Elsa in *Lohengrin* and the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*. Opera lovers were denied the opportunity to hear her world famous Leonore in *Fidelio* under Toscanini's direction (Salzburg 1937) because the NBC clerk designated to request the Zelanophone recording from Salzburg omitted it from the list. It was subsequently lost in the war. A different kind of mishap prevented one from hearing her in this role at the Met because Edward Johnson, the manager, enthralled with the success of Kirsten Flagstad in the previous season, offered the role to Flagstad (who had never sung it) thereby gravely offending Lehmann who was the most celebrated soprano in the role.

Notwithstanding, what we have of her singing is treasure indeed, and in the instance of Sieglinde we can hear a portrayal that has no rival on disc or in the theater in the entire century.

KARIN BRANZELL, a much admired contralto, was celebrated for her performances in the roles of Brangaene in *Tristan und Isolde* and Fricka in *Rheingold* and *Walküre*. She was born in Stockholm in 1891. At the suggestion of the Crown Prince of Sweden, and with a royal endowment, she was enabled to study singing, making her debut at the Royal Opera, Sweden in 1912 at the age of 21. She became a member of the Berlin State Opera

Consider Wotan's memorable monologue in Act II in which Wotan moodily reflects upon the events that have led to the dilemma from which he cannot extricate himself. This monologue recites the agonizingly bitter prospects which appear to Wotan, now that he is forced to sacrifice his son, Siegmund, upon whom he had set all his hopes. It gives Schorr the opportunity to acquaint us with the enormous dignity and innate nobility which must characterize Wotan. Everything is here — Wotan's solemnity, his increasing gloom, his tenderness, elevation, the humanity of his character, not to mention the rage and subdued bitterness of his recollection of the moral dilemma into which his concern for Alberich's possession of the Ring-of-Power and his actions since have thrust him. All of this is sung with that unmistakable timbre, authority and legato we associate with Schorr, the greatest of Wotans.

It is precisely because Schorr's voice personifies these grand qualities that Wagner's text and music come so alive. Wotan's pained and gloomy *Was veilangst du?* in Act II shows that he is already aware of the loss he is to suffer through the laws he is required to administer. This is like seeing a hero in tears. The calamity of it is like a new level of baleful prospects and unforeseen significances had opened before one. Only when Wotan is sung with the tone which Schorr brings to the second act monologue does Wagner's music erupt out of the drama with such enormously heightened power and beauty, heaving with pained recollections, dark with perception of the onrushing consequences, arriving at a monumental statement of the crux of Wagner's stupendous drama.

Something of Schorr's searching, brooding intelligence can be found in Hans Hotter's Wotan in the 1952 and 1953 Bayreuth Ring Cycles; but despite Hotter's commanding utterances and introspection he lacks the inner radiance or nobility of tone which characterizes Schorr's Wotan with a sense of heightened humanity and grandeur. Apart from this, however, I much admire the previously cited Hotter performances although Hotter's voice is occasionally muffled or woolly with an inclination toward a wobble in his tone. On the other hand Schorr's voice can turn

hollow at certain notes or reflect diminished power in certain climactic moments but this is nothing in the face of what glories Schorr's dignity, eloquence and unforgettable tone bring to the role of Wotan.

Those who do not know Schorr's voice in this music during his earlier years are urged to hear the 78 rpm recordings he made from Act II and III of *Die Walküre* with Frida Leider and Olszewska. Also try to hear the improved sonic version of the complete 1936 San Francisco Opera performance of Act II of *Walküre* directed by Reiner, to be issued by Guild. Yet, what Schorr has lost in vocal power since those days has been compensated by the tender dignity and elevation of his essay in this performance and by the improved recording which gives such focus to his tone and expression.

Even in the closing days of his distinguished career, Schorr was incomparable in this role for the warm, troubled intelligence he brought to the Act II narrative. He brought a kind of throttled quality to the deeper aspects of Wotan, covering them over with a brooding misery and wrath. This is all the better to bring forward his transfiguration in Act III when he accedes to Brünnhilde's pleas and surrounds her with the Magic Fire and bids her his sorrowing, eloquent farewell.

At one time, lovers of Wagnerian opera, and of *Die Walküre* in particular, cherished any opportunity to hear Schorr sing Wotan. And so did the incomparable Melchior, who said he was happiest in this opera when Schorr sang because he couldn't get enough of the "warm-heartedness and passion" Schorr brought to the role. Even though Melchior made no appearance in Act III, he often remained through the act, standing in the wings in his street clothes to hear Schorr sing Wotan's farewell. In later years, Melchior said of this:

"Schorr had in the texture of his voice a timbre that went straight to one's heart, and his fine character as a human being enriched his art. (In *Walküre*) I would often hurry up taking my makeup off so that I could go down in the wings and listen and always a tear would run down my cheek. That for me was one of the great things in opera."

sang all the Wagnerian characters but Walter in *Die Meistersinger*, appearing in 7 roles in 519 performances. It was a great disappointment to him that the Met management did not permit him to sing Otello, Florestan and Rhadames (in deference to other singers at the Met) but he did sing the first two roles at the San Francisco Opera, the former with Rethberg and the latter with Flagstad. Alas, they were not broadcast or otherwise recorded.

Melchior was as famous for his Tristan as for his Siegfried but his Siegmund was also considered the supreme embodiment of burning heroism and passionate poetry of expression. Fortunately, all the Wagnerian roles he sang were captured on broadcast recordings including his *Parsifal* (Act II 1938). His final performance was on 2 February 1950 as Lohengrin. He sang with such strength and beauty that one despairs of ever hearing its like in our era. Undoubtedly, Melchior has made history at the Metropolitan as the foremost Wagnerian tenor of that era. He has sung the role of Tristan more than 150 times in 16 different opera houses and under 22 different conductors, including Toscanini. He has sung the role of Siegfried almost 200 times. On February 22, 1935 there took place a celebration in honor of his hundredth performance of the Siegfried role. At that time Melchior was presented with a sword forged after an old Viking sword by Kenneth Lynch, a metal craftsman. The presentation was made on the stage of the Metropolitan by the Danish consul-general in the presence of Mayor La Guardia and Gatti-Casazza. This sword was thereafter used by Melchior in all his Siegfried performances.

His broadcast recordings amply cover his career in Wagner opera. There exist five complete preservations of *Tannhäuser*; eight of *Lohengrin*; five of *Walküre*; one of *Siegfried*; one of *Götterdämmerung*; twelve complete *Tristans* all from the Met. There are two complete *Tristans* from Covent Garden plus Act II (1937) from the San Francisco Opera. There are also extensive scenes from his Covent Garden *Götterdämmerung*. In addition there are numerous complete acts such as Act II *Parsifal* 1938; Act II *Walküre*; Act II; and Act III *Tristan und Isolde* 1943 Beecham; Act III *Götterdämmerung* and others, all with important singers in the other roles. Guild anticipates releasing on CD many important recordings which preserve his vocal art in public performances.

appear as soloist with the Queen's Hall Orchestra directed by Sir Henry J. Wood. In that audience was Hugh Walpole, English novelist. Walpole saw in Melchior the material for an extraordinary Wagnerian heroic tenor. After the concert, he came to the singer, placing at his disposal his own influence, advice and financial assistance. Walpole urged Melchior to begin the study of German without delay, and to undertake all of the important Wagnerian tenor roles.

