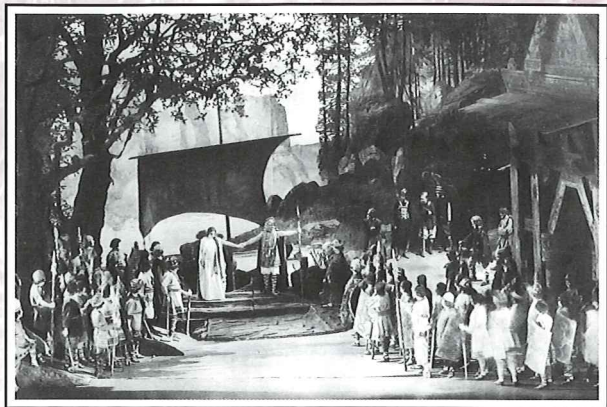


WAGNER Götterdämmerung

3 CDs

Lauritz Melchior • Marjorie Lawrence • Ludwig Hofmann
Eduard Habich • Friedrich Schorr • Dorothee Manski
Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera
Artur Bodanzky

(Broadcast on 11th January, 1936)



Richard
WAGNER

(1813 - 1883)

Götterdämmerung
(Twilight of the Gods)

**Third Day of
Der Ring des Nibelungen**
(The Ring of the Nibelung)

Cast

Lauritz Melchior	Siegfried
Marjorie Lawrence	Brünnhilde
Ludwig Hofmann	Hagen
Eduard Habich	Alberich
Friedrich Schorr	Gunther
Dorothee Manski	Gutrune, Norn
Katheryn Meisle	Waltraute
Edithea Fleischer	Woglinde
Irra Petina	Wellgunde, Norn
Doris Doe	Flosshilde, Norn
Max Altglass, Arnold Gabor	Vassals

Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera
Artur Bodanzky
(Broadcast on 11th January, 1936)

CD I

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| 1 | Broadcast Introduction (by Milton Cross) & Prologue | (0:28) |
| 2 | Prelude | (1:50) |
| 3 | Welch Licht leuchtet dort? — <i>Three Norns</i> | (10:30) |
| 4 | Zu neuen Taten, teurer Held! — <i>Siegfried, Brünnhilde</i> | (8:34) |
| 5 | Durch deine Tugend allein — <i>Siegfried, Brünnhilde</i> | (2:24) |
| 6 | Siegfried's Rhine Journey | (5:39) |

Act I

Scene 1

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| 7 | Nun hör', Hagen, sage mir, Held! — <i>Gunther, Hagen, Gutrune</i> | (11:07) |
| 8 | Hoiho! Wohin, du heit'rer Held? — <i>Hagen, Siegfried</i> | (0:27) |

Scene 2

- | | | |
|----|---|--------|
| 9 | Heil! Siegfried, teurer Held! — <i>Hagen, Siegfried, Gunther</i> | (5:32) |
| 10 | Willkommen, Gast, in Gibich's Haus! — <i>Gutrune, Siegfried</i> | (2:40) |
| 11 | Gutrune – Sind's gute Runen — <i>Gunther, Siegfried</i> | (6:24) |
| 12 | Was nahmst du am Eide nicht Teil? — <i>Siegfried, Hagen, Gunther, Gutrune</i> | (3:03) |
| 13 | Hier sitz'ich zur Wacht — <i>Hagen</i> | (9:00) |

Scene 3

- | | | |
|----|--|--------|
| 14 | Altgewohntes Geräusch — <i>Brünnhilde, Waltraute</i> | (4:27) |
| 15 | Höre mit Sinn, was ich dir sage! — <i>Waltraute</i> | (2:51) |

CD 2

Act I (cont.)

