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SEATTLE SYMPHONY
COLLECTION

WAGNER

Orchestral Excerpts • 2

A Faust Overture • Lohengrin • Parsifal

Alessandra Marc, Soprano
Seattle Symphony • Gerard Schwarz

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

A Faust Overture · Excerpts from Lohengrin and Parsifal

Richard Wagner was born in Leipzig in 1813, the acknowledged son of a Government official Carl Friedrich Wagner, and his wife Joanna, but apparently fathered in fact by the actor Ludwig Geyer, who was to marry Joanna after Carl Friedrich's death. Wagner's education was an intermittent one, much of it in Dresden, where he fell under the spell of Weber and *Der Freischütz*, the first great German romantic opera. Returning to Leipzig he was to profit more from contact with his uncle Adolf, a widely read scholar, with a knowledge of Greek tragedy, as well as of the classics of Italy, the works of Shakespeare, and of course, of the literature of his own country. In Leipzig Wagner took the opportunity of furthering his own interests in music, stimulated by the performances of the famous Gewandhaus Orchestra and Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, which he heard in 1829. He borrowed books from the music lending library of Robert Schumann's future teacher and father-in-law, Friedrich Wieck, and took private music lessons at the Thomasschule, where J.S. Bach had been employed a century earlier.

The later career of Wagner was a turbulent one. His income never matched his ambitions, and he was driven on by an aggressive and ruthless urge to create a new form of music, the music of the future, particularly in the conjunction of all arts in a series of great music dramas. He worked first as conductor at the undistinguished opera-house in Magdeburg, married a singer, Minna Planer, moved to Königsberg and later to Riga. From there, pursued by creditors, he sailed for England, and thence, a week later to Paris, where success continued to elude him. Recognition was finally to come from his native Saxony, with a production for the opera *Rienzi* in Dresden and an official appointment to the royal court. His own tactless espousal of revolutionary notions led to his flight from Saxony in 1849, at first to Liszt in Weimar, and then to Switzerland. Further troubles were to follow as the result of the political suspicions he had aroused, the constant attention of creditors and his selfish

unscrupulousness in his relations with women. The protection later afforded by King Ludwig II of Bavaria allowed some respite from difficulties, but his liaison with Liszt's daughter Cosima, wife of the Bavarian court conductor Hans von Bülow, and his unpopularity in Munich led to a further period of exile in Switzerland. His final relative triumph in the establishment of a Festival devoted to his work in Bayreuth was accomplished again with the encouragement of King Ludwig. The first festival took place in 1876, but did nothing to reduce his increasing personal debts.

Wagner died during the course of a visit to Venice in 1883. In his life-time he had inspired equally fanatical devotion and hatred, both of which continued after his death. His principal achievement must be seen in the creation of massive and stupendous masterpieces for the theatre, such as his German epic cycle *The Ring of the Nibelungen*, and his expansion of traditional harmonic and constructional devices in music.

Respect for Goethe, shared by his contemporaries and following generations, led Wagner to an attempt in Paris in 1840 to write a *Faust Symphony*, under the influence of Berlioz. The original overture, the first movement of the proposed work, was re-orchestrated a few years later, and Liszt, who had received a visit from Wagner in 1848, played the work in Weimar. It was presumably Liszt's *Faust Symphony* that persuaded Wagner to revise the overture to offer a fuller view of the drama. The revised work was completed in 1855. It opens in the old scholar's study and reflects, in its course, the interventions of Mephistopheles and its consequences.

Wagner's romantic opera *Lohengrin* was first performed at Weimar under the direction of Liszt, after Wagner, having sided with the revolutionaries in Dresden, had taken refuge in Switzerland. The work makes use of the technique Wagner had now more fully developed of leitmotifs, leading motifs associated with ideas or characters in the drama.

