Richard

WAGNER

Götterdämmerung

Kirsten Flagstad • Set Svanholm • Ingrid Bjoner
Eva Gustavson • Egil Nordsjø • Waldemar Johnsen
Opera Chorus • Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra
Norwegian State Radio Orchestra
Øivin Fjeldstad

4 CDs

NAXOS

GREAT OPERA RECORDINGS

Richard

WAGNER

(1813-1883)

Götterdämmerung

Music–Drama in Three Acts and a Prologue • Libretto by the Composer

Brünnhilde	Kirsten Flagstad (Soprano)
Gutrune, Third Norn	Ingrid Bjoner (Soprano)
Woglinde	Unni Bugge-Hanssen (Soprano)
Waltraute, First Norn	Eva Gustavson (Mezzo-soprano)
Second Norn, Wellgunde	Karen Marie Flagstad (Mezzo-soprano)
Floßhilde	Beate Asserson (Contralto)
Siegfried	Set Svanholm (Tenor)
Gunther	Waldemar Johnsen (Baritone)
Alberich	Per Grönneberg (Baritone)
Hagen	Egil Nordsjø (Bass)

Opera Chorus • Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra
Norwegian State Radio Orchestra
Øivin Fjeldstad

Recorded in the Norwegian Radio Studios, Oslo, on 5th, 8th and 10th January, 1956
and in University Hall, Oslo, on 14th March, 1956
First issued on Decca LXT 5205 through 5210

Reissue Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

CD 1 **52:40**

Prologue

1 *Prelude* (Orchestra) 2:04
2 *Welch' Licht leuchtet dort?* (First Norn, Second Norn, Third Norn) 10:20
3 *Dämmert der Tag?* (First Norn, Second Norn, Third Norn) 6:31
4 *Dawn* (Orchestra) 3:29
5 *Zu neuen Taten, teurer Helde* (Brünnhilde) 2:15
6 *Mehr gabst du, Wunderfrau* (Siegfried, Brünnhilde) 6:34
7 *O heilige Götter* (Brünnhilde, Siegfried) 2:17
8 *Siegfried's Rhine Journey* (Orchestra) 5:22

Act I
Scene 1

9 *Nun hör, Hagen* (Gunther, Hagen) 2:47
10 *Ein Weib weiß ich* (Hagen, Gunther, Gutrune) 7:56
11 *Vom Rhein her tönt das Horn* (Gunther, Hagen, Siegfried) 2:23

Scene 2

12 *Heil! Siegfried, teurer Held!* (Hagen) 0:42

CD 2 **59:59**

Act I, Scene 2 (continued)

1 *Wer ist Gibichs Sohn?* (Siegfried, Gunther, Hagen) 2:26
2 *Begrüße froh, o Held* (Gunther, Siegfried, Hagen, Gutrune) 4:23
3 *Vergäß' ich alles* (Siegfried) 6:56
4 *Blühenden Lebens labendes Blut* (Siegfried, Gunther) 2:06
5 *Was nahmst du am Eide nicht teil?* (Siegfried, Hagen, Gunther, Gutrune) 3:11
6 *Hier sitz' ich zur Wacht* (Hagen) 7:58

Scene 3

7 *Altgewohntes Geräusch* (Brünnhilde, Waltraute) 6:49
8 *Höre mit Sinn, was ich dir sage!* (Waltraute) 9:07
9 *Welch banger Träume Mären* (Brünnhilde, Waltraute) 6:07
10 *Blitzend Gewölk* (Brünnhilde) 2:52
11 *Brünnhild'! Ein Freier kam* (Siegfried, Brünnhilde) 5:21
12 *Jetzt bist du mein* (Siegfried, Brünnhilde) 2:43

CD 3 **69:37**

Act II
Scene 1

1 *Prelude* (Orchestra) 4:46
2 *Schläfst du, Hagen, mein Sohn?* (Alberich, Hagen) 13:13

Scene 2

3 *Hoiho, Hagen!* (Siegfried, Hagen, Gutrune) 4:57

Scene 3

4 *Hoiho! Hoihohoho!* (Hagen, Vassals) 2:31
5 *Rüstet euch wohl* (Hagen, Vassals) 3:46
6 *Groß Glück und Heil* (Vassals, Hagen) 3:15