- | | | |
|---|--|--------|
| 1 | So sitzt er, sagt kein Wort — <i>Waltraute</i> | (5:34) |
| 2 | Welch' banger Träume Mären meldest du — <i>Brünnhilde, Waltraute</i> | (5:18) |
| 3 | Blitz und Gewölk vom Wind getragen — <i>Brünnhilde</i> | (2:51) |
| 4 | Brünnhild! Ein Freier kam — <i>Siegfried, Brünnhilde</i> | (8:26) |
| 5 | Broadcast Commentary (by Milton Cross) | (1:35) |

Act II

- | | | |
|---|---------|--------|
| 6 | Prelude | (3:07) |
|---|---------|--------|

Scene I

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|---|---|--------|
| 7 | Schläfst du, Hagen, mein Sohn? — <i>Alberich, Hagen</i> | (8:40) |
|---|---|--------|

Scene 2

- | | | |
|---|--|--------|
| 8 | Hoiho! Hagen! Müder Mann! — <i>Siegfried, Hagen, Gutrune</i> | (5:26) |
|---|--|--------|

Scene 3

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|---|---|--------|
| 9 | Hoiho! Ihr, Gibich's Mannen, machet euch auf! — <i>Hagen, Armed Men</i> | (8:14) |
|---|---|--------|

Scene 4

- | | | |
|----|---|--------|
| 10 | Heil dir, Gunther — <i>Armed Men</i> | (1:03) |
| 11 | Brünnhilde, die hehrste Frau — <i>Gunther, Men, Siegfried, Brünnhilde, Hagen</i> | (6:57) |
| 12 | Brünnhilde, kühne Frau! Kennst du genau den Ring?
— <i>Hagen, Brünnhilde, Women, Gutrune</i> | (0:55) |
| 13 | Heil'ge Götter, himmlische Lenker!
— <i>Brünnhilde, Chorus, Siegfried, Gunther, Gutrune, Hagen</i> | (4:42) |

- | | | |
|-----------|---|--------|
| 14 | Helle Wehr, heilige Waffe — <i>Siegfried, Brünnhilde, Men</i> | (2:08) |
| 15 | Gunther! Wehr' deinem Weibe — <i>Siegfried</i> | (2:39) |

Scene 5

- | | | |
|-----------|---|--------|
| 16 | Welches Unholds List liegt hier verholen? — <i>Brünnhilde, Hagen, Gunther</i> | (8:23) |
|-----------|---|--------|

CD3

Act II (cont.)

- | | | |
|----------|--|--------|
| 1 | Siegfried's Tod! — <i>Gunther, Hagen, Brünnhilde</i> | (6:13) |
| 2 | Broadcast Commentary (by Milton Cross) | (3:03) |

Act III

- | | | |
|----------|---------|--------|
| 3 | Prelude | (2:49) |
|----------|---------|--------|

Scene I

- | | | |
|----------|--|--------|
| 4 | Frau Sonne sendet lichte Strahlen — <i>Woglinde, Wellgunde, Flosshilde</i> | (3:21) |
| 5 | Ein Albe führte mich irr — <i>Siegfried, Rhinemaidens</i> | (6:34) |
| 6 | Mein Schwert zerschwang einen Speer — <i>Siegfried, Rhinemaidens</i> | (4:37) |

Scene 2

- | | | |
|----------|--|---------|
| 7 | Hoiho? – Hoihe! — <i>Men's voices, Siegfried, Hagen, Gunther</i> | (14:04) |
| 8 | Brünnhilde! Heilige Braut! — <i>Siegfried</i> | (3:13) |
| 9 | Funeral March — <i>Trauermarsch</i> | (6:50) |

Scene 3

- | | | |
|-----------|---|---------|
| 10 | War das sein Horn? — <i>Gutrune, Hagen, Gunther, Brünnhilde</i> | (7:31) |
| 11 | Starke Scheite schichtet mir dort — <i>Brünnhilde</i> | (15:02) |

Götterdämmerung (The Twilight of the Gods)

Wagner's tetralogy, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring of the Nibelung) was first performed as a whole in August 1876 at the new Festspielhaus in Bayreuth. The complete cycle consists of a *Prologue*, *Das Rheingold* (The Rhinegold), followed the next day by *Die Walküre* (The Valkyrie), and then by *Siegfried*, leading up to the final *Götterdämmerung*. The texts had been completed by Wagner by 1853 and the completion of the music and performance of the whole cycle in a specially created opera-house of novel design represented a summit of creative achievement, the apotheosis of German art. Leading motifs associated with characters, events and ideas in the drama, recur, interwoven to unify the whole conception.

