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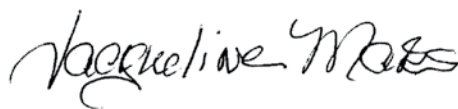
Dear Friends,

Welcome to Washington National Opera for Richard Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung*. For those of us who call WNO our home company, this presentation of Wagner's complete masterpiece has been a long time in the making, and words cannot fully express how deeply gratifying and moving it is to see this work come to fruition. I am thrilled to share this experience with each of you, as well as with all of our patrons who have travelled from across the nation and the globe to be here for this special presentation, which concludes WNO's 60th anniversary season.

As with every opera, it takes the work of so many to bring a production to life—artists, directors, designers, production crew, and stagehands, to name a few. However, each artistic experience also relies on the friendship of our many patrons, especially those who have recognized WNO in their philanthropy. On behalf of the Company, I thank everyone who has supported WNO during this 60th anniversary year and particularly those who joined our *Ring* donor family with a designated contribution toward this production. We could not have accomplished this incredible undertaking without your partnership.

Whether this is your first *Ring* or you are a seasoned Wagnerian, I warmly welcome you to the Kennedy Center Opera House and hope that our presentation will provide you with a superior artistic and musical experience. Thank you for being here and enjoy!

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jacqueline Mars". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jacqueline" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Mars".

Jacqueline Badger Mars
Chairman, WNO Board of Trustees

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WELCOME FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Scott Suchman

Dear Friends,

Welcome to Washington National Opera's *The Ring of the Nibelung*!

On behalf of all of us at WNO and the entire cast and crew, we are overjoyed to have you with us here at the Kennedy Center. Putting together this production has been an honor and a thrill for all of us involved—our cast, orchestra, chorus, stage crew, creative team, and administration. This is a milestone for WNO as we present the *Ring* that was designed and created for WNO, for the Kennedy Center, and for Washington, D.C.

WNO's history with this *Ring* has been well documented. Our production began 10 years ago under the leadership of then General Director Plácido Domingo. Financial challenges derailed our initial plans, so these *Ring* performances are particularly symbolic for our company as they represent our rebirth and firmly cement our place as one of the country's leading opera companies.

Our Artistic Director, Francesca Zambello, found inspiration for her *Ring* here in Washington. Many of the city's museums house works of art that helped inform the production's design. And, politics and power—two themes important to Washingtonians, particularly in a presidential election year—are at the core of this *Ring*.

As you prepare to watch and hear Wagner's epic unfold before you, please join me in thanking our board of trustees, generous donors, Kennedy Center colleagues, and everyone else who has helped to make this event possible.

Thank you for joining us!

And now, let us dim the house lights and begin our journey together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Mael". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Michael Mael
Executive Director

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE BY FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO



Stephen Voss

In the summer of 1981, I climbed to the top of Red Rocks, a vast outdoor arena for rock concerts at the foot of the Rocky Mountains near Denver, where gods and goddesses seem just out of sight. Space seems immeasurable in a place like that and time appears to slow down, as if awaiting an appearance from the earth goddess Erda. I have often thought of this view in our planning of Wagner's *Ring* cycle now premiering here at the Kennedy Center. It was very evocative of how I thought *The Ring* could start, and I began at that moment to see an American parallel to Wagner's story.

As a director of something as immense as *The Ring*, ideas and inspirations come from different moments of your life in addition to drawing from extensive research and many references. My colleagues and I search for ideas in art, nature, film, museums, literature, and history. But, above all, you always have to start with something personal. Often it is images around me, which then lead to understanding how I perceive the characters and then determining inside what world they need to live.

The greatness of Wagner's vast world is that it encompasses the past, present, and future. The timeless themes of *The Ring*—the destruction of nature, the quest for power, the cutthroat corruption, the plight of the powerless—are not bound to the 19th century's Industrial Age, nor to Europe, nor to some leafy Nordic realm of long ago. America's stories, myths, visions, and iconographic images are in so many ways analogous to *The Ring*. All of the great paintings of the idealized American West give a visual to Wagner's idea of what you see for such a short time in the beginning of *The Rhinegold*. Yet, from the moment Alberich steals the gold, that natural order is broken.

Once we leave the idealized world of the West, we come to our Valhalla, which is something like one of those nascent, technically ingenious 1930s skyscrapers that speak to the American dream as well as the mess left in the wake of their construction. The battlements in the surroundings of many of our shores were immediately suggestive of the war zone that becomes the realm of the gods. These kinds of American images all filtered into our palette as we constructed our stage world.

And while the setting of our *Ring* is certainly grounded in American iconography, it isn't limited to that. Many of our "locations" could be anywhere today. The setting ultimately feels like a world we know, which allows the characters to shine through. And the characters are at the heart of *The Ring*.

While Wagner's themes are epic and grand, the scenes he creates to tell the story are very small and intimate. It was crucial for us to place the intimate inside the epic in this piece, to balance the larger-than-life with the personal. Gods, goddesses, creatures, heroes, and mere humans are all equally at home in Wagner's world. Many set out on journeys that will take them through terrifying landscapes demanding courage, heart, understanding, and sacrifice. As they are transformed, so are we who watch but sense their stories are also ours. >>

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The parallels of our own contemporary story and those of *The Ring* came into focus for me at the start of this century. We have all watched the events of America unfold on our screens. We have all looked on in shock as many parts of this country collapsed, taking down the men of myth and an economy built on avarice and magical numbers: bad deals, bad faith, bad banking, greed, and ambition on a colossal scale.

With Wagner, we dwell in what sometimes seems like corresponding worlds in which Wotan gives up an eye to gain wisdom but ultimately builds a mansion he can't afford, and a young goddess provides eternal youth through negotiable apples of eternity—worlds in which man is clearly out of balance with nature.

When we began production in 2005 in Washington, D.C., the seat of political power, we focused on the misuse of it. The production then journeyed to San Francisco, where Californians have a keen awareness of nature and the environment; we placed more emphasis on despoliation. Is there a major river in the U.S. that hasn't been raped like the Rhine, as the brooding E-flat chords suggest at the beginning of *The Rhinegold*? Think of the Wagnerian clouds of Los Alamos, Three Mile Island, or the BP oil spill, and how the natural resources that built this country have been on an inevitable path to destruction. And now, a long-term trend of increasing temperatures threatens to permanently transform the earth's climate. How do we rebuild our environment since we do not have Brünnhilde to rescue us?

It's fitting that California is where our cycle starts. The western shore is our last chance for reinvention. It's the part of our geography where we can no longer cast off old environments and ignore the havoc we've caused, forever changing ourselves with no consequences.

As the curtain rises on our *Ring*, you will see the pristine world of an idealized natural landscape. As the cycle proceeds, the glistening world sickens, changes, trembles, darkens, and decays. And when the curtain falls, the world seems bereft of any living natural resource as we know it, now destroyed by our own making. The Norns live inside a computer, attached to the motherboard by bundles of cables; the only visible sign of nature in *Twilight of the Gods* is a slowly dying tree in the Gibichungs' hall. In *Siegfried*, Fafner is a scrap metal compactor who bleeds oil when Siegfried slays him. By the end, the fire that surrounds Brünnhilde has a greenish tinge suggesting

chemical combustion. We are left hoping that the despoiled world might be reborn through her redemptive suicide.

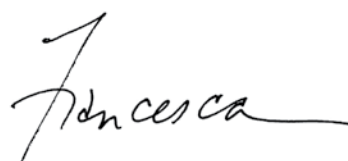
Perhaps the most heartbreaking aspect of *The Ring* is Wotan's failure to realize that the transformative hero he so desires is actually his daughter Brünnhilde. She achieves what no man can achieve: by returning the ring to the Rhinemaidens, Brünnhilde restores the natural order. With her self-sacrifice, we come to a new world. For me, it's a world where mankind is not conflated to godliness, where there is a society with morals. It's allowing us to start over, and that's what she enables all who stayed behind to do.

In *The Ring*, I have embraced the Christian motifs of redemption and reinvention—even the act of another's sacrifice to redeem us so that we don't have to face the full consequences. I am an optimistic believer in personal transformation. This impulse is of course hugely American, not only in its New Testament feel but also the "right" to reinvent ourselves in a single lifetime, a single generation. Creating a better life not just for our kids, but for ourselves—it's the essence of the American experience and what makes us different from wherever we fled.

The winners in American life are those who drive for redemptive transformation now; the losers wait patiently for another life. This lack of impulse control, the push against predestination, the drive to not let the gods tell us what our place is, the belief that we have a right to have it all in our own lifetimes are not only particularly American sentiments but also post-Christian, as Christianity originally looked towards a better life after death.

I am indebted to the artists with whom I have collaborated on the evolution of this production over the years. We all shared a collective, unified vision through constant communication and diligence—like the ropes of destiny. We knew where we were going from the beginning, and we knew what the end was going to be. My gratitude also goes out to the many generous people who have brought this *Ring* to life, and to our audiences who are on the voyage with us.

Thank you,



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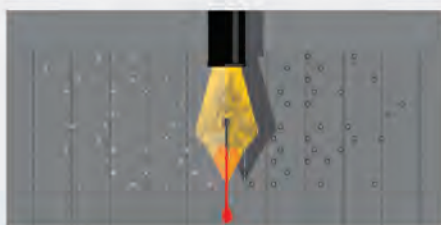
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FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO ON CREATING THE WORLD OF *THE RING*



Many different inspirations went into the designs for WNO's production of *The Ring*. Some of the inspirations used by the set, costume, lighting, and projection designers and me are right here in Washington.

Why not start with the first image? It's the perfect, pure creation of the world suggested by Wagner in the opening chords of *The Rhinegold*. We thought of the perfection of the natural world captured by the great German-American painter Albert Bierstadt. There are four of his works in the National Gallery of Art. Most importantly, there is *Mount Corcoran*, which was one of the opening inspirations for the natural world of the Rhine.

Also, do not miss Frederic Church's evocative *Niagara*, another painting that inspired the opening scene of our *Rhinegold*.

For more about Mount Corcoran:
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Top: *Mount Corcoran* by Albert Bierstadt
Bottom: *Niagara* by Frederic Church

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“I HAVE SEEN THE END OF THE WORLD”: **EXPERIENCING *THE RING***

Kip Cranna

Asked if she could Tweet a 140-character synopsis of *The Ring of the Nibelung*, an experienced stage manager wrote:

Dwarf steals gold, incest, ride, fire, magic sleep, hero, treachery, stabbing, more fire, Ring goes home, everything burns, rebirth.

Aptly put. But *The Ring* is much too vast and measureless a creation by far to be summarized in any number of tweets. The immensity of *The Ring* can be daunting to newcomers, but like many a challenge, experiencing it can be utterly thrilling, even cathartic. Which is why thousands flock to *Ring* productions wherever and whenever they are staged. *The Ring* is a big deal. Let's talk about why.

WHY *THE RING* MATTERS

At first glance, Wagner's cycle of four “music dramas” (his term) comprising some 15 hours of music can be viewed as a gigantic and mythical adventure tale, complete with giants, dwarves, gods, heroes, and warrior maidens—even a monster serpent, a dragon, and a talking bird. Oh yes, and a bear. But through his allegorical figures Wagner achieves a deep exploration of the meaning of human existence, the inevitable consequences of mankind's failings, and the supremacy of love's redemptive power. The enduring influence of *The Ring* stems in part from the inexhaustible opportunities it offers for new discovery and reinterpretation, transcending any single philosophical insight or conceptualization.

In his book *The Nibelung's Ring*, Peter Bassett writes: “*The Ring* is a drama of ideas. It belongs to no particular period but makes timeless statements about the destructive consequences of man’s ruthless lust for power and greedy exploitation of nature.” As the Washington National Opera production so forcefully makes clear, Wagner offers in *The Ring* a vision of a looming man-made natural catastrophe that might bring about worldwide destruction, but could instead cleanse away the old corrupt order and usher in a new age. Tellingly, in a version Wagner later discarded, Brünnhilde closes her famous Immolation Scene, which brings *The Ring* to its finish, with the words “I have seen the end of the world.”

Wagner called his cycle “A Stage Festival Play for Three Days and a Preliminary Evening,” conceiving *The Rhinegold* as a kind of prologue to the three longer operas. Nothing on this scale had been attempted in the world of opera before, nor has anything since. In *The Art-Work of the Future*, Wagner outlined his goal of achieving what he believed the ancient Greek stage had created, which he called *Gesamtkunstwerk*, literally a “Total Work of Art.” This represented to him a modern revolutionary fusion of poetry, drama, music, dance, and visual arts. Synthesizing all of his deep and far-reaching studies of ancient myths, Greek drama, and contemporary philosophy, Wagner reimagined not only a new kind of society, but a new kind of performer, theater, and even audience.

LANGUAGE

An important element in his new approach to drama is Wagner’s distinctive treatment of the German language, particularly his use of *Stabreim*, frequent alliteration based on stressed syllables. This can be hard for English-speaking audiences to grasp, and supertitles can’t adequately recreate it. Along with *Stabreim* he often used archaic words or even contrived new ones that sound old, full of double meanings and hidden puns. This innovation freed him from the musical constraints imposed by the sing-song rhyming couplets and other poetic forms of traditional opera libretti, allowing him the freedom to create what he called “endless melody,” with the drama and the music constantly flowing forward together throughout the opera.

In the very first words heard in *The Ring*, the Rhinemaiden Woglinde revels in alliteration, with made-up words that babble along like the waters of the river:

Weia! Waga!	Weia! Waga!
Woge, du Welle!	Wandering waters,
Walle zur Weige!	Cradle us, rock us,
Wagalaweia!	Wagalaweia!
Wallala weiala weia!	Wallala weiala weia!

Soon after, the lusty subterranean dwarf Alberich (the “Nibelung” of the cycle’s title) uses blunt alliterative phrases to bark out his frustration as he clamors over the slick river rocks in pursuit of the watery maidens:

Garstig glatter	Slippery, slimy,
Glitschriger Glimmer!	Ghastly glimmer!
Wie gleit ich aus!	I slip and slide!

LEITMOTIFS

But a much more far-reaching and comprehensive feature of Wagner’s innovation in *The Ring* is the vastly expanded role of his orchestra, combined with a much more extensive use of leitmotif (*Leitmotiv* in German), literally “guiding motif.” A type of “signature tune,” it consists of a short musical figure—a distinctive melodic or harmonic idea associated with a character, idea, object, event, mood, or emotion. Depending on who is doing the counting, there are more than 80 of these leitmotifs in *The Ring*. Wagner was certainly not the first to use them, but he exploits them more intensely by far than his predecessors. They become the basic substance of his musical fabric, shaping and unifying his expansive musical edifice and supporting the immense superstructure of the cycle. With their clearly etched musical identities, they underscore the action and comment on it, sometimes telling the audience what the characters themselves do not know, and even contradicting what we see or foretelling what is to come.

Often derived from the simplest of note patterns based on broken chordal figures, the motifs evolve and transform, regenerating themselves as one grows out of another, mutating, fragmenting, combining, forming vast families of interrelated musical and emotional meaning.

>>

LEITMOTIFS IN ACTION

- In the famous opening bars of *The Rhinegold*, the cycle begins with a slowly unfolding, boldly extended exploration of the chord of E-flat major, unprecedented in its persistent adherence to a single harmony. This is Wagner's evocative portrait of the world being born. Using the notes of the natural harmonic series, a phenomenon of the physical universe, he has us experiencing the innocence of nature, the gathering of primordial waters. (Wagner's Bayreuth audiences witnessed all this sitting in his custom-built, darkened theater with its "invisible orchestra" deep in its hidden, tiered pit; both the darkness and invisibility were innovations at the time.)
- Out of this basic E-flat harmonic pattern grows the upward-flowing theme of the Rhine. When heard later in a minor key, this becomes the portentous theme of Erda, the prophetic earth goddess. When in turn her theme is inverted (played upside down from top to bottom instead of bottom to top), the auguring theme of *Twilight of the Gods* emerges.
- The Ring motif—nebulous, shifty, and harmonically evasive—utterly transforms when played in sturdy rhythms and a major key into the majestic motif of the mighty fortress of the gods, Valhalla.
- The hero Siegfried's rollicking horn call, capturing so vividly the vigor and spirit of this brash, fearless youth, is reshaped by a new stately rhythmic pattern and rich harmonization into the stirring theme of the mature hero's valiant deeds.
- Near the end of *The Rhinegold*, as Wotan ponders the mysterious warning he has heard from Erda about the Ring's curse, a fanfare-like theme is heard, closely akin to the brilliant flourish of the Rhinegold motif heard earlier when the glimmering gold is first seen amidst the waters. Now the orchestra hints at what is unspoken in Wotan's imagination, sending out a musical symbol of an idea: his grand plan to recover the Ring and redeem the world through the act of a pure, free-willed hero. Only later does this fanfare theme take on concrete meaning as the motif of the sword, the iconic weapon Wotan provides to his son Siegmund and that is later wielded by his grandson Siegfried.



The Valkyrie, photo by Cory Weaver for San Francisco Opera

THE RENUNCIATION OF LOVE

The greed-driven dwarf Alberich forswears the joys of love in order to forge a power-bestowing ring from the Rhinegold, singing a solemn minor-key motif that most analysts have called the "Renunciation of Love." But as the cycle unfolds, we learn that this motif can't be so narrowly defined. Rather it is a theme associated with crucial choices. The hero Siegmund, Wotan's son by a mortal woman, intones this same theme as he prepares to draw his father's sword, purposely left for him to claim, from the sturdy trunk of a tree. He is not renouncing love (having just reunited with and fallen deeply in love with his twin sister Sieglinde), but preparing for a decisive act, just as Alberich had done when he resolved to steal the gold. The same somber theme accompanies the unhappy god Wotan at the end of *The Valkyrie* as he bids farewell to his beloved daughter Brünnhilde, accepting his separation from her as her punishment for disobeying him. He tenderly kisses away her godhood, leaving her a slumbering mortal woman to be awakened by the kiss of an earthly hero.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF DEATH

A crucial scene in Act II of *The Valkyrie*, known as "The Annunciation of Death," is dominated by a fateful-sounding, oft-repeated slowly rising passage in the brass. Brünnhilde appears to Siegmund to tell him he is destined to die in the coming battle with Sieglinde's husband, Hunding. As the scene unfolds, Siegmund refuses the honor of joining the fallen heroes in Valhalla if it means he must leave behind his sister/bride. Brünnhilde now learns what Wotan had failed to understand—the depth of >>

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the doomed hero's love. Moved by Siegmund's profoundly human devotion, she resolves to disobey her father Wotan's spoken order and obey instead what she knows to be his inner will: saving his son.

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF NARRATION

Throughout *The Ring*, characters take time to recount past happenings as a way not only to remind the audience of major plot features in this sweeping saga, but also to provide bits of new information and offer fresh insights from another character's viewpoint, while allowing for further musical revelations through the interplay of evolving leitmotifs.

- The first of these key narrations occurs very early on, in the second scene of *The Rhinegold*, as the conniving fire-god Loge arrives to describe to the other gods what we had all just witnessed in the previous scene.
- Wotan's emotionally wrenching narration to Brünnhilde in Act II of *The Valkyrie* is a crucial turning point in the drama, as the once mighty god—after a ruthless grilling by his ever-practical wife Fricka—sets aside his mental evasions and admits that his grand scheme to create an unfettered hero who could act freely to win back the Ring is a self-delusion.
- In *Siegfried*, Wotan roams the earth in the guise of the cynical, world-weary Wanderer. He engages in an edgy question-and-answer challenge with the dwarf Mime, who had raised the orphaned Siegfried from infancy. Essentially a catechism of the dwarf, this quirky confrontation provides a telling review of prior events from yet another vantage point.
- *Twilight of the Gods* opens with a prologue that dourly rolls out the cycle's most extensive recap, recounted by the three Norns, daughters of the earth-goddess Erda, who weave the strands of fate. Late in the cycle we get crucial new revelations about how the ambitious young Wotan came to rule, and how he unwittingly set in motion the inexorable forces of his own doom.

THE GOLD RING: DOES IT REALLY WORK?

Much ink has been spilled on the subject of the Ring itself, the gold circlet forged by Alberich to gain world domination and then cursed by him as he loses it. The Ring is said to bestow unlimited power on its possessor. But does it? The Ring's magic does not prevent Wotan from ripping it off the finger of its maker. Nor does it

prevent its later owner, the giant Fafner (transformed into a dragon), from being slain by Siegfried, who then claims the Ring for himself. Siegfried gives the Ring to Brünnhilde as a bridal token, but later she is powerless to prevent its being wrested from her by the disguised Siegfried acting under the influence of an amnesia-inducing potion. Nor does the Ring prevent Siegfried from being stabbed in the back by Alberich's scheming son Hagen.

Nearly all who possess the Ring, in fact, fall victim to its curse, including not only the giants Fasolt and Fafner as well as the hero Siegfried, but also, in the end, Wotan himself. The devious brothers Gunther and Hagen both die just *attempting* to gain the Ring. And Brünnhilde perishes in an act of self-immolation as she gives up the Ring to cleanse it of its curse. The only ones to escape the evil spell are the Rhinemaidens themselves, to whom the Ring is at last restored to regain its pristine natural state, and—ironically—the Ring's creator Alberich, who lives on as the final curtain falls. As Wagner's great epic tale comes to an end, a new natural order is begun, but the seeds of hatred and avarice survive.

In the end, the golden Ring's potential, like many dreams of wealth and power, turns out to be illusory. The Curse, on the other hand, works well. The evil born of mankind's reckless greed and heedless destruction persists to threaten our future. But Wagner's supreme artistic statement ends with the promise of a new beginning, and the resplendent prospect of a better world. ●

Kip Cranna is Dramaturg at San Francisco Opera and teaches at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.



Twilight of the Gods, photo by Cory Weaver for San Francisco Opera



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WAGNER THE ENVIRONMENTALIST?

Kip Cranna

"From the moment when man perceived the difference between himself and nature...when he therefore set himself in opposition to nature...from that moment error began." So wrote Richard Wagner in his manifesto *The Art-Work of The Future*. The year was 1849, just after he had begun conceiving the vast project that would become *The Ring of the Nibelung*. One important aspect of what he meant by "error" becomes obvious as his great cycle unfolds.

Two destructive acts in violation of the natural world are central to *The Ring*. As *The Rhinegold* begins, the dwarf Alberich, wild with greed, curses love and plunders the Rhinegold—symbolic of pristine and unspoiled nature—from its primordial home in the river's bed, disrupting the natural order. From the Gold he forges the Ring, which in turn carries his curse.

But another, even more momentous assault against nature had occurred much earlier in the story, though we learn of it late, in the last opera of the cycle. In the prologue to *Twilight of the Gods*, the Norns, agents of Fate, describe how the ambitious young god Wotan, eager for power and domination, had sought wisdom by drinking from the deep spring that leapt from the base of the World Ash Tree. (He forfeited an eye for the privilege.) He then tore a branch from the tree to shape his symbolic, treaty-bearing spear. The World Ash Tree withered and the spring went dry.

This theme of mankind's devastation of nature is of course extraordinarily relevant to our own time, and the Washington National Opera production vividly reflects that. But how much of this contemporary emphasis would Wagner himself have condoned? In other words, how Green was he, really?