In tenth century Antwerp King Henry urges the

support of Brabant against Hungary. Friedrich von Telramund accuses Elsa of having killed her brother in order to usurp the dukedom that he now claims for himself. The matter is to be settled by combat, and Elsa now prays for her champion to come forward in answer to the Herald's challenge. The mysterious knight Lohengrin appears, in a boat drawn by a swan, and, making Elsa promise never to ask his name or origin, defeats Telramund, sparing his life. Ortrud and Telramund now plan their revenge, planting the seeds of doubt in Elsa's mind. The Herald announces the banishment of Telramund and the assumption of the title Protector by the unnamed knight, who will that day marry Elsa, whose doubts now grow, with Telramund accusing Lohengrin of sorcery. Finally, in the bridal chamber, she asks him the question. Telramund bursts in, and is killed by Lohengrin, who then agrees to answer Elsa's question in the presence of the people. Before the King's judgement seat he reveals his name, Lohengrin, his parentage, as a son of Parsifal, and his rôle as a servant of the Holy Grail, with power that depended on not revealing his name. He tells Elsa that her brother would have come back to her, after a year together, but now he must go, as he came. The swan that draws his boat is revealed, however, as is Gottfried, bewitched by Ortrud, and restored to life again as Duke of Brabant. Elsa now falls back dead in her brother's arms.

The *Prelude to Act I* is based on the motif of the Holy Grail and *Elsa's Dream, Einsam, in trüben Tagen* (Alone in troubled days), tells how she sees a vision of the knight who will save her. Some of the best known music is found in the *Prelude to Act III*, depicting the festivities for the wedding of Elsa and Lohengrin, leading to the very well known *Wedding March*.

Various interpretations have been put on Wagner's last opera, *Parsifal*, a work specifically and for some time exclusively designed for the consecration of the festival theatre at Bayreuth, where it was first performed in 1882. At the most obvious level Parsifal may be taken to represent Christianity and the wicked magician Klingsor the pagan world.

The *Prelude to Act I* uses motifs of the Last Supper, the Holy Grail and Faith, interwoven with a sorrow motif

and part of a motif associated with the torment of sin. Gurnemanz and four esquires, sleeping in a clearing in the woods, waken and make ready for the bath of the sick King Amfortas, balm for whose pain can only come from one person, a blameless fool. Kundry, who now arrives, exhausted, brings balm for the King. The mysterious nature of Kundry is discussed and the good fortune she brings. Gurnemanz explains the entrusting to Titirel of the Grail, the cup used at Christ's last supper, a vessel that caught his blood, with the spear that caused the wound in his side. The magician Klingsor was refused admission to the temple Titirel built and in revenge created a garden with maidens of seductive beauty, a lure and temptation that led to the downfall of many knights. Amfortas had been wounded attacking Klingsor's castle and had lost to him the Holy Spear. Parsifal enters, having shot a swan, a deed he now regrets. He knows little of his past, except that his mother was Herzeleide, Sorrowful Heart. Kundry explains further that his mother had died when he deserted her. Kundry sinks to the ground, her task fulfilled. The scene changes to the temple of the Grail. Titirel, now too weak to officiate, asks Amfortas to display the Grail, but he refuses, since the sight of the holy vessel makes his wounds bleed the more, as a sinner. Eventually he carries out his allotted task and the sacred bread and wine are given to the assembled knights. Parsifal stands fascinated at what he sees, but says and does nothing to alleviate the suffering of Amfortas. In his castle the magician Klingsor sees in his magic glass the fool approaching. He calls up Kundry, an unwilling instrument of his desire to destroy Parsifal, the blameless fool, whom he now sees attacking his knights. The scene is transformed to that of a magic garden, where the flower maidens attempt to charm Parsifal. Kundry, now in more seductive guise, sends them away and tells Parsifal of his mother. As their lips are about to meet, Parsifal comes to his senses and breaks away, feeling the pain of the wound of Amfortas, which he now understands. Kundry begs him to save her from the curse under which she has laboured since she laughed at the crucifixion of Christ. He understands her wiles and her possible salvation, rejecting her advances. Klingsor huris the Holy Spear at