Scene 4

7 *Heil dir, Gunther!* (Vassals) 1:05
8 *Brünnhild', die hehrste Frau* (Gunther, Vassals) 1:34
9 *Gegrüßt sei, teurer Held* (Gunther, Vassals, Siegfried, Brünnhilde, Hagen) 4:15
10 *Einen Ring sah ich an deiner Hand* (Brünnhilde, Siegfried, Gunther, Hagen) 2:38
11 *Betrug! Betrug!* (Brünnhilde, Gutrune, Vassals, Gunther, Siegfried) 6:33

12 *Helle Wehr! Heilige Waffe!* 2:56
(Siegfried, Brünnhilde, Vassals)
13 *Glaub', mehr zürnt es mich als dich* 3:34
(Siegfried)
Scene 5
14 *Welches Unholds List* 2:42
(Brünnhilde)
15 *Vertraue mir, betrogne Frau!* 3:42
(Hagen, Brünnhilde)
16 *Auf, Gunther, edler Gibichung!* 5:44
(Hagen, Gunther, Brünnhilde)
17 *So soll es sein!* 2:24
(Gunther, Brünnhilde, Hagen)

CD 4 **77:56**

Act III
Scene 1
1 *Prelude* 3:04
(Orchestra)
2 *Frau Sonne sendet lichte Strahlen* 3:31
(Woglinde, Wellgunde, Floßhilde)
3 *Ein Albe führte mich irr* 0:32
(Siegfried)
4 *Siegfried!* 1:01
(Woglinde, Wellgunde, Floßhilde, Siegfried)
5 *Ein goldner Ring ragt dir am Finger!* 2:34
(Woglinde, Wellgunde, Floßhilde, Siegfried)
6 *Behalt ihn, Held* 6:32
(Floßhilde, Woglinde, Wellgunde, Siegfried)
7 *Weialala leia* 2:06
(Woglinde, Wellgunde, Floßhilde, Siegfried)
Scene 2
8 *Hoiho!* 4:02
(Hagen, Vassals, Siegfried)
9 *Trink, Gunther, trink!* 2:30
(Siegfried, Gunther, Hagen)
10 *Mime hieß ein mürrischer Zwerg* 5:05
(Siegfried, Hagen, Vassals)
11 *In Leid zu dem Wipfel* 2:51
(Siegfried, Hagen)
12 *Was hör' ich?* 2:11
(Gunther, Hagen, Vassals)
13 *Brünnhilde, heilige Braut!* 5:07
(Siegfried)
14 *Siegfried's Funeral March* 6:12
(Orchestra)
Scene 3
15 *War das sein Horn?* 2:41
(Gutrune)
16 *Hoiho! Hoiho!* 2:19
(Hagen, Gutrune, Gunther)
17 *Siegfried – Siegfried erschlagen!* 3:19
(Gutrune, Gunther, Hagen)
18 *Schweigt eures Jammers jauchzenden Schwall* 3:37
(Brünnhilde, Gutrune)
19 *Starke Scheite schichtet mir dort* 2:22
(Brünnhilde)
20 *Wie Sonne lauter strahlt mir sein Licht* 2:13
(Brünnhilde)
21 *O ihr, der Eide ewige Hüter!* 4:07
(Brünnhilde)
22 *Mein Erbe nun nehm' ich zu eigen* 2:14
(Brünnhilde)
23 *Fliegt heim, ihr Raben!* 1:18
(Brünnhilde)
24 *Grane, mein Roß, sei mir gegrüßt!* 6:27
(Brünnhilde, Hagen)

Richard Wagner (1813-1883):
Götterdämmerung

This recording of *Götterdämmerung*, starring Kirsten Flagstad and Set Svanholm, was the first (almost) complete recording of the final part of Wagner's mighty *Der Ring des Nibelungen* to be released commercially, and therefore commands considerable interest. It is also, however, one of the least distributed of recordings of this opera, having been published on long-playing records by Decca in the United Kingdom in 1956 and in America in 1957, after which Decca only published a two-LP set of highlights in 1970. Decca never sought to publish it on compact disc, although two dedicated collector labels have done so, in Italy and Germany. The context for the reasons for its original publication are therefore significant, and have been laid out in detail in the account of Decca's recording of the whole of *Der Ring* under Sir Georg Solti, *Ring Resounding*, written by that recording's producer John Culshaw.