Following Walpole's advice, Melchior went to Germany and worked with Anna Bahr-Mildenburg, the famous Wagnerian soprano. A long period of careful study and analysis followed. Finally, on May 14, 1924, Melchior made his first appearance as an important Wagnerian tenor. This took place at Covent Garden when he sang the role of Siegmund in *Die Walküre*, with Bruno Walter conducting.

On July 23, 1924, Melchior appeared in Bayreuth for the first time — as Parsifal under the baton of Karl Muck. It was the beginning of his long and successful association with the Wagnerian shrine. He sang both *Tannhäuser*, *Parsifal* and *Tristan* under Toscanini's direction.

It was not long before he attracted the notice of the Metropolitan Opera House which, ever on the lookout for promising Wagnerian artists, gave him a contract. On the afternoon of February 17, 1926, Melchior made his American debut at the Metropolitan in *Tannhäuser*.

Melchior's rise to fame was slow — but inevitable. His art developed slowly, matured and ripened not with any one or with several performances, but with several seasons. His voice acquired greater richness and strength, greater flexibility and resilience. He could then sing "with the plenitude of noble and heroic tone . . . and also, at times, with an almost disembodied exaltation that lifts his singing into a great mood of consecrational ecstasy," as Lawrence Gilman once wrote. His conception of Wagnerian roles became more and more integrated, and more intelligently carried out. So Melchior's art grew until (almost without the Metropolitan audiences being aware of when or how it happened) it became obvious that here was the answer to one of the most pressing needs of the Metropolitan: a German tenor who combined a superb voice with a magisterial stage presence.

Considered by most people to be the greatest Wagnerian tenor of the century, he



Lauritz Melchior as Siegmund

Siegmund in *Walküre* is just such a heroic figure, capable of a scathing denunciation of heaven, with all its proffered wish-fulfillments, if Sieglinde will not be there; capable too of a ravishing poetry of expression in the first act in which tender lyricism is at the heart of the beset warrior who cries out in distress for the weapon long promised him. And who, not much later, is capable of plucking it from the tree and wielding it with a strength and manliness which comports with its power.

No other tenor possessed the power of Melchior, so that even in the greatest restraint an enthralling passion vibrates. When have we heard, before or since, the simple nobility and certitude with which Melchior refuses the hero's heaven Brünnhilde offers? If Sieglinde cannot go, then he bids Brünnhilde to greet on his behalf the joys of Valhalla; greet for him, too, Wotan; greet for him all the sorely missed, long-departed members of his early life; greet for him all that might ever be desirable to a stalwart warrior such as Siegmund was, but without Sieglinde he will not come. What human being capable of feeling the nature of true heroism would not be, as Brünnhilde was, deeply moved by this adamant resolve? Who would not be thrilled, electrified, revolutionized from all resolve at the pain this hero bears to learn that he is prevented from defending she whom he loves most? With a scorn that has no parallel in operatic music, Siegmund spurns all celestial splendors, all promises of contentment, peace and a hero's welcome; to Hell he would go, preparing to kill Sieglinde and himself. These are not words, not notes of music to be sung by any ordinary man, not sentiments that can be voiced by even one tenor voice in a thousand, dress them in skins and arm them with a great sword if you will. This requires a heroic capacity for an epic and engulfing passion, a noble light, a splendid, golden, ringing tone-of-being that never was before, standing out from all other expression, utterly unique, imposing, immense; a true man that shows others to be quavering half-men.

This embodiment of heroism Wagner has forged from the fires of his genius, though its overpowering truth flames from an unlikely looking man, and this Man-Heroic is given us by Melchior alone. We have never solved the mystery of why Nature hides divine secrets in seemingly inapt enclosures. We would not dream that so much humanity, so much of the human state, could dwell in one man like Shakespeare; or so much wisdom aggregate in one man like Emerson; or so much moral force gather like charged lightning in a man like Toscanini. It is difficult to understand how the essences of the Imperial-Woman could be personified in Maria Callas, while off stage she was so often weak and needy. We

1941); Elsa (*Lohengrin* 1937, 1938 Act II); Brünnhilde complete (*Walküre* 1940; *Siegfried* 1937); Kundry (*Parsifal* Act II, 1938); Leonore (*Fidelio* 1936, 1938, 1941); *Alceste* (1952). One music critic wrote of Flagstad's Brünnhilde:

"Is there anything nobler in all opera than the sound of Flagstad's voice matching the horns of Wagner's orchestra when Brünnhilde tells Siegmund of his fate? She combines this sombre moment with profound significance. When Flagstad is hailed as the 'first lady of Wagnerian opera' ... such moments confirm the claim."
Paul Jackson, *Saturday Afternoons at the Old Met*



LAURITZ MELCHIOR, outstanding among this century's Wagnerian heroic tenors, and often called the successor to Jean de Reszke, was born in Copenhagen on March 20, 1890.

In 1912 he was entered in the Royal Opera House School. After one year of study, Lauritz passed on from the school to the Opera House itself. He was selected to substitute for a baritone who had left the company and on April 2, 1913, made his debut at the Royal Opera as a baritone in *Pagliacci*. After several other appearances, he toured through Sweden as Count Luna in *Il Trovatore*.

It was during this tour that Melchior confronted the first great influence in his artistic life. One of the leading singers of the itinerant opera company was Mme. Charles Cahier. With wonderful perception, Mme. Cahier recognized that Melchior's voice was placed in the wrong range, that it would be more effective as a tenor than as a baritone. She urged him to make the important change. This was no small decision for Melchior to make. It necessitated the desertion of his career, the return to study and the acquisition of an altogether new repertoire. But, having faith in Mme. Cahier's judgment, Melchior decided to begin his music study anew.

A second all-important influence in his life brought him from Italian Opera to German. On October 8, 1918, Melchior made his second debut, this time as a tenor, in *Tannhäuser* at the Royal Opera in Copenhagen. The following year he was invited to

technical mastery, his simplicity and dignity and integrity" has brought distinction and new artistic significance to the Wagnerian dramas.

His portrayal of Hans Sachs, as Olin Downes pointed out, "is unequalled in this country, if not in Europe, for the distinction of its style and for the lofty conception of the character." His Wanderer, in the words of another critic, is "an impressive characterization, telling of a thorough comprehension of the role from both the emotional and musical points of view." But, perhaps, his greatest triumphs have been in the role of Wotan, a characterization "subtly developed and humanely projected...."