Synopsis

CD I

Prologue. [2] 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. [3] 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. 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. Brünnhilde has given 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. Siegfried gives Brünnhilde, as a token of faith, the ring, the symbol of all he has achieved, and she gives him her horse. [5] Through her power, now, will Siegfried act, as part of her. [6] He takes his leave and sets out on his Rhine Journey, his own bold motif mingling with those of Fire, the Rhinemaidens, the Rhine and the ring itself.

Act I, Scene 1. [7] 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. 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. The sound of Siegfried's approach is heard. [8] 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. [9] While Hagen sees to his horse, Gunther welcomes Siegfried, who seeks to know whether Gunther is his friend or enemy. 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. [10] Gutrune now returns with a drinking-horn, welcoming their guest, 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. [11] 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. 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. [12] 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. [13] 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. [14] 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. [15] 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.

CD 2

[1] 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. [2] 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. [3] 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. [4] 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. 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.

Act II, Scene 1. [6] An orchestral *Prelude* suggests the opening of the following scene, set in front of the Gibichungs' hall. [7] 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. [8] 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. [9] Hagen calls on the Gibichung men, who gather, seeking the reason for the summons and the nature of the enemy. He tells them they have been called to celebrate a wedding feast, to eat and drink.

Scene 4. [10] As Gunther and Brünnhilde arrive, they are greeted by the men. [11] Gunther introduces his bride, Brünnhilde, leading her towards the hall and greeting Siegfried and his sister Gutrune. 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. [12] Hagen intervenes, accusing Siegfried of treachery and Brünnhilde joins the accusation. [13] 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. [14] 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. [15] 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 Gunther into the hall, followed by the Gibichung men and women.

Scene 5. [16] 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. 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.

CD 3

[1] 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. 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.

Act III, Scene 1. [3] An orchestral prelude depicts the hunting-party, as horns resound and echo, while the Rhine flows on. [4] 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. [5] He appears, having lost his way, led astray by some spirit, and the Rhinemaidens laugh at him, seeking to have the ring from his finger, which he is about to give them, holding it up to tempt them to him. They warn him, however, of its dangers. [6] 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. They swim away.

Scene 2. [7] 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. As the latter hands the drinking-horn to Gunther, he tells them he has not heard their language for a long time, but now 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. 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. 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. [8] Gunther bows his head, by Siegfried's side as he dies with the

name of Brünnhilde on his lips. [9] 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. The mists part to reveal the hall of the Gibichungs in the moonlight, reflected from the river. [10] 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. 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. 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. 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 she was. Gutrune turns on Hagen, realising that the drugged potion had made Siegfried forget Brünnhilde.

[11] 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. She tells of the purity of Siegfried, the truest, who yet had broken every oath and vow. She calls on Wotan to hear her, now with her knowledge restored to her; his ravens may take him a message of peace. 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. 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 and mounting the horse, Grane, 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.