We know that he relished outdoor adventures like strenuous trekking through the splendor of Alpine peaks. During his exile in Switzerland beginning in 1849, fleeing an arrest warrant for his revolutionary and anti-monarchist agitation in Dresden, he lived in Zürich

adjacent to the spectacular Üetliberg mountain, where he hiked constantly. He was in his mid-thirties and in vigorous health. In his autobiography *Mein Leben (My Life)* he enthusiastically describes his extended ramblings amid natural splendor in the Alps and elsewhere, while sometimes complaining about his inadequate hiking guides. A favorite spot in Switzerland was the magnificent Tschierwa Glacier, much of which, due to climate change, is now a rock field. One can only imagine the composer's thoughts if he could see it now.

Yes, Wagner was a nature lover, but was he an "environmentalist" in the modern sense? The word of course, along with "ecology," would have been unfamiliar to him. His view of nature embodied the Romantic Era's love for its beauty, its sublime vastness, and its unspoiled grandeur, but it could not have encompassed modern concerns about toxic pollution, extinction of species, global warming, and habitat destruction. Viewed in that light, can *The Ring* really be viewed as Wagner's commentary on mankind's mishandling of divine creation? Is his vision of nature in *The Ring* a precedent to the ideals of modern environmentalism?

At the time he began conceiving *The Ring*, Wagner's politics, to be sure, were more those of the revolutionary and anarchist than the environmentalist. He was surely aware of the negative consequences of the Industrial Age of which he was a part. But anxiety about an impending environmental crisis in the developing world was much further from his mind than ideals of socialist political reform.

Yet a key philosophical concept for Wagner was the promise of rebirth and renewal, not only in the political sense, with the extinction of the old capitalist society and the creation of a new civilization. In his original "Nibelung Myth," sketched out in 1848, Wagner wrote: "The curse and the power of this Ring would be destroyed if it were returned to the water and thereby resolved into its original, pure element." In *Twilight of the Gods*, Wotan himself restates this idea (as quoted to Brünnhilde by

her sister Waltraute): “If she [Brünnhilde] would return the Ring to the Rhine’s daughters in its depths, from the weight of the curse would the gods and the world be freed.” It is worth remembering that the Rhinemaidens, personifications of that pure state of nature, are not only present at the beginning of the story, but return three more times in the cycle, reminding us of the wrong they—and the natural world—have suffered.

Restoring the Ring to its primordial state—i.e., to the Rhinemaidens—can surely be taken as the basis of an environmental allegory. The “curse” of the Ring can logically symbolize the heedless exploitation of nature. The rejection of the curse, accomplished through Brünnhilde’s sacrifice, achieves the purification of the

Ring and the restoration of a primeval natural order. And from that, surely, some nobler new society might grow.

Wagner’s myth of apocalyptic destruction followed by rebirth resonates in our modern world as we confront the consequences of our deeds—our mindless exploitation of nature, imperiling our planet. Some sincerely doubt that global ecological disaster looms at all, while others strive fervently to prevent it. In the cause of environmental justice, would a modern-day Wagner champion the Sierra Club or be a rabble-rouser for Greenpeace? Or, given the revolutionary leanings of his younger days, might he instead be on the political vanguard of some radical socialist movement? We can only surmise. In the end we will have to let *The Ring* speak for itself. ●



Twilight of the Gods, photo by Cory Weaver for San Francisco Opera

THE EVOLUTION OF WAGNER'S *RING*

Kip Cranna

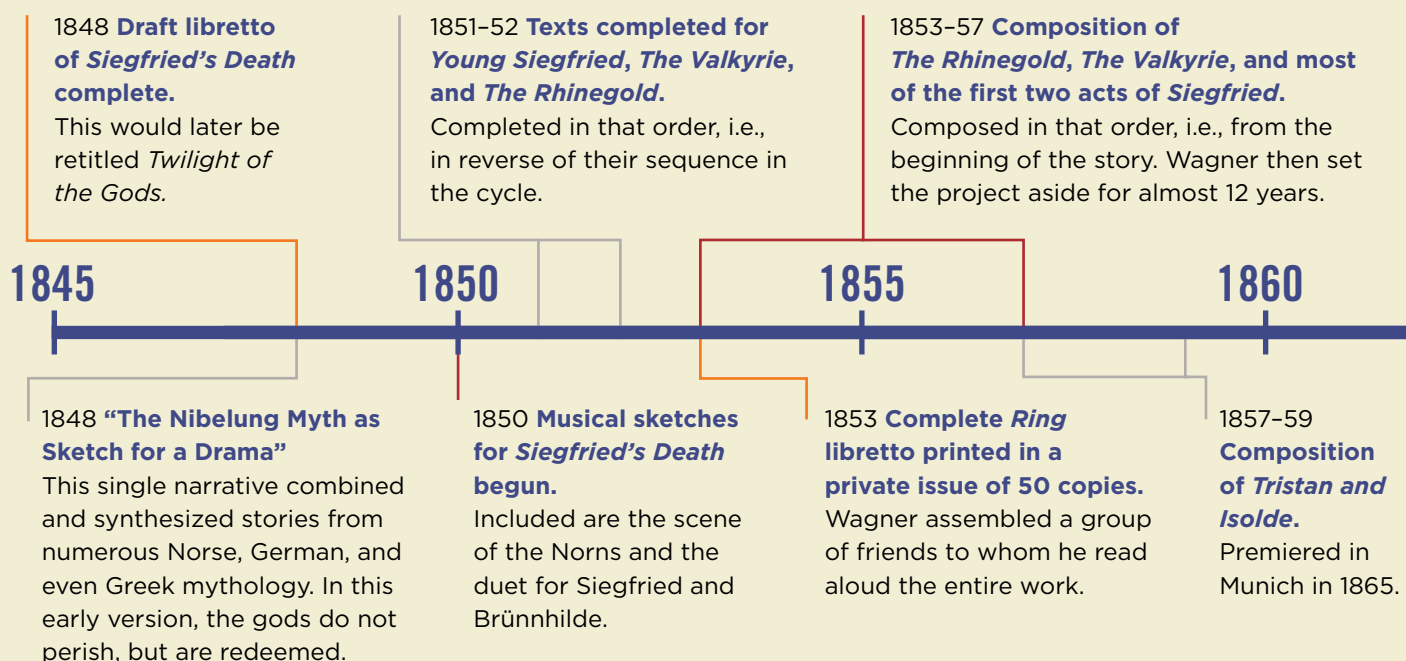
Wagner devoted most of his adult life—28 years—to developing his vast *Ring* creation. He was 35 when he wrote his first dramatic sketch for the work, and 63 when he finally saw his complete *Ring* produced in 1876 at his specially built theater, the *Festspielhaus*, in the Bavarian town of Bayreuth. Crucial to this long and complicated development was its unusual sequence of events. In essence, the stories (the texts) were written backwards—in reverse order—starting with *Twilight of the Gods*, originally called *Siegfried's Death*, and ending finally with *The Rhinegold*.

But the music was written front to back, beginning with *The Rhinegold* and ending with *Twilight of the Gods*. The multi-stage evolution of *The Ring* thus reflected the profound changes and experiences in Wagner's own life, including his love affairs, his political struggles, his money problems, and his deep philosophical studies.

Always interested in ancient myth, Wagner took inspiration for *The Ring* from the Greek dramas of Aeschylus, but also steeped himself in medieval Scandinavian and Germanic legends, including the *Poetic Edda*, the *Prose Edda*, the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Volsunga Saga*, and traditional stories collected by the Brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm.

Wagner's original idea was a single opera based on his synthesis of all this material. By 1848, he had completed his first prose draft, and, soon after, he had written the libretto for the opera which he intended to call *Siegfried's Death*, dealing primarily with the great hero of the *Nibelungenlied*. By 1850, after working on musical sketches for *Siegfried's Death*, he decided to add a “prequel,” *The Young Siegfried*, later called simply *Siegfried*, to set forth the earlier events that led up to Siegfried's heroic demise.

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF THE CREATION OF *THE RING*

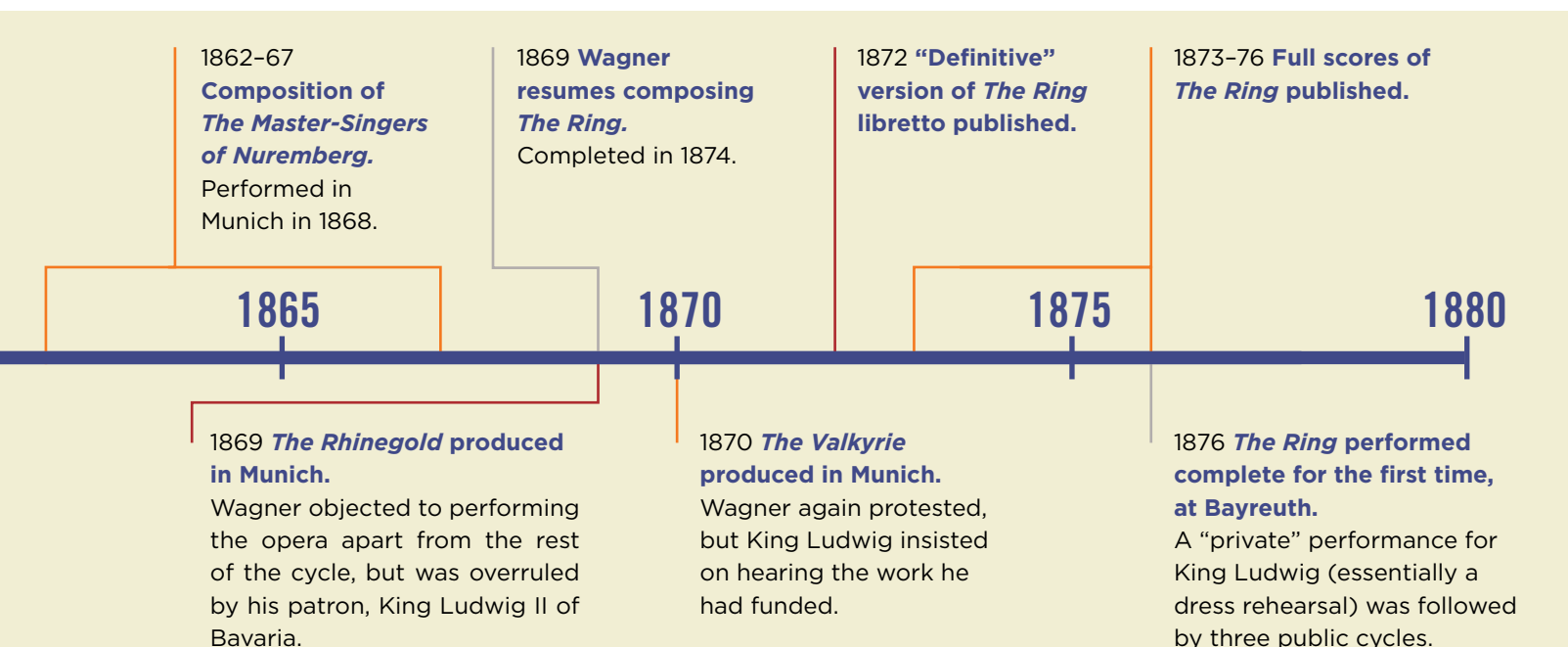


The verse draft of the libretto for *The Young Siegfried* was completed in 1851. But later that year Wagner realized that the huge amount of “backstory” required to fully realize the drama would unduly burden this opera. A prequel to *Siegfried* would be added, called *The Valkyrie*, to tell the story of the warrior-maiden Brünnhilde prior to her life with Siegfried. The three operas would in turn be preceded by a “Prologue,” *The Rhinegold*, to relate the story of the theft of the primordial gold and forging of the Ring. The resulting cycle of four operas can be compared to the ancient Greek practice, familiar to Wagner, of presenting dramas in a group of three tragedies plus a tragicomedy or satire.

By 1852, Wagner had completed the libretti for the complete cycle, and he privately published 50 copies of it the following year. (He read the whole thing aloud to a captive audience of invited guests.) Then he set out to compose, and by 1854 the score of *The Rhinegold* was complete. Composition of *The Valkyrie* was finished by 1856. But by this time he had become influenced by the pessimistic worldview of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), whose work *The World as Will and Representation* had a major impact on Wagner’s outlook. After composing the first two acts of *Siegfried*, unable emotionally and artistically (as well as financially) to find his way forward with his momentous project, he set it aside, not to return to it for almost 12 years.

In the interim, he composed *Tristan and Isolde* (premiered in 1865), pushing further in his experimentation with ambiguous tonalities and achingly emotive harmonies, and giving voice to his own new, less pessimistic insights on Schopenhauer’s ideas about human will, desire, and yearning. A much different, sunnier mood was to characterize his next project, the comedy *The Master-Singers of Nuremberg* (1868).

In 1869, he at last resumed work on *The Ring*, finally completing it in 1874. His major challenge in this final stage was to determine how the cycle would end. Over the years, he had considered nine different versions. He had already abandoned his original plan in which the gods would survive, redeemed by Brünnhilde’s sacrifice. Too positive an outcome by far. But ultimately he also decided against the negativity of his proposed “Schopenhauer ending,” which had rejected love and its suffering in favor of the welcoming embrace of death, and envisioned the end of the world. He turned instead to an earlier, more optimistic idea for the ending, as Brünnhilde proclaims the redeeming power of love. And what would follow? Mature and confident in his art, Wagner entrusted his music to end the cycle without the need of words, surging forward to express the inexpressible: as the world of the gods comes to an end, the Ring is restored to its natural home, and a radiant theme of assuring hope signals the dawn of a new age. ●



THE WASHINGTON *RING*: A DECADE IN THE MAKING

Kip Cranna

The complex demands of staging and performing *The Ring* mean that productions almost always develop in stages over a period of years before being presented in a full cycle. The Washington National Opera *Ring* (co-produced with San Francisco Opera) is no exception, requiring more than 10 years to arrive in complete form on the stage of the Kennedy Center Opera House. A major economic recession in the middle of it all was a disappointing—but in the end temporary—setback.

To achieve their vision of an “American *Ring*,” director Francesca Zambello and set designer Michael Yeargan conceived a production using American landscapes and urban imagery, evoking several periods of American history and highlighting the very Wagnerian theme of mankind’s violation of nature and destruction of the environment. They began their project in Washington, but took full advantage of later remounts in San Francisco to refine their approach and revise their realization. (For Zambello’s thoughts on how her concepts evolved, see her Director’s Note on page 8.)

Much has been written about the changes in the physical look of this *Ring* production throughout the period of its re-stagings, some of the commentary laudatory, some skeptical or even dismissive. There were animated discussions about the use of distinctly American images. Did Erda, the earth goddess, look at first like a Native American woman? Was she Pocahontas? Was the lecherous dwarf Alberich meant to be a California Gold Rush miner panning for gold? Does Wotan resemble a corporate mogul in his skyscraper penthouse suggestive of Trump Tower? These and countless similar speculations animated the already vibrant dialogue that seems to greet each new *Ring*.

But amid those sometimes distracting controversies, what seems to have been almost universally acknowledged is the intense power of dramatic action and interpersonal relationships in this conception of Wagner’s masterwork—the striking ways in which his gods, dwarves, giants, and mortals have been humanized and made arrestingly real.

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE WASHINGTON *RING*

November 2003	<i>The Valkyrie</i> Washington, D.C. DAR Constitution Hall
March–April 2006	<i>The Rhinegold</i> Washington, D.C. Kennedy Center Opera House
March–April 2007	<i>The Valkyrie</i> Washington, D.C. Kennedy Center Opera House
June 2008	<i>The Rhinegold</i> San Francisco War Memorial Opera House
May 2009	<i>Siegfried</i> Washington, D.C. Kennedy Center Opera House
November 2009	<i>Twilight of the Gods</i> (concert staging) Washington, D.C. Kennedy Center Opera House
June 2010	<i>The Valkyrie</i> San Francisco War Memorial Opera House
June 2011	Complete <i>Ring</i> (3 cycles) San Francisco War Memorial Opera House
April–May 2016	Complete <i>Ring</i> (3 cycles) Washington, D.C. Kennedy Center Opera House

Describing the San Francisco mounting of the production in 2011, *The Dallas Morning News* marveled that “emotional details, elaborating moral complexities, suffuse Francesca Zambello’s revelatory staging of *The Ring*.” *Opera Now* observed that “Zambello’s overarching concepts and [their] complex execution were brilliant” and that her “concept of paralleling the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ of today’s contemporary American society with the struggles of Mime, Alberich, Wotan, Siegfried, and Brünnhilde, was insightful and relevant.”

Anne Midgette in her *Washington Post* blog “The Classical Beat” acknowledged that “Zambello is a brilliant storyteller. The most difficult scenes in *The Ring*...were some of her best. She is adept at finding the dramatic kernel of a scene, translating words and sung phrases into something that is compelling on stage.”

The San Francisco Chronicle agreed. “What makes the current production...such a musical and theatrical tour de force isn’t director Francesca Zambello’s decision to relocate the action of Wagner’s epic tetralogy across a span of a century and a half of American history—though that certainly helps the audience feel some of the economic and political nuances of the drama. And it isn’t the emphasis on the ruination of the environment, an idea that comes from Wagner. [See the article “Wagner the Environmentalist?” on page 20.]

“What made the entire first cycle so arresting and so memorable was the sure-footedness with which the entire story was told...and the accumulation of all those thousands of details into a compelling narrative arc.”

The Washington Post itself summed it up neatly: “It was going to be an ‘American *Ring*,’ a vision of Wagner’s epic four-part operatic cycle *The Ring of the Nibelung* seen through the lens of American culture. But the [Zambello] production became much more than an overlay of American imagery on a 19th-century spectacle of gods, dwarves, men, and magic talismans. It is now one of the best *Ring* cycles in more than a quarter of a century.”

As the first complete *Ring* developed and produced locally in this city’s history is unveiled, many will be watching keenly for any further changes in design concepts and visual effects. But new insights into Wagner’s complex and all-too-human characters may ultimately prove to be even more fascinating and satisfying. ●



Siegfried, photo by Cory Weaver for San Francisco Opera

WNO MUSIC DIRECTOR PHILIPPE AUGUIN ON *THE RING*



Dario Acosta

Wagner is a big part of your operatic repertoire. What draws you so strongly to his music?

To give a complete answer, it would be necessary to explain what a real conductor (I mean, a conductor as the composer wants him to be) is actually doing during the performance, during the rehearsals, before the rehearsals. To explain, it would need a book.

Instead, let's use a metaphor: the conductor is a painter who sees clearly the image in his mind before making it visible for the others. Only he sees the work and sees what needs to be done to make, let's say, the *Mona Lisa*, visible. This active part of the creation of the conductor grows with the richness, the dimensions, the complexity, and the length of the score, as well as the vastness of the discourse of the composer.

The active part of creation requested of the conductor by Wagner is huge: an intellectually and artistically gigantic task. Every bar is a kaleidoscope within itself, but at the same time there are myriad elements one needs to master:

to memorize, conceptualize, coach, rehearse, and conduct while adjusting connection and balance between stage and orchestra; and to perform with a constant alacrity of reflexes during 17 hours, but also with raw sensitivity and complete emotional abandon. Consequently, he is a painter, a set designer, a stage director, and an actor at the same time—to the acme of each of these roles to the maximum during 17 hours—narrating a history of the world.

You have conducted *The Ring* several times now. How has your approach changed since your first cycle?

I have conducted seven cycles of *The Ring*, not counting performances of the four titles given separately. During the rehearsals of the first cycle, one experiments with various technical solutions to concretize the intentions of the composer. Afterwards, there are no technical questions left open, from the very first rehearsal. It is only a gain of always more accurate efficiency at all levels. But I knew *The Ring* by memory already before the very first time. Some people say that life is not a dress rehearsal; I say that the experience of conducting *The Ring* was never for me an occasion to grow my repertoire list, but an experience of a lifetime, in full artistic and emotional awareness.

What have been the most rewarding aspects of conducting *The Ring*?

The Ring is a part of me, but at the same time a living organism I dialogue with. I assume you will have the same answer from writers or painters who live a lifetime with a masterwork. Even when I go years without conducting it, it is there: a friendly presence and source of unlimited joys to whom I am endlessly grateful; a universe of feelings, beauty, passion, and fascination that offers itself to me.

In your experience, how has the energy been different among cast and musicians performing an entire *Ring* as opposed to performing the operas individually?

The first problem: the extension of the rehearsal time due to the length of the tetralogy is a real challenge for memorization. What was practiced, coached, shaped, and dramatically accurate on day one needs to feed the

interpretation and the technical mastery for the remainder of the four evenings. The first 10 pages of *The Rhinegold* rehearsed during the first orchestra solo session should remain present in the memory and in the fingers of the musicians while rehearsing the last 10 pages of *Twilight of the Gods*, approximately 2,000 orchestral score pages later. And through the stage rehearsals and through the performances of the three cycles.

The second problem is the proportionally reduced time of rehearsals for the complete *Ring* compared to an isolated run of *Siegfried*. Six solo orchestra rehearsals for a run of *Siegfried*'s performances is no luxury. But we do not have proportionally 24 solo orchestra rehearsals for *The Ring*! *The Ring* as a complete cycle that the audience experiences is only the visible part of the iceberg.

For the conductor, it is the equivalent of Shakespeare's tragedies—*Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, and *Henry V*—for an actor who would memorize all the roles. And for me physically: I was once asked how I could stand through four hours of *The Valkyrie* after *The Rhinegold* and still know I have *Siegfried* and *Twilight of the Gods* to come. I answered: And how is it possible to be in tears during three of these four hours? Life is too short to save one's energy while conducting *The Ring*. The most extraordinary experience of surpassing oneself is the destiny of an artist.

What are the specific challenges of leading *The Ring* that are different from other Wagner works?

Wagner remains the most influential personality in the history of music. For the development of musical language, he can be compared only to Schoenberg, Debussy, and Stravinsky: his 11 major works are 11 different worlds. There are 11 different Wagners.

It is true also for *The Ring*: four different Wagners coexist. To take it extremely schematically and only talking about the texture of the orchestral writing: *The Rhinegold* orchestra is related to *Lohengrin*'s, transcended by extraordinary inventions.

The Valkyrie has a darker texture—"the most tragic of my works," Wagner said—calling tempests, thunders, and magic fire unique in the history of music.

Siegfried's orchestra reaches a critical size in the first act. Resuming after seven years of pause, dedicated to *Tristan and Isolde* and *The Master-Singers of Nuremberg*, Wagner invents a new over-dimensional proportion, exploding the frontiers of orchestral virtuosity.

Twilight of the Gods transcends all dimensions and all difficulties, exhausting all thematic variations of all the motives in order to give us the ultimate feeling of accomplishment.

For you, what is the most important thing that audiences take away from *The Ring* experience?

The system of the leitmotif is remarkably efficient: Wagner puts in our memory sound signals associated with images, ideas, or characters. Each time he calls upon these sound signals, he loads them with more signification and emotion. Each time the leitmotifs appear, our ear discerns what is different and associates the new added element with a dramatically meaningful situation. That is the reason we cry in the third act of *Twilight of the Gods* when the heartbreaking cantilever of the oboe, singing the theme that we associate with Sieglinde, shyly reminds us of her cruel destiny, nine hours after she's left the stage. That is the reason we are transported by the melody associated with the miracle of love, sung in full exaltation by Sieglinde nine hours before, when it crowns the last appearance of Valhalla's theme: the world transfigured by love, the dawn of the promise of a better world.

From the very first instant, from the very first note of *The Rhinegold*, Wagner takes us by the hand into his fantastic world. The orchestra is his voice, calling the maelstrom of human passions and destinies, calling up thunder, rainbows, and delirious sunrises. One cannot escape the overwhelming emotional transfiguration *The Ring* offers. One remembers forever the last chord, pointing out to an eternity of light.