In all, Schorr sang for 20 seasons at the Metropolitan Opera appearing in 18 roles giving 457 performances. Of these, nine of his roles are preserved in complete broadcast recordings: Wotan (*Rheingold*, *Walküre* and *Siegfried*); Gunther (*Götterdämmerung*); Hans Sachs (*Die Meistersinger*); Don Pizarro (*Fidelio*); Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*); Telramund (*Lohengrin*); Kurvenal (*Tristan*); the Speaker (*Zauberflöte*) and Jokanaan (*Salome*).



KIRSTEN FLAGSTAD, the successor to the great Frida Leider at the Metropolitan and Covent Garden, was born June 12, 1895 in Norway. She had an operatic career which began in 1913, married for the first time in 1919, gave up her career, had children but slowly drifted back to the stage ultimately being engaged to sing at Bayreuth in 1932. She was finally called to the Met in 1934 and made her debut there as Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* in 1935. The occasion was a sensation and she was soon heard in *Tristan* (with Melchior) and as Brünnhilde in *Walküre*. By the 1936-37 season she and Melchior were the greatest box office draw the Met had since Caruso and Toscanini.

Esteemed as the Isolde and Brünnhilde of the era, she sang eleven other roles during two periods at the Met, separated by her return to war-torn Norway. In all, she sang nine seasons and gave 201 performances. Her appearances in most of her major roles have been recorded in complete performances on Met broadcast transcriptions.

These include Sieglinde (*Die Walküre* Act I, 1935 and Act III, 1937); Isolde (*Tristan und Isolde* 1935, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940 and 1941); Elisabeth (*Tannhäuser* 1936, 1940,

wonder how heroism itself should be made to illuminate the sagging bulk of this giant Melchior, residing within his being like a golden spirit briefly sojourning in human form, but there it was. Melchior demolished all visual considerations on stage the moment he sang, for the higher realities of song dominated the secular and lower facts of appearances. Where such a voice was, there was intoned Man-Heroic, putting into melody the inarticulate living action of all the heroes of humanity that heretofore have had no voice. If their actions, their sentiments, their aroused blood and involuntary service could sing, this would be its voice. And, beyond all comparison to any other music ever written, *this* would be its music.

Listen to this *Walküre* and hear again that no other voice in the history of recordings was so radiantly alive with Siegmund's ennobled spirit, with a shining metal of character forged in the hot fires of adversity, singing in tones ringing with strength, clear and true and with an enthralling passion that sweeps all considerations of circumstance away.

It is true that he sings *Winterstürme* with somewhat lessened poetical tone than in other of his Met broadcasts and the 1935 commercial set, which is to say that he sings this music only 50 times better than his nearest competitor. Occasionally Melchior's unboundable vigor, enthusiasm or ardor will cause him to push ahead of the beat as he does in this performance when he first embraces Sieglinde after her thrilling *Der Manner Sippe*. Melchior presses ahead in his ardency with *Die selige Frau halt nun der Freund* but this is clearly the result of his enthrallment. How could he, how could anyone emotionally responsive to Lehmann's incomparable expressiveness, not lose contact with the restraints of the measures? Here, as elsewhere, what some few critics refer to as Melchior's "sloppy musicianship" and his persistence in always making the same mistakes, represents another aspect of Melchior's compelling and profoundly artistic involvement and one which, as the noted critic John Steane (*The Grand Tradition*) pointed out, rarely occurs:

"It is always said that Melchior could be maddeningly and persistently inaccurate. But by now we have a large number of stage performances on record and so we can hear for ourselves, if the evidence is of any value. I may claim to have followed a good many of these with the score and though looking deliberately for inaccuracies on Melchior's part have gathered only the most meagre collection. On June 1, 1931 he entered a bar late for the phrase *du folge willig mis'* in *Götterdämmerung*; that is the prize of a catalogue that otherwise includes a dot here and a quaver there; nothing remotely to justify the remark that all reviewers seem called upon to make that they are 'well aware of his faulty rhythmic sense' and so forth.

What does emerge from these (stage performance) records with the sharpest clarity is that he was always rhythmically alert, he has a very live grasp of energy and rhythmic shape of the phrase in a declamatory passage.

With Melchior, the years go by and records continue to show him to be the greatest singer of the century in his own field. Even today we have probably not realized how phenomenal Melchior was. One is even tempted to see an odd kind of perversity in the incomplete recognition, for without him we would have a very limited notion of how well Wagner's tenor roles can sound."

This capacity to be enthralled by the drama and to lose himself in its expression often calls out an exhibition of Melchior's prodigious vocal powers. For instance, in this performance, Melchior sings the most extraordinary *Walse*, *Walse* ever committed to record. Here is the anguished lament of a hero soaring into the night, life-deep, stupendous in its power and beauty. Melchior holds the note on the first *Walse* 15 seconds, as compared to 7 seconds and 9 seconds in the 1935 commercial recording and his 1941 broadcast. The effect is extraordinary, not only because the notes are so steady, so perfectly placed, so gloriously rich, powerful and thrilling in their golden qualities, but because Siegmund's strength is thus marvelously portrayed while his anguish is dimensionalized for us as never before.

CAST AND CONDUCTOR



FRIEDRICH SCHORR is one of the foremost Wagnerian baritones of our time. He was born in Nagyvarad, Hungary, on September 2, 1888. His father, a lawyer, had planned a legal career for his son. "However, Adolph Robinson, a star of the Metropolitan a long time ago, heard me sing at a party in Vienna, and urged me to take up the voice seriously, offering to coach me himself. My father put his foot down firmly. I must study law, he insisted."

A compromise was reached in which Schorr was permitted to study music if, at the same time, he studied law as well. He enrolled in the Vienna University, at the same time studying voice with Adolph Robinson. After a year, the manager of the opera house in Graz, Austria, heard him sing and invited him to make his debut at his opera house which he did in 1911 as Wotan. Thereafter he became the principal Wagnerian baritone of the Berlin State Opera.

Schorr's first journey to America was with the visiting Wagnerian Opera Company which came in 1923 to present a season of Wagnerian operas at the Manhattan Opera House. These appearances brought Schorr to the attention of Gatti-Casazza, who offered him a contract. One of the most admired baritones of the century in Wagnerian roles, he made his Met debut on 24 February 1924 and sang until 2 March 1943. He was the unsurpassed Wotan during the Golden Age of Wagner at the Met and was repeatedly celebrated as Hans Sachs, perhaps his best known and most beloved role.

He has become recognized as one of the foremost Wagnerian singers of the century. His voice, as the critics have pointed out again and again, has "power, volume and quality," and "the style and phrasing and vocal coloring of his singing are those of an artist, thoroughly understanding and completely realizing the music and drama."

"His right to be classed among the royal line of Wagnerian singing actors" was emphasized by Lawrence Gilman. "This magisterial artist, with his rare gifts, his

punishment he decrees that Brünnhilde will no longer be a Valkyrie and orders her sisters to shun her. They flee in horror.

[6] For a long time Brünnhilde remains kneeling at Wotan's feet. Then she falteringly asks if what she did was so terrible as to warrant such a punishment? She pleads with him, seeking to explain that she only did what she knew he wanted to do in the innermost recesses of his heart. Wotan remains resistant. [7] He was forced to obey the law which governed this circumstance, how dare she flout it? As punishment, she shall be put into a sleep until some man awakens her, and she shall then become his wife.