In the post-war era, Kirsten Flagstad was a major name to conjure with, especially in Wagnerian circles. She had appeared annually in Wagner operas at Covent Garden between 1948 and 1952, and gave her final operatic stage performances in America at the Metropolitan Opera in 1952 as Gluck's Alceste, and in Europe in her native Oslo during 1953 as Purcell's Dido. In the same year EMI released on its HMV label an early complete recording of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler (available on Naxos 8.110321-24), which generated high critical praise and great public enthusiasm. This recording, however, also caused a parting of the ways between Flagstad and EMI as it was inadvertently made public that Isolde's top Cs in the Second Act had been sung by Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and not by Flagstad. Decca throughout this period was an assertive 'number two' company to EMI, and when John Culshaw heard through the pianist Julius Katchen that Flagstad's voice was still in excellent condition, and furthermore through the actor and director Bernard Miles that she might be persuaded to record with Decca, he grasped what seemed like both an excellent commercial and musical opportunity, and at the same time a chance to trounce EMI. Negotiations were concluded in 1955 for Flagstad to record some *Lieder* and Wagner for Decca, after which during early 1956 Miles made it known to Decca that Flagstad had participated in a farewell performance of *Götterdämmerung* for Norwegian Radio, and that the commercial release of this recording by Decca would be seen as confirmation by her that she and Decca had entered into a serious relationship.

On hearing the actual tapes of this performance in Oslo Culshaw was horrified to discover that about forty minutes of music had been cut in the performance. His superiors in London, however, agreed to purchase the right to release the tapes and authorised him to arrange for the missing music to be recorded immediately. When Culshaw met with Flagstad, he tried to persuade her to record the complete opera in Vienna under the finest studio conditions, but she was adamant that this Norwegian performance should be published, if not by Decca then by others who might be interested. Culshaw realised that it would be advantageous for Decca in the long run to accede to her wishes. Most of the missing music was recorded, except for the orchestral interlude between the first and second scenes of the First Act, for which there was insufficient studio time. Looking back on this episode later Culshaw was convinced that by issuing this recording of *Götterdämmerung* Decca had cemented its relationship with Flagstad, and as a result was seen by her as a company that would keep its promises and would take risks on her behalf. The value of this firm relationship may be seen in the later, extraordinarily successful, casting of Flagstad as Fricka in Culshaw's recording of *Das Rheingold* of 1958 – the first episode of the complete Solti-Culshaw *Ring*, and a recording that on its initial release reached the American Top Ten LP chart. He also felt that the Oslo *Götterdämmerung* demonstrated to Flagstad the feasibility of the establishment of a Norwegian National Opera, a concept in which she passionately believed. In fact she later did become the first director of the newly establi-

shed Norwegian National Opera, between 1958 and 1960. So the consequences of the publication of this recording were considerably greater than anyone could have foreseen at the time of the initial negotiations for its commercial release.

The Norwegian conductor **Øivin Fjeldstad** (1903-1983) studied at the music conservatories of Oslo, Leipzig and Berlin, where he was a pupil of Clemens Krauss. Between 1924 and 1945 he was a violinist in the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra. Having initially appeared as a conductor as early as 1931, he was appointed as the first chief conductor of the Norwegian State Radio Orchestra upon its formation in 1945 and held this post until 1962, when he became chief conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra. In addition between 1958 and 1960 he served as the first conductor of the Norwegian National Opera, working alongside Kirsten Flagstad. He made a number of recordings, predominantly with the Oslo Philharmonic, of mainstream repertoire for Decca and Reader's Digest, and of Scandinavian repertoire for the Nerax and Phonogram Norsk labels, some of which reappeared on the Mercury and Composers Recordings Inc., marques. This performance of *Gõtterdämmerung* was by far his most ambitious undertaking to appear on disc, and in the words of the distinguished critic, John Holmes, in it Fjeldstad proved himself 'to be a more than adequate Wagnerian conductor'.