How could anyone miss this experience, one so absolutely unique to western civilization? ●

The writers in this section will be joining us at special *Ring* symposia throughout the cycles to share their insights with audiences. For more information, see page 38.

Women and Nature in *The Ring*: Wisdom, Exploitation, Heroism

Richard Wagner and eco-feminism might seem an unlikely combination. His operas are populated with transgressor-heroes and self-sacrificing women who redeem them through a love “faithful unto death.” His first idea for what became *The Ring* cycle was a libretto called “Siegfried’s Death,” which would have shown another legendary hero betrayed by a corrupt and uncaring society. But as Wagner expanded the tale into its final four-opera form, the hero’s journey evolved into a cosmic saga that critiques the foundations of modern culture itself. I am fascinated by Wagner’s critical depiction of femininity and the natural world in *The Ring* as commodified and alienated. Throughout *The Ring*, the subjugation of women and nature offers only false or temporary solutions to the heroes’ problems, and always creates new crises.

—Heather Hadlock,
Stanford University

The Eyes Have It: Glances, Glimmers, and Glares in *The Ring*

As a composer, Richard Wagner was fascinated by themes: patterns that could be repeated, combined, and manipulated. The most familiar of these themes are the musical leitmotifs that Wagner uses to identify characters, remind the audience of earlier events, and reinforce ideas expressed by his text. But Wagner was a complete man of the theater. His “total work of art” also made extensive use of visual themes (he wanted the Rhinemaidens to be bathed in greenish twilight, Erda and the Wälsungs to be associated with blue, and Nibelheim to be depicted as red), phonetic themes (with the alliterative form of poetry known as *Stabreim* used to repeat certain sounds as a type of verbal leitmotif), and narrative themes (with certain incidents repeated, such as three divine women whose actions result in a disaster beginning both *The Rhinegold* and *Twilight of the Gods*). Perhaps the most significant of these narrative themes is the significant glance that regularly occurs at critical moments throughout *The Ring*.

In *The Rhinegold*, it is Freia’s gaze, still visible through heaps of gold, that causes the giants to insist that Alberich’s ring of power be added to their treasure, thus beginning Wotan’s long quest to retrieve the ring. In *The Valkyrie*, Brünnhilde is stunned to discover that, even though Siegmund has seen the searing look of the Valkyrie, he would still forego a blessed immortality in Valhalla for the sake of his beloved. That realization causes Brünnhilde to commit the act that will eventually cause her to lose her own immortality. In *Siegfried*, Brünnhilde, now no longer divine, asks the title character whether he was not blinded by her glance as the two of them fall helplessly into love. And in *Twilight of the Gods*, the instant that Siegfried has drunk the fatal love potion that will prove his undoing, he tells Gutrune that she has scorched his sight with the glance of her eyes.

In this way, Wagner marks a climactic moment in each music drama with a significant glance, glimmer, or glare. But the composer’s use of these narrative themes, like his use of musical leitmotifs, is far more creative than as a way of punctuating his plot. Like leitmotifs, Wagner’s narrative themes develop over time. The first glance we considered was that of a goddess, the second that of a divine creature, the third that of a formerly divine creature, and the fourth that of a mortal. The first and last of these glances cause men to lose their self-control, while the two intervening glances (both, it should be noted, caused by Brünnhilde) decidedly do not. In this way, Wagner’s use of repeated and evolving themes, so well studied in his music, can be viewed in his thoughts on plot, staging, character, costuming, and text as well. We would, of course, expect nothing less of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total work of art.

—Jeffrey Buller, Florida Atlantic University

Ever Stirs the Soul: Exploring Wagner's Alchemy in *The Ring*

As the house lights fade before the downbeat of *The Rhinegold*, an inexorable pull to the end of Wagner's *Ring* cycle begins.

Even though there are significant challenges and spirited debates for those of us who immerse ourselves in the experience of attending an entire cycle, we reap the greatest of rewards. For close to 140 years, *Ring* audiences have enjoyed a high return on investments of time, of thought, and of emotion.

What is it about Wagner's extraordinarily complex synthesis of musical, poetic, and dramaturgical elements that provokes immediate response and prolonged contemplation? That inspires both intense devotion and extreme aversion? How does he take us away from our daily lives with, seemingly, such ease?

Wagner's notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk* bears a great deal of responsibility in this regard. But there are more complex forces at play between the story and sound worlds that he creates and brings into, and out of, opposition. How do Wagner's creative choices both expand and extend our sense of operatic time and space?

Opera is, at its heart, a fusion of words and music in service of drama. Musically, *The Ring* provides an exceptional opportunity to learn more about how a composer uses instruments and voices to craft an irresistible emotional experience for audience members. Over the 17 or so hours that Wagner's characters progress from divine to human, we escape the tight cage of our daily lives in exaltation.

—Sue Elliott, Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto

The Music of *The Ring*: A Struggle Between Elemental Themes

Perhaps the most celebrated feature of the music of Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* is the extensive use of leitmotifs, the chief means by which Wagner irrevocably unites the music with the dramatic action. Both the physical action and the inner lives of the characters are constantly described, illuminated, and commented on by a vast and intricate network of motives, many, perhaps even hundreds of which have been given names. Recognizing and learning lists of these names, often merely labels, can, however, take on an artificial and overly static quality, which can undermine an appreciation of the extraordinary depth and complexity of constantly evolving associations and layers of meaning that Wagner has created in this masterpiece.

It is often more useful and more faithful to Wagner's own commentary on his work to consider not so much the individual leitmotifs, but rather to gain a sense of the larger groups of closely related motives, each based on what Wagner himself called *Urmotiven*, the elemental building blocks of *The Ring*. These motivic "families" embody basic and easily identifiable musical features and are generally associated with many of the underlying themes of the drama: Nature, Greed, Power, Love, Magical Transformation, Heroism, etc. I am fascinated by how they stand in opposition to each other, but also interrelate, intermesh, and merge in ways that are not only beautiful and exciting, but also give significant insights into the meaning of the drama.

—Jeffrey Swann, New York University



Twilight of the Gods, photo by Cory Weaver for San Francisco Opera

On *Ring* Productions

Richard Wagner worked on every detail for the world premiere of his *The Ring of the Nibelung* in 1876. The settings and costumes, designed by those he chose, didn't please him in their realization. After the three cycles closed, he told his wife that he would never present *The Ring* the same way again; his wife, Cosima, didn't help his feelings by calling the costumes more like what Native Americans wore on Buffalo Bill's frequent European tours. The tradition of these sets did last: most *Ring* productions until the 1930s had the same look, as did the costumes; the horned helmet Valkyrie, the stolid spear-carrying Wotan with the hat covering one eye, and the bearskin-clad Siegfried became synonymous with *The Ring* even to those who had never heard or seen a cycle. With the new lighting and design ideas of Adolph Appia, the look of *The Ring* began to change in the late 1920s in Europe and even in Bayreuth in the 1930s, though the Metropolitan Opera's 1948 *Ring* looked much as all of the cycles had looked in the previous 70 years.

Wagner's grandson, Wieland Wagner, caused a revolution in the 1950s, designing and costuming *The Ring* in the spirit of Greek drama. His brother Wolfgang followed his lead in his *Ring* as well. A much larger change came with Patrice Chéreau's Bayreuth *Ring* of 1976. Costumed as

Victorians with many new ideas inspired in part by Shaw's interpretation of *The Ring* as a socialist tract, his *Ring* was at first booed by all the audiences but by its fourth revival hailed by many as a means of giving the cycle new life. Since then the gate has swung wide: *Rings* have been set in outer space, as statements in opposition to capitalism, particularly America's hegemony in the world, ideas barely imaginable or comprehensible, all attesting to the power of the text and music to have a strong effect in any conceivable situation.

Francesca Zambello's *Ring* here at Washington National Opera is the first to be a complete "American" *Ring*, directed and designed by Americans and set clearly and consciously in the United States, something very important to *Ring* iconography. Every *Ring* production occasions strong reaction. As someone who produced two completely different cycles, I can say that opera lovers are vocal and sometimes violent in their reaction to a new cycle. It keeps the *Ring* rolling, if you will, a constantly controversial and exciting epic, a situation that would no doubt delight Richard Wagner.

—Speight Jenkins,
former general director of Seattle Opera



The Valkyrie, photo by Karin Cooper for WNO

Alan Held

Wotan

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

We have all heard music from *The Ring* in our daily lives for a long time. However, I first became aware of *The Ring* when I was a sophomore in college at Millikin University. There was a special course on *The Ring*, and we studied the leitmotifs and the story before getting into the complete recordings. It was a great immersion into this incredible saga. To me, it is one of the two greatest artistic achievements ever—the other being the Sistine Chapel. As far as any preconception, when I started the course, I only knew it was Wagner. I knew it would be grand and thick—I never expected it to be so overwhelming. I then studied *The Ring* off and on but found myself, just 10 years later, being offered to sing in *The Ring* at the Metropolitan Opera. *The Ring* has been a major part of my life since then. So, all in all, I've had a 37-year relationship with *The Ring* (to this point), and I hope it is never far from my side.

Have you been involved in any of the *Ring* operas before?

I have been involved with *Ring* productions in Washington, Chicago, San Francisco, New York, London, Munich, Barcelona, Brussels, Frankfurt, and Vienna. In some of these cities, I have been involved with multiple productions of *The Ring*. And, there have been multiple concert presentations of the operas as well during my career. Every production is so unique and depends greatly on the director's concept, the music director's approach, and the cast on hand. I have been moved to find out new things in each presentation. No two *Rings* are alike...and that goes for *Ring* cycles within the same production. The first cycle will be vastly different than the third cycle.

Which of the characters in *The Ring* appeals to you the most?

Wotan is certainly a troubled character—but he is a very real “man” and faces joys and trials, just like most humans. I like to find the real humanity in his character. I think this is something that Francesca Zambello's production does very well.

If you could ask the composer Richard Wagner a question about *The Ring*, what would it be?

Why did you have to take a break in composing after Act II of *Siegfried*? When you came back, you wrote some of the hardest music to sing in the entire *Ring*. It is so different for Wotan than anything up to that point. During the first scene of Act III, Wagner challenges the singer in ways unmatched by any other composer.



What advice would you give to somebody seeing *The Ring* for the first time?

The Washington *Ring* is a VERY good choice for your first *Ring*. The story is told clearly and in a relatable way. I'd study the synopsis ahead of time and listen to some of the music. Remember that Wagner wrote the story in reverse order and the music in chronological order. Listen to his growth as a composer as you sit and listen to the opera. Know who the characters are and the path of possession of the Ring. You're up for an amazing experience. Enjoy!

What is your strategy for coping with the long hours required to perform *The Ring*?

In all things, there has to be balance. You can't sing every second of every rehearsal for two months and then be in your freshest voice for opening night. You have to understand pacing and you need to understand your instrument and dramatic skills. I have been working on *Rings* for the better part of my career. I'm glad that my immersion in *The Ring* began nearly four decades ago. It has served me well and makes the entire experience more enjoyable as a performing artist. In addition, you have to be on top of your health, diet, hydration, and rest. Finding the balance that makes it all come together is the best choice. And then, learn to never over-sing. Wagner knew what he was doing when joining the voices and orchestra together. Relax and rely on what is on the page.

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

At the end of a *Ring* cycle, you are emotionally, physically, and vocally spent. That's the way it should be, within reason. But there is a tremendous satisfaction for having gone through a week of storytelling that moves an audience—and hopefully, yourself. And, you should want to rest a few days and get right back at it. *The Ring* never ends even if a curtain falls. The story goes on.



Elizabeth Bishop

Fricka

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

Even as a young person interested in singing, I only had the rudimentary Bugs Bunny preconception about *The Ring*. It wasn't until I was an Adler Fellow in San Francisco singing my first *Valkyrie* that I began to realize what a monumental beauty Mr. Wagner had managed to write!

Which of the characters in *The Ring* appeals to you the most?

Honestly, I love Fricka. Love her...she's a terribly misunderstood woman.

If you could ask the composer Richard Wagner a question about *The Ring*, what would it be?

Was all the incest really necessary? Couldn't this have gotten done without the creepy interfamily mess?

What advice would you give to somebody seeing *The Ring* for the first time?

Not to let the long bits make you anxious. Remember that Wagner-time is different from Verdi-time. Everything is longer, but still coherent. If you get frantic about long sentences, you'll cheat yourself out of the sweep and grandeur of it all!

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

Having ended several of them, I know that I will feel a bit bereft after the cycles are over, even if I'm ready to move on. I'll be humming the leitmotifs at inappropriate moments for weeks!



David Cangelosi

Mime

Have you been involved in any of the *Ring* operas before?

I made my Metropolitan Opera debut with *The Rhinegold* (Mime) under James Levine in 2004, but had already performed *Siegfried* (Mime) with Lyric Opera of Chicago (LOC) and was already scheduled to sing the entire *Ring* with LOC the following season. Other performances include those with San Francisco Opera, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Washington National Opera, the Met, and a special recording of *Ring* scenes with Plácido Domingo for EMI Classics. EVERY installment of *The Ring* has been thrilling, no matter where I have been invited to perform.

Which of the characters in *The Ring* appeals to you the most?

The Norns and the Rhinemaidens are among the characters who have the most stunning music; but the Norns in particular—who actually “spin the tale”—fascinate me.

What is your favorite musical moment in *The Ring*?

The addition of the “high strings” during Brünnhilde's awakening in *Siegfried*. Most people do not realize that they hadn't quite been heard from up to this point.

What is your favorite dramatic moment in *The Ring*?

Siegfried's Funeral March...it is simply breathtaking. The more you listen to it, the more you WANT to listen...over and over again.

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

I have traditionally felt three things upon the end of an entire *Ring* cycle: satisfaction, relief, and then...yes, depression.

Jacqueline Badger Mars

Chairman, WNO Board of Trustees

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

I first met Wagner through *The Flying Dutchman*, but did not really, at a young age, know much about *The Ring*. It sounded long and only watched by obsessed people.

Which of the characters in *The Ring* appeals to you the most?

Of all of the widely varied characters of *The Ring*, Wotan is by far my favorite. He is very human and very “male”—need I say more?

What is your favorite musical moment in *The Ring*?

So much of the music of *The Ring* is dynamic and beautiful. I would have to say that my favorite is “The Ride of the Valkyries,” because I love horses and the imagery that the music provokes. It is also the most recognizable piece from the opera, so it is easy to engage friends, family, and colleagues. After hearing the music, how can you not want to come and see it?



What is your strategy for coping with the long hours required to experience *The Ring*?

I find that I am so engrossed that time flies by and I cannot wait for the “next episode” (after all, it is a grand soap opera).

What aspect of *The Ring* are you most looking forward to?

I am really looking forward to seeing all of the American iconography on stage in our production. It is such a unique way to tell this mythical story, and one that I hope shows just how powerful and universal Wagner’s ideas can be.

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Andrew Jorgensen

WNO Director of Artistic Planning and Operations

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

I experienced my first *The Valkyrie* at the Metropolitan Opera on January 7, 2008. Lisa Gasteen was Brünnhilde, Adrienne Pieczonka was Sieglinde, Clifton Forbis was Siegmund, and James Morris sang Wotan. It was the last stand-alone revival of the Schenk production. I was an assistant to Forbis's manager, but I had just applied for a job at the Met. I remember sitting there and listening to these extraordinary singers, and thinking about how magical it was that humans could come together to create something so spectacular and beautiful and complicated. I was totally entranced. I had my interview at the Met a few days later and started work soon after.

Have you been involved in any of the *Ring* operas before?

I was an assistant on the Artistic Staff at the Met during the presentation of all four of the new productions of the Robert Lepage *Ring*. It was thrilling to be a fly on the wall and listen to James Levine, Sarah Billinghamurst, and Jonathan Friend talk about casting and planning this epic project. Also, in the summer of 2015, I traveled to hear Catherine Foster sing Brünnhilde in the dress rehearsal of *The Valkyrie* at the Bayreuth Festival. It was exciting to visit the Mecca of the Wagnerian world, and to hear this great music in Wagner's own theater. Catherine sang magnificently and I am proud that we can bring her extraordinary singing to our audience for Cycles I and II. I could go on....

If you could ask the composer Richard Wagner a question about *The Ring*, what would it be?

I don't have many questions, but I would like to say thank you.



What advice would you give to somebody seeing *The Ring* for the first time?

Open-mindedness. Turn off your cell phone, don't look at your watch, and embrace that you have nowhere else to be for these hours. Let yourself go on Wagner's timescale and let the music and drama take you away.

What aspect of *The Ring* are you most looking forward to?

Short of wars, I really can't think of many things that humans do which are more complicated or involve more people in coordinated efforts than grand opera. That it can happen at all is extraordinary. That it is sometimes moving and inspiring is nothing short of miraculous. I am so proud to have been part of the team that helped Francesca and Philippe over the last several years make our *Ring* possible. So what I am looking forward to? Sitting in the audience with all of the other Wagnerians—be they at their first *Ring* or their 50th—and being swept away by the music.



Twilight of the Gods, photo by Cory Weaver for San Francisco Opera



Bob and Jamie Craft

*Founding Patrons, Opera Legacy Society
and WNO Circles Members*

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

Bugs Bunny. My preconception was that it was very long. I was right. It can be summarized concisely as follows: "Someone steals the Rhinemaidens' gold. 17 hours later they get it back."

If you could ask the composer Richard Wagner a question about *The Ring*, what would it be?

When Birgit Nilsson was asked a similar question on a Met intermission broadcast, she said: "Mr. Wagner, your music is beautiful, but why do you take so long to get to the point?" Couldn't ask it any better than that.

What is your favorite musical moment in *The Ring*?

The prelude for Siegfried and Brünnhilde in the prologue of *Twilight of the Gods*, followed by Brünnhilde's opening notes. Why? On March 8, 1974, Birgit Nilsson was scheduled to sing Brünnhilde on the opening night of the Met's new production, but at the dress rehearsal several days earlier she fell from a tower, breaking her collarbone and two ribs, and was hospitalized. None of us in the audience that night knew whether she would perform. When she first appeared from a cave (cloak covering her arm in a sling), with Siegfried, the house went crazy on her opening notes, and it took quite a while for the audience to quiet down. Everyone had goosebumps.

What is your favorite dramatic moment in *The Ring*?

Act I, Scene 3 of *The Valkyrie*, when Sieglinde realizes that the stranger before her is her twin brother Siegmund. When Plácido Domingo and Anja Kampe performed this scene at DAR Constitution Hall on November 11, 2003, I had to bite my lip to keep from crying.



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WNO Costume Director

Have you seen or heard (or been involved in) any of *The Ring* operas before?

My first *Ring* opera was the production of *The Valkyrie* we did at DAR Constitution Hall in 2003. It was unforgettable. Although my presence was required at dress rehearsals, there were many times when I didn't have much costuming work to do. That lucky circumstance allowed me to get immersed in the music and the spectacle. I had a lot of fun identifying all of the leitmotifs, and began to get a sense of why some opera lovers become obsessed!

If you could ask the composer Richard Wagner a question about *The Ring*, what would it be?

I would ask if he ever thought about writing a scene between Fricka and Erda. They would undoubtedly have had a lot to say to each other, and could have created their own fireworks!

What is your favorite dramatic moment in *The Ring*?

Hands down, it's Sieglinde's cry "O, hehrstes Wunder!" when she learns she is carrying Siegmund's child. The first time I heard it with the orchestra and Anja Kampé singing, I almost burst into tears.

What advice would you give to somebody seeing *The Ring* for the first time?

Pace yourself. It's a long song, times four. As a theater professional, I am more accustomed to a rehearsal environment where I can get up and move or make a whispered comment. I find in performances that if I am able to put myself in a sort of meditative mindset, I can



(sort of) relax and enjoy what's going on dramatically and musically without getting too antsy. The reward is a transcendental theatrical experience!

What is your strategy for coping with the long hours required to produce *The Ring*?

There are often long stretches in rehearsal where there are only one or two costumes onstage, and not much to do backstage. I have learned a lot from the translations of the *Ring* libretti by Rudolph Sabor, published by Phaidon. Besides the words, there is a lot of informative commentary about what is going on. These translations tell the story behind the story. I am also planning to do some cardio between rehearsals!

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

I will be proud to put this feather in the cap of my experience as an opera costumer. I am already so proud of our company for getting here!

Costume design by
Catherine Zuber



Brunnhilde



The Norns



Ortlinde

GOOD WISHES FROM PLÁCIDO DOMINGO

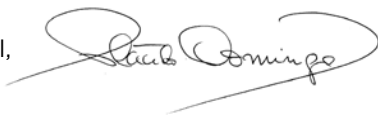
To all my dear friends in Washington:

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Francesca Zambello and Washington National Opera for having realized at last our grand project of producing Wagner's entire *The Ring of the Nibelung* for the nation's capital.

During my years as WNO's General Director—an unforgettable period in my life—we planned an “American” *Ring* cycle, but we managed to stage only the first three of the cycle's four music dramas before the economic crisis of 2007–2008 created budgetary problems that made it impossible to reach our goal at that time. I was very happy to have been part of the project, not only as an administrator, but also by singing the role of Siegmund in *The Valkyrie*, which we did during the cycle's second season, after having performed *The Rhinegold* the first season.

I am so happy that under Francesca's guidance, the cycle—which is one of the most important and most difficult undertakings in the whole operatic repertoire—has finally been realized in its entirety, and I want to share my good wishes not only with her and with all my friends at WNO, but also with the whole Washington audience, which I miss and which I think about with great warmth. I am sorry that I can't be there myself to congratulate everyone in person, but I wish much success to the company and a wonderful experience for the public.

With warmest greetings for all,



Greg Gorman



The Wagner Society of Washington DC

The Wagner Society of Washington, DC is one of the city's most vibrant cultural institutions. For the last 18 years it has proudly served the Washington community in many ways – through monthly lectures, semi-annual concerts, and special events through a network of collaborating institutions such as the Goethe Institut, the German Embassy, and the Washington National Opera.

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RING SYMPOSIA

Curated and moderated by Dr. Clifford (Kip) Cranna, San Francisco Opera, Dramaturg

10:30 a.m.–3 p.m. once per cycle
Theater Lab | Each symposium \$65
Boxed lunch included

Interested in exploring the depths of opera's greatest epic masterpiece? WNO convenes scholars, opera producers, and members of the cast and production team to examine the musical, historical, and artistic significance of *The Ring*. Each cycle's symposium includes several guest speakers on varying topics, a boxed lunch,* Q&A with artists, and a chance to hear from Artistic Director Francesca Zambello and Music Director Philippe Auguin.

Schedule for each symposium:

Topic I: 10:30–11:45 a.m.

Topic II: 11:55 a.m.–1:10 p.m.

Boxed lunch pickup: 1:10–1:30 p.m.

Q&A with Francesca Zambello and Philippe Auguin: 1:30–2 p.m.

Q&A with the artists: 2–2:45 p.m.

Finish by 3 p.m.

**The boxed lunch includes your choice of sandwich from a variety of non-vegetarian and vegetarian options, a bag of chips, whole fruit, a house-made cookie, and a beverage. Upon purchasing a symposium ticket, you will receive an email confirmation with a link to make your lunch selection.*

Ring Symposia are made possible by Lynn and John Pohanka.