Brünnhilde wildly pleads for some protection [8] – seeking to remind him that she, from a glorious lineage should not be so debased. She begs that he surround her with a fire so fierce that only the greatest hero can break through to claim her. Her eloquent cries finally break through to Wotan's heart and he concedes what she asks.

[9] Raising her up, he bids her farewell in music of unutterable grandeur, kissing her eyes so that she passes into a deep trance, her godhood dissolving. He stands there in the gathering dusk a long time while the orchestra meditatively recalls the music of his farewell, now entwined with the motif of Slumber. Then he strides to the rocky mountainside [10] and striking his spear three times, calls forth Loge, the God of Fire, to encircle Brünnhilde with flames. In answer, a fluid stream of fire descends from the mountainside and surrounds Brünnhilde, flickering there in a persisting vigil, its remarkable orchestration weaving around the other motifs as Wotan intones his final command:

"He who my spear in spirit feareth, ne'er springs through this fierce flaming fire."

and at his words, the orchestra prophesies *Siegfried*. This motif dissolves as we hear the melodies of Slumber, of Wotan's farewell and the Magic Fire. Wotan ascends the slope into the enveloping darkness, leaving the sleeping Brünnhilde ringed with a circle of fire. So ends one of the most transcendently beautiful scenes in all of opera.

[11] Broadcast commentary

Richard Caniell

Here, then, as in the 1935 Victor discs, is the Siegmund of one's dreams and the hero implied by Wagner's music and text.

Lehmann corroborates my experience of Melchior as her perfect counterpart. She says:

"I often sang with him — and among the Wagner roles in which I partnered him, it is his Siegmund that stands out as something quite inimitable. Just as I believe that in his mind I shall always be his Sieglinde, so has he remained my Siegmund. We grew in each other, and his warm humanity in the role made me forget acting and stage and enabled me to enter into Sieglinde as I could with no one else."

The counterpart of Melchior's ideal Siegmund was Lotte Lehmann's unforgettable Sieglinde. Every Wagnerite has heard the glorious commercial recording of Act I with Melchior and List conducted by Walter released in 1935 and the Act II which followed, not to mention the Act II from the San Francisco Opera, but the complete *Walküre* we present allows us to hear her in Act III *together with Flagstad*. Of this combination one music critic wrote:

"Mdme. Lehmann's performance fulfilled great expectations. By temperament she is extraordinarily suited to Wagner's emotionalism. The poetry and passion of



Lotte Lehmann as Sieglinde

the nineteenth century romanticism are alive in her spirit. It is too bad that many members of an American audience cannot hear precisely how much meaning she put into every line of the German text. Her voice in its rich upper range is worthy to vie with Mme. Flagstad's Brünnhilde in Act III."

Lehmann herself was awed by singing with Flagstad in *Walküre*. She said:

"How she sang! It was more than performance, or interpretation or characterization, it was a phenomenal experience. We met on the stage, we sang in *Die Walküre* together, and when, in the third act, we stood side by side and sang our alternating phrases, Sieglinde felt oh so greatly the inferior of this Brünnhilde."

Lehmann's regard for Flagstad omits that it was often her own singing of Sieglinde which drew the rapturous responses of the music critics. Writing about her Sieglinde at the Met, two of New York's leading critics wrote:

"A new element in the cast of *Die Walküre* gave the occasion the glamour and thrill which can confer upon opera its maximum intensity. This was the Sieglinde of Lotte Lehmann . . . As for this writer, who has been privileged to hear some great Sieglindes at the Metropolitan, and that within no distant date, he would sacrifice them all, great and small, high and low, for the glory, the sweep and the transfiguring emotion of Mme. Lehmann's interpretation. The voice had in it every color that the scene implies . . . the utterly right feeling, the imaginative artist's sure grasp of the dramatic as well as the musical curve of the situation range true every instant."

Olin Downes, *New York Times*

Neville Cardus, music critic for the *Manchester Guardian*, expressed some richly appropriate sentiments about Lehmann's Sieglinde:

orchestra exultantly celebrates his victory. Siegfried contemplates the sleepy Sieglinde.^[9]

Soon, the music darkens as storm clouds gather: the sounds of Hunding's pursuit draw near. Siegmund kisses the inert form of Sieglinde and leaves for battle as the storm breaks. A crash of thunder awakens her and, in various flashes of lightning, she sees Siegmund and Hunding in battle. Brünnhilde is seen behind Siegmund protecting him. As the fight becomes more intense, a red glow arises around Hunding as Wotan appears, stretching his spear towards Siegmund's sword which shatters and Siegmund is mortally wounded. Brünnhilde runs toward Sieglinde, first picking up the two broken parts of Siegmund's sword and lifts Sieglinde onto her horse and gallops off as Wotan moves to the stage center gazing sadly at the dead body of Siegmund. Then, glancing in disgust at Hunding, who has become the instrumentality of Fricka's revenge, he bids him go find the Goddess and kneel before her to say that Wotan's spear has avenged her shame. And on his words, "Go, go," Hunding falls dead. Roused now from his reverie, Wotan recalls how Brünnhilde had flouted his commands and his fury breaks out as he swears the harshest punishment, disappearing in the lightning and thunder of the closing music.

[10] Broadcast commentary

[CD 3]

ACT III [1] Broadcast commentary

[2] The opening of the final act is prefaced by the wild music depicting the Ride of the Valkyries, as the sisters assemble on a mountain peak, each greeting the others as they arrive. Their gathering is interrupted by the hurried entry of Brünnhilde and Sieglinde [3] who know Wotan pursues them. [4] Sieglinde begs the Valkyries to protect her. Brünnhilde assures Sieglinde that she bears within her Siegmund's son and that if she flees and seeks refuge in the forest near Fafner's cave, which Wotan shuns, she will be safe. Giving Sieglinde the broken pieces of Siegmund's sword and sending her away, Brünnhilde and her terrified sisters await Wotan's wrath as they hear him thundering at a distance, calling out Brünnhilde's name.

Wotan strides furiously into the scene and castigates his daughters for hiding and aiding Brünnhilde, threatening them with similar punishment. Brünnhilde, previously shielded by her sisters, steps out and presents herself [5] to Wotan, ready to bear what he is disposed to do. Angrily, Wotan reminds Brünnhilde that the laws of his command are laws to which he, himself, has had to be obedient, though the death of Siegmund broke his heart. As

dramas. [3] He recounts the history leading up to that moment, including his own misguided involvement in the theft of the Ring, his own thirst for power that led him astray, and Erda's warning of the coming downfall of the Gods. [4] Now Wotan feels powerless. Even against Fafner he may not directly move because he had bargained with Fafner for the building of Valhalla and paid him with the gold and the Ring. Thus he may not wrench it back. Faced now with the pending demise of Siegmund, all his hopes smashed, Wotan wishes only for an end to it all, an end to all the pomp and power concerns. And such an end is coming, Wotan says, because Erda had told him that when Alberich, the foe of love, begets a son, that will signal the coming end of the Gods. And now Alberich, using some of the gold the Nibelungen still possessed, has bought the responses of a woman who will soon bring forth from herself the fruit of hate.