The Performance

Melchior's Siegfried is astonishingly youthful, virile, poetical, heroic, everything one cherished in his younger Siegfried, now chastened by conflict, confusion and sadness. Lawrence is ecstatically alive in her intonation; hers is a vibrant characterization sometimes touching near-ecstasy, but she lacks the inner dimension of quiet nobility one associates with Flagstad. Schorr as Gunther brings a memorable eloquence to the role while Hofmann's dark and implacable Hagen also lingers in the memory, even if he does not eclipse Ludwig Weber in the rôle, who still remains the supreme interpreter of this character. We are also extremely fortunate to hear, in this broadcast, Eduard Habich in his masterful portrayal of Alberich, the content and colour of which was delineated in my review of the 1937 *Rheingold* from the Metropolitan Opera. Apart from these singers, the cast leaves much to be desired. Meisle does not bring Waltraute's deeply moving narrative to life — Thorborg's essayal at Covent Garden remains the incomparable realisation of this music, Meisle sounds a bit wobbly and lacks any vocal face. Bodanzky's work with the orchestra is admirable in many passages, deplorable in others, as he is given to rushing the music in ways which do not give the phrases their fullest value, especially in portions of the *Immolation*. He also cuts from before *Schweigt eures Jammers* to *Stark Scheite* though he helps one forgive this notorious inclination by generally redeeming himself with a predominantly masterful feel for the phrasing and dynamics of Wagner's music.

This *Götterdämmerung* is the concluding performance of a fabulous, nearly complete *Ring Cycle* (lacking only *Rheingold*). It began with a *Walküre* with Marjorie Lawrence as Brünnhilde, Melchior as Siegmund, Schorr as Wotan and Rethberg as Siegliende (Meisle sang Fricka) on 18th December, 1935. A few weeks later Siegfried was presented in which Marjorie Lawrence again sang Brünnhilde, Melchior was Siegfried. Then eight days later, this *Götterdämmerung* (the next performance brought Flagstad as Brünnhilde and Branzell as Waltraute, otherwise the singers remained the same; such were the weekly casts one could hear in the Golden Age of Wagner at the Met).

In the early 1990s, when Paul Jackson wrote his endlessly fascinating and often eloquent *Saturday Afternoons at the Old Met* (Amadeus 1992), he did not have access

to the recording presented here. Rather he heard the only recording available — a home preservation which had breaks and music losses every five to seven minutes (while the recordist changed acetate blanks) and which offered minuscule, distorted, tinny sonics buried under an avalanche of surface noise resembling a transatlantic short-wave broadcast transmitted during a thunderstorm or sea battle. It was so horrid I was unable to hear it through, but Jackson persevered and heard through its ear-lacerating sonics what one can now verify was there to be heard. Of this broadcast Jackson wrote:

Melchior again must be singled out for his characterful play of tone colour. Particularly notable is the dreamy, erotic, covered tone as, recalling Brünnhilde, he pledges his undying love just before Siegfried and Gunther launch the blood-brother duet. And in this duet the still puissant Schorr proves a mighty match; when the two join voices, Melchior blends and phrases in Italianate style (what a *Forza* Don Alvaro he might have been). His oath on the spear is solid and baritonal (some Bayreuth bark intrudes) and he captures the joy of his approaching wedding to Guttrune in long, splendidly flowing phrases. The variety of Melchior's characterization is apparent again in the free-and-easy charm of his exchange with the Rhinemaidens, all in his best young Siegfried manner (and Bodanzky for once adopts an appropriately leisurely tempo). The *Hei-o* calls to Gunther and Hagen are unbelievably plangent, and Melchior stuns us with a high C of incredible size and brilliance — a breathtaking effect. Surely no Wagnerian tenor (and almost no Italianate tenor) has ever duplicated it.

Melchior's narration of Siegfried's life provides the climax of the performance. No baritonal fogs here as he summons the bright sound of youth, effortlessly negotiates the jagged lines, and ascends to the myriad high As with consummate ease. As Hagen's potion restores Brünnhilde's image, his transition from *marcato* to *legato* singing is striking, and he achieves a perfect blending of tenor and baritone resonance (especially on a sustained E) in the final phrases of the narrative before Hagen's spear finds Siegfried's back. From the veiled pain of *Heilige Braut!* to the noble,

dark tones of farewell, Melchior's final greeting to the absent Brünnhilde catches the heart.