CYCLE I: TUESDAY, MAY 3

Topic I: "The Eyes Have It: Glances, Glimmers, and Glares in *The Ring*"

Jeffrey Buller, Florida Atlantic University

Significant glances in *The Ring*: The imagery of sight and insight in this visual as well as musical work, with thematic analyses

Topic II: "Ever Stirs the Soul: Exploring Wagner's Alchemy in *The Ring*"

Sue Elliott, Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto

As characters onstage progress from divine to human, audiences escape their tight cages of daily life in exaltation. How does Wagner's synthesis of musical, poetic, and dramaturgical elements create this operatic gold?

CYCLE II: THURSDAY, MAY 12

Topic I: "The Music of *The Ring*: A Struggle Between Elemental Themes"

Jeffrey Swann, New York University

How the interrelations and transformations of a few basic motives express and illustrate the conflicts between nature, power, love, and heroism, which are all at the heart of *The Ring*

Topic II: "Casting *The Ring* on Two Continents"

Eva Wagner-Pasquier, Bayreuth Festival, Former Co-Director; The Metropolitan Opera, Artistic Consultant

Jonathan Friend, The Metropolitan Opera, Artistic Administrator

Moderated by Francesca Zambello, Wagner-Pasquier and Friend discuss the challenges of casting and producing *The Ring*, both in America and Europe, over the course of their significant careers in opera administration.

CYCLE III: THURSDAY, MAY 19

Topic I: "Women and Nature in *The Ring*: Wisdom, Exploitation, and Heroism"

Heather Hadlock, Stanford University

How Wagner depicts femininity and the natural world as commodified and alienated. Throughout *The Ring*, the subjugation of women and nature offers only false or temporary solutions to the heroes' problems, and always creates new crises.

Topic II: "The Evolution of *The Ring* in My Lifetime"

Speight Jenkins, Seattle Opera, Former General Director

On conducting, singing, and staging the production

Siegfried, photo by Karin Cooper for WNO



Twilight of the Gods, photo by Cory Weaver for San Francisco Opera



SPECIAL EVENTS

PRE-PERFORMANCE INSIGHTS

North Millennium Stage | Free with your opera ticket

Before every performance in each cycle, join dramaturg Kip Cranna from San Francisco Opera for an illuminating and compelling overview of each opera.

CYCLE I

The Rhinegold: Saturday, April 30, 5–5:45 p.m.

The Valkyrie: Monday, May 2, 4:45–5:30 p.m.

Siegfried: Wednesday, May 4, 4:45–5:30 p.m.

Twilight of the Gods: Friday, May 6, 3:45–4:30 p.m.

CYCLE II

The Rhinegold: Tuesday, May 10, 5:15–6 p.m.

The Valkyrie: Wednesday, May 11, 4:45–5:30 p.m.

Siegfried: Friday, May 13, 4:45–5:30 p.m.

Twilight of the Gods: Sunday, May 15, 11:45 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

CYCLE III

The Rhinegold: Tuesday, May 17, 5:15–6 p.m.

The Valkyrie: Wednesday, May 18, 4:45–5:30 p.m.

Siegfried: Friday, May 20, 4:45–5:30 p.m.

Twilight of the Gods: Sunday, May 22, 11:45 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

POST-CYCLE TALKBACKS (FOR CYCLES I & II)

Free with your opera ticket

Immediately after you've finished the complete *Ring* cycle with *Twilight of the Gods*, stay for an engaging post-performance moderated discussion.

Friday, May 6 on the North Millennium Stage (Cycle I)

Sunday, May 15 on the South Millennium Stage (Cycle II)

MORE MILLENNIUM STAGE EVENTS

Free, no tickets required

PREVIEW CONCERTS

Join cast members of *The Ring* for musical excerpts from each production combined with narration highlighting the opera's story and background.

The Rhinegold and The Valkyrie: Tuesday, April 26 at 6 p.m.

Siegfried and Twilight of the Gods: Thursday, April 28 at 6 p.m.

RING COVERS IN CONCERT

Understudy artists in *The Ring* perform the music of Wagner and other composers in this special concert with piano.

Thursday, May 12 at 6 p.m.

The Millennium Stage is brought to you by



STARS OF TOMORROW: THE DOMINGO-CAFRITZ YOUNG ARTISTS IN CONCERT

WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists continue their annual tradition in a special program of songs, scenes, and arias from favorite operas.

Tuesday, May 3 at 7 p.m. | Terrace Theater | Tickets \$15

The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program is made possible through the generous support of The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, with additional funding provided by Judy and Billy Cox.

OFFSITE EVENTS

Please note: These events DO NOT take place at the Kennedy Center.

Cultural Capital Discussion: Women and Wagner's *Ring*

In this program co-presented by WNO, the National Museum of Women in the Arts will bring together select cast and creative team members in a conversation on the role women play—from the Valkyries to Brünnhilde—in Wagner's masterpiece. Musical excerpts from the opera will enliven the discussion, followed by a reception.

Sunday, April 24, 4–6 p.m.

**National Museum of Women in the Arts | Performance Hall
1250 New York Ave. NW**

**Free, no tickets required | Seating first-come, first-served
Visit nmwa.org for further details.**

FILMS: FRITZ LANG'S *DIE NIBELUNGEN*, PARTS 1 & 2

The National Gallery of Art will screen Fritz Lang's 1924 classic silent film in a restored print from the Murnau-Stiftung Film Archive, Wiesbaden, Germany. Based on the epic poem the *Nibelungenlied*, with a screenplay by Lang and his wife Thea von Harbou, the story is divided into two parts, *Siegfried* and *Kriemhild's Revenge*. Organist Dennis James will provide live organ accompaniment based on the original score by Gottfried Huppertz.

Saturday, May 14 at 1 p.m. | National Gallery of Art

East Building Auditorium | 4th Street & Constitution Avenue NW

**Free, no tickets required | Seating first-come, first-served
Visit nga.gov for further details.**

CRUISE: DINING ON THE DC RHINE

The Wagner Society of Washington, in collaboration with WNO, is pleased to sponsor a festive dinner cruise to celebrate WNO's *Ring* cycle. Join select cast members on *Nina's Dandy* and enjoy cocktails and a three-course dinner while cruising the Potomac River from Alexandria to Georgetown. Cocktail attire required.

Monday, May 16 | Boarding begins at 5:30 p.m.

Zero Prince Street, Alexandria, VA

**Tickets available ONLY through the Wagner Society—
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LECTURE SERIES WITH SAUL LILIENSTEIN: INTRODUCTION TO *THE RING*

North Atrium Foyer | Each event \$15

The Ring 101

For almost 150 years, listeners have been deciding for themselves what *The Ring of the Nibelung* is all about. In this introductory lecture, musicologist Saul Lilienstein addresses those things that are beyond question—the merging of opera and symphony, the expansion of known structures, and the creation of a new musical technique (leitmotifs) and poetic methods (*Stabreim*)—that have enabled drama, music, and human psychology to interact and thrill us anew on the operatic stage.

Friday, April 29 at 7:30 p.m.

The Rhinegold and The Valkyrie—Exposition and Lyrical Expansion

Saul Lilienstein takes us into the first two operas of *The Ring*. In *The Rhinegold*, we are introduced to a group of supernatural creatures, each etched indelibly in orchestral color and the thread of melodic motifs. *The Valkyrie* shows us the human side of this equation as Wagner imagines four of the greatest characters in all of opera—Sieglinde, Siegmund, Wotan, and Brünnhilde—and clothes them in magnificent music.

Monday, May 9 at 7 p.m.

Siegfried and Twilight of the Gods—Scherzo and Recapitulation

Saul Lilienstein traces the development of character through music as the boy Siegfried—an unwitting child of destiny—blunders and blusters his way through two acts, until he learns the meaning of fear in the eyes of the woman he awakens. In the final opera, perhaps Wagner's most expansive orchestral score, the rich treasury of leitmotifs combine in polyphonic mastery as the drama forges a path of treachery and murder toward a final redemption for mankind.

Thursday, May 19 at 7 p.m.

THE OPERA BALL

Saturday, May 21, 2016 (during Cycle III)

We hope that you will enhance your *Ring* experience by joining us for Washington National Opera's annual Opera Ball on Saturday, May 21, 2016.

Under the joint chairmanship of Jane and Calvin Cafritz and Samia and A. Huda Farouki—and in celebration of WNO's 60th Diamond Anniversary Season—the evening will feature

intimate pre-Ball dinners hosted by various Ambassadors at their elegant residences and embassies throughout Washington, D.C. This year's Ball will conclude at the Headquarters of the Organization of American States, where guests will experience a memorable evening of dessert, music, and dancing.

The Opera Ball is a highlight of the Washington social season and your participation—which advances the Opera's artistic, educational, and community outreach programming—would be greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in attending this year's Opera Ball, please contact the Kennedy Center Special Events Office at (202) 416-8496 or OperaBall@kennedy-center.org.

THANK YOU TO OUR LEAD OPERA BALL SPONSORS:

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As of April 4, 2016



IN THE GIFT SHOP

Browse our Hall of States Gift Shops for a wide selection of *Ring*-related gifts and merchandise—from books, CDs, and DVDs to apparel, housewares, and collectibles. If you've purchased a full cycle through our Subscription Office, you also receive 10% off your purchase with your Subscriber Card!

You can also visit us online at kennedy-center.org/giftshop.



DINING OPTIONS

PRE-ORDER *RING* MEALS

Across all three cycles, the Kennedy Center will serve a special *Ring* boxed meal, to include a variety of sandwiches with drink and side options. Patrons can order their food in advance and pick it up at the performance. For full menu items and information about reserving your meal(s), please visit tkc.co/ringfood or call (202) 467-4600.

KENNEDY CENTER DINING OPTIONS

The Roof Terrace Restaurant & Bar serves innovative adaptations of classic dishes. Reservations are strongly recommended and can be made at (202) 416-8555 or opentable.com.

Special *Ring* Restaurant Hours:

Cycle I: Sat., Apr. 30 at 5 p.m.; Mon., May 2 at 4:30 p.m.; Wed., May 4 at 4:30 p.m.; Fri., May 6 at 4 p.m.

Cycle II: Tue., May 10 at 5 p.m.; Wed., May 11 at 4:30 p.m.; Fri., May 13 at 4:30 p.m.; Sun., May 15 at 11 a.m.

Cycle III: Tue., May 17 at 5 p.m.; Wed., May 18 at 4:30 p.m.; Fri., May 20 at 4:30 p.m.; Sun., May 22 at 11 a.m.

Regular Dinner hours: 5–8 p.m. before Opera House/
Concert Hall evening performances
Buffet brunch: Most Sundays 11 a.m.–2 p.m.

The KC Café is a casual dining spot ideal for a quick meal on the go or pre-performance.
Hours: Daily 11:30 a.m.–8 p.m.

Intermission Bars will be stationed in the Grand Foyer and feature alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, water, and light snacks. Patrons can also pre-order a drink or snack before a performance to avoid waiting in line during intermission. More information at tkc.co/pages/restaurants.

Hours: 1 hour before each Opera House performance through the last intermission.





The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN, *Chairman*

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WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

presents

THE RICHARD WAGNER RING OF THE NIBELUNG APRIL 30–MAY 22, 2016 KENNEDY CENTER OPERA HOUSE

Major support for WNO and *The Ring* is provided by Jacqueline Badger Mars.

David and Alice Rubenstein are the presenting underwriters of WNO.

WNO acknowledges the longstanding generosity of Life Chairman Mrs. Eugene B. Casey.

General Dynamics is the Presenting Sponsor of WNO's 2015–2016 Season.

Generous support for *The Ring* is provided by
Constance Milstein de La Haye St. Hilaire & Jehan Christophe de La Haye St. Hilaire,
Ken and Dorothy Woodcock, and an anonymous gift.

The WNO Orchestra's performances in *The Ring* are underwritten in part
thanks to the extraordinary generosity of Lynn and John Pohanka.

Projection technology for *The Ring* is provided by Panasonic.

Maestro Auguin's performances in *The Ring* are made possible in part
by The Theodore H. Barth Foundation.

Soloman Howard's performances as Fafner are underwritten by Mr. Jeffrey P. Cunard.

Nina Stemme's performances as Brünnhilde are underwritten in part
by the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation.

Catherine Martin's performances as Wellgunde and Waltraute are underwritten
by Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey P. Pohanka.

Makeup for the choristers in *Twilight of the Gods* is provided by MAC Cosmetics.

*Patrons are requested to turn off cell phones and other electronic devices during performances.
The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in this auditorium.*

THE RHINEGOLD

SCENE 1

The opera opens with three young women—Woglinde, Wellgunde, and Flosshilde—playing in a mountain river. They are charged with guarding the gold deep in the water and they scarcely notice the Nibelung, Alberich, who tries to catch the free-spirited girls as they tease him. They explain that this gold is all-powerful: if fashioned into a ring, its wearer would rule the world. But they are content that the gold is safe, since whoever would steal the treasure must renounce love. Hearing this secret, Alberich renounces love and steals the gold.

SCENE 2

Fricka reproaches her husband Wotan, ruler of the gods, for having promised her sister Freia to the giants, Fafner and Fasolt, as payment for constructing their new home, Valhalla. Wotan replies that he never meant to keep his word. When Fafner and Fasolt arrive to claim Freia, Wotan tells them that they must accept another form of payment. Fafner, aware that the gods would lose their eternal youth and power without Freia's golden apples, decides to take her hostage. Donner, the god of thunder, and Froh, the god of spring, try to defend their sister Freia, to no avail. The fire god Loge suggests that the giants might find Alberich's gold an acceptable substitute for Freia and proposes that Wotan steal the gold, a portion of which Alberich has used to forge into the all-powerful Ring. The giants take Freia away until evening, when they will return to claim the Nibelung's gold as ransom. Wotan asks Loge to accompany him to steal Alberich's treasure in Nibelheim.

SCENE 3

In the underground caverns of Nibelheim, Alberich tries on the Tarnhelm—a magical chain-mail helmet his brother Mime has forged that transforms the wearer into any size or shape—and uses it to torment Mime and his Nibelung slaves. Wotan and Loge arrive and Alberich suspiciously questions them and unwittingly tells them of his plan to overthrow the gods and rule the world. Loge tricks Alberich into using the Tarnhelm to transform himself into a toad, and Wotan and Loge seize him and drag him back up to earth.

SCENE 4

Back on the mountaintop, Loge and Wotan tell Alberich that they will free him only if he yields all his gold, including the Tarnhelm and the Ring. Alberich resists until the the Ring is torn from his finger. As he leaves, he places a curse upon it: until the Ring returns to him, trouble, envy, and death will befall all who possess it. The giants return with their hostage Freia and demand the Nibelung gold in exchange for her. Just then, Erda, the earth goddess, magically appears and warns Wotan to yield everything, including the Ring, as it spells doom for the gods. Wotan surrenders the Ring, and then Fafner kills Fasolt to claim the Ring, the Tarnhelm, and the hoard for himself. Fricka urges Wotan to turn his thoughts to their new home Valhalla, while Froh and Donner summon a rainbow bridge to take them there.

First performance: Munich, September 22, 1869.

First performance as part of a *Ring* cycle:
Bayreuth, August 13, 1876.

First performance in the U.S.: New York,
Metropolitan Opera, January 4, 1889.

First Washington National Opera performance:
March 25, 2006.

Orchestra: 3 flutes, 1 piccolo, 3 oboes, 1 English horn, 3 clarinets, 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 8 French horns (4 doubling on Wagner tubas), 3 trumpets, 1 bass trumpet, 2 trombones, 1 bass trombone, 1 contrabass trombone, 1 tuba, 2 timpani, 2 percussionists, 2 harps; 47 strings (13 first violins, 11 second violins, 9 violas, 8 cellos, 6 basses).

“Anvils”: 6 percussionists play a total of 15 “anvils.” Made of metal tuned to three specific pitches and created especially for this production, these anvils signal the arrival in Nibelheim.

Conductor
Philippe Auguin

Director
Francesca Zambello

Senior Associate Director
Christian Räth

Associate Director
Laurie Feldman

Set Designer
Michael Yeargan

Costume Designer
Catherine Zuber

Lighting Designer
Mark McCullough

Original Projections Designed by

Jan Hartley

New Projections Designed by

S. Katy Tucker

Remounted by

S. Katy Tucker

Movement Director
Denni Sayers

Hair and Makeup Designer
Anne Ford-Coates
for Elsen Associates

Fight Master
Joe Isenberg

Cover Conductor
John Keenan

Assistant Conductors

Thomas Bagwell

Steven Gathman

Glenn Lewis

Robert Mollicone

Ken Weiss

Diction Coaches
Irene Spiegelman
Thomas Bagwell

Assistant Director
Ophelie Wolf

Stage Manager
Lisa Anderson

Co-production with
San Francisco Opera

THE RHINEGOLD

Das Rheingold

The Ring of the Nibelung—Prologue

Music drama in one act by Richard Wagner
Libretto by the composer
Performed in German with Projected English Titles

Saturday, April 30, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, May 10, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 17, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

CAST

(in order of vocal appearance)

Woglinde	Jacqueline Echols ±
Wellgunde	Catherine Martin
Flosshilde	Renée Tatum*
Alberich	Gordon Hawkins
Fricka	Elizabeth Bishop
Wotan	Alan Held
Freia	Melody Moore
Fasolt	Julian Close*
Fafner	Soloman Howard ±
Froh	Richard Cox*
Donner	Ryan McKinny*
Loge	William Burden
Mime	David Cangelosi
Erda	Lindsay Ammann*

Washington National Opera Orchestra

*Washington National Opera Debut

± Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

The performances on April 30 and May 10 are audio described
by Carolina Carter or Andrea Okwesha.

The performance is approximately 2 hours and 35 minutes
and is performed without an intermission.

THE VALKYRIE

Events between *The Rhinegold* and *The Valkyrie*

- *Fafner has turned himself into a dragon to protect his golden hoard.*
- *Wotan has fathered Brünnhilde, his warrior maiden, with Erda.*
- *Wotan has fathered another eight daughters, the Valkyries, with an unnamed goddess, possibly Erda.*
- *On a journey to earth, Wotan, with a mortal woman, has fathered the twins Siegmund and Sieglinde.*

ACT I

An exhausted fugitive seeks refuge in a dismal home built around a mighty tree. Sieglinde tends to her unexpected visitor. When her husband Hunding arrives home, the stranger relates his sad tale: attempting to protect a young woman from an unwanted arranged marriage, he killed her brothers and was forced to escape her avenging kinsmen. Hunding reveals that he was part of the hunting party searching for the stranger. He offers Siegmund shelter for the night, but advises him to prepare for a fight the next day.

Sieglinde drugs Hunding's drink so that the stranger can flee to safety. She, too, had been an unwilling bride and remembers that at her wedding, an unknown old man had thrust a sword deep into a tree trunk, but no man has had the strength to pull it out. The stranger realizes that this must be the sword his father had promised him and rejoices in reborn hope and newfound love for Sieglinde. Sieglinde recognizes him now as her long-lost twin brother, Siegmund. In great excitement, Siegmund triumphantly pulls the sword from the tree, and the lovers run off into the night.

ACT II

Wotan exhorts his daughter Brünnhilde, a Valkyrie, to protect his mortal son Siegmund in his coming duel with Hunding. Wotan had been grooming Siegmund to be a "free hero"—a free-willed mortal unaided by the gods, unbound by Wotan's treaties, and consequently the only one capable of regaining the cursed Ring that Wotan was earlier forced to yield. But Fricka, Wotan's wife and the protector of marriage, is outraged at the adulterous and incestuous love of Siegmund and Sieglinde and forces Wotan to let Hunding triumph. Wotan changes his order to Brünnhilde and tells her that she must let Siegmund die in combat.

Siegmund and Sieglinde rest during their flight. While Sieglinde sleeps, Brünnhilde appears to Siegmund, instructing him to follow her to Valhalla after his death.

Deeply moved by Siegmund's devotion to Sieglinde, Brünnhilde decides to disobey her father's orders and save Siegmund's life. After Hunding arrives and begins his battle with Siegmund, a furious Wotan appears and shatters Siegmund's sword. Allowing Hunding to easily kill Siegmund, Wotan then strikes Hunding down as well. Having defied her father, Brünnhilde gathers up the broken pieces of the sword and flees with Sieglinde to safety.

ACT III

Brünnhilde's eight sisters, the Valkyries, are on their way to Valhalla to report on the fallen heroes they have gathered. When Brünnhilde arrives with Sieglinde, the Valkyries refuse to harbor them for fear of Wotan's wrath. Brünnhilde gives Sieglinde the broken sword pieces and sends her to seek refuge in the forest where the dragon Fafner hides, for Wotan will not follow her there. Sieglinde takes some comfort in the knowledge that she will bear Siegmund's son, whom Brünnhilde predicts will be the greatest of all heroes.

When Wotan arrives, he condemns Brünnhilde for her betrayal and sentences her to be stripped of her divinity and left asleep on the mountaintop, to be claimed by the first mortal man to awaken her. Brünnhilde begs Wotan to surround her with a ring of magic fire so that only the bravest of men would attempt to awaken her. Wotan agrees, regretfully leaving his daughter to her long sleep, surrounded by terrifying flames.

First performance: Munich, June 26, 1870.

First performance as part of a *Ring* cycle: Bayreuth, August 14, 1876.

First performance in the U.S.: New York, Academy of Music, April 2, 1887.

First Washington National Opera performance: December 9, 1974.

Orchestra: 3 flutes, 1 piccolo, 3 oboes, 1 English horn, 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 8 French horns (4 doubling on Wagner tubas), 3 trumpets, 1 bass trumpet, 2 trombones, 1 bass trombone, 1 contrabass trombone, 1 tuba, 2 timpani, 2 percussionists, 2 harps; 47 strings (13 first violins, 11 second violins, 9 violas, 8 cellos, 6 basses).

Backstage instruments: An alpenhorn is used during the Act II fight scene to simulate the sound of the stierhorn, a rough-sounding primitive instrument made from the horn of a bull or a cow.

Conductor
Philippe Auguin

Director
Francesca Zambello

Senior Associate Director
Christian Räth

Associate Director
Laurie Feldman

Set Designer
Michael Yeargan

Costume Designer
Catherine Zuber

Lighting Designer
Mark McCullough

Projections Designed by
Jan Hartley
Remounted by
S. Katy Tucker

Movement Director
Denni Sayers

Hair and Makeup Designer
Anne Ford-Coates
for Elsen Associates

Fight Master
Joe Isenberg

Cover Conductor
Derrick Inouye

Assistant Conductors
Thomas Bagwell
Michael Baitzer
Justina Lee
Stephanie Rhodes

Diction Coaches
Irene Spiegelman
Thomas Bagwell

Assistant Director
Jennifer Harber

Stage Manager
Lynn Krynicki

Co-production with
San Francisco Opera

THE VALKYRIE

Die Walküre

The Ring of the Nibelung—Part I

Music drama in three acts by Richard Wagner
Libretto by the composer
Performed in German with Projected English Titles

Monday, May 2, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, May 11, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, May 18, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.

CAST

(in order of vocal appearance)

Siegmund	Christopher Ventris
Sieglinde	Meagan Miller
Hunding	Raymond Aceto*
Wotan	Alan Held
Brünnhilde	Catherine Foster* (May 2 & 11) Nina Stemme* (May 18)
Fricka	Elizabeth Bishop
Gerhilde	Marcy Stonikas*
Helmwige	Lori Phillips
Waltraute	Catherine Martin
Schwertleite	Lindsay Ammann
Ortlinde	Melody Moore
Siegrune	Eve Gigliotti*
Grimgerde	Renée Tatum
Rossweisse	Daryl Freedman ‡

Washington National Opera Orchestra

*Washington National Opera Debut

‡Current member of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

The performances on May 2 and May 11 are audio described
by Andrea Okwesa or Carolina Carter

The performance is approximately 5 hours and 10 minutes.