him, but it remains suspended above his head. He seizes it and makes the sign of the cross with it, at which the garden and castle disappear. The *Prelude to Act III* shows the Kingdom of the Grail in desolation, the knights living on roots and herbs. Gurnemanz finds Kundry, dishevelled and weary, as in the first act, but her face is transformed. A knight approaches, Parsifal, holding the Holy Spear, which he venerates. Kundry and Gurnemanz bathe and anoint Parsifal, who baptizes Kundry, and sees the beauty of his surroundings in the *Good Friday Spell*. This is a time, Gurnemanz explains, when nature rejoices with man at his

salvation. The scene changes to that of the temple, where Amfortas will perform the ceremony of the Grail for the last time, to atone for the death of his father Titurel. Parsifal enters the temple, with Gurnemanz and Kundry, and heals the wound of Amfortas with the touch of the Holy Spear, which he presents to the company. It is Parsifal who now must perform the ceremony of the Grail, which he does as a Holy Dove appears above his head and Amfortas and Gurnemanz acknowledge their new king.

Keith Anderson

Alessandra Marc



Alessandra Marc has appeared at major opera-houses in Paris, London, Milan, Rome, Vienna, Berlin, Lisbon, Tokyo, Chicago and San Francisco, and at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Regular rôles include Sieglinde and Brünnhilde in *Die Walküre* and in *Götterdämmerung*. She sang the Israeli première of Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs* conducted by Leon Botstein, Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* with the Choral Arts Society of Washington, a gala opera concert with the Philadelphia Orchestra, and two televised appearances at the Festival Casals in San Juan, Puerto Rico, among much else. Additionally, she has collaborated with the popular composer, Chuck Wild, and performs frequently in recital works by Harold Arlen, George Gershwin, Carlisle Floyd, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, Jerome Kern, and others, as well as a large catalogue of American gospel songs and spirituals, and German and French cabaret favourites.

Seattle Symphony

The Seattle Symphony, founded in 1903, has gained international prominence with more than 140 recordings, twelve GRAMMY® nominations, two Emmys and numerous other awards. Gerard Schwarz led the orchestra from 1985 to 2011, and is now Conductor Laureate. The Seattle Symphony is internationally recognized for its innovative programming and extensive recording history. The Seattle Symphony performs in one of the world's finest concert venues – the acoustically superb Benaroya Hall – in downtown Seattle. Under the leadership of Music Director Ludovic Morlot since September 2011, the Symphony is heard live from September through July by more than 315,000 people. For more information on the Seattle Symphony, visit www.seattlesymphony.org.

Gerard Schwarz



Gerard Schwarz serves as Music Director of the Eastern Music Festival and Conductor Laureate of the Seattle Symphony. A renowned interpreter of nineteenth-century German, Austrian and Russian repertoire in addition to contemporary American composers, Schwarz recently completed his final season as music director of the Seattle Symphony after an acclaimed 26 years. His previous positions as Music Director include New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and the New York Chamber Symphony. As a guest conductor he has worked with many of the world's finest orchestras and opera companies. His discography of over 350 releases showcases his collaborations with the

Seattle Symphony, the Berlin Radio Symphony, The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic, the London Symphony Orchestra and L'Orchestre National de France, among others. His pioneering recordings of American symphonists Diamond, Hanson, Hovhaness, Piston and William Schuman have received high critical praise, as have his cycles of works by Brahms, Mahler, Rimsky-Korsakov, Robert Schumann, Shostakovich, Richard Strauss, Stravinsky and Wagner. Schwarz has received hundreds of honours and accolades including two Emmy Awards, 13 GRAMMY® nominations, six ASCAP Awards and numerous *Stereo Review* and *Ovation Awards*. He holds the Ditson Conductor's Award from Columbia University, was the first American named Conductor of the Year by *Musical America* and has received numerous honorary doctorates. The National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences gave Schwarz its first "IMPACT" lifetime achievement award.