While Hofmann has the necessary black sonority for Hagen's villainies, Eduard Habich is merely another in that endless line of expendable Alberichs, and Kathryn Meisle has neither the vocal timbre (she is more soprano than alto) nor plenitude for the grandeur of Waltraute's Narrative. There remains, however, one other sterling element in this *Götterdämmerung*: the Brünnhilde of the Australian soprano Marjorie Lawrence. . . . After her début as the *Walküre* Brünnhilde and her broadcast Ortrud, Lawrence was assigned the first performance of both the Siegfried and *Götterdämmerung* Brünnhildes (although Flagstad was currently in residence). Quite in keeping with the almost reckless pace of her career, Lawrence's biggest splash with the press resulted from her leaping onto the horse Grane and riding him into the flames of Siegfried's pyre at the close of the *Götterdämmerung* broadcast. Wagner had so prescribed, but evidently no prima donna had been able to comply until the young warrior from "down under" delivered.

Of more lasting merits is the quality of her vocal performance. In the opening scene with Siegfried the sensuous sheen of the Lawrence voice markedly differs from the remembered Flagstad and other soprano Wagnerians; hers is a voice of sufficient size and thrust to cut through, rather than surmount, the Wagnerian orchestral horde. Pliant in the extreme, it soars to silvery top tones with laser-like efficiency. Such fluid vocal movement amplifies the youthful impetuosity of her interpretation. Tonal density is not hers, certainly not in the lowest tones where a slightly breathy dullness lodges — at least until the instrument becomes all of a piece as it does later in the afternoon. . . . if Flagstad sculpts with a massive blade, Lawrence paints with a fluent brush, its tip touched with crimson.) In the exchange with Waltraute some harshness intrudes upon Lawrence's tones, but she manages a ravishing expansion of line as she ecstatically proclaims that while love lasts, she will love. This Brünnhilde is obviously a woman who has known love, and her emotional response to situations

of betrayal, anger and grief have a human spontaneity. Genuine sorrow gathers in her well-collected middle voice as she joins Gunther and Hagen in the plot to kill Siegfried.

Her Immolation has immense pathos. She begins with sweet, pure sound and a lovely point to the tone, then betrays more anger than is usually registered at the apocalyptic moment (some glancing blows at top tones are less than fully poised). The match of *Ruhe* with the French horns is exquisite — a lovely soft velvet encircles the tone, and the voice shimmers with a fine, light vibrato. Grane is summoned with purposeful intent, and Bodanzky (opposed to and unaware of Lawrence's equestrian purpose) spurs her on at a hectic pace before pulling back for a sufficiently serene apotheosis by the strings. Lawrence's warrior maid has all the virtues of youth and remarkably few of the blemishes.

Jackson's response expresses my reaction except I hear more in Habich as Alberich not, perhaps, because of his singing in this broadcast but because he gives us here the concluding phrases to an extraordinarily complex, marvellously sung characterization which can be heard in the 1937 *Rheingold* and 1937 *Siegfried* (both of which will be issued by Naxos, thus I will let my notes on Habich in those sets explain why I rate his performance so highly.

As told, Jackson only had access to a tape of the horrid-sounding discs issued by Eddie Smith, ever the generous, public-spirited man. Smith decided to endisc the recording, primitive and flawed as it was, because it was still the only preservation of the great Melchior in this rôle. This was especially true of portions of *Act I* and *Act III* which had not been made available from the Covent Garden recordings made of Melchior in this opera during the late 1930s. We, however, thought the EJS discs offered unendurably bad sound. Nevertheless, I believed that somewhere, someone had a better-sounding recording but for 25 years the rumour turned out to be wishful thinking. I finally gave up and then I unexpectedly came across a tape in a private collection which did, indeed, offer better sound — *much better* — and while the discs were often unjoined, or clumsily linked, and the pitch repeatedly lapsed flat or sharp, I could scarcely believe my ears. I sat there literally dumbfounded, in a nearly unbelievable state of tension, expecting the sound to break off

or gap between each disc; *it couldn't all be there?* It was! And, at the end of many hours, I was delirious and most anxious to work on this marvel. After much experimentation we arrived at the basis by which the sound could be improved, together with the conclusion that everything one did to filter out the acetate surface noise robbed the sound of certain, nearly intangible values of liveness. The electricity vanished, the recording had less surface noise but sounded lifeless, canned. I decided to leave the surfaces as they were; the acetate grit and ticks can be tuned out in such a way as to be hearable — on a different aural strata separate from the music — something that those with much experience of 78 rpm discs know very well how to do. And since this preservation would only appeal to the vocal connoisseur (those interested in quiet sides and bigger sound would avoid this recording no matter how filtered) I worked on enlarging the recording signal, re-pitching and joining the sides and replacing the unusable passages.