Act I – 70 minutes

Intermission – 40 minutes

Act II – 95 minutes

Intermission – 35 minutes

Act III – 70 minutes

SIEGFRIED

Events between *The Valkyrie* and *Siegfried*

- *Eighteen years have elapsed since the end of The Valkyrie.*
- *Sieglinde has died giving birth to Siegfried. The fragments of Siegmund's sword Nothung have come into the possession of Mime, Alberich's brother.*
- *Mime has raised the young Siegfried, preparing him to recover the Nibelung hoard of gold—the Gold, the Ring, and the Tarnhelm—which he then expects Siegfried to yield to him.*

ACT I

Mime has set up a metal forge in a deserted area near the spot where a transformed Fafner guards the treasure. Siegfried demands a sword from Mime, but every weapon the Nibelung forges is easily shattered by Siegfried. Commanding Mime to reforge the fragments of a sword purportedly left to Siegfried by his deceased mother, the young man learns more from Mime about his heritage.

Wotan, who now wanders the world incognito, approaches Mime and challenges him to a battle of wits, proposing that they each pose three questions to the other. When Mime is unable to answer the final question, Wotan reveals that only a person without fear can reforge Siegfried's sword, and that person will kill Mime. After Wotan departs, the terrified Mime resolves to teach Siegfried fear in order to save himself. But Mime faces a dilemma: if Siegfried learns fear, who will forge the sword that can kill Fafner and regain the golden hoard?

When Siegfried returns to claim his sword, Mime tries to teach the young man to fear. Siegfried, still immune to fear, successfully reforges Siegmund's sword and goes off with Mime to reclaim the golden hoard from Fafner. Unbeknownst to Siegfried, Mime has brewed a poisoned drink to give him after he triumphs over Fafner.

ACT II

Alberich, eager to regain the golden hoard, keeps watch near the place where Fafner sleeps and guards it. Meanwhile Fafner has used the magic Tarnhelm to transform himself into an invincible form. Wotan arrives and warns Alberich of Mime's designs on the Ring and then rouses Fafner so that Alberich may demand the Ring from him in exchange for warning him of Siegfried's approach. Fafner refuses, and Wotan leaves.

Siegfried arrives with Mime, who tries to make him fear Fafner. But Siegfried instead resolves to approach Fafner and sends Mime away. Siegfried listens to the birds and

fashions a makeshift pipe to imitate them. When the pipe fails to communicate with the birds, Siegfried tries his horn. Fafner emerges and Siegfried kills him. The dying Fafner warns Siegfried against Mime's treachery, and his lifeblood renders Siegfried instantly able to understand the birds.

When Siegfried goes into Fafner's hiding place, Mime approaches Alberich and the two brothers fight over the golden hoard. Siegfried emerges with the Tarnhelm and the Ring as Mime and Alberich hide. A forest bird warns Siegfried to beware of Mime, who emerges and offers Siegfried the poisoned drink. Now able to understand the true meaning of Mime's words, Siegfried refuses it and kills Mime. The forest bird counsels Siegfried to penetrate the wall of fire surrounding Brünnhilde, his destined bride.

ACT III

Wotan visits Erda in a last-ditch effort to avert a disastrous future. When she advises him to seek guidance from Brünnhilde, he tells her of their daughter's disobedience and punishment, and the dismayed Erda becomes unwilling to reveal more. Wotan abandons Erda, informing her that he will bequeath the world to Siegfried.

Just then, Siegfried arrives and Wotan questions him about his sword. This irritates Siegfried and he tells the old man to leave him alone. Wotan bars Siegfried's way with his spear, which Siegfried shatters, accusing Wotan of having killed his father. Wotan collects the fragments of the spear as we see him for the last time.

Siegfried plunges through the fire and awakens the sleeping Brünnhilde. Though Brünnhilde realizes that she is now a mortal woman and must obey Siegfried, she welcomes him and learns the meaning of love for herself.

First performance: Bayreuth, August 16, 1876.

First performance in the U.S.: New York, Metropolitan Opera, November 9, 1887.

First Washington National Opera performance: May 2, 2009.

Orchestra: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 1 piccolo, 2 oboes, 1 English horn, 3 clarinets, 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 8 French horns (4 doubling on Wagner tubas), 3 trumpets, 1 bass trumpet, 2 trombones, 1 bass trombone, 1 contrabass trombone, 1 tuba, 2 timpani, 2 percussionists, 2 harps; 47 strings (13 first violins, 11 second violins, 9 violas, 8 cellos, 6 basses).

Backstage instruments: 1 English horn for the Siegfried/reed scene; 1 horn for Siegfried's horn calls.

Conductor
Philippe Auguin

Director
Francesca Zambello

Senior Associate Director
Christian Räth

Associate Director
Laurie Feldman

Set Designer
Michael Yeargan

Costume Designer
Catherine Zuber

Lighting Designer
Mark McCullough

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Assistant Conductors
Thomas Bagwell
Michael Baitzer
Justina Lee
Stephanie Rhodes

Diction Coaches
Irene Spiegelman
Thomas Bagwell

Assistant Director
Andrea Dorf McGray

Stage Manager
Lynn Krynicki

Co-production with
San Francisco Opera

SIEGFRIED

The Ring of the Nibelung—Part II

Music drama in three acts by Richard Wagner
Libretto by the composer
Performed in German with Projected English Titles

Wednesday, May 4, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.
Friday, May 13, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.
Friday, May 20, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.

CAST

(in order of vocal appearance)

Mime	David Cangelosi
Siegfried	Daniel Brenna*
The Wanderer (Wotan)	Alan Held
Alberich	Gordon Hawkins
Fafner	Soloman Howard ±
Forest Bird	Jacqueline Echols ±
Erda	Lindsay Ammann
Brünnhilde	Catherine Foster (May 4 & 13) Nina Stemme (May 20)

Washington National Opera Orchestra

*Washington National Opera Debut
± Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

The performances on May 4 and May 13 are audio described
by Carolina Carter or Andrea Okwesa

The performance is approximately 4 hours and 55 minutes.

Act I – 75 minutes
Intermission – 40 minutes
Act II – 70 minutes
Intermission – 35 minutes
Act III – 75 minutes

TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

PROLOGUE

The three Norns, daughters of the earth goddess Erda, are busy weaving the rope of fate. Predicting Valhalla's imminent fall, they notice that the rope of destiny is starting to fray and unravel. As the sisters try to make it taut, it snaps and they descend in terror to find Erda.

At dawn, Siegfried and Brünnhilde awaken from their night together. Though fearful that she may lose him, Brünnhilde encourages Siegfried to travel in search of heroic challenges. He gives her the Ring as a pledge of his love.

ACT I

In their home, Gunther, leader of the Gibichungs, and his sister Gutrune plot how to secure the Ring. Their half-brother Hagen, son of Alberich, advises Gunther to marry Brünnhilde. By means of a magic potion, Siegfried could be induced to forget his vows and win her for Gunther in return for Gutrune's hand. Siegfried's horn call announces his approach. Gunther welcomes him, and Gutrune seals his fate by offering him the potion. He drinks and instantly forgets all about Brünnhilde and agrees to deliver her for Gunther.

On Brünnhilde's rock, Waltraute visits her sister and tells her that she must yield the Ring to the Rhinemaidens or all is doomed. When she refuses, Waltraute departs in despair. Dusk falls as Siegfried appears, but he is now disguised as Gunther by means of the Tarnhelm. He wrests the Ring from the terrified Brünnhilde and claims her as Gunther's bride.

ACT II

Alberich appears to Hagen and urges his sleeping son to get back the Ring from Siegfried. As dawn breaks, Siegfried returns and announces he has won Brünnhilde for Gunther. Hagen calls everyone to witness the joining of the two couples: Brünnhilde and Gunther, Siegfried and Gutrune. As they enter, Brünnhilde notices her ring on Siegfried's finger. She deplores the trickery through which she was won and proclaims Siegfried to be her true husband. The hero, still under the potion's spell, vows that he has never wronged the woman, and Brünnhilde angrily swears that he is lying. Bent on revenge, she reveals to Hagen the hero's one vulnerable spot: a blade in his back will kill him. Taunted by Brünnhilde and lured by Hagen's description of the Ring's power, Gunther joins in the murder plot.

ACT III

On the banks of the destroyed Rhine, the three Rhinemaidens mourn their lost treasure. Siegfried approaches and the maidens plead for the Ring, but he ignores them. When Siegfried's hunting party arrives, he describes his boyhood with Mime, the killing of Fafner, and finally—after Hagen gives him a potion to restore his memory—his wooing of Brünnhilde. Pretending indignation, Hagen plunges a spear into Siegfried's back and the hero dies.

At the Gibichung Hall, Gutrune nervously awaits Siegfried's return. Hagen tells her that Siegfried has been slain by a wild boar, but she accuses Gunther of murder and Hagen admits the crime. Quarreling over the Ring, Hagen kills Gunther but recoils in fear from the prize when the dead hero raises his arm. Brünnhilde appears and orders a funeral pyre built for Siegfried. Musing on the gods' responsibility for his death, she returns the Ring to the Rhinemaidens and walks into the flames. As the world is consumed by fire, the Rhine overflows its banks and the Rhinemaidens, dragging Hagen to his death, regain their treasure. Brünnhilde's death frees the Ring of its curse.

First performance: Bayreuth, August 17, 1876.

First performance in the U.S.: New York, Metropolitan Opera, January 25, 1888.

First Washington National Opera performance:
A concert performance on November 7, 2009.

Orchestra: 3 flutes, 1 piccolo, 3 oboes, 1 English horn, 3 clarinets, 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 8 French horns (4 doubling on Wagner tubas), 3 trumpets, 1 bass trumpet, 2 trombones, 1 bass trombone, 1 contrabass trombone, 1 tuba, 2 timpani, 2 percussionists, 2 harps; 47 strings (13 first violins, 11 second violins, 9 violas, 8 cellos, 6 basses).

Backstage instruments: 3 alpenhorns are used to simulate the sound of stierhorns, rough-sounding primitive instruments made from the horn of a bull or a cow; 3 added horns for the echoing horn calls.

Conductor
Philippe Auguin

Director
Francesca Zambello

Senior Associate Director
Christian Räth

Associate Director
Laurie Feldman

Set Designer
Michael Yeargan

Costume Designer
Catherine Zuber

Lighting Designer
Mark McCullough

Projections Designed by
S. Katy Tucker
Based on Original Designs by
Jan Hartley and **S. Katy Tucker**

Movement Director
Denni Sayers

Hair and Makeup Designer
Anne Ford-Coates
for Elsen Associates

Chorus Master
Steve Gathman

Fight Master
Joe Isenberg

Cover Conductor
John Keenan

Assistant Conductors
Thomas Bagwell
Steven Gathman
Glenn Lewis
Robert Mollicone
Ken Weiss

Diction Coaches
Irene Spiegelman
Thomas Bagwell

Assistant Director
Amanda Consol

Stage Manager
Lisa Anderson

Production from San Francisco Opera

TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Götterdämmerung *The Ring of the Nibelung—Part III*

Music drama in a prologue and three acts by Richard Wagner
Libretto by the composer
Performed in German with Projected English Titles

Friday, May 6, 2016 at 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 15, 2016 at 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 22, 2016 at 1:00 p.m.

CAST

(in order of vocal appearance)

First Norn	Lindsay Ammann
Second Norn	Jamie Barton*
Third Norn	Marcy Stonikas
Brünnhilde	Catherine Foster (May 6 & 15) Nina Stemme (May 22)
Siegfried	Daniel Brenna
Gunther	Ryan McKinny
Hagen	Eric Halfvarson
Gutrune	Melissa Citro*
Waltraute	Jamie Barton
Alberich	Gordon Hawkins
Woglinde	Jacqueline Echols ±
Wellgunde	Catherine Martin
Flosshilde	Renée Tatum

Washington National Opera Chorus **Washington National Opera Orchestra**

*Washington National Opera Debut

± Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

The performances on May 6 and May 15 are audio described
by Andrea Okwesa or Renee McKinney

The performance is approximately 5 hours and 25 minutes.

Prologue and Act I – 120 minutes

Intermission – 40 minutes

Act II – 60 minutes

Intermission – 30 minutes

Act III – 75 minutes

THE WORLD OF *THE RING*

THE GODS



Erda
Goddess of wisdom, fate, and Earth
LINDSAY AMMANN



Wotan/The Wanderer
King of the gods
ALAN HELD

THE NORNS

Weavers of fate



First Norn
LINDSAY AMMANN



Second Norn
JAMIE BARTON



Third Norn
MARCY STONIKAS

THE VALKYRIES



Siegrune
EVE GIGLIOTTI



Grimgerde
RENÉE TATUM



Ortlinde
MELODY MOORE



Gerhilde
MARCY STONIKAS



Brünnhilde
CATHERINE FOSTER
(Cycles I & II)



NINA STEMME
(Cycle III)

*Nina Stemme's performances
as Brünnhilde are underwritten
in part by the
Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation.*



Waltraute
CATHERINE MARTIN
(*The Valkyrie*)



Rossweisse
DARYL FREEDMAN



Schwertleite
LINDSAY AMMANN



Helmwig
LORI PHILLIPS

*Catherine Martin's performances as
Wellgunde and Waltraute
are underwritten by
Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey P. Pohanka.*



JAMIE BARTON
(*Twilight of the Gods*)

THE RHINEMAIDENS



Flosshilde
RENÉE TATUM



Woglinde
JACQUELINE ECHOLS



Wellgunde
CATHERINE MARTIN



Fricka
Goddess of marriage
ELIZABETH BISHOP



Donner
God of thunder
RYAN MCKINNY



Freia
Goddess of love,
youth, and beauty
MELODY MOORE



Froh
God of spring
and happiness
RICHARD COX

THE MORTALS



Siegmund
CHRISTOPHER VENTRIS



Sieglinde
MEAGAN MILLER



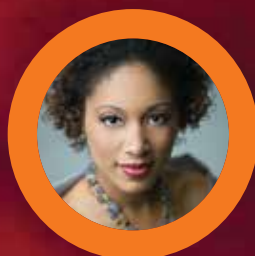
Loge
Demigod of fire
WILLIAM BURDEN



Hunding
RAYMOND ACETO



Siegfried
DANIEL BRENNAN



Forest Bird
JACQUELINE ECHOLS

THE GIANTS



Fasolt
JULIAN CLOSE



Fafner
SOLOMAN HOWARD

*Soloman Howard's performances as Fafner
are underwritten by Mr. Jeffrey P. Cunard.*



Mime
DAVID CANGELOSI



Alberich
GORDON HAWKINS

THE NIBELUNGS



Hagen
ERIC HALFVARSON



Gutrune
MELISSA CITRO



Gunther
RYAN MCKINNY

WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA ORCHESTRA

Philippe Auguin, Music Director

VIOLIN I

Oleg Rylatko, *Concertmaster*
Eric Lee, *Associate*
Concertmaster
Ko Sugiyama, *Assistant*
Concertmaster
Zino Bogachev +
Joan Cataldo
Michelle Kim**
Karen Lowry-Tucker
Susan Midkiff
Margaret Thomas**
Cristina Constantinescu*
Sonya Hayes*
Jennifer Himes*
Simon Rundlett*
Sarah Sherry*
Kei Sugiyama*

VIOLIN II

Julia Grueninger Cox,**
Principal
Najin Kim, *Assistant Principal*
Richard Chang +
Xi Chen
Jessica Dan Fan**
Martha Kaufman
Timothy Macek
Victoria Noyes
Julie Ahn*
Sonya Chung*
Agnieszka Kowalsky*
Arimine Graham*
Alexandra Mikhlin*

VIOLA

Allyson Goodman, *Principal*
Shelley Coss, *Assistant*
Principal
Philippe Chao +
Leon Neal
Elizabeth Pulju-Owen
Uri Wassertzug
Chiara Dieguez*
Stephanie Knutsen*
Derek Smith*

CELLO

Amy Frost
Baumgarten, *Principal*
Elizabeth Davis,**
Assistant Principal

Ignacio Alcover+
Timothy H. Butler
Kristen Wojcik
Igor Zubkovsky
Yvonne Caruthers*
Danielle Cho*
Kerry van Laanen*

BASS

Robert D'Imperio, *Principal*
Frank Carnovale,
Assistant Principal
Nathaniel West
Marta Bradley*
Jeff Koczela*
Edgardo Malaga*

FLUTE

Adria Sternstein Foster,
Principal
Stephani Stang-Ferry,
Assistant Principal
John Lagerquist
Beverly Crawford*

PICCOLO

John Lagerquist
Beverly Crawford*

OBOE

Igor Leschishin, *Principal*
Carole Libelo,
Assistant Principal
Kathleen Golding**
David Garcia*
Shawn Welk*

ENGLISH HORN

Carole Libelo

CLARINET

David Jones, *Principal*
Lora Ferguson,
Assistant Principal
Ashley Booher
Suzanne Gekker*

BASS CLARINET

Ashley Booher

BASSOON

Joseph Grimmer,** *Principal*
Christopher Jewell,
Assistant Principal
Samuel Blair

CONTRABASSOON

Samuel Blair

HORN

Geoffrey Pilkington, *Principal*
John Peiffer,
Assistant Principal
Robert Odmark
Peter de Boor
Güloya Altay*
David Byrd-Marrow*
Wei-Ping Chou*
Shona Goldberg-Leopold*
Shawn Hagen*
Julie Landsman*
Christian Loferer*
Nat Willson*
Dan Wions*

WAGNER TUBEN

Güloya Altay*
Shawn Hagen*
Christian Loferer*
Dan Wions*

ALPENHORN

John Peiffer
Shona Goldberg-Leopold*
Nat Willson*

TRUMPET

Tim White, *Principal*
Christopher Tranchitella,
Assistant Principal
Michael Rossi

BASS TRUMPET

Douglas Rosenthal

TROMBONE

Lee Rogers, *Principal*
Douglas Rosenthal,
Assistant Principal
Stephen Dunkel
Jeremy Moeller*

BASS TROMBONE

Stephen Dunkel
Dave Becker*

TUBA/CIMBASSO

Michael Bunn,** *Principal*
Seth Cook*

TIMPANI

Jonathan Rance, *Principal*
Greg Akagi, *Assistant Principal*

PERCUSSION

John Spirtas, *Principal*
Greg Akagi
Bill Richards*
Mark Carson*
John Kilkenny*
Gerald Novak*
Douglas Wallace*

HARP

Susan Robinson, *Principal*
Rebecca Smith*

MUSIC STAFF

Assistant Conductors

Thomas Bagwell
Michael Baitzer
Justina Lee
Glenn Lewis
Robert Mollicone
Stephanie Rhodes
Ken Weiss

Diction Coaches

Irene Spiegelman
Thomas Bagwell

WNO STAFF

Whitney McColley,
Orchestra Manager
Shelley Friedman,
Music Librarian

+ begins alphabetical listing of musicians who participate in a system of revolving chairs within the string section

* Guest musician

** On leave

WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA CHORUS

Tim Augustin	Patrick Cook	Sammy Huh	Erin Passmore
Connie Coffelt Bailey	Keith Craig	Patricia Hussey	Keith H. Pennick
James S. Bailey	Tad Czyzewski	Annadaire Ingram	Sean Pflueger
Marta Kirilloff Barber	Maria Dolan	Devandas James	Vito Pietanza
Andrew Bawden	Aurelio Dominguez	Wayne Jennings	Patricia Portillo
Lisa Berger	Douglas S. Dykstra	William Jones	William Powell
Michael Bicoy	Kyle Engler	DongKeon Kim	Angela K. Pregano
J Austin Bitner	Angeli Ferrette	Linda Kirk	Frederic Rey
Teresa R. Bonzagni	Harvey D. Fort	Eunseo Koo	Norwood Robinson
John Boulanger	Jeffrey Gates	Melissa Kornacki	Darnell Roulhac
Charles Bowers	Vijay Ghosh	Shaina Kuhn	Matthew Schwartz
Jason Buckwalter	Grace Gori	Jaenam Lee	James Shaffran
Robert Cantrell	David Gradin	Jarrood Lee	Pamela Thérèse Simonson
Eduardo Castro	Ethan Greene	Jennifer Mathews	Margaret Stricklett
Adam Caughey	Denise Gulley	Rob McGinness	Michael Talley
Suzanne S. Chadwick	Jason Hentrich	Matthew Joseph Minor	Aaron Theno
Jonathan Champ	Jonathan Hoffman	David B. Morris	Justin T. Wilson
Jihanna Charlton-Davis	Joshua Hong	Seong Won Nam	
William Commins	Nicholas Houhoulis	Matthew Osifchin	

SUPERNUMERARIES

Nyah Abdullah	Emma McKinny
Meredith Abramson	Louis McKinny
Arya Anoush Balian	Aksel Moeller
Olivia Blucker	Malin Moeller
Sophia Blucker	Emma Sophie Moore
Cassandra Branson	Brendan O'Connell
Clarissa Branson	Evelyn Penhoet
Ronia Brown	Alexandra Perkins
Elizabeth Burch	Christopher Rios
Aoife Butler	Stella Roehrig
Lauren Christopher	Devon Ross
Elisabeth Desmond	Nicolas Rossi
Yasmeen Enahora	Sarah Sherman
JaLynn Evans	Kelli Smith
Penelope Gallagher	Kerry Smith
Hannah Goldberg	Randy Snight
Kathy Gordon	Matt Stover
Jordyn Griffin	Sarah Thau
Pasquale Guiducci	John Tinpe
Abigail Jamison	Morgan Touchette
Kendall Jones	Mike Van Maele
Stephanie Kara Jordan	Rachelle Vann
Justin Kydd	Jaeli Velez
London Lawson-Bailey	Gemma Volz
Taylor Lewis-Richardson	Janika Webb
Keaton Linzau	Cordario Worrell
Sabrina Linzau	Khloe Yelverton
Vivienne Lyons	Sophia Zinn
Avery McDonald	

PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant Stage Managers	Projection Coordinator	Associate Properties Coordinator
Sean Corcoran	Maria Mendoza	Amanda Relaford
Tracy D. Hofmann	Head Carpenter	Technical Assistant
Laura R. Krause	Howard L. Sacks	Kyle Leinneweber
Jill Krynicki	Assistant Carpenters	Wardrobe Supervisor
Diane Lin	Frank M. Page	Tim Timlin
Kristy Matero	Mike Mullen	Assistant Wardrobe Supervisor
Production Assistants	Assistant Carpenters—Flies	Martha Timlin
Margaret Edyvean	Richard D. Page	Projected English Titles Coordinator
Patricia Garvey	Shane Angus	Corinne M. Hayes
Lighting Supervisor	Head Electrician	Child Supervisors
A.J. Guban	Mark M. Cohee	Mia Athey
Associate Lighting Designer	Assistant Electrician	Patrick Derrickson
JAX Messenger	Eric W. King	Erin Dunn
Assistant Lighting Designer	Head Sound	Tiffany Gauthier
Derek Jones	Dave Crook	Lyndsey Gore
Projection Programmer	Head Properties	Hannah Martin
Erik Docktor	Charles H. Vaughan IV	Jackie Rosen
Projection Design Associate	Assistant, Properties	Rachel Spears
Robert Figueira	David N. Mairs	Elle Sullivan
Video System Designer and Engineer	Swing Assistant	and Friends of the Kennedy Center volunteers
Russell E. Adamson III	Stephen A. Maurer	
	Properties Coordinator	
	Guy Palace	

MEET THE ARTISTS



French conductor **Philippe Auguin** (*Conductor*) is the music director of WNO and the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra. Last season at WNO he conducted Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* (2015), and he has recently led the orchestra in performances of *La bohème* (2014), Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* (2013), and *The Magic Flute* (2014). He made his debut with WNO in 2009 conducting Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* in concert. He is a leading conductor of his generation, performing masterworks in the most prestigious opera houses around the world. His extraordinary career has taken him to the most important international music capitals, including Vienna, London, Berlin, and New York where he has led performances of standard Italian repertoire as well as the core of French and German operatic works. His work on the podium has taken him to every corner of the world from Opera Australia in Sydney to the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires to leading orchestras throughout Asia. Guest performances this season include *Otello* at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona and *Madama Butterfly* with the Vienna State Opera. A consummate Wagner expert, he brought Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* to the International Beijing Music Festival in 2005, marking the first-ever performances of the complete *Ring* in China. He has led performances of *Der fliegende Holländer* at Deutsche Oper Berlin, Bavarian State Opera, and the Savonlinna Opera Festival; *Tannhäuser* at Hamburg State Opera, Opera Australia, and the Beijing Music Festival; *Lohengrin* with the Metropolitan Opera and Opera Stuttgart; and *Parsifal* with Opéra de Nice and in Nürnberg. Among his many recent symphonic performances, he led the NHK Symphony Orchestra of Tokyo in celebration of Wagner's bicentennial with a concert of overtures and excerpts.