The soprano **Kirsten Flagstad** (1895-1962) was born into a musical family. She made her operatic début in a small part in d'Albert's opera *Tiefland* in Oslo in 1913. In 1919 she joined a travelling opera company with which she appeared in leading rôles in operas such as *Otello*, *La fanciulla del West* and *Un ballo in maschera*. She joined the Stora Theatre in Gothenburg in 1928, and made her début at the National Theatre in Oslo in 1932 as Isolde. She appeared in minor rôles at the Bayreuth Festival in 1933 followed by Sieglinde and Gutrune at the 1934 Festival. She made her Metropolitan Opera début as Sieglinde in the spring of 1935, in a performance that was broadcast coast to coast, and caused an immediate sensation. So great was her appeal that her subsequent performances at the Met, generally in Wagner, consistently sold out, greatly helping the company's then precarious financial position. She appeared at the Royal Opera House in London during the 1936 and 1937 opera seasons singing under Reiner and Beecham. She returned to Nazi-occupied Norway from America in 1941, a decision which provoked considerable negative publicity. After the end of the Second Word War she gradually rebuilt her international reputation. Following her retirement from the stage in 1953 recording became her principal activity, until she became the first director of the Norwegian National Opera in 1958. In 1960 she was diagnosed as suffering from bone cancer.

The Swedish tenor **Set Svanholm** (1904-1964) was considered one of Europe's leading Wagnerian tenors during the decade after the Second World War. He began his career as a teacher when he was seventeen. He studed singing at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm and also worked privately with the baritone John Forsell, who also taught Aksel Schiøtz and Jussi Björling. He made his operatic début in Stockholm as a baritone in 1930, singing Silvio in *Pagliacci*. After singing baritone for several years, he made his second début as a tenor in 1936, singing Radames in *Aida*. This was followed by Lohengrin and Siegfried in 1937. Between 1938 and 1942 he sang with the Vienna State Opera. After the Second World War he appeared regularly at the Metropolitan Opera between 1946 and 1956, and at the Royal Opera House, London between 1948 and 1957. He was appointed director of the Royal Swedish Opera in 1956, a post he held until 1963.

Götterdämmerung is the fourth and final part of Wagner's massive *Der Ring des Nibelungen,* or The Ring of the Nibelungs. This cycle of four operas, or 'dramas' as Wagner preferred them to be described, features characters who are loosely based on those from the Norse sagas and particularly the *Nibelunglied* or *Song of the Nibelungs*. Wagner wrote both the libretti and the music for *The Ring* over a period of 26 years, between 1848 and 1874. The four operas that make up the entire Ring cycle are: *Das Rheingold* (The Rhine Gold), *Die Walküre* (The Valkyrie), *Siegfried* and *Gõtterdämmerung* (The Twilight of the Gods). Although Wagner intended these operas to be performed consecutively in order to form a coherent whole, they are often performed individually. The scale and scope of the story of *The Ring* is truly epic. It follows the struggles of gods, heroes and several mythical creatures over ownership of the magic Ring, which grants domination over the entire world. The drama and intrigue continue though three generations of protagonists, until the final cataclysm is reached at the end of *Gõtterdämmerung*.

David Patmore

Synopsis

CD1

Prologue. 1 The motifs associated with the Rhine and with Nature, first heard at the start of *Das Rheingold* are now heard again in the instrumental introduction to *Götterdämmerung*. The Fate motif returns, a hint, as we know from *Die Walküre*, of Siegfried's impending death. 2 It is night, as the curtain rises to reveal the three Norns, weavers of Fate, sitting on Brünnhilde's rock, near the entrance to a cave, resolved to spin and sing. They tell how, once, a brave god came to the sacred ash-tree and paid with one of his eyes to drink there from the well of wisdom. From the tree he cut a branch, from which he made a spear. The motifs here recall Wotan's dreams of Valhalla and his promise to pay for the building of Valhalla. The tree died, the third Norn ends her tale, throwing the rope she holds to the second Norn, who continues the story. She tells how Wotan engraved the words of his agreement on the spear, how a young hero broke the spear in battle and how Wotan sent heroes from Valhalla to cut the sacred tree up into logs. 3 The first Norn continues, telling how these logs are piled around the fortress of Valhalla, to be set ablaze and bring about its end. They see Loge, transformed again into fire, guarding Brünnhilde's rock, but later to set fire to the fragments of the spear and set ablaze the logs round Valhalla, at Wotan's command. What then of the Rhinegold, the Ring? The rope has become entangled and now breaks. The Norns know their time has come and they must return to Erda, goddess of Fate.
4 It grows lighter with the start of dawn, and now day breaks. Siegfried and Brünnhilde come from the cave, the latter leading her horse, Grane. Each is identified by a motif, the horse by a reminiscence of the Ride of the Valkyries. 5 Brünnhilde has give Siegfried her knowledge and strength and sends him forward to new deeds of glory. From her Siegfried has learned love, above all, and they sing of their love, with motifs associated with it. 6 Siegfried gives Brünnhilde, as a token of faith, the ring, the symbol of all he has achieved, and she gives him her horse. 7 Through her power, now, will Siegfried act, as part of her. 8 He takes his leave and sets out on his Rhine Journey, his own bold motif mingling with those of Fire, the Rhine-maidens, the Rhine and the ring itself.