Many of the joins are seamless, many of them are not. Even when I matched levels exactly, the difference in wear from side to side (in surface sound) varied and that would define joins. In all, given pitch correction and what we did that was not unavoidably clumsy, it *flows*. The result is the emergence of a major recording from the Golden Age of Wagner, much like the preservation of the 1935 *Lohengrin* with Lotte Lehmann or the better sounding *Meistersinger* with Schorr and Rethberg (another dream fulfilled!). Every labour on this *Götterdämmerung* was an honour and a privilege. Now we have the great pleasure of making it available to you.

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Lauritz Melchior

The Danish tenor Lauritz Melchior was born in 1890 in Copenhagen, where he studied and, in 1913, made his début at the Royal Opera as a baritone. It was in 1918 that he made a second début in the title-rôle of Tannhäuser, soon embarking on an international career that took him to London, Bayreuth, Berlin and Hamburg, establishing him as a leading Wagnerian tenor. He made his début at the Metropolitan Opera in 1926 as Tannhäuser, returning there, after further study in Europe, in 1929. From then onwards he appeared principally at the Met, until his final Lohengrin in 1950. He died in Santa Monica in 1973. Melchior remains one of the most distinguished heroic tenors of the twentieth century, his performances well represented in surviving recordings.

Marjorie Lawrence

Later assuming American nationality, Marjorie Lawrence was a native of Melbourne, where she was born in 1909. After study in Paris, she made her début in 1932 in Monte Carlo as Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*. She was then engaged by the Paris Opéra, where she appeared in *Lohengrin*, *Aida* and *Salome*. She made her début at the Metropolitan Opera in 1935 as Brünnhilde in *Die Walküre* and continued there for the following six seasons, undertaking principal Wagnerian rôles, as well as appearing in *La Juive*, *Alceste*, *Thaïs* and *Salome*. She sang Brünnhilde in *Siegfried* at the Met and remains among the only Wagnerian sopranos to have given a display of her own horsemanship as Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung*, as she rode through the flames. She died in Little Rock in 1979.

Ludwig Hofmann

The German bass Ludwig Hofmann was born in Frankfurt in 1895 and studied there, as well as in Berlin and Milan. After successful engagements in Dessau, Bremen, Wiesbaden and Berlin, he was invited to Vienna, where he appeared at the Staatsoper from 1935 to 1955, and to Bayreuth, where he appeared in festival seasons from 1928 to 1942, his interpretations of Wagnerian bass and baritone rôles earning him high critical praise. He made his début at the Metropolitan Opera as Hagen in 1932 and undertook engagements at the Met in the following six seasons. He boasted a wide repertoire, ranging from Mozart to Verdi and to the contemporary. He died in Frankfurt in 1963.

Eduard Habich

The baritone Eduard Habich was born in Kassel in 1880. He studied with Max Fleisch at the Raff Conservatory in Frankfurt and made his début in Koblenz in 1904. He appeared in Posen, Halle and Düsseldorf and after 1910 at the Berlin Court Opera, later the Berlin Staatsoper, continuing at this last until 1930. He appeared in 1911 at Bayreuth as Alberich, a rôle he repeated every year there until 1931. In 1912 he sang Klingsor in *Parsifal* at Bayreuth and in 1927 Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde*. From 1924 to 1936 he sang in each season at Covent Garden, and in 1928 in Amsterdam. He appeared at the Chicago Opera from 1930 to 1932 and at the Metropolitan Opera from 1935 to 1937. Eduard Habich made his début at the Met in December 1935 as Peter in *Hänsel und Gretel* and appeared in 42 performances there, in eight rôles. These included most notably his Alberich in *Rheingold*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*, a rôle that gave scope for his extraordinary voice and dramatic capacities, unimpaired by age in his performances at the Met. His Beckmesser in the 1936 Met *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and his début Peter are preserved on record. He gave his final Met performance on 9th April 1937 and made his final appearance at Covent Garden in the following year. After a long career, he lived and taught in Berlin, where he died in 1960.