Wotan commands that Brünnhilde is not only to remove protection of Siegmund but also inform him he is to die and to make ready to join Wotan in Valhalla. Brünnhilde, knowing Wotan's real feelings for Siegmund, objects but this rouses Wotan into a fury and he commands her, "the submissive blind slave of my will," to do immediately what he orders and with that he thunders off.

[5] Brünnhilde takes up her helmet and weapon and then, hearing the sounds of Siegmund's and Sieglinde's arrival, draws back into a cave, thereafter remaining unseen. Then the two fleeing Valsungs enter, Sieglinde in terror wanting to keep running, Siegmund endeavoring to get her to pause briefly for rest. [6] Sieglinde however can hear Hunding's hounds baying, and fears the imminency of death; she imagines Siegmund torn by Hunding's dogs, his sword in splinters, and sinks fainting in his arms. Tenderly he lowers her to the ground and, after a short silence while he contemplates her, the orchestra announces the solemn presence of Brünnhilde in its Motif of the Announcement of Death as she gravely emerges from the cave.

[7] Brünnhilde steadily informs Siegmund that he is called to Valhalla, where he will meet again his father, Walse and his desires will be fulfilled by wish-maidens. Siegmund asks if he will find there his beloved Sieglinde. Brünnhilde says no, whereupon Siegmund tells her to greet Walse, the fortress of Valhalla and the wish-maidens but he will not go. [8] Then, in a frenzy of pained recollections, he asks why a sword should be promised him that will now fail? He prepares to kill Sieglinde and himself and go, instead, to the underworld. Brünnhilde, deeply moved by the hero's distress, impulsively throws herself on his side and removes the stern edict; she will be there, the sword will not shatter and she leaves Siegmund as the

"Lehmann is at her most melting, most womanly; we do not only love singing of this perfect kind; we love the artist herself. Her art is better than ever in inflection and treatment of the subtlest significance in the music."

Lawrence Gilman of *The New York Herald Tribune* wrote:

"No singing actress of our time, I think, has achieved a more telling or veracious Sieglinde than Lotte Lehmann's. Her performance gives us the essence of the character, this remarkable and deeply touching embodiment of Mme. Lehmann's. It gives us Sieglinde's tenderness, her passion and her essential purity, her piteousness, her resolution, her impulsiveness, her shrinking pathos and her steel-like strength. She is warm and pitiful, enraptured and faltering. She stands before us touched with the mystery and the remoteness and the heroic simplicity of the Northern sagas. In certain moments of exceptional exactness and felicity of suggestion, she colors her voice and shapes her gestures with something of the primitive magic and strangeness and wonder of those who were daughters of earth in old, forgotten, far-off times, and heard the Spring waters running through primeval woods, and drove wild flocks across the twilit hills.

Such triumphs of imaginative identification and projection as Mme. Lehmann attains in this, her most completely realized achievement, could scarcely be overpraised."

Opera lovers have long verified the truth of these eloquent words by hearing Lehmann's Sieglinde in Act I and Act II of this opera recorded in Vienna in the early 1930s. What they did not have an opportunity to hear was what Lehmann did with Sieglinde's impassioned and soaring phrases in Act III. Nor will they be disappointed in Lehmann's performance of this part in the final act even though this preservation comes late in Lehmann's career. Indeed, as in the previous acts, Lehmann sounds much as she did in the 1930s commercial discs. There are many

passages and as many high notes which are sung more thrillingly in this performance than in the cherished 78 rpm Victor set, as for example when she sings the name *Siegmond* — *so nenn' ich dich* near the end of Act I. Happily, Sieglinde's third act passages are sung with this same intensity. No one before or since, at least on recordings, has ever sung the passage *Fern von Siegmund— Siegmund von dir!* with such memorable heartbreak or the climactic lines beginning, *Du hehrstes Wunder!* with such unforgettable ecstasy. Lehmann gives us Sieglinde's passages sung with great freedom and beauty of voice.

As an example of how important it has been to music lovers to hear Lehmann in Sieglinde's climactic passages in Act III, a music review by Max de Schaunsee in *Opera News* (March 25, 1946) entitled *Opera on Records* reviewed the commercially available recordings from *Die Walküre*. This critic refers to Lehmann's "incomparably poetic Sieglinde" and goes on to say:

"Mme. Lehmann's Sieglinde runs through the second act (Hotter, Melchior, Fuchs) but regrettably gives way to Irene Jessner in Columbia's third act (78 rpm album Traubel / Janssen). If Mme. Lehmann (at this time a Columbia artist) *could only have made a supreme effort and completed her Sieglinde and her thrilling final phrases!*"

This statement goes beyond reflecting the public concern for completeness in these historically important portrayals, it also reflects much mistake as to facts and a regrettable deference many music critics gave the record companies. The record companies repeatedly betrayed the public trust through their control of the artists they had under contract. Max de Schaunsee writes as if it was Mme. Lehmann who refused to consent to record these passages, whereas, as the statements made by Lauritz Melchior concerning his unrecorded performances with Flagstad, reveal, it was the dereliction of the recording companies which lost us so much of our cultural wealth. Fortunately, what the record companies failed to do, the

ago lost and now sees as her hero and lover. Then mutual astonishment leads to ecstatic triumph as Siegmund mightily draws the sword from the tree and, holding it aloft, hails the fate which has bound them together, passionately drawing Sieglinde to him as bride and sister. They then rush off into the forest while the orchestra exultantly accompanies their flight.

[3] Broadcast commentary

ACT II

[4] A wildly vital and propulsive prelude, fusing the Flight Motif with that of the Sword, is interwoven with music connected with the love between Siegmund and Sieglinde. This yields a new motif, connected with the Valkyries. The curtain rises showing us a mountainside overlooking a deep ravine. Wotan (Friedrich Schorr), clad in armor and holding a spear, tells Brünnhilde (Kirsten Flagstad), his favorite among the Valkyries, that she is to protect Siegmund in his coming fray with Hunding who is pursuing the fleeing couple. As she leaves, Fricka (Karin Branzell) enters wrathfully, [5] confronting Wotan with abetting Siegmund and Sieglinde in the most grievous violation of marriage vows. She, as the Goddess who administers such laws, demands that he punish the two who have violated them. [6] Wotan's resistance to her demand inflames Fricka to ever greater anger and denunciation, for, as Wotan's wife, Siegmund and Sieglinde represent marital infidelities to herself as well. Wotan remains unmoved. The Gods require a hero unsheltered by their powers, who acts undirected, who, by the convergence of circumstances and the valor within him, does the deed the Gods cannot do. Wotan insists he has never protected Siegmund. Fricka, quick to see an advantage, replies: Then leave him now unprotected.