Act I
Scene 1
9 The scene is the hall of the Gibichungs, by the Rhine. Gunther and Gutrune are seated to one side, with Hagen at the table. Gunther asks his half-brother if he has the true fame due a Gibich. Hagen respects him but tells him that he could possess greater things and should marry, as should Gutrune. 10 For Gunther there is Brünnhilde, on her rock surrounded by fire, but she is to be Siegfried's bride, for he has killed the dragon and taken the Nibelung's treasure and magic power. Siegfried, however, might win Brünnhilde for Gunther, in return for the hand of Gutrune. She thinks

this improbable, but Hagen reminds her of the drug they have that brings forgetfulness and will make Siegfried forget any other women. 11 The sound of Siegfried's approach is heard. Hagen, who has gone down to the bank of the river, hails Siegfried, with the ominous motif of the curse placed on the ring by Hagen's father, Alberich, from whom it had been taken.

Scene 2
12 Hagen greets Siegfried, who dismounts.

CD 2
1 Siegfried seeks to know whether Gunther is his friend or enemy. 2 He is welcomed by Gunther, while Hagen sees to his horse. They swear friendship, Gunther pledging all he has, his land, body and sword. Hagen returns. He mentions the treasure, by which Siegfried claims to set little store, but he has the Tarn-cap that, as Hagen tells him, gives the power to take on any form. Siegfried adds that he has given the ring to a noble woman, identified at once by Hagen, to himself, as Brünnhilde. Gutrune now returns with a drinking-horn, welcoming their guest, 3 and Siegfried drinks to Brünnhilde. The potion does its work and as he looks again at Gutrune he feels desire. As she leaves, he asks Gunther her name. He tells him that her name is Gutrune and goes on to explain his own desire to marry a woman who is now set on a rock, surrounded by fire, Brünnhilde, who will be the wife of the one who rescues her. Siegfried at once offers to break through the fire and bring Brünnhilde to be Gunther's bride, disguising himself as Gunther through the Tarn-cap, in return for the hand of Gutrune. 4 They swear to be blood-brothers and allow their blood to mingle in a drinking-horn of wine that Hagen holds for them, pledging faith or death and drinking. Hagen takes his sword and cuts the drinking-horn in two. 5 Siegfried asks him why he has not taken the oath, but Hagen tells him that his blood is mixed and not so noble. Siegfried now moves towards his boat, ready to leave with Gunther. As they make ready to leave, Hagen tells Gutrune that the two are going to seek Brünnhilde. 6 He sits motionless, to watch over the hall, thinking that now Gunther will bring Brünnhilde home with him and Hagen himself will have the ring. The music suggests both Hagen's thoughts and Brünnhilde, as well as the two who are now travelling to seek her out.