Friedrich Schorr

Intended by his father for a career as a lawyer, the Hungarian-born bass-baritone Friedrich Schorr studied with Adolph Robinson, a former soloist of the Metropolitan Opera, and made his début, in spite of his father's wishes, at Graz in 1912, continuing his association with the opera there until 1916, while also accepting engagements in Vienna at the State Opera. His career brought engagements by the National Theatre in Prague from 1916 to 1918 and from then until 1923 with the Cologne Opera. He spent the following ten years, until Hitler's accession to power, as the principal Wagnerian baritone with the Berlin Staatsoper. He had made his début at the Met in 1924 and continued appearances there until 1943, subsequently helping to train young American singers in the Wagnerian traditions that he embodied. He enjoyed a reputation as the most distinguished interpreter of rôles such as those of Hans Sachs, Wotan and the Dutchman. He died in 1953.

Artur Bodanzky

The Austrian conductor Artur Bodanzky was born in Vienna in 1877 and studied at the Vienna Conservatory, before joining the Court Opera as a violinist. After making his début as a conductor in Bohemia, he returned to the Court Opera in Vienna in 1903 as assistant to Gustav Mahler and then as a conductor in Berlin, Prague and Mannheim. He conducted the first Paris performances of *Die Fledermaus* and the first London performances of *Parsifal*, following this with appointment as chief German conductor at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, where he succeeded Alfred Hertz. At the same time he enjoyed a busy career in the concert-hall in a diverse repertoire. His association with the Metropolitan Opera continued, with a break in 1928, until his death in 1939, covering 24 seasons during which he conducted 1087 performances. Bodanzky was much admired and, at the same time, greatly disliked by some. He was capable of giving inspiring performances, especially in Wagner, but could appear rushed and perfunctory, anxious, as his assistant Erich Leinsdorf recounts, to be done and back home at the card-table. At his best in the 1937 *Siegfried* and 1937 and 1938 *Tristan und Isolde*, his *Rheingold* reveals his virtues and his failings, the latter particularly in his remake of the score, breaking the opera into two acts, and its alternation of inspired leadership and passages in which notes

and phrases do not seem to be fully sounded, in his eagerness to press forward. Similar praise and criticism might be levelled at his 1939 *Rosenkavalier*, with its objectionable cut of the imbroglia that precedes the departure of Baron Ochs. He was behind Edward Johnston's ill-advised decision to cast Kirsten Flagstad as Leonore in *Fidelio* in 1936, instead of Lotte Lehmann, a singer distinguished in the rôle, who decided she would never perform it again at the Met.

A number of Bodanzky's performances of Wagner at the Met are preserved from the 1930s. He was succeeded, on his sudden death at the age of 62, by Erich Leinsdorf.

Source

The recording derived from NBC reference discs found in a private collection. These had been transferred to tape at an unknown time, presumably in the very late 1940s. The sides were unjoined, the pitch repeatedly lapsed. We had to replace a few lines between the three Norns, a short part of the Dawn music in the *Prologue* and a portion of the orchestral music between the end of Hagen's *Hier sich'ich* and the beginning of Scene 3 because of highly intrusive crosstalk. In other parts of the preservation, as a result of the instantaneous starts, a phrase here and there was chopped off. Wherever we could, we repaired these defects. A few fleeting seconds of cross-talk remain, all unremediable. Granted that this private recording is marred by many defects, it is nevertheless all there is. We would not reject it for these reasons any more than we would refuse to spend time with Da Vinci's canvases because the paint is peeling. For my own part, having heard in excess of 700 Met broadcasts as are archived here — many of these derived from the late 1930 and 1940 in superlative sound — I still think this to be one of the most important preservations we have ever unearthed, chiefly because there is hardly any singing of these rôles recorded in our century to compare with it. (With the exception of the Melchior-Flagstad, Melchior-Leider Covent Garden preservations.)