CD 2

Wotan, caught in the vise of his statement, now gloomily concedes: he will leave Siegmund unprotected by the Valkyries. [7] Fricka wants still more — shatter his sword, she demands. Wotan rejoins that Siegmund has won the sword fairly by seizing it, of his own strength, from the tree. But who, asks Fricka, gave him the urge, the drive, the need of such a sword? Wotan sinks ever more deeply into dejection, unable to refute Fricka's logic and finally murmurs his gloomy, saddened assent. Triumphant, Fricka draws away as Brünnhilde arrives but not before she demands that Wotan swear to remove all protection from Siegmund and to shatter his sword. Wotan dejectedly gives his oath.

Brünnhilde, uncomprehendingly, seeks to learn the source of her father's distress [2] and Wotan begins the long narrative that is the psychological and philosophical core of the Ring

ministers to him, a strange intensity of response between them arises.

As he revives he tells her that he is pursued by enemy tribesmen following a battle in which he lost both his sword and shield. He wishes to leave lest he bring trouble to her household, but Sieglinde responds by saying that trouble already resides there. As they speak, they become more and more spellbound with each other.

Sieglinde explains that this is the home of Hunding and that she is his wife. [5] She is interrupted by the arrival of Hunding (Emanuel List) who mutters a suspicious greeting and, according to custom, offers Siegmund hospitality and refuge but in a guarded and resistant tone. Asked to share their meal, Siegmund sits opposite Sieglinde. This allows Hunding to recognize an uncanny resemblance between them. [6] Siegmund, answering Hunding's question, tells of his battle and therefore reveals [7] that those whom he fought and from whom he fled are kinsmen to Hunding. [8] Hence Hunding tells him he may remain the night but he must defend himself in the morning. With this he commands Sieglinde to prepare his night drink, which she does, and they both depart to sleep leaving Siegmund in darkness but for the fire that is, itself, nearly out.

Left alone, Siegmund laments the fate that finds him unarmed in the house of his enemy. [9] He recalls his father's promise that in his hour of greatest need, he would find a great sword, and he calls out in ringing tones, "Wälse! Wälse! Where is your sword?" while failing to notice that the firelight's gleams reveal a mighty sword plunged halfway into the trunk of the tree.

Sieglinde returns, whispering that she has substituted a sleeping potion for Hunding's night drink, and thus she is free to tell Siegmund her own tale. [10] Sieglinde explains that years earlier she was captured by Hunding and his tribe and forced to marry him. Midway in the marriage ceremony, a one-eyed stranger entered uninvited. In one grand stroke he thrust a sword into the tree which formed the center of their house and pronounced to all that it belonged to a warrior who would draw it out but no one, that night or since, has been able to remove it. She cries out that she has been waiting for years for someone to draw the sword and avenge her and she falls ardently into Siegmund's arms.

At that moment, the double doors at the rear spring open to a gust of wind revealing the forest flooded with moonlight. [11] Siegmund's ardor takes form as a poem to Spring that he likens to Sieglinde, while all around him throb muted orchestral voices murmuring of the forest radiant with silver light. To this, Sieglinde replies rapturously, "Thou art the Spring" (*Du bist der Lenz*). [12] As they continue in their enrapture, Sieglinde recognizes Siegmund, his face, his voice, as something resounding from the distant past, as the brother whom she long

preservation of many broadcast transcriptions managed to effect, thus Lehmann's entire essayal of the role of Sieglinde has been preserved.

The interplay of comparisons between the 1935 commercial recording of Act I and this performance continues with Hunding as List sings this role in both performances. Fortunately, Emanuel List justifies his reputation as Hunding with some of the best singing heard from him at the Met. His voice is largely free of the wobble and tonelessness one hears from him as the King in this same season's *Lohengrin*. Here he brings far more of the drama to life than in the 1935 commercial set, quite as if he too were caught up in the onrushing events and breathtaking elements which pervade this stage performance.

But if Melchior, Lehmann and Schorr were the most cherished portrayals of these Wagnerian characters, Kirsten Flagstad was no less the Brünnhilde of one's dreams. She carries with her a tonal aura which sets her apart from Leider (who may overall have had a more glorious voice), Lawrence (whose vital strength-of-expression made for a more endearing, human Brünnhilde) and Traubel (whose Olympian characterization brought the Warrior-maiden into full exultant focus). Flagstad's Brünnhilde partook of all these qualities but added a subdued poignant loveliness-of-tone which gave this figure a tenderness and nobility which comported with her standing as Wotan's favorite. One music critic of the era commented on some of these tonalities:

"Wagner again held the feelings of a capacity audience in his titanic grip. Familiar, and nonetheless thrilling was the peerless Brünnhilde of Kirsten Flagstad. The great ample freshness of Mdme. Flagstad's Valkyrie cry was the ideal vocal climax. But more and more she develops her character in many phases. She can be not only heroic. In her appearance before the doomed Siegmund she expressed deep womanly tenderness both in her personality and in her music."



Kirsten Flagstad as Brünnhilde

All this one heard in Flagstad's Act II of *Walküre* with Schorr in 1936. No one has ever surpassed the exquisite loveliness of her tone and phrasing of *Zu Wotan Willen sprichst du, Sagst du mir was dir willist. Webin ich, war'ich dein Wille nicht?* as she encourages Wotan to share his evident misery with her. This is but one passage among many which stay with one after the echoes of the Magic Fire Music have been stilled. And all one could write about Flagstad's Brünnhilde applies as well to the other glorious vocal performances in this recording, all sure to illuminate Wagner's masterpiece as never before.

About this work, the justly famed music critic, Neville Cardus, wrote:

"Die Walküre plunges us into the centre of Wagner's great smithy, where he seemed to see and feel the primitive stuff of nature red hot and molten. Wagner gives a tongue to the elements, to fire and air and devouring waters. His gods are stricken with pitiful mortality. His humans are exalted to gods. We see Siegmund and Sieglinde driven on the wind of the passions of ordinary frail men and women; we see Wotan losing his divinity and taking on the load of common frustration, limitation, and perplexity. And the orchestra is the continuous creative force, calling up spirits from the deeps, shaping the ends of earthly desire and ambition, and canceling fatally the assumption of the gods.

DIE WALKÜRE

SYNOPSIS

In the intervening years between the end of *Das Rheingold* and the beginning of *Die Walküre*, Wotan has been forced to act on his perception that Alberich will seek to regain the Ring-of-Power from Fafner and is crafty enough to accomplish it, even though Fafner has changed himself into a fearsome dragon to guard the treasure of gold and the Ring he took away with him after killing his brother. Further, Wotan is gravely concerned that Alberich will use the Ring to destroy the Gods, to subvert the principles by which they govern and to enslave the world at every level to the unceasing toil of the Nibelungen. Wotan has therefore fathered eight daughters, the Valkyries, whose mission it is to transport every slain hero from the battlefield of their death to Valhalla, there to form an army to further protect the Gods.