Scene 3
7 The scene is again the entrance to the cave of the *Prologue*. Brünnhilde sits contemplating the ring and remembering her beloved Siegfried. She hears the approach through the air of the Valkyrie Waltraute and asks her whether her presence is in defiance of Wotan or if Wotan has forgiven her, as he may have done, since he has allowed her to be found by Siegfried, or whether Waltraute has been condemned to share her fate. Waltraute, however, brings anxious news. 8 Wotan, she tells her, since Brünnhilde's departure, no longer sends the Valkyries to battle, but wanders aimlessly and alone. Recently he had returned with his spear broken by a hero and he then ordered the World Ash-Tree to be cut down and its logs piled around the sacred hall. Now Wotan sits in Valhalla, Waltraute continues, not speaking or moving, surrounded by the gods, grasping the shattered spear in his hand and not listening to the appeals of the Valkyries. Once, though, he spoke of Brünnhilde, sighing, as in a dream, and saying that if she gave the ring back to the Rhinemaidens then the curse would be ended. At this Waltraute had taken her horse and ridden to Brünnhilde. 9 In reply to Brünnhilde's question, she tells her that she seeks her help in returning the ring. Brünnhilde will never surrender the token of Siegfried's love for her, although Waltraute pleads with her to save Valhalla. She clings to this symbol of her own happiness and tells her sister to leave her. 10 Left alone again, as thunderclouds gather, she bids Waltraute never return. It grows darker and the fire from around the rock now grows fiercer. She hears the sound of Siegfried's horn and a figure appears through the flames, Siegfried, in the Tarn-cap, having the form of Gunther. 11 He declares that he has come to set her free and take her as his wife, announcing himself as the Gibichung, Gunther. Brünnhilde calls down curses on Wotan for this cruel punishment. Siegfried bids her go into the cave, but she threatens him with the ring, which he tears from her finger, once he has overpowered her. 12 As they go into the cave, he swears to be true to his oath to Gunther, and will sleep in the cave with his sword Nothung between him and Brünnhilde.

CD 3

Act II
Scene 1
1 An orchestral *Prelude* suggests the opening of the following scene, set in front of the Gibichungs' hall. 2 Here Alberich crouches at his son Hagen's feet, while the latter seems to sleep. He reminds Hagen, who seems to hear in his sleep, of the power that will be theirs, how Siegfried defeated Wotan and how Hagen must defeat Siegfried, protected as he is by his innocence from the curse of the ring. Hagen must swear to take the ring from Siegfried, for if Brünnhilde returns it to the Rhinemaidens then they will lose it for ever. He swears and Alberich disappears into the darkness.

Scene 2
3 There is a sudden sound, as Siegfried appears behind a bush and hails Hagen, brought quickly by the magic of the Tarn-cap, followed by Gunther and Brünnhilde. He calls out to Gutrune and tells her how he has rescued Brünnhilde for Gunther, while remaining true to her. Gutrune asks Hagen to call together the men in celebration of her wedding with Siegfried, while she will call the women. Hagen mounts a rock and there sounds his horn.

Scene 3
4 Hagen calls on the Gibichung men, who gather, seeking the reason for the summons and the nature of the enemy. 5 He tells them they have been called to celebrate a wedding feast, to eat and drink. 6 They drink to Hagen.

Scene 4
7 As Gunther and Brünnhilde arrive, they are greeted by the men. 8 Gunther introduces his bride, Brünnhilde, leading her towards the hall 9 and greeting Siegfried and his sister Gutrune. 10 When Brünnhilde sees the couple she is near to fainting and seeing the ring on Siegfried's finger she understands that she has been betrayed and the ring torn from her own finger. Siegfried, however, remembers how he won the ring from the dragon that he slew. Hagen intervenes, accusing Siegfried of treachery and Brünnhilde joins the accusation. 11 She calls on the gods, in her suffering, claiming to be the wife of Siegfried. He, however, declares his faithfulness to the oath that he has sworn to Gunther, as his blood-brother, separated from her by his sword, that was between them as they lay together in the cave. Brünnhilde reproaches him as a liar, joined by Gunther. 12 In the turmoil aroused, Siegfried swears by Hagen's spear, the Spear Oath, calling for his own destruction from it, if he is forsworn. Brünnhilde calls on the same spear for vengeance and the death of Siegfried. 13 He, however, tells Gunther that Brünnhilde is lying, regretting the apparent failure of their deception with the Tarn-cap. Turning to the company, he bids them to the wedding feast, accompanying Gutrune into the hall, followed by the Gibichung men and women.