Despite its noisy surfaces, we have returned again and again to hear Melchior's exuberant, vital, deeply feeling Siegfried, Lawrence's brightly toned, young, strong Brünnhilde, Schorr's superlative Gunther and Ludwig Hofmann's darkly ominous Hagen. If you revere Wagner's music, listening to such a cast in decent sonics may be to you, as it is for me, a dream fulfilled.

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Immortal Performances
Recorded Music Society

The Metropolitan Opera Broadcasts

The voice of Milton Cross is indelibly associated with opera broadcasts from the Met. For forty years he introduced these operas, his introductions and commentaries from 1936 onwards generally preserved on record. A useful supplement to these is provided by the broadcasts introduced by the Spanish-speaking commentator Augustin Llopes de Olivares, particularly where, as sometimes happened, Milton Cross spoke over the music, or where the English-language transcription is faulty or lost. Milton Cross had previously introduced NBC opera broadcasts from Chicago and joined the Met as staff-announcer during the second season of its broadcasts, quickly becoming a favourite with audiences, with his knowledge of opera and his ability to improvise when necessary. He also read the commercials for the American Tobacco Company in 1933 and 1934. Listerine became the sponsor in 1935, while from 1937 to 1939 there was no sponsor. In 1940 Texaco began sponsorship that continued for 45 years. Milton Cross was careful in his preparation for each broadcast. While at first inclined to intrude in his announcements, by the 1940s he had learned to time his commentary, avoiding unnecessary explanation or interruption. The present broadcast recordings eliminate whatever seems intrusive but preserve a voice that recalls the atmosphere of those performances and broadcasts, as seen and heard for so many years from Box 44 of the Grand Tier at the Metropolitan Opera.

The sound on these CDs has been restored using two CEDAR processes. Derived from research funded by the British Library National Sound Archive and carried out at Cambridge University, these eliminate unwanted blemishes such as clicks and crackle from the audio signal. Once the problems are correctly identified and removed, the original sound can then be recreated using powerful and sophisticated digital interpolation processes. The result is a higher quality audio signal almost completely free from the scratches and surface noise normally associated with recordings of this vintage.

8.110041-43
WAGNER: Götterdämmerung
NAXOS Historical



8.110041-43



Richard
WAGNER
(1813 - 1883)

AAD

Playing Time:
3hrs 44mins

Götterdämmerung

Lauritz Melchior Siegfried
Marjorie Lawrence Brünnhilde
Ludwig Hofmann Hagen
Eduard Habich Alberich
Friedrich Schorr Gunther
Dorothee Manski Guttrune, Norn
Kathryn Meisle Waltraute
Edithea Fleischer Woglinde
Irma Petina Wellgunde, Norn
Doris Doe Flosshilde, Norn
Max Altglass, Arnold Gabor Vassals

Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera
Artur Bodanzky
(Broadcast on 11th January, 1936)

CD 1	(74'56")	CD 2	(75'58")	CD 3	(73'18")
1 Broadcast Commentary		1 - 4 Act I (cont.)		1 Act II (cont.)	
2 - 15 Act I		5 Broadcast Commentary		2 Broadcast Commentary	
		6 - 16 Act II		3 - 11 Act III	

(All commentaries by Milton Cross)

Series Producer: Jonathan R. Wearn
Archivist & Restoration Producer: Richard Cianiell
Associate Producer & Editor: Nicholas Ryder
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Series Consultants: John Ardoin and Gerd Heinsen
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3 CDs



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