Wotan recognizes, however, that this is no solution in itself, because the Ring confers powers on Alberich that go well beyond whatever army he might hurl against the Gods. Thus he must seek to regain the Ring yet not compromise the moral principles by which he governs, as he wrongly did when he first tore the Ring from Alberich's finger. Somehow, there must arise a hero who is led by his own nature to ultimately confront Fafner and regain the Ring. To this end, Wotan roamed among the human race disguised as a man, Walse, and fathered two twin children, Siegmund and Sieglinde, but then abandoned them to their fate, as he, himself, is subject to some larger fate over which he has no control.

1 Commentary

ACT I

When *Die Walküre* begins, Wotan's children have long been separated by battles between hostile tribes and Sieglinde was carried off by her captors and wed to a rough-hewn warrior, Hunding. 2 The opera opens with an astonishing symphonic poem depicting a dark stormy night. The winds blow through the score, the thunder resounds and under it all we hear the relentless tread of someone running. As this breathless pace slackens with the storm, the curtain rises on the rude forest dwelling of Hunding, which is built around a huge tree that occupies the center of the stage. 3 We see an exhausted warrior, Siegmund (Lauritz Melchior), enter and fling himself before the fireplace. Sieglinde (Lotte Lehmann) enters from a side room and exclaims in surprise, responding quickly to Siegmund's call for water. 4 As she

does he kiss his beloved daughter into slumber *Denn sa, Kehrt, Der Gott sich dir ab* leaving the orchestra to meditate on emotions too deep for words. And then, in Wotan's final challenge, we hear the truth of Schorr's departure from our midst: we hear him distantly, as through a veil of great music, obscured, withdrawing, seeming to vanish into the melody itself, achieving a miraculous effect in which Art and Life reflect each other. It was as if Schorr and Wotan, time and music, dissolved into an unforgettable truth, revealing, for one dazzling and inexplicable moment, their wondrously divine unity.

Richard Caniell



"So much for the dramatic power of Wagner: anybody can experience it who has heart and imagination. But only the insight of long musicianship can hope to understand and appreciate the art of Wagner as composition, as inevitably growing and shaping form. The man wrote with a thousand eyes, a thousand hands, a thousand ears; he weaves his orchestral tissue with countless shuttles. He looks back and forward at the same time, a swift binding strand here, another there, a sudden gathering up of a skein, a miraculous unravelling of it, the needles flash ceaselessly. But the simile of a tissue will not do; it is not dynamic enough. Rather let us think of the forces of growth themselves, the seminal energy of earth, beginning from the first upheavals which threw up the mountains and at the same time achieved the quietest flower and the peace of a spring night.

"Wagner in *Die Walküre* is not always crashing the hammer in the world's forge; he has consummate and moving condescensions. The strings, when Sieglinde bends over the weary Siegmund in Act I, are in the style of the miniature; perfect chamber music. Then there is the magical moment of the opening of the door of Hunding's house. Until now the orchestra has been gloomy and bodeful as the pit. With a single touch Wagner sends the healing light of the moonlit woods over his orchestra; the man's strengths breed his sweetness.

"Lehmann was the natural woman, the tender-bearer of life, the impulsive beloved, close to the earth, closer to heaven. Lehmann's every inflection was at one and the same time music and poetry; she looked fresh and young and her voice was not mere singing but the expression of her whole heart. Her acting is as fine as her singing. There is one moment when Lehmann compels us to catch our breath and glisten our eyes — the exquisite phrase from the love-scene when Sieglinde says: "Hush! Let me listen to thy voice: I heard it as a child." Wagner suddenly quietens the music mysteriously; it is a marvelous expression of memory throwing back to some romantic remoteness. The voice

of Lehmann falls almost to silence as she sings *Hört ich als Kind*; we can feel the woman's mind listening within itself for old forgotten tenderness; then Lehmann gives a quick little gasp of ecstasy and her *doch nein* knocks us over. As they say: the great artist's whole personality, all her sweetness, come through the gramophone as warm as life. We shall not hear Sieglinde's music sung better than this.

"The music of Sieglinde is curiously "pure" in its passion; with unerring dramatic instinct Wagner drew out of the woman the sweetness of mother and sister love; in her most passionate moments Sieglinde is never out of character; Wagner seldom committed a stroke that was untrue to psychology. In *Die Walküre* he is at his greatest. Here all the elements in his red-hot crucible mingle and fuse; the music is dramatic and visual and yet always musical; poetry and drama melt into rhythm; action has ears which respond to the allurements of sound; eyes are given to music, making the most abstract of arts a vivid, concrete protagonist in the vast world of Wagner's conception. It is beyond analysis that Wagner can paint the scene without crude imitation. The entire picture and action are taken into the dimension of music, which, as I say, is given eyes. We can see Siegmund stumbling into Hunding's house; we can see the glances exchanged between Sieglinde and Siegmund; we can see Hunding's every gesture; we can even see into his mind as he makes his sinister aside — "How like to the woman!" Yet it is all glorious music, bound together with the strictest musical art, quasi-symphonic, a self-subsistent thing.

"To hear this music, perfectly done, is to feel coming back to one's mind some words written more than 36 years ago by Ernest Newman; he has written nothing more true and beautiful: "The Muse of Poetry seems to have dipped her wings into the lucid stream of Music, disturbing it with suggestions of a world it had never reflected before, deepening its beauty by closer association with the actual world of men. This was the brain of Wagner. There is none like him, none . . ."

the very center of higher laws; infinitely flexible, encompassing, penetrable, penetrative, and only in its central radiance are its contradictions reconciled.

It is to this underlying source of Wotan's greatness that Brünnhilde addresses her pleas and it is only the upwelling of this love to which Wotan yields that returns him to the grandeur and nobility-of-being from which his concessions to lesser laws had robbed him. Thus his decree of punishment is modified and his surrender to his emotions is, indeed, his transfiguration, giving rise to one of the most glorious and tender leave-takings in the history of human expression. What heights of human grandeur are illuminated in this Farewell and the final, tender, heart-torn greeting he gives his beloved Brünnhilde! In this vast, ennobled humanity that has fountained forth from the depths of Wotan's innermost spirit, Schorr's grandeur of expression is imperishably fixed in a mountaintop illumination of fire and melody; a figure of transcendentalized humanity.

In the end Wotan did not achieve such a height by the wise exercise of power, or in the just administration of laws, or even by association with principles, but in the upwelling of a tender mercy and surrender. Encircling and protecting his slumbering child, Wotan offers his challenge and prophecy, He who would be worthy, He who would break through the Fire, must be above fear, even of God. Here, alone, triumphs Love.