An internationally recognized director of opera and theater, **Francesca Zambello** (*Director*) is the Artistic Director of Washington National Opera. She has directed many WNO productions, including *Of Mice and Men* (debut in 2001), *Fidelio* (2003), *Die Walküre* (2003 and 2007), *Billy Budd* (2004), *Porgy and Bess* (2005 and 2010), *Das Rheingold* (2006), *Siegfried* (2009), *Salome* (2010), *Show Boat* (2013), *The Force of Destiny* (2013), the world premiere children's opera *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me* (2013), *Florença in the Amazon* (2014), *The Little Prince* (2014), and *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (2015). Since September 2010 she has also been the Artistic and General Director of The Glimmerglass Festival in Central New York. Her American directing debut took place at the Houston Grand Opera with a production of *Fidelio* in 1984, and her European debut took place at Teatro la Fenice in Venice with *Beatrice di Tenda* in 1987. Collaborating with outstanding artists and designers and

promoting emerging talent, she takes a special interest in new music theater works, innovative productions, and producing theater and opera for wider audiences. She has staged many new productions at major theaters, festivals, and opera houses in Europe, Asia, and the United States. Her awards include the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by the French government, the Russian Federation's medal for Service to Culture, the Palme d'Or in Germany, the Golden Mask in Russia, two Helpmann Awards in Australia, and the Medallion Society Award from San Francisco Opera for 30 years of artistic service. In London, she has also won three Olivier Awards from the Society of Theaters and two Evening Standard Awards for Best Musical and Best Opera. She served as the Artistic Advisor to the San Francisco Opera from 2005 to 2011 and as the Artistic Director of the Skylight Theater from 1987 to 1992, and as an adjunct professor at Yale University. An American who grew up in Europe, she speaks French, Italian, German, and Russian. She attended Moscow University and Colgate University and began her career as an Assistant Director to the late Jean-Pierre Ponnelle.



American bass **Raymond Aceto** (*Hunding*) makes his WNO debut with these performances. He has established an important presence among the world's leading opera companies and symphony orchestras, and his performances continue to gather both popular and critical acclaim. Recent operatic highlights of the 2015–2016 season include the Royal Opera House tour to Japan as Banquo in Phyllida Lloyd's production of Verdi's *Macbeth* and Il Commendatore in Kasper Holten's production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, both under the baton of Sir Antonio Pappano. He continued his season as Scarpia in Puccini's *Tosca* with The Dallas Opera conducted by Emmanuel Villaume. He also made his Australian debut as Walter in Verdi's *Luisa Miller*, in a new production at Opera Australia. He will conclude his season with Santa Fe Opera as Ashby in Puccini's *La fanciulla del West*, directed by Richard Jones and conducted by Emmanuel Villaume, and Frère Laurent in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, in a new production directed by Stephen Lawless and conducted by Harry Bicket. In past seasons, he has performed at the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Fafner in *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried* and at The Dallas Opera in the roles of Fafner and Fasolt in *Das Rheingold*. He is an alumnus of the Wolf Trap Opera young artist program.



American contralto **Lindsay Ammann** (*Erda*, *Schwertleite*, and *First Norn*) makes her WNO debut with these performances. She will also debut at Grand Théâtre de Genève as Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*, North Carolina Opera as Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, and sing

Verdi's *Messa da requiem* with the South Dakota Symphony. She recently debuted at Aalto-Musiktheater Essen as Jezibaba in a new production of *Rusalka* and also debuted at the Canadian Opera Company as Schwertleite in *Die Walküre*. She was recently a member of the ensemble at the Stuttgart State Opera, where she sang Dame Quickly in *Falstaff*, Olga in *Eugene Onegin*, in the world premiere of *Peter Pan*, Mary in *Der fliegende Holländer*, Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*, and First Norn and Flosshilde in *Götterdämmerung*, while also covering Waltraute. She was also seen in productions of *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Die Zauberflöte*. She made her Casals Festival debut in Puerto Rico as Brangäne in a concert version of *Tristan und Isolde*. She made her Metropolitan Opera debut in Robert Lepage's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* as Rossweisse in *Die Walküre* under the baton of James Levine. She can be seen on the *Die Walküre* DVD from the Metropolitan Opera's *Ring* cycle and the documentary *Wagner's Dream*, as well as heard on the Grammy Award-winning *Götterdämmerung* CD, all commercially available on Deutsche Grammophon. She is an alumna of the Wolf Trap Opera young artist program.



American mezzo-soprano **Jamie Barton** (*Second Norn* and *Waltraute*) makes her WNO debut with these performances. Recipient of the 2015 Richard Tucker Award, she is also winner of both Main and Song Prizes at the 2013 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, winner of the 2007 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and a Grammy Award nominee. This season, she returns to the Metropolitan Opera as Giovanna Seymour (*Anna Bolena*) and makes an impressive set of company debuts: Adalgisa (*Norma*) at LA Opera, Cornelia (*Giulio Cesare*) at Oper Frankfurt, Elizabeth Proctor (*The Crucible*) at The Glimmerglass Festival, and Fenena (*Nabucco*) at both Seattle Opera and the Royal Opera House. Her concert season includes her BBC Proms debut in the Brahms *Alto Rhapsody*, a work she also performs in her return to the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. Other highlights include her Russian debut with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra and recitals with San Francisco Performances, Ann Arbor's University Musical Society, Vocal Arts DC, and the Tucson Desert Song Festival. Recent performances include Adalgisa at the Metropolitan Opera and San Francisco Opera, Fricka (*Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*) at Houston Grand Opera, Azucena (*Il trovatore*) at Cincinnati Opera, and both Giovanna Seymour and Magdalene (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Future projects include a debut at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and returns to Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. At the Metropolitan Opera, she will appear as Jezibaba in a new production of *Rusalka*, Fenena, Adalgisa, and as Fricka in Wagner's *Ring* cycle. She is an alumna of the Wolf Trap Opera young artist program.



American mezzo-soprano **Elizabeth Bishop** (*Fricka*) has appeared in more than a dozen roles at WNO since her debut in 1997, most recently as Mother Marie in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (2015), Brangäne in *Tristan und Isolde* (2013), and Gertrude in *Hamlet* (2010). In demand in Wagnerian roles, she appeared in previous productions of Wagner's *Ring* cycle at WNO (Fricka in *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* and Second Norn in *Götterdämmerung*), at the Metropolitan Opera, and at The Dallas Opera. Other successes at home include her appearances with Washington Concert Opera, where she sang Principessa in *Adriana Lecouvreur*, Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and Sara in *Roberto Devereux*. She enjoys a long relationship with the Metropolitan Opera, beginning with her win at the National Council Auditions in 1993, and where past roles include Teresa in *La sonnambula*, Enrichetta in *I puritani*, Didon in *Les Troyens*, Fenena in *Nabucco*, Venus in *Tannhäuser*, Mère Marie in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, the title role in *Iphigénie en Tauride*, and in productions of *War and Peace*. LA Opera appearances include *Der Zwerg*, *Jenůfa*, and *Der zerbrochene Krug*. Other significant roles in her repertoire include Amneris in *Aida*, Ioanna in *The Maid of New Orleans*, and Kundry in *Parsifal*. Further highlights this season include her role debut as Herodias in *Salome* in Cincinnati, her return to Grand Teton Music Festival for Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with Donald Runnicles, and Verdi's *Requiem* with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra conducted by Marin Alsop. She recently established the Potomac Vocal Institute to help further the careers of young artists.



American tenor **Daniel Brenna** (*Siegfried*) makes his WNO debut with these performances. He is considered one of the youngest and most convincing Siegfrieds around. His Siegfried has been much celebrated in theaters such as the Longborough Festival in 2011 and Stuttgart State Opera in 2014. He also appeared in Opéra de Dijon's *Ring* as Siegmund. His *Tannhäuser* at the Dortmund Theatres was also critically acclaimed. His international career began in 2011 when he portrayed Aron in *Moses and Aron* at Opernhaus Zürich. Before, he already enjoyed huge success in this very role at the Miskolc Opera Festival in Budapest and at the Palace of Arts in 2010. In the summer 2012, he made his widely noticed debut as Desportes in Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* at the Salzburg Festival. This role also took him to the Bavarian State Opera in Munich in 2014 and to Teatro alla Scala in Milan in 2015. He performs with renowned conductors and directors, including Christoph von Dohnányi, Kirill Petrenko, Seiji Ozawa, Daniel Harding, Ingo Metzmacher, Stefan Soltesz, Michael Schønwandt, Achim Freyer, Andreas Moses, Alvis Hermanis, Andreas Baesler, Peter Konwitschny, and William

MEET THE ARTISTS

Kentridge. He made his successful debut at the Metropolitan Opera as Alwa in Alban Berg's *Lulu* in the fall of 2015, a role he performed previously at the Dutch National Opera in Amsterdam. Next season he will return to the Met as Laca in *Jenůfa* and will sing Siegfried at the Budapest Wagner Days with Maestro Ádám Fischer.



American tenor **William Burden** (*Loge*) makes his role debut as Loge in these performances. This season, he returned to the Lyric Opera of Chicago for the world premiere of Jimmy López's *Bel Canto*, and this summer returns to San Francisco Opera as Laca in *Jenůfa*. He has

won an outstanding reputation in a wide-ranging repertoire throughout Europe and North America, appearing with many prestigious opera companies including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Seattle Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Santa Fe Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Glyndebourne Opera Festival, Paris Opera, Munich State Opera, Canadian Opera Company, and the Saito Kinen Festival. He has also appeared with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, Berlin Philharmonic, BBC Symphony Orchestra, and with Les Arts Florissants on tour throughout Europe. His many recordings include Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony (SFS Media), Barber's *Vanessa* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (Chandos), and *Musique adorable: The Songs of Emmanuel Chabrier* (Hyperion). He also appeared in the Metropolitan Opera's *Live in HD* broadcast of Thomas Adès's *The Tempest*. Raised in Florida, he received his master's degree in vocal performance at Indiana University. As of the fall of 2015, he is also member of the faculty at the Mannes School of Music. He is an alumnus of the Wolf Trap Opera young artist program.



American tenor **David Cangelosi** (*Mime*) was last seen at WNO in *Pagliacci* (1997). He has firmly established himself as an artist who combines both excellent singing with winning characterizations. In 2004, he made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Mime in *Das Rheingold*, conducted by

James Levine; he has returned in multiple principal roles and *Ring*-related assignments over the past 12 years. Upcoming highlights include a multi-year performance and recording project of *The Ring* with the Hong Kong Philharmonic, his company debut with Houston Grand Opera (*Tosca*, *Eugene Onegin*), and reprising his signature role of Mime for the Boston Wagner Society. Other notable *Ring* highlights include a recording of the "Forging Scene" (*Siegfried*) with Plácido Domingo for *Scenes from the Ring* (EMI Classics) plus *Siegfried*

and full *Ring* cycles with Lyric Opera of Chicago and San Francisco Opera. Recent performances include his role debut as the Witch in *Hansel und Gretel*, *Salome* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, *The Cunning Little Vixen* with Cleveland Orchestra, and a concert with Saito Kinen Festival in Matsumoto, Japan. Career highlights include multiple appearances with Paris Opera, Carnegie Hall, Hollywood Bowl, San Francisco Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Washington National Opera, Santa Fe Opera, The Dallas Opera, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Venice Film Festival, and additional recordings with EMI Classics. He continues his close, multi-decade association with Lyric Opera of Chicago and also serves as the Artistic and Program Director of the Vann Vocal Institute in Montgomery, Alabama.



American soprano **Melissa Citro** (*Gutrune*) makes her WNO debut with these performances. Most recently she made her debut with San Francisco Opera as Freia in *Das Rheingold* and Gutrune in *Götterdämmerung*, and The Dallas Opera in the title role of *La Wally*. She also debuted the role of Sieglinde in *Die*

Walküre with Virginia Opera, covered Renée Fleming at the Metropolitan Opera as Rusalka and covered the role of Senta in San Francisco, and performed *Rusalka* with New Orleans Opera. Future engagements include Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, her return to the New Orleans Opera as Rosalinde, and her debut as Minnie in *La fanciulla del West* with Opera Colorado. Other recent engagements include Senta with Lyric Opera of Kansas City. In the 2009–2010 season, she made her debut at The Glimmerglass Festival as Magda in Menotti's *The Consul*. She also returned to LA Opera for the role of Third Norn in *Götterdämmerung* and made her Hawaii Opera Theatre debut as Ortlinde in *Die Walküre*. In 2009, she was also heard with the Richmond Symphony Orchestra in Strauss's *Vier letzte Lieder* with conductor Marc Taddei.



British bass **Julian Close** (*Fasolt*) makes his WNO debut with these performances. He has performed many Wagnerian roles throughout his career, including King Marke in *Tristan und Isolde* and Landgraf in *Tannhäuser* with Northern Wagner Orchestra, Fasner in both *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried* with Longborough Wagner Festival, Tituel in *Parsifal*, Steffano Colonna in *Rienzi*, *der Letzte der Tribunen*, Wotan in *Das Rheingold*, and Hagen in *Götterdämmerung*. This season, he returns to the Metropolitan Opera as Theatre Manager/Banker in *Lulu*. In future seasons, he rejoins the Metropolitan Opera roster, sings Hunding in *Die Walküre* with Saffron Opera Group, and performs Fasner in *Das Rheingold* at Minnesota Opera. Recent engagements include covering

Prince Galitsky in *Prince Igor* at the Metropolitan Opera, Theatre Manager/Banker in *Lulu* with Dutch National Opera, Don Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with the Longborough Festival, Hunding in a concert performance of *Die Walküre* with the Chandos Symphony Orchestra, Verdi's *Requiem* with the Eaton Christchurch Choir in Norwich, and a return to Welsh National Opera for *Moses und Aron* and *Nabucco*. Recently, he returned to Opera Project for *Madama Butterfly* and joined Opera Rara for Donizetti's *Les martyrs* at Royal Festival Hall. He has appeared at top opera houses including the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera North, Scottish Opera, Mid-Wales Opera, Lyric Opera Dublin, The Opera Project, Jubilee Opera, Opera Rara, and the Wexford, Buxton, Longborough, and English Bach Festivals.



American tenor **Richard Cox** (*Froh*) makes his WNO debut with these performances. This season, he returned to the Metropolitan Opera for *Tannhäuser* and debuted with the Tucson Symphony Orchestra in Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. He has appeared in many of the great opera

houses around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, LA Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival, Teatro Municipal de Santiago, Semperoper Dresden, and Oper Frankfurt. An accomplished concert singer and recitalist, he is on the roster of the Marilyn Horne Foundation and made his New York recital debut in the *On Wings of Song* recital series. He has also appeared with the Seattle Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, American Symphony Orchestra, and Orchestra of St. Luke's at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, and the Kennedy Center. The recipient of numerous awards and scholarships, he has earned grants from the George London Foundation, Sullivan Foundation, Opera Index, Inc., the Olga Forrai Foundation, Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation, and the Shoshana Foundation. He has been honored with a Lucrezia Bori grant for foreign study, the Vocal Arts Honors Recital at Alice Tully Hall, and the Campbell Watcher Memorial Award for singers from Santa Fe Opera. He holds degrees from Tennessee Technological University, Florida State University, and The Juilliard School.



American soprano **Jacqueline Echols** (*Woglinde* and *Forest Bird*) was seen earlier this season at WNO as Micaëla in *Carmen*. A graduate of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, she was seen in previous seasons as the Unicorn in the world premiere of Jeanine Tesori's *The*

Lion, the Unicorn, and Me; the First Lady in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* under the baton of Music Director Philippe Auguin; and as Clorinda in Rossini's *Cinderella*. In November 2015, she made her house and role debuts as Pip in LA Opera's production of

Moby-Dick. Recent seasons have seen her with North Carolina Opera as the title role in *La traviata* and Musetta in *La bohème*, as well as with The Glimmerglass Festival as Pamina in *The Magic Flute*, Giulietta in *King for a Day*, and Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, directed by Francesca Zambello. A native of Detroit, she is a 2012 second prize winner at the Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition. She completed her master's degree and artist diploma at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music (CCM), where she appeared as the Female Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia*, the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Anne Truelove in *The Rake's Progress*, and Pamina in *The Magic Flute*. Next season she returns to WNO as Sister Rose in *Dead Man Walking*.



British soprano **Catherine Foster** (*Brünnhilde*) makes her American and WNO debuts with these performances. She has fast become one of the most renowned Brünnhildes on stage today, having sung the role to great acclaim at Wagner's Bayreuth Festival under the

musical direction of Kirill Petrenko and the direction of Frank Castorf. She began singing Brünnhilde in Weimar in 2007, going on to sing the role on many international stages such as Hamburg State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Berlin State Opera, the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, with the Dutch National Opera for its final staging of Pierre Audi's world renowned *Ring* in 2014, in Shanghai with the Cologne Opera, and in Helsinki, Essen, Budapest, Tokyo, and Riga. From 2001 to 2011, she was a member of the ensemble of the German National Theatre (DNT), where she was first engaged singing roles such as Mimi, Senta, Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser* and *Don Carlo*, Leonora in *Il trovatore* and *Fidelio*, and Elektra in *Idomeneo*. She continued to develop vocally and had the fortune of moving into the more dramatic repertoire in Weimar with roles such as Tosca, Abigaille, Isolde, Brünnhilde, and Strauss's Elektra. Through her work on *The Ring* and other operas, she has had the privilege to work with conductors such as Kirill Petrenko, Marek Janowski, Daniel Barenboim, Simone Young, Ádám Fischer, Hartmut Haenchen, and Donald Runnicles, among others. Recent engagements include the title role in *Elektra* with Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin, *Nabucco* in Stuttgart, the title role in *Turandot* at Deutsche Oper Berlin, and performances of Mahler's Symphony No. 8 in Poland. Future engagements include Brünnhilde at the Bayreuth Festival, *Elektra* in Weisbaden and São Paulo, and a concert with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra at the Musikverein. She began her studies in the UK with Pamela Cook MBE from 1993 to 2013, where she studied at the Birmingham Conservatoire, the Royal Northern College of Music (as prize winner of the Dame Eva Turner award), and at the National Opera Studio in London through the generous sponsorship of the Peter Moores Foundation.

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A native of Philadelphia, mezzo-soprano **Daryl Freedman** (*Rosswisse*) is in her first season of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. Earlier this season she was seen in the American Opera Initiative 20-Minute Operas, as Mother in *Hansel and Gretel*, and as Queen Lili'uokalani in *Better Gods*. In the 2014–2015 season she sang the role of Amelfa in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Le coq d'or* at Sarasota Opera and in the summer of 2015 was an Apprentice Artist at Santa Fe Opera, where she covered the role of Herodias in *Salome*. Her 2013–2014 season included her Carnegie Hall debut singing Handel's *Messiah* with The Cecilia Chorus of New York and her Wagner debut singing Mary in *Der fliegende Holländer* with Sarasota Opera, where she also covered Azucena in *Il trovatore*. She was seen at Santa Fe Opera as a first-year apprentice covering the roles of Fraulein Krone in *The Impresario* and Death in *Le rossignol*. Recent seasons have included Zotico in Cavalli's *Eliogabalo* with Gotham Chamber Opera, Mozart's *Requiem* with The Florida Orchestra, Marcellina in *Le nozze di Figaro* with the Merola Opera Program, Ascalax in Telemann's *Orpheus* with New York City Opera, and both Federica in *Luisa Miller* and Third Lady in *The Magic Flute* with Chautauqua Opera, as well as roles with Music Academy of the West, Central City Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, and the Caramoor Festival. She was a member of the Studio Artist Program at Portland Opera from 2009–2011; her roles there included Aglaonice in Philip Glass's *Orphée*, which was recorded and released on Orange Mountain Music. She holds degrees from Manhattan School of Music and Temple University.



American mezzo-soprano **Eve Gigliotti** (*Siegrune*) makes her WNO debut with these performances. Her 2015–2016 season also includes appearances with Beth Morrison Projects for *Persona*. Future seasons include a debut with Hawaii Opera Theatre as Giulietta in *Les contes d'Hoffmann* and a return to Opera Philadelphia for the world premiere of *Breaking the Waves*. The 2014–2015 season brought significant company debuts, including Houston Grand Opera for Siegrune in *Die Walküre*, Milwaukee Symphony for Handel's *Messiah*, as well as Opera Santa Barbara to reprise the title role of Isabella in *L'italiana in Algeri*. Additionally, she debuted the role of Bradamante in director R.B. Schlather's gallery installation of *Alcina* in association with Whitebox Art Center. After her debut with the Metropolitan Opera as Mercédès in *Carmen*, she returned in 2010–2011 reprising the role of Mercédès and appearing as Siegrune in *Die Walküre*, led by James Levine and broadcast worldwide in HD. She also appeared as Siegrune in the Metropolitan Opera's production of *The Ring* as part of the 2012–2013 season. She was recently seen as Nazimova in *The Dream of Valentino* with Minnesota

Opera, Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare* with Florentine Opera, and Ruth in the world premiere of Nico Muhly's *Dark Sisters*, produced by Gotham Chamber Opera, Music-Theatre Group, and Opera Philadelphia. She is an alumna of the Wolf Trap Opera young artist program.



American bass **Eric Halfvarson** (*Hagen*) has appeared at WNO in *Rigoletto* (debut, 1983), *Semele* (1983), *La bohème* (1984), *Don Giovanni* (1985), *Eugene Onegin* (1985), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1989), *The Aspern Papers* (1990), *Aida* (1990), *Der fliegende Holländer* (1992), *Der Rosenkavalier* (1995), and *Fidelio* (2003). He is one of today's foremost interpreters of many of the darkest Verdi and Wagner roles. He is a regular guest artist in many of the world's leading opera houses from Vienna, Bayreuth, Munich, and London to New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The current season is no exception. Highlights of the 2015–2016 season include a return as Hagen in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* at the Vienna State Opera, appearances at Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu, and the world premiere of Thomas Adès's *The Exterminating Angel* at the Salzburg Festival, a role that will also take him to the Royal Opera House and the Metropolitan Opera in future seasons. In previous seasons, he performed Fafner in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* with Munich's Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle as well as in both *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried* at the Royal Opera House with Antonio Pappano conducting. He performed Gurnemanz in *Parsifal* at the Gran Teatre del Liceu, Hagen in *Götterdämmerung* at the Bavarian State Opera, and Fafner, Hunding, and Hagen in LA Opera's 2010 *Ring* cycle conducted by James Conlon. He made his professional debut in 1973 and was a founding member of the Houston Grand Opera Studio. In addition to his stage performances, he is a respected voice teacher and university lecturer. He currently makes his home in Barcelona.



American baritone **Gordon Hawkins** (*Alberich*) has appeared at WNO in *La belle Helene* (debut, 1983), *The Rakes's Progress* (1985), *Un ballo in maschera* (1985), *L'italiana in Algeri* (1988), *Porgy and Bess* (2005), *Das Rheingold* (2006), *Rigoletto* (2008), *Cavalleria rusticana* (2008), and *Siegfried* (2009), among others. He is earning critical acclaim as a Wagner specialist, and has been engaged as Alberich in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at esteemed international companies including San Francisco Opera, LA Opera, WNO, Seattle Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Teatro de la Maestranza de Sevilla, and the BBC Orchestra at Royal Albert Hall in London, where he was heard on a live BBC Radio broadcast. This season, he is performing the title role

in Vancouver Opera's production of *Rigoletto*, Porgy in *Porgy and Bess* in concert at Toledo Opera, Scarpia in *Tosca* with Cincinnati Opera, and a recital entitled *War and Remembrance* at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. In recent seasons, he performed the title role in *Nabucco* with Seattle Opera and Opera Carolina, sang Álvaro in Daniel Catán's contemporary Spanish-language opera *Florencia en el Amazonas* at LA Opera, appeared as Scarpia in *Tosca* at Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Amonasro in *Aida* with St. Louis Symphony, and reprised the role of Porgy in *Porgy and Bess* for the Jacksonville Symphony and the Bergen International Festival in Norway. In future seasons, he will return to Deutsche Oper am Rhein to perform one of his signature roles. He is an alumnus of the Wolf Trap Opera young artist program.



American bass-baritone **Alan Held** (*Wotan*) last appeared with WNO in the title role of *The Flying Dutchman* and as the Marquis de la Force in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (both 2015) and is currently serving as Artist-in-Residence with WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. In

the summer of 2016, he will be Artist-in-Residence at Wolf Trap Opera, where he is an alumnus of the young artist program. He has appeared in major roles in the world's finest opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Washington National Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Royal Opera House, Paris Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Vienna State Opera, and the Munich State Opera. His many roles include Wotan in Wagner's *Ring* cycle, the title role in *The Flying Dutchman*, Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde*, the Four Villains in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Jochanaan in *Salome*, Don Pizarro in *Fidelio*, Orestes in *Elektra*, Balstrode in *Peter Grimes*, and the title role in *Wozzeck*. Equally at home on the concert stage, he has performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, and the Berlin Philharmonic. He has also appeared at the Salzburg, Tanglewood, and Saito Kinen Festivals and at the BBC Proms. His many recordings and DVDs include the title role in the Paris Opera's production of *Cardillac*, Don Pizarro in *Fidelio* with Sir Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic (EMI Classics), and the Four Villains in the Met's *Live in HD* broadcast and DVD of *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. This season, he returned to the Canadian Opera Company as The Wanderer in *Siegfried* and made his debut at the Opéra de Montréal in *Elektra*. A native of Washburn, Illinois, he received his vocal training at Millikin University and at Wichita State University, where he was most recently named Associate Professor, The Ann and Dennis Ross Faculty of Distinction.



A native of Washington, D.C., bass **Soloman Howard** (*Fafner*) is a recent graduate of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. He has appeared at WNO as Frederick Douglass and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the world premiere of the revised version of *Appomattox*, as

Sarastro in *The Magic Flute*, as the Lion in the world premiere of *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*, as the Alcade of Hornachuelos in *The Force of Destiny*, as the title role in the world premiere of *Approaching Ali*, as Joe in *Show Boat*, as Il Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*, and as the High Priest of Baal in *Nabucco*. He makes his role debut as Fafner with these performances. His 2015-2016 season has included performances of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 under the baton of Gustavo Dudamel conducting both the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra on tour and the Los Angeles Philharmonic at Walt Disney Concert Hall. The Los Angeles performances celebrated the commercial release of a CD of the work that he recorded last spring with Mr. Dudamel in Caracas. Other performances of the season included a role debut as Gremin in *Eugene Onegin* with North Carolina Opera, Banco in *Macbeth* with Kentucky Opera, and a role and house debut as Jacopo Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra* at Opéra National de Bordeaux. He will conclude his season with a debut at Santa Fe Opera as Il Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*. The past season was marked by several high profile debuts, most notably at the Metropolitan Opera as The King in Verdi's *Aida* conducted by Marco Armiliato. Additionally, he debuted with the LA Opera under the baton of Music Director James Conlon as Doctor Grenvil in *La traviata* and at The Glimmerglass Festival as Banco in *Macbeth* and as Sarastro in *The Magic Flute* during the same period. In a return engagement to North Carolina Opera, he reprised his acclaimed portrayal of the title role in *Approaching Ali*. He is a graduate of Morgan State University and the Manhattan School of Music.



American mezzo-soprano **Catherine Martin** (*Wellgunde* and *Waltraute*) has been seen at WNO in the world premieres of *Approaching Ali* (2013) and *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me* (2013). She continues to make an impact in repertoire ranging from Verdi and Wagner to Strauss and

Bellini. Most recently, she made her debut with Dayton Opera as Sister Helen Prejean in *Dead Man Walking*, sang Waltraute in *Die Walküre* with Houston Grand Opera, returned to Opera Santa Barbara as Maddalena in *Rigoletto*, sang Der Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos* for Festival Opera, and performed the role of Genevieve in Hindemith's *The Long Christmas Dinner* with the American Symphony Orchestra at Alice Tully Hall, her Lincoln Center debut that was also recorded for Bridge Records. The 2015-2016 season and beyond will see debuts with Opera Colorado in her signature role of Amneris in *Aida* and a role

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debut with Florida Grand Opera as Adalgisa in *Norma*, a return to Houston Grand Opera in *Götterdämmerung*, and her international debut at the Semperoper Dresden. She recently added several key Strauss roles to her repertoire, making her role debut as Der Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at The Glimmerglass Festival and singing Annina while covering Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center. An alumna of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, she returned there to sing Amneris in its production of *Aida*, filling in at the last minute for an indisposed artist, and made her role debut as Wellgunde in *Das Rheingold* for the company's first-ever *Ring* cycle. She is also an alumna of the Wolf Trap Opera young artist program.



American bass-baritone **Ryan McKinny** (*Donner* and *Gunther*) makes his WNO debut with these performances. In the 2015–2016 season, he makes his Bayreuth Festival debut as Amfortas in a new production of *Parsifal* under Andris Nelsons, a role he will also sing for his debut at Teatro Colón in

Buenos Aires. He returned to the Metropolitan Opera as Biterolf in *Tannhäuser* under James Levine, which was broadcast around the world in HD. He also returns to the Hamburg Opera for his first European performances of *Der fliegende Holländer*. Other recent Wagner performances include the Dutchman at The Glimmerglass Festival in Francesca Zambello's new production, Donner and Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde* at Houston Grand Opera, Kothner in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at the Met, and Amfortas at Deutsche Oper am Rhein. He has also been recently seen at the Metropolitan Opera as the Sprecher in *Die Zauberflöte* and LA Opera for his role debut as Count Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*. He made his Santa Fe Opera debut in the summer of 2015 as Jochanaan in a new production of *Salome* conducted by David Robertson. He was the first recipient of the Birgit Nilsson Prize for singing Wagner at Plácido Domingo's Operalia Competition held at Teatro alla Scala in Milan and the Kirsten Flagstad/George London Award from the George London Foundation. He also represented the United States in the 2007 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, where he was a finalist in the Rosenblatt Recital Song Prize. He was a Grand Finalist in the 2007 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and is featured in the film *The Audition*, released on DVD by Decca. He is an alumnus of the Wolf Trap Opera young artist program.



American soprano **Meagan Miller** (*Sieglinde*) made her WNO debut as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* (2012). Acclaimed for the expansive colors, rich tones, and the power of her voice, she continues to be celebrated on important stages worldwide for her interpretations of

Strauss, Wagner, and beyond. Her compelling stage presence, intelligently nuanced portrayals, and varied repertoire have been applauded at such distinguished opera houses as the Bavarian State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Hamburg State Opera, New National Theatre Tokyo, Metropolitan Opera, Oper Leipzig, Opéra de Monte-Carlo, Teatro Massimo di Palermo, Vienna Volksoper, and Vienna State Opera, among others. Orchestral engagements have taken her to such venues as Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw, Hong Kong's Cultural Center, and the Lucerne Festival. Recent performance highlights include acclaimed debuts with Boston's Odyssey Opera singing Marie/Marietta in Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt* (a role she reprised in spring of 2015 in a new production at the Hamburg State Opera); at the Beijing Music Festival with Oper Leipzig; her role debut as the Marschallin in a new production of Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* with Opera Wroclaw (Breslau); and her debut as the Empress in Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* at the Metropolitan Opera. Her future seasons hold several role debuts, including: the Countess Madeleine in Strauss's *Capriccio*, Heliane in Korngold's *Das Wunder der Heliane*, and Marta in d'Albert's *Tiefland*. A National Grand Finals winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, her other awards include the 2010 Robert Launch Memorial Award from the Wagner Society of New York, and first prize in the 2010 Gerda Lissner Competition. She is an alumna of the Wolf Trap Opera young artist program.



American soprano **Melody Moore** (*Freia* and *Ortlinde*) last joined WNO as Julia Grant and Viola Liuzzo in the world premiere of the revised version of *Appomattox* (2015) and as Florencia in *Florencia in the Amazon* (2014). She is enjoying a varied and exciting career

appearing on many leading opera stages of the world. Recent highlights include San Francisco Opera in the title role of *Tosca*, Susan Rescorla in *Heart of a Soldier*, Mimì in *La bohème*, and the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro*; Houston Grand Opera as Julie in *Show Boat*, Marta in the American premiere of Weinberg's *The Passenger*, the title role in *Carmen*, Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, and as Freia in *Das Rheingold*; English National Opera as Mimì and as Marguerite in *Faust*; New York City Opera as Rita Clayton in the New York premiere of Stephen Schwartz's *Séance on a Wet Afternoon* and as Regine St. Laurent in Rufus Wainwright's *Prima Donna*; and LA Opera as the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro* and in productions of *Der Zwerg* and *Der zerbrochene Krug*.



American soprano **Lori Phillips** (*Helmwige*) was last seen at WNO in *The Flying Dutchman* (2008). She is establishing herself as an exponent of the most difficult heroines of the dramatic soprano repertoire: Brünnhilde, Senta, Elektra, Turandot, Kostelnicka, and

Minnie. She recently created a sensation at Seattle Opera as Brünnhilde in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Senta in *Der fliegende Holländer*, which was broadcast live on Sirius Radio. She made her debut at Opéra National du Rhin in a new production of Paul Dukas's *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* conducted by Daniele Callegari and directed by Olivier Py, which was streamed worldwide. Other recent performances include Senta in *Der fliegende Holländer* with Victorian Opera in Melbourne, Australia and Santuzza in *Cavalleria rusticana* with Amarillo Opera, as well as covering Gertrud in *Hansel and Gretel* at the Metropolitan Opera. She recently made her role debut as Brünnhilde in *Die Walküre* with Hawaii Opera Theatre and covered Marie in *Wozzeck* at the Metropolitan Opera. She also recently performed Senta with Michigan Opera Theatre and Arizona Opera. The award-winning soprano's concert and recording career include the release of *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* (Ariane) on Telarc with Leon Botstein and the BBC Symphony, for which she has received critical acclaim worldwide.



Swedish soprano **Nina Stemme** (*Brünnhilde*) makes her WNO debut with these performances. She is certainly one of the greatest Wagner and Strauss sopranos today. Brünnhilde in Wagner's *Ring* is one of her most important roles, and she has sung it with Daniel Barenboim at Teatro

alla Scala, and in complete cycles at the San Francisco Opera, Vienna State Opera, Munich State Opera, and will perform it also at the Semperoper Dresden with Christian Thielemann. She sang her first Isolde at the Glyndebourne Festival, then in Bayreuth and later at most of the important European opera houses. She has recorded the role with Plácido Domingo for EMI, and will sing it at the Metropolitan Opera next season. Her repertoire also includes Italian roles like Aida, Tosca, Minnie, and Turandot. Recent highlights were her first *Elektra* at Vienna State Opera and *Turandot* at Teatro alla Scala in Milan, and the leading role in the world premiere of *Notorious* in Göteborg. She has sung *Fidelio* in concert version with Claudio Abbado at the Lucerne Festival (recorded for Decca). Her DVD collection includes *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Aida*, and *Jenůfa*. She is a Swedish Royal Court Singer, member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, and Kammersängerin of the Vienna State Opera.



American soprano **Marcy Stonikas** (*Gerhilde* and *Third Norn*) makes her WNO debut with these performances. A first prize winner in the Wagner Division of the Gerda Lissner Foundation Vocal Competition, her 2015–2016 season includes performances as the soprano

soloist in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the San Antonio Symphony and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with Opera Santa Barbara. Future seasons include a return to Seattle Opera. A graduate of Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts (CCPA) and Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, she is also an alumna of the Young Artist Program at Seattle Opera, where she performed the roles of Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, and the title role in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. She is a winner of the 2013 George London Foundation Vocal Competition and was a finalist in Seattle Opera's 2014 International Wagner Competition. Previous seasons included performances with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra for Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, the Vienna Volksoper as Leonore in *Fidelio*, Seattle Opera for the title role in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and Cincinnati Opera as the title role in *Turandot*. She has also appeared with the Yakima Symphony Orchestra for a Wagner/Verdi concert; Utah Opera in a role debut as Salome; Opera Santa Barbara as Tosca; and in a return to Seattle Opera as Magda Sorel in Menotti's *The Consul*. During the 2012–2013 season, she debuted the title roles in *Turandot* and *Fidelio* at Seattle Opera and performed a recital under the auspices of Wolf Trap Opera, where she was a member of the young artist program.



American mezzo-soprano **Renée Tatum** (*Flosshilde* and *Grimgerde*) makes her WNO debut with these performances. She is rapidly gaining critical acclaim on the most prestigious opera stages in the United States. Recently, she made her Houston Grand Opera debut as Flosshilde

in *Das Rheingold* led by Patrick Summers. Her latest Wagnerian performances include Flosshilde in Robert Lepage's landmark production of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* conducted by Fabio Luisi at the Metropolitan Opera, and the roles of Flosshilde and Grimgerde in San Francisco Opera's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. She opened last season with a return to the Metropolitan Opera as the Second Lady in Julie Taymor's production of *Die Zauberflöte* led by Ádám Fischer, and returned to Houston Grand Opera as both Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* under the baton of Robert Spano and as Grimgerde in a new production of *Die Walküre* conducted by Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers. She joined an international cast in Japan as Flora in Verdi's *La traviata* and was the mezzo soloist in Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony* and Mozart's *Requiem* with the Eastern Music Festival. She then finished the season as

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mezzo soloist in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the Tanglewood Music Festival. This season, engagements include Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* with Toledo Opera and Flosshilde in *Götterdämmerung* with Teatro Massimo di Palermo. Future seasons include Flosshilde in *Das Rheingold* with National Taichung Theater and Flosshilde in *Götterdämmerung* in a return to Houston Grand Opera.



British tenor **Christopher Ventris** (*Siegmond*) has appeared at WNO in *Fidelio* (debut, 2003) and in the title role of *Peter Grimes* (2009). He has forged an exemplary international reputation as a top Wagnerian as well as an excellent interpreter of principal roles by Britten,

Janáček, Weill, and most recently, Mussorgsky. After an acclaimed debut in the title role of *Parsifal*, this role became a great calling card; he has sung it around the world including at the Bayreuth Festival, Vienna State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Dutch National Opera, and at Opernhaus Zürich, the latter released on DVD (Deutsche Grammophon). He sang his first Lohengrin at Teatro Comunale di Bologna, and has made a number of notable recent debuts including Tannhäuser at Paris Opera, Peter Grimes at Deutsche Oper Berlin, Erik in *Der fliegende Holländer* at San Francisco Opera, Prince Andrey Khovansky in *Khovanshchina* at Vienna State Opera, and Laca in *Jenůfa* at Opernhaus Zürich. His 2015–2016 season brings a return to the Bayreuth Festival as Siegmund, the role of his return to Vienna under Ádám Fischer. In addition to *Peter Grimes* at Deutsche Oper Berlin under Donald Runnicles, he will debut at Teatro Colón in *Parsifal* and sing Max in *Der Freischütz* under Mark Elder at London's Southbank Centre.



German stage director **Christian Răth** (*Senior Associate Director*) is renowned throughout Europe, Japan, and the United States. His work takes him to many of the world's leading opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Saito Kinen Festival in Japan, Mariinsky

Theatre in St Petersburg, Paris Opera, Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Vienna State Opera, and the Royal Opera House. Current work includes an acclaimed new production of *Macbeth* for the Vienna State Opera to open their 2015–2016 season, *L'italiana in Algeri* in Portland, *Norma* in Dallas, and projects with Opéra de Lyon. Recent stagings include new productions of Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* for The Dallas Opera, Verdi's rarely performed comic opera *King for a Day* for The Glimmerglass Festival in 2013, as well as the design and direction of *Tristan und Isolde* for The Dallas Opera in 2012. Other recent work includes *Falstaff* at Washington National Opera, *Roméo et Juliette* at Houston Grand Opera, *Carmen* at the Grand Théâtre de Genève, and *Manon* at the Metropolitan Opera (revival director). He collaborates with

several leading directors and regularly works alongside Laurent Pelly, Robert Carsen, and Francesca Zambello. He obtained a master's degree in Musiktheater-Regie from the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg and studied musicology, literature, and psychology at the University of Hamburg. From 1995 to 2001, he was a staff director at the Grand Théâtre de Genève.



American stage director **Laurie Feldman** (*Associate Director*) worked on the directing staff at the San Francisco Opera for 22 years and collaborated on *Ring* cycles there in 1985, 1990, and 1999. She is a frequent guest at Teatro Regio di Torino, where she recently directed Laurent

Pelly's *Giulio Cesare* and where in 2002 she also revived Robert Carsen's acclaimed production of *Mefistofele*. As a guest director at the Metropolitan Opera, where she has been on the directing staff since 1991, she has directed *La traviata*, *Rusalka*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Elektra*, *The Rake's Progress*, *La forza del destino*, *La clemenza di Tito*, *Norma*, *Un ballo in maschera*, and has frequently collaborated on the Schenk *Ring* cycle. For San Francisco Opera, she has directed *Luisa Miller*, *Mefistofele*, *Lohengrin*, Rossini's *Otello*, *La bohème*, *Rusalka*, *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Götterdämmerung*, *Fidelio*, *Carmen*, and *Don Giovanni*. Other productions include *Carmen* for the Teatro Regio di Torino, *Fidelio* for Washington National Opera, *Un ballo in maschera* for Florida Grand Opera, and *Falstaff* for Wolf Trap Opera. International houses include Opéra National du Rhin, Strasbourg; Opéra de Lyon; Opéra de Nice; Teatro Real, Madrid; Staatstheater Nürnberg; Teatro Massimo, Palermo; Cologne Opera; Bavarian State Opera; Canadian Opera Company; the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing; and The Icelandic Opera. She has worked with a number of prominent directors including Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, Robert Carsen, Laurent Pelly, Nikolaus Lehnhoff, Andrei Serban, Herbert Wernecke, Tim Albery, John Copley, Cesare Lievi, Otto Schenk, Michael Hampe, August Everding, Giancarlo del Monaco, and Francesca Zambello.



The work of American designer **Michael Yeargan** (*Set Designer*) has been seen at WNO in *Vanessa* (debut, 1995), *La finta giardiniera* (1997), *Susannah* (1999), *La bohème* (2002), *Vanessa* (2002), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (2004), *Das Rheingold* (2006), *Die Walküre* (2007), *Siegfried* (2009), *Madama Butterfly* (2011), *Werther* (2012), and the world premiere of *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me* (2013), among others. Theater credits include numerous productions for regional theaters in America, London's West End, Broadway, and off-Broadway. For Lincoln Center Theater: *The Light in the Piazza* (Tony and Drama Desk Awards), *Seascape* (Drama

Desk nomination), *Awake and Sing*, (Drama Desk Award, Tony nomination), *South Pacific* (Tony and Drama Desk Awards), *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (Tony nomination), *Golden Boy* (Tony and Drama Desk nominations), and *The King and I* (Tony nomination). Opera credits include projects for opera houses around the world including the world premieres of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Dead Man Walking* for San Francisco Opera, *Two Boys* and *The Great Gatsby* for the Metropolitan Opera, and Carlisle Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree* for Houston Grand Opera. He is co-chair of the stage design department at the Yale School of Drama.



The work of American designer **Catherine Zuber** (Costume Designer) was last seen at WNO in *Florencia in the Amazon* (2014), *The Force of Destiny* (2013), *Siegfried* (2009), and *Die Walküre* (2007). Her Broadway credits include *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The King and I* (Tony Award), *Gigi*,

The Bridges of Madison County, *Macbeth*, *Outside Mullingar*, *Golden Boy* (Tony nomination), *The Big Knife*, *Enemy of the People*, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (Tony nomination), *Born Yesterday* (Tony nomination), *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, *The Royal Family* (Tony Award), *South Pacific* (Tony Award), *The Coast of Utopia* (Tony Award), *The Light in the Piazza* (Tony Award), Edward Albee's *Seascape* (Tony nomination), *Awake and Sing!* (Tony Award), *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (Outer Critics Circle nomination), *Blood & Gifts*, *Oleanna*, *Cry-Baby*, *Mauritius*, *Doubt*, *Little Women*, *Dinner at Eight* (Tony, Outer Critics Circle, and Drama Desk nominations), *Twelfth Night* (Tony and Drama Desk nominations), *Ivanov*, *Triumph of Love* (Drama Desk nomination), *The Sound of Music*, and *The Red Shoes*, among others. Her opera credits include *L'elisir d'amore*, *Le comte Ory*, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, *Doctor Atomic*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and the 125th Anniversary Gala at the Metropolitan Opera; *Two Boys* and *Carmen* at English National Opera; *Roméo et Juliette* at the Salzburg Festival and Teatro alla Scala; and *South Pacific* at Sydney Opera House. Her off-Broadway credits include BAM/Old Vic's *The Bridge Project* 2009, 2010, 2011 (*Richard III*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Winter's Tale*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*). She is a recipient of a 2012 Olivier Award nomination, Henry Hewes Awards for Outstanding Costume Design in 2003 and 2004, a 2004 Lucille Lortel Award, a 2004 Ovation Award, and Obie Awards for Sustained Achievement in 1997 and 2005. She attended Fête des Vignerons in Vevey, Switzerland in 1999. She is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama and a member of BAFTA, USA, IATSE, and FIAF.