Scene 5
14 Hagen, Gunther and Brünnhilde remain behind. She wonders what magician has brought about this change and regrets how she has bestowed on Siegfried all her wisdom. 15 Hagen promises vengeance, but she tells him that Siegfried is invincible, protected by her power, although his back is vulnerable, since she knew he would never turn his back on an enemy, in flight. Hagen, then, will use his spear to find its mark there, urging Gunther on, betrayer and betrayed. 16 Gunther must help Hagen to secure Siegfried's death. Gunther, however, is reluctant to break his bond, but Brünnhilde joins her voice to Hagen's, urging him to act, since Siegfried has betrayed them both. Hagen assures him that this is the only way to regain the Ring of the Nibelung. They agree to arrange a hunting-party and spare Gutrune by telling her that Siegfried has been killed by a boar. 17 They swear vengeance. As Gunther and Brünnhilde approach the hall, the wedding procession emerges, with Siegfried and Gutrune carried high on the men's shoulders, as they proceed to the hill for the ceremony.

CD 4

Act III
Scene 1
1 An orchestral prelude depicts the hunting-party, as horns resound and echo, while the Rhine flows on. 2 The curtain rises on a rocky valley and forest by the Rhine, from which the three Rhinemaidens, Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde, rise, lamenting the loss of the Rhinegold, as they wait for Siegfried, whose horn-call they hear. 3 He appears, having lost his way, led astray by some spirit, 4 and the Rhinemaidens laugh at him, seeking to have the ring from his finger, 5 which he is about to give them, holding it up to tempt them to him. 6 They warn him, however, of its dangers. He remembers now the warning of the dragon, but this did not teach him to fear. The Rhinemaidens leave him, in his folly, blind to danger, since a woman will inherit the ring and listen to them. 7 They swim away.

Scene 2
8 Siegfried pulls himself together, as he hears the Gibichung horn-call, an inversion of his own, with which he answers, as the men call to him. He is joined now by them, with Gunther and Hagen, ready to rest from the hunt and take refreshment. He tells Hagen that he has taken no prey, but has met three wild waterbirds, who sang to him. Hagen fills a drinking-horn for Siegfried and asks if it is true that he can understand the language of birds. 9 As the latter hands the drinking-horn to Gunther, he tells them he has not heard their language for a long time. 10 He goes on to recount his earlier deeds, recalled by the earlier motifs, of the dwarf Mime, who taught him the art of the smith, so that, of his own art, he restored his father's weapon, the sword Nothung, and killed the dragon, Fafner. When he dipped his finger in the dragon's blood and touched his mouth, he could understand a bird that told him of the Tarn-cap and the ring, and then, when he had them both, warned him of the treachery of Mime, who tried to poison him and whom he then killed. Hagen refills the drinking-horn, now adding a drug and urging Siegfried to drink. 11 The latter continues his story, telling how the bird told him of Brünnhilde, on her rock, surrounded by fire. Now he remembers how he had found her and wakened her with a kiss. 12 Gunther is horrified at what he hears and two ravens fly out of a nearby bush, circle over Siegfried and fly then to the Rhine. Hagen asks if he can guess their meaning, and Siegfried stands up, turning his back on Hagen, who plunges his spear into him. He tries to hurl his shield at Hagen, but is too weak, and sinks to the ground, while the men reproach Hagen, who strides away. 13 Gunther bows his head, by Siegfried's side as he dies with the name of Brünnhilde on his lips. 14 To the sound of the funeral march the men, at a signal from Gunther, bear Siegfried's body away. A mist rises from the river, hiding the procession.