The magnificent music of Wotan's Farewell is entirely appropriate to mark Friedrich Schorr's soon to ensue departure from *Die Walküre* and from his radio audiences. That this is his next to final broadcast makes his singing in the finale strike double resonances; his departure through the fire seems more like a passage into the flames of time which consumes all that has been, giving off an obscuring smoke in which we can see him no more. And what a Farewell it is with which this legendary artist departs, surrounded by this glorious music, the breath of his song, now touched with old age, making inexpressibly poignant his *Leb' wohl, Leb' wohl, Leb' wohl*. What heart-rending tenderness and nobility of expression he brings to his final greeting to Brünnhilde *Der augen leuchtender Paar*, and with what sadness

administrates. The double-edged pain in this is not Brünnhilde's mutiny but the portrait of his own enslavement, which cannot be expunged unless he vindicates the laws which forced his punishment of Siegmund, allowing them to fall, impartially, on Brünnhilde. Wotan has no other choice but to side with law. To listen to his own emotions, were he to follow the dictates of his heart, or to permit Brünnhilde to follow hers, would be to revolt against the very premise by which he governs; worse, it is now too late, for it would make the death of Siegmund, which was the destruction of his fondest hopes, all for naught.

This internal drama shapes every tone and phrase Schorr gives us in this passage, his own deep emotions masked at times by a facade of dry indifference to Brünnhilde's defenses. Nevertheless, Schorr's Wotan, permeated as it is with a tone of warm, heart-deep wisdom, creates an aura which hovers around the edge of his anger, coloring the indomitable resolve he has to justify the principles he claims to now serve, contradicting his punishing intentions with intimations of some deeper aspect of his being that this dilemma has obscured. And what is that but the encompassing capacity for great love which flows deep within him? And what does Brünnhilde ask of him but the repudiation of Law unless it be founded on Love? This intimation is always threatening and mutinous to those who would rule by Law alone, because Love, being higher than Law, engenders contradictions in all the formulas and codes by which those who live by Law alone can feel safe. Love dares, knowing no other Law but itself, for it is truly



Brünnhilde begs Wotan to be surrounded by fire

Never were these eloquent words of Cardus more evident than in hearing this assemblage of voices as conducted by Leinsdorf. In the vital intensity of his leadership, the young Leinsdorf reminds me of Toscanini: there is an impetuous freshness and lyricism to his work, elements that were to dim as Leinsdorf aged. But here, making an enormous contribution to the grandeur of the performance, Leinsdorf is worthy of the singers and Wagner's great work.

Another remarkable aspect of this *Walküre* is Karin Branzell's Fricka. In her interpretation, as in Thorborg's characterization (who alternated with her in this role), Fricka is no shrew, no nagging, obstructive, narrow-minded defender of old morals but a woman of principle that sees the precepts she exists to defend flouted. She insists on piercing the sophistries in which Wotan encloses his secret intentions, to reveal a manipulation he is at pains to deny. It is Wagner's genius that, taking first one side then the other, he enables us to sympathetically see the moral issues as Fricka sees them while she expresses her view. Any soprano who sings the part with its truth must first feel herself ennobled by her association with the principles defending marriage vows and then mix in this the bitter irony that they are lived better elsewhere by others than in her own union. Branzell has this essential nobility. She sings her indictment of Wotan's actions with a grave, sorrowing intensity, dark with a woe that upwells into her words as she senses, herself, the turning point and coming darkness the rapidly culminating events must bring. It is limited, her vision; inflexible, untouched by love, which alone would sanctify marriage vows into something that looked beyond traditions to content and spirit.

It is Branzell's triumph that each time she sings the role, she eclipses this higher truth and shows us, instead, Wotan's wrong-doing. And this emphasis as to Fricka's position achieves the result, through Wagner's genius, of



Karin Branzell as Fricka

being in the right as to the letter of the law but wrong as to its spirit. We are left puzzled, piqued, by Fricka's success, made aware of Wotan's subtle interventions in matters to which he claims he is not connected. We are troubled not because Wotan is wrong but because he cannot find for us the higher, the encompassing reason to refute Fricka; something higher than the limited right of the just administration of law. In the scene between Wotan and Fricka we feel that somehow there is in Wotan's wrongness a higher Right but neither he nor we can sense what it is. Even Brünnhilde, in her rebellion, acts on this higher rightness yet does not know, cannot say, how it refutes both Fricka and Wotan, and serves higher equities.

Consider the situation from Fricka's view: There was Sieglinde, wife of Hunding, and she has not only betrayed him, but her lover is her brother, thus their intimacy is doubly proscribed. And yet, in this epic world, there are inexplicable intimations of some overriding commandment that does not yet manifest, but in the preliminary storms which sweep majestically before the approach of its radiantly clear, sane, divinely beautiful sunlight, a torrent of questions falls upon us. What is a true marriage, and is that what existed between Hunding and Sieglinde? Laws are sometimes blind to content, ignoring the spirit which often contradicts the form. Is Hunding, the husband betrayed, the real victim, or was Sieglinde a victim before him? Before it is decided what Law shall protect, we must clearly see to its roots what it is that is protected. Failing to do that we have a dwarfed world where law can be made to serve the very things a higher moral decree forbids, so long as the thing protected is large enough, powerful enough, to remake the values by which the law is administrated.

In *Die Walküre*, Fricka's laws and their administration were blind; all they knew was form, all they honored was the outward shape of the thing. Sieglinde's marriage might be forced, empty, loveless, oppressive, brutal; but it still was marriage. And what was essential to marriage — a longing for union, a merging of kindred spirits, a mutual extinguishment of being, an involuntary fusion of twin-

born souls, as in Siegmund and Sieglinde — this was illegal, hateful, punishable by death. Fricka urges Wotan to support law without concern for what, in fact, the law serves.

Wotan's hopes that Siegmund's heroism might lead him to a motiveless confrontation with Fafner and the acquisition of the Ring-of-Power, were impeached by the influence, the *need* Wotan had worked into Siegmund's life so to do, but that dilemma obscures a finer question. What of the truth of the love between Siegmund and Sieglinde? Fricka is glacially turned away from the sunlight of those significances, and Wotan's needs have contaminated his involvement, but is that all there is? Brünnhilde's revolt from Wotan's commands alone holds the secret, but what years must pass before even she comes to realize what was truly at issue, riding triumphantly into the flames to fling forever from her the Ring and its power, that Love alone be at the seat of all action and the crown of all expression. Fricka, then, has a right that speaks on her behalf which yet hides a wrong, while Wotan is evidently wrong, yet this wrong for which he is responsible, hides a rightness no less central to the solution simply because it is inexplicable.

The extent of dramatic embodiment that great voices involuntarily contain is what illuminatively extends the significances of this great story, for each voice is, itself, a drama. Thus, the most complex personage in all of opera, Wotan, who combines perceivable character defects together with a vaulting nobility and grandeur-of-being, must be sung by a voice unique among all others. One notable instance in this performance, can be heard in the long, mournful passage in Act III when Wotan confesses to Brünnhilde the grief he suffered when obedience to the laws for which he governed forced upon him the necessity to condemn to death his son, so long nurtured through adversity to arrive at a heroism equalled by none. Hear the tone of this *Da labte suss, Dich selige Lust*, with its pained and bitter nuances gradually merging into rancor, as he recalls that Brünnhilde thought herself free enough to flout the very mandates that bound him, placing herself above him, Wotan the Ruler, as if she thought herself above the laws he