American designer **Mark McCullough** (Lighting Designer) made his WNO debut with *Fidelio* (2003) and returned for *Die Walküre* (2003 and 2007), *Porgy and Bess* (2005 and 2010), *Das Rheingold* (2006), *Rigoletto* (2008), *Siegfried* (2009), *Salome* (2010), *Hamlet* (2010),

Don Pasquale (2011), *Nabucco* (2012), *Anna Bolena* (2012), *Show Boat* (2013), *The Force of Destiny* (2013), *Florencia in the Amazon* (2014), *The Little Prince* (2014), and *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (2015). He maintains a highly successful career with opera and theater companies in the United States and abroad. He has lit productions for the Bolshoi Theatre (*The Tales of Hoffmann*), the Metropolitan Opera (*Le nozze di Figaro*), the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing (*The Tales of Hoffmann*), Teatro alla Scala (*Cyrano de Bergerac*), Madrid's Teatro Real (*Luisa Miller*), Strasbourg's Opéra National du Rhin (*The Beggar's Opera*), Royal Opera House (*The Queen of Spades*), Vienna State Opera (*Macbeth*), Opera North (*Eugene Onegin*), as well as numerous productions with Boston Lyric Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, LA Opera, Houston Grand Opera, The Dallas Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival (including *The Flying Dutchman*), Canadian Opera Company, New York City Opera, Seattle Opera, and San Francisco Opera. Among his successes in theater have been the Broadway productions of *Outside Mullingar*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* (revival), *After Miss Julie*, and *The American Plan*. His work has also been seen off-Broadway and in American regional theater companies across the country. International theater credits include *Whistle Down the Wind* (Aldwych Theatre, London), *Der Besuch der alten Dame* (Ronacher Theatre, Vienna), *Artus* (St. Gallen, Switzerland), *Rebecca* (St. Gallen, Switzerland and the Palladium Theatre, Stuttgart), and the UK tour of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. He is an alumnus of the North Carolina School of the Arts and holds a Master of Fine Arts from the Yale School of Drama.



The work of American designer **S. Katy Tucker** (Projection Designer) was last seen at WNO in *Florencia in the Amazon* (2014). She is a video and projection designer based in Brooklyn, New York. Her work in theater and opera has been seen around the world, including the

Metropolitan Opera, the Sydney Opera House, San Francisco Opera, LA Opera, Carnegie Hall, New York City Ballet, the Kennedy Center, BAM, and the Park Avenue Armory, among others. She has collaborated with composers and musicians like Paul McCartney, John Zorn, David T. Little, and Paola Prestini. Her artwork has been seen at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Artists Space in NYC, the Dillon Gallery in NYC, The Kitchen, and National Sawdust. Recent opera productions with Francesca Zambello include the world premiere of *Two*

MEET THE ARTISTS

Women at San Francisco Opera, *Florencia in the Amazon* at LA Opera, the world premiere of *Heart of a Soldier* at San Francisco Opera, and *Götterdämmerung* in San Francisco. Other recent productions of note include Dmitri Tcherniakov's *Prince Igor* at the Metropolitan Opera, *Tristan and Isolde* and *The Flying Dutchman* at the Sydney Opera House, *En hund's hjärta* at Uppsala Stadsteater, and a season of multimedia collaborations with the St. Louis Symphony and conductor David Robertson. Upcoming projects include *Prince Igor* with Dutch National Opera, *Ouroboros Trilogy* with Michael Counts, *21c Liederabend* with the LA Philharmonic and Beth Morrison Projects, Poe Project at Fort Worth Opera, and *La bohème* with Paul Curran at Wolf Trap Opera.



The work of American designer **Jan Hartley** (*Projection Designer*) has been seen at WNO in *Fidelio* (debut, 2003), *Die Walküre* (2003 and 2007), *Das Rheingold* (2006), and *Siegfried* (2009). She made her San Francisco Opera debut in 2008's *Das Rheingold*. She has collaborated with

Francesca Zambello on Shostakovich's *Moscow, Cheryomushki* at Bard College; David Henry Hwang's adaptation of *Tibet Through the Red Box* in Seattle; and *Napoleon* by Andrew Sabiston and Timothy Williams at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London. She also designed projections for Walt Disney's *Finding Nemo*. A member of Ping Chong & Co. since 1983, her work was featured in productions such as *Cocktail*, *Kwaidan*, *After Sorrow*, *98.6*, *Chinoiserie*, *Deshima*, *Skin—A State of Being*, and the Ping Chong and Meredith Monk collaboration *The Games*. She has also worked on a wide array of productions both on and off-Broadway and in London's West End. She has received a Drama Desk Award for *Bunny Bunny* and an Obie Award for Sustained Excellence. Recent projects include *The Miracle Worker* at the Paper Mill Playhouse in New Jersey; Anna Deavere Smith's *Let Me Down Easy*; and *Celia, the Musical* by Carmen Rivera and Cándido Tirado.



The work of British choreographer **Denni Sayers** (*Movement Director*) has been seen at WNO in *Of Mice and Men* (2001) and *Porgy and Bess* (2005). Her recent work includes *Turandot* (Teatro alla Scala), *Elektra* (Salzburg Festival), *Parsifal* (English National Opera), *The Flying Dutchman* (LA Opera), *La fanciulla del West* (Paris Opera) and *Salome* (Baden-Baden Festival) with Nikolaus Lehnhoff; *Manon Lescaut* (Royal Opera House), Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean* (National Theatre), *Sweeney Todd* (London's West End), *The Flying Dutchman* (ENO), and *Private Lives* (Chichester) with Jonathan Kent; *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (Beijing) and *Porgy and Bess* (Lyric Opera of Chicago) with Francesca Zambello; *Don Carlos* (Houston Grand Opera) with John Caird; *Caligula* (ENO)

with Benedict Arnold; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Lyric Opera of Chicago) and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Canadian Opera Company) with Neil Armfield; and *Hansel und Gretel* (Vienna State Opera) with Adrian Noble. Further choreography includes *Parsifal* (San Francisco, Chicago); *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Arshak II* (San Francisco); *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Opernhaus Zürich); *Lohengrin* (Baden-Baden), Henze's *Boulevard Solitude*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Carmen*, and *Paul Bunyan* (ROH); *The Bartered Bride* (ROH and Glyndebourne); *L'amour des trois oranges*, *Peter Grimes*, and *Carmen* (Sydney); *Porgy and Bess* (San Francisco); *Die Gezeichneten* and *Fidelio* (Salzburg); *Peter Grimes*, *La fanciulla del West*, *Turandot*, and *The Bassarids* (Amsterdam); *The Little Prince* (Houston, Milwaukee, Boston, and BBC TV); *Boris Godunov* and *War and Peace* (Paris Opera); *Of Mice and Men* (Bregenz); *Aida* and *Don Carlos* (Welsh National Opera); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Houston); *Der Vogelhändler* (Berlin); and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (St. Petersburg). As director, her work includes *Tosca* (Toronto), *West Side Story* (Tel Aviv), Rachel Portman's *The Water Diviner's Tale*, *Dr. Who* concerts (BBC Proms), revivals of *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Boston Lyric Opera and Welsh National Opera), *Peter Grimes* (Canadian Opera Company), and *Manon Lescaut* (Shanghai), and as Associate Director of *Hippolyte et Aricie* and *Don Giovanni* (Glyndebourne).



The work of American designer **Anne Ford-Coates** (*Hair and Makeup Designer*) was last seen at WNO in *Lost in the Stars* (2016), *Appomattox*, *Carmen*, *Cinderella*, and *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (all 2015). On Broadway, her makeup design has recently been seen in the Roundabout

Theatre Company's hit production of *On the Twentieth Century* starring Kristin Chenoweth and in *It Shoulda Been You*, directed by David Hyde Pierce. Her new Broadway show is *On Your Feet!*, the musical biography of Gloria Estefan, which recently concluded an acclaimed pre-Broadway run in Chicago and opened in New York to rave reviews. Future Broadway assignments include *Prince of Broadway*, which celebrates the legendary career of producer and director Hal Prince, and the new Broadway musical *Disaster!*. Other recent credits include *A Bronx Tale*, a world premiere musical directed by Robert DeNiro at Paper Mill Playhouse. In addition to her work at WNO and The Glimmerglass Festival, other recent design credits include productions at the Shakespeare Theatre Company, Gotham Chamber Opera, SITI Company, Utah Opera, McCarter Theatre, Yale Opera, Opera Omaha, the Mark Taper Forum, the Mezzo Television Opera Competition and Festival in Hungary, the Women's Project, Manhattan School of Music, and Opera Philadelphia. Her recent hair and makeup credits include work for the Royal Opera House Muscat, Sarasota Opera, the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, Guggenheim Museum, the Metropolitan Opera *Live in HD*, PBS,

and The Thomashefsky Project. She is co-director of Elsen Associates, Inc., wig and makeup designers for numerous North American opera companies, theaters, and educational institutions, including WNO, Wolf Trap Opera, Syracuse Opera, Opera New Jersey, Des Moines Metro Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival, Yale School of Music, Eastman School of Music, and Carnegie Mellon University.



Steven Gathman (*Chorus Master*) has prepared the WNO Chorus for more than 100 productions and has been with the company since 1994, having also held the positions of assistant chorus master and music administrator. In recent years, the WNO Chorus has presented

four free concerts in the D.C. community to great acclaim. In the summer of 2015, he conducted *Albert Herring* at the Miami Summer Music Festival. At WNO, he has conducted performances of *Tosca*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *La clemenza di Tito*, *Der fliegende Holländer*, and *Carmen*. He has served on the music staffs of the Metropolitan Opera; Il Festival dei Due Mondi in Spoleto, Italy; Michigan Opera Theatre; and Opera Pacific. He was on the faculty of the University of Maryland at College Park and served as a guest coach at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, in addition to giving master classes around the country. He holds a bachelor's of music in piano from DePaul University and a doctor of musical arts degree in piano accompanying and chamber music from the University of Michigan.



The work of **Joe Isenberg** (*Fight Master*) has been seen at WNO in *La bohème* (2014), *An American Soldier* (2014), *The Force of Destiny* (2013), *Tristan and Isolde* (2013), *Approaching Ali*, and *Show Boat* (2013). Other credits include productions for the Kennedy Center Theater for Young

Audiences, Arena Stage, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Round House Theatre, Studio Theatre, Signature Theatre, Theater J, Humana Festival 2011 and 2012, Florida Stage, and InterAct Theatre. He assisted choreography at Folger Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and the Metropolitan Opera. He has been a guest teacher at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Howard University, Georgetown University, and the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. Awards include the 2013 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Choreography, the Society of American Fight Directors 2010 Swashbuckler of the Year Award, and the Kennedy Center/Keenan Fund for the Arts Fight Choreographer in Residence for the 2010–2011 season. He is a graduate of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

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Lynn and Jill Krynicki, 1986



Lynn and Jill Krynicki, 2016

Lynn Krynicki

Stage Manager, The Valkyrie and Siegfried

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

When we were two years old, at our request, my parents took my twin sister and me to a dress rehearsal of *The Rhinegold* at Seattle Opera. The rules were: learn the story and listen to the music, take a nap, you get dessert afterwards, and if you make a peep we leave. Mind you, this was before projected English titles. Well, we didn't leave, and I still remember the projection of Valhalla and the rainbow bridge.

Have you seen or heard (or been involved in) any of the *Ring* operas before?

Yes, in many ways. As a young child, I was a volunteer for Seattle Opera's *Ring* cycle during backstage tours. I was a Nibelungen in Seattle Opera's 1986 premiere production of Francois Rochaix's *Ring* cycle. In 1995, I was a stage management intern for the last presentation of that production. In 1997, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I ran the title slides for a concert of *The Valkyrie* armed only with a script and an uncued score. At WNO, I was the deck stage manager for *The Valkyrie* at DAR Constitution Hall in 2003, assistant stage manager for the premiere of this production of *The Rhinegold* in 2006 and the memorable concert of *Twilight of the Gods* in 2009, and I was stage manager for *Siegfried* in 2009. I am thrilled to be a part of this production since its

birth 10 years ago and so pleased that I can finally finish the story here at WNO.

What advice would you give to somebody seeing *The Ring* for the first time?

Take some time to learn the story, get familiar with the characters and leitmotifs, and get some background. The orchestration is so rich with layers and layers of leitmotifs and melodies. When you know the motifs, you will have a better understanding of the motivations, underlying currents, influences, and musical references happening during each moment. In *Twilight of the Gods* you'll realize that when Hagen is greeting Siegfried, he is singing the melody of The Curse leitmotif, the same Curse that his father, Alberich, put on the ring when Wotan, Siegfried's grandfather, stole it from him back in *The Rhinegold*. Mind blown.

What aspect of *The Ring* are you most looking forward to?

I get to be immersed in Wagner for 15 weeks. I get to listen to my favorite music, the music that has been more a part of my life than any other music. I also get to experience this epic journey with my twin sister, who was there at the beginning when my love of opera started.

Jill Krynicki

Assistant Stage Manager

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

My parents took my sister and me to a dress rehearsal of *The Rhinegold* at Seattle Opera when we were two years old. According to them, we sat through the whole thing with rapt attention. Every summer while we were growing up, Seattle Opera produced *The Ring*. Some families go to Disney World, we went to *The Ring*. Being immersed in the music and the fabulous visuals was amazing. It was something I always looked forward to, and still do.

Have you been involved in any of the *Ring* operas before?

I have seen numerous productions and have been involved in three *Ring* cycles, as well as individual productions of *The Rhinegold*, *The Valkyrie*, and *Siegfried*. I've been an audience member, a Nibelungen, the Frog, an intern, an assistant stage manager, and a stage manager. These operas captured my imagination as a kid, and inspired me to want to have a career in opera stage management. Working on *The Ring* is a journey for everyone involved, including the audience. It requires a lot of patience, organization, communication, and good humor. I've always wanted to be able to do another *Ring* cycle with my sister, and WNO made that happen.

Which of the characters in *The Ring* appeals to you the most?

Brünnhilde. She's a warrior woman who is passionate about her work, takes responsibility for her actions, and sees the positive in every situation. We'll just ignore that whole "marrying her nephew" thing.

What advice would you give to somebody seeing *The Ring* for the first time?

Read the story a few times, and plan intermission snacks. For *Twilight of the Gods*, I remember my family tailgating in the parking lot, with a nice picnic spread on the trunk of the car.

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

The euphoria of being emotionally exhausted and elated all at the same time. And then, wanting it not to be over.

Christy Blackham

WNO Associate Technical Director

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

I started at the Washington Opera (before it was WNO) in 2003. My preconceived notions of opera came from Bugs Bunny and *Pretty Woman*. The concept of *The Ring* was discussed at my first interview for the company because we were about to do *The Valkyrie* at DAR Constitution Hall. The scenery was huge: taller, wider, and heavier than anything I had ever worked on. At that point, I was excited to start my career working on projects of this scale.

What is your favorite dramatic moment in *The Ring*?

I love the flying entrance of the Valkyries, and the moment when Wotan lights the ring of fire. Of course, I know how both moments work, but I still enjoy watching them happen.

What advice would you give to somebody seeing *The Ring* for the first time?

Wear something you're comfortable sitting in for a long time, and enjoy the music. The music is so compelling, I find myself humming bits of it even after I've gone home for the day.

What is your strategy for coping with the long hours required to produce *The Ring*?

I spent the weekends leading up to load-in cooking and freezing 120 meals: lunches and dinners for 60 straight days of working in the theater from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m.

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

Exhausted. Relieved. Proud.

What aspect of *The Ring* are you most looking forward to?

From the moment I walked in the door of WNO this has been a company goal. I had the challenge and pleasure to be part of the team and work on each show for the past 10 years, and I can't wait to see it finally accomplished here and to say that I was a part of it.



Meagan Miller

Sieglinde

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

I think that, like many, my first exposure was through *Looney Tunes*! Overall, my preconceptions were about how HUUUGGEE it is—loud, long, and for the loudest voices and biggest rib cages! These days, I see that a smart singer with a HUGE imagination can sing in *The Ring* too.

Have you seen or heard (or been involved in) any of the *Ring* operas before?

I've been in three staged *Ring* cycles before (Berlin as Freia, Helmwig, and Third Norn; Leipzig as Sieglinde; and Palermo as Brünnhilde in *Siegfried*), a concert version of the full *Ring* (in Lucerne as Sieglinde, Freia, and Third Norn), and a concert version of Act I of *The Valkyrie* (in Melbourne as Sieglinde). It was so great to hear (and feel) the orchestra live all around me, and to realize I could be part of such a spectacular event.

Which of the characters in *The Ring* appeals to you the most?

Haha!! I guess it works well with my character when I am singing Sieglinde, but I love Siegmund. His life has been so hard, and somehow, he stays brave and kind and loyal and true.

What is your favorite dramatic moment in *The Ring*?

When Wotan kisses the immortality away from Brünnhilde... oh, the tears!

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

Satisfied in the best sense of the word!



Lindsay Ammann

Erda, Schwertleite, First Norn

Have you been involved in any of the *Ring* operas before?

I was “kicked out” of my young artist program to go to the Metropolitan Opera to debut as Rossweisse in *The Valkyrie* in 2011. I was 25 when I got the contract that changed my life. I knew at an early age that I would sing Wagner. But I never could have imagined that my first contract outside of being a young artist would be Wagner at the Met!

Which of the characters in *The Ring* appeals to you the most?

I want to be the first female Wotan! Vocally, I know I could sing a great Wotan! But honestly, I love being an Erda... everything hinges on her. Without her in *The Rhinegold*, there would be no *Ring*.

What is your strategy for coping with the long hours required to perform *The Ring*?

I totally change my sleeping patterns by the time we get to final dress rehearsals. I will stay up until 3 or 4 a.m. and sleep until noon if possible! I will have breakfast and coffee in the early afternoon. As Erda, I won't be onstage until late in the evening...it's like I have a night job.

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

I know I will have all the feels by the end...it is always hard to leave your “Wagner family” when you have been through SO much together!

What aspect of *The Ring* are you most looking forward to?

In the WNO *Ring*, I am really looking forward to the first bow of *Twilight of the Gods*. I am the only artist in all four operas and it will be nice to know that I survived the first cycle!

Thomas Bagwell

Assistant Conductor

Have you seen or been involved in any of *The Ring* operas before?

I played each of the four operas at WNO and I've worked on the whole *Ring* in Seattle. It's one of the greatest challenges a pianist in opera can have, yet it's one of the most rewarding. I've also seen *The Ring* at Bayreuth, Wagner's own theater, which was one of the highpoints of my opera-going life. Catherine Foster, WNO's Brunnhilde in Cycles I and II, was thrilling in their thought-provoking, riveting production.

Which of the characters in *The Ring* appeals to you the most?

Loge, the trickster character from *The Rhinegold*, constantly amuses me. He's seen it all, has to deal with the giant egos of the gods, and still has a sense of humor about things. One wonders if the gods know how manipulative he really is. How many people in power are controlled and influenced by such shady characters? The mind boggles.

If you could ask the composer Richard Wagner a question about *The Ring*, what would it be?

"Maestro, I'm sure you'd like to cut some of this, wouldn't you? Where shall we start?" No, seriously, I wouldn't dare ask but I do wonder if he considered revising the orchestration once he heard the acoustics at Bayreuth.



What is your favorite musical moment in *The Ring*?

"The Ride of the Valkyries" is such fun to play, coach, hear, and see from the auditorium. Eight dramatic voices singing at full tilt against one of the fullest orchestrations in all of opera. The Norn scene in *Twilight of the Gods*, which anticipates Debussy in its colors and harmonic daring, has also always been one of my favorites.

What is your strategy for coping with the long hours required to perform *The Ring*?

I have to warm up with scales, arpeggios, and Mozart before I play this music. We have a terrific yoga studio right across the street from our rehearsal facility, Willow Street Yoga, with one of the best Pilates teachers in the D.C. area, Roberta Stiehm. In order to sit up straight at the piano for hours on end you have to have good core strength.

John Pohanka

WNO Trustee

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

In 1946 while I was attending Princeton University.

Have you seen or heard any of the *Ring* operas before?

I have attended nine cycles: four in Seattle, four in New York (the Otto Schenk production at the Metropolitan Opera), and one in Washington (Deutsche Oper Berlin). They were wonderful, mind-stretching, and intoxicating.

What is your favorite musical moment in *The Ring*?

In Act III of *The Valkyrie*: Sieglinde's response to being told that she is pregnant with Siegmund's child.

What is your favorite dramatic moment in *The Ring*?

In Act II of *The Valkyrie*: When Wotan tells Hunding to kneel before Fricka and then strikes him dead.



What aspect of *The Ring* are you most looking forward to?

The orchestra conducted by Philippe Auguin.

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

Inspired, optimistic, and sorry that it's over.



Jamie Barton

Second Norn, Waltraute

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

Bugs Bunny was my entrance into it, and of course every movie that has ever used “The Ride of the Valkyries”! I knew Wagner’s *Ring* was supposed to be really long and really loud, but given that I like *The Dark Side of the Moon* and rock music, that was fine with me!

Have you been involved in any of the *Ring* operas before?

I was in *The Rhinegold* and *The Valkyrie* at Houston Grand Opera, and *Twilight of the Gods* at the Bavarian State Opera, which was one of the turning points in my musical life. The night of the final dress in Munich, we all had to stay for bows, six hours after having gotten in hair and makeup. Standing backstage listening to Nina Stemme sing the Immolation Scene and seeing the stage burn around her was so powerful—this incredible production, the music, and how she performed it—that I had a moment of finally discovering why I loved opera. This was in 2012, I had been a student of classical singing since 2000, I had been in operas, I had been through training programs...

but at that moment, when I saw the magnitude of Nina Stemme singing, I fell into almost obsessive love with Wagner and found my real home in opera.

Which of the characters in *The Ring* appeals to you the most?

I’m torn directly between two characters! There’s a part of me that absolutely loves Fricka. As hard-nosed as she is, as stubborn as she can be about getting her point through, she always tells the truth. It’s really hard for Wotan to hear, but she’s an astounding lady. Then there’s Brünnhilde, who is literally the hero of the entire cycle. She is the one who sacrifices her life, and she’s the one who—in the end—brings it all to a resolution. I love Wagner for giving his strongest characters to the women!

What is your favorite musical moment in *The Ring*?

Wotan’s farewell to Brünnhilde, when he’s sitting down and recounting how much he loves her and how he’s about to banish her from Valhalla. It’s the worst timeout a father has ever given a kid. But the care and love he shows her even in this moment...I love it so much that it’s my ringtone. I wake up to this aria!

What is your strategy for coping with the long hours required to perform *The Ring*?

Backstage at a long Wagner evening, I usually have my Nintendo 3DS and dinner on hand. I’ve also been known to hold dance parties in my dressing room!

What aspect of *The Ring* are you most looking forward to?

Getting to sing this with Nina Stemme, who ignited my love for something that is such a massive part of my life!



WNO mourns the loss of former
Music Director Heinz Fricke,
who passed away on December 7, 2015.

Music Director: 1993–2010

Music Director Emeritus: 2010–2015

Maestro Fricke conducted performances of *The Valkyrie*
in 2003 and 2007 and *The Rhinegold* in 2006.



Susan Robinson

Principal Harp, WNO Orchestra

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

Hasn't everyone heard of *The Ring*? I can remember back in the 1980s watching the Metropolitan Opera's telecast of the cycle, and thinking how incredible the orchestra sounded. In truth, the "Magic Fire" music that ends *The Valkyrie* has a well-earned reputation in the harp world as being one of the most challenging (and terrifying!) excerpts, and it was unofficially my career