3 Elsa's Dream from Act I of *Lohengrin*

Einsam in trüben Tagen
hab' ich zu Gott gefleht,
des Herzens tiefstes Klagen
ergoß ich im Gebet —
Da drang aus meinem Stöhnen
ein Laut so klagevoll.
der zu gewalt' gem Tönen
weit in die Lüfte schwoll:
ich hört' ihn fern hin hallen.
bis kaum mein Ohr er traf:
mein Aug' ist zugefallen,
ich sank in süßen Schlaf.

In lichter Waffen Scheine
ein Ritter nahte da,
so tugendlicher Reine
ich keinen noch ersah:
ein golden Horn zur Hüften,
gelehnet auf sein Schwert,
so trat er aus den Lüften
zu mir, der Recke wert;
mit züchtigem Gebahren
gab Tröstung er mir ein;
des Ritters will ich wahren,
er soll mein Streiter sein!
Hört, was dem Gottgesandten
ich biete für Gewähr:
in meines Vaters Landen
die Krone trage er;
mich glücklich soll ich preisen,
nimmt er mein Gut dahin
will er Gemahl mich heißen,
geb' ich ihm, was ich bin!

Alone in troubled days
I appealed to God
and poured out in prayer
my heart's deepest anguish.
Then from my laments
arose a cry so piteous
that it filled the air far and wide
with its vast reverberation.
I heard it echo far away
until it barely reached my ear:
then my eyelids closed
and I sank into a sweet sleep.

Arrayed in shining armour
a knight was approaching,
more virtuous and pure
than any I had yet seen;
a golden horn at his hip
and leaning on his sword,
Thus was this worthy knight
sent to me from heaven;
with courteous bearing
he gave me consolation;
that knight will defend me,
he shall be my champion!
Hear what prize I offer
To the one who is heaven-sent:
in my father's lands
he would wear the crown
I would glory in my fortune
could he accept what I possess;
If he would call me consort
I'll give him all I am!

English translation: Michael Vogel

Under the dual influences of Goethe and Berlioz, Wagner wrote *A Faust Overture* in Paris. Years later, in 1855, he returned to the work, revising it to create an even greater sense of drama and narrative conviction. In the excerpts from his romantic opera *Lohengrin* we hear the visionary *Prelude to Act I* and the *Act III Prelude*, which includes the well-known *Wedding March*. *Elsa's Dream* is sung by the internationally acclaimed soprano, Alessandra Marc. The orchestral music from *Parsifal* contains some of the most transcendent music Wagner ever wrote. Volumes 1 and 3 in this series are available on 8.572767 and 8.572769.



**Richard
WAGNER**
(1813-1883)

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|---|--|--------------|
| 1 | A Faust Overture | 10:45 |
| 2 | Lohengrin, Act I: Prelude | 11:09 |
| 3 | Lohengrin, Act I: Elsa's Dream* | 7:37 |
| 4 | Lohengrin, Act III: Prelude
and Wedding March | 3:35 |
| 5 | Parsifal, Act I: Prelude | 14:52 |
| 6 | Parsifal, Act III: Prelude | 5:30 |
| 7 | Parsifal, Act III: Good Friday Spell | 11:13 |

Alessandra Marc, Soprano*

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Previously released on Delos International

Recorded at Seattle Opera House, Seattle, WA, on 21st October, 1987 (tracks 2, 4-7),
and on 19th and 20th February, 1992 (tracks 1 and 3)

Executive Producer: Amelia S. Haygood • Producers: Bejun Mehta (tracks 2, 4-7);
Adam Stern (tracks 1 and 3) • Engineer: John M. Eargle • Assistant Engineers: Al Swanson;
Laura Wirthlin (tracks 2, 4-7); Matthew Lutthans (tracks 1 and 3)

Production Associates: Stephen Basili (track 1); Phyllis Bernard (tracks 2, 4-7)

Booklet notes: Keith Anderson • Cover photograph by Tammy Fullum (iStockphoto.com)