Scene 3
15 The mists part to reveal the hall of the Gibichungs in the moonlight, reflected from the river. Gutrune comes out, thinking she hears Siegfried's horn-call, wakened now by a bad dream and seeking Brünnhilde, whom she thinks she has seen walking to the Rhine. 16 She hears the voice of Hagen, calling for lights, as he returns from the hunt, and he appears, bidding Gutrune welcome Siegfried, as the hero's body is borne in. Hagen tells her that Siegfried was killed by a wild boar, as she falls on the body in grief. 17 Gunther tries to comfort her, but she calls him a murderer. He tells her rather to accuse Hagen, who admits the deed and seeks to claim the ring. Gunther rises to defend Gutrune's inheritance and in a short fight is killed by Hagen, who tries to seize the ring, but is prevented when Siegfried's hand rises, to the horror of all. 18 Now Brünnhilde appears, seeking final revenge on those who have betrayed her. Gutrune accuses her of bringing sorrow on their house, but Brünnhilde tells her that she was never Siegfried's wife, as Gutrune was. Gutrune turns on Hagen, realising that the drugged potion had made Siegfried forget Brünnhilde. 19 In the Immolation Scene Brünnhilde orders the men to raise a pyre for Siegfried, to bring his horse, to share with her the funeral rites. 20 She tells of the purity of Siegfried, the truest, who yet had broken every oath and vow. 21 She calls on Wotan to hear her, now with her knowledge restored to her; his ravens may take him a message of peace. 22 She gives a sign to the men to bear Siegfried's body to the pyre and takes from his finger the ring, which she now will return to the Rhine with her ashes. 23 She takes a burning brand, bidding the ravens fly home and on their way urge Loge to Valhalla to bring fire there. She hurls the brand onto the pyre. 24 Mounting the horse, Grane, she rides into the flames, which burn the fiercer. The Rhine swells and overflows its banks, quelling the fire, as the Rhinemaidens emerge. Hagen, casting aside spear, shield and helmet, plunges into the water, eager to seize the ring, and is dragged down by the Rhinemaidens, who now hold the ring up in triumph. In the sky Valhalla is seen, with the gods and goddesses sitting motionless, as the great hall is consumed in cleansing fire, bringing the reign of gods and heroes to an end.

Keith Anderson

Producer's Note

By 1956 Decca already had three unissued live recordings of *Götterdämmerung* in the can, all from Bayreuth, the latter two in stereo. Yet, owing to a combination of legal issues and Decca producer John Culshaw's desire to record the complete *Ring* operas under studio conditions, these remained unreleased until the CD era. Instead, the present performance became the first to enter Decca's catalogue, where it remained until the Solti recording displaced it in 1964.

The circumstances of the recording were recounted by Culshaw in his book, *Ring Resounding*. Briefly, Norwegian Radio had broadcast the opera, live from a studio, in three parts – the Prologue and Act 1 on January 5th, 1956; Act 2 on the 8th; and Act 3 on the 10th. Certain scenes were not included in the original broadcasts (among them, the Norns' appearance in the *Prologue* and the scene between Alberich and Hagen which opens Act 2). When Flagstad was approached by Decca to sign with the label following her departure from EMI, it was her desire that this performance be released, both as a memento of her final performance as the *Götterdämmerung* Brünnhilde and as a way of bringing international attention to opera in Norway.

A make-up session was held on 14th March to record the missing parts and make several small "fixes" to what had already been set down. Culshaw relates that time ran out before the brief orchestral bridge between Scenes 2 and 3 of Act 1 – between Hagen's Watch and the Brünnhilde/Waltraute scene – could be recorded. The original recording has a good deal of warmth, impact and detail, and has been transferred here from British LP pressings.

Mark Obert-Thorn

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Richard
WAGNER
(1813-1883)

Götterdämmerung

Brünnhilde	Kirsten Flagstad
Siegfried	Set Svanholm
Gutrune	Ingrid Bjoner
Gunther	Waldemar Johnsen
Alberich	Per Grönneberg
Hagen	. Egil Nordsjø
Woglinde	. Unni Bugge-Hanssen
Waltraute	Eva Gustavson
Wellgunde	Karen Marie Flagstad

Opera Chorus • Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra
Norwegian State Radio Orchestra
Øivin Fjeldstad
Recorded in the Norwegian Radio Studios, Oslo on 5th, 8th and 10th January, 1956 and in University Hall, Oslo on 14th March, 1956

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Playing Time 4:20:12

CD 1	52:40
1-8 Prologue	38:53
9-12 Act I (beginning)	13:47
CD 2	59:59
1-12 Act I (conclusion)	59:59
CD 3	69:37
1-17 Act II	69:37
CD 4	77:56
1-24 Act III	77:56

In January 1956 Norwegian Radio broadcast an almost complete performance of *Götterdämmerung* starring Kirsten Flagstad and Set Svanholm, and conducted by Øivin Fjeldstad. Despite opportunities to re-record the work in Vienna, Flagstad was insistent that this performance be released. Most of the missing sections were then recorded, and the resultant LP was the first (almost complete) commercial recording of the work on disc. Flagstad, the great Wagnerian, is in resplendent voice and Svanholm proves a worthy partner. This elusive set remains a milestone in Wagner performance.

Reissue Producer and Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Cover photo: Kirsten Flagstad (Private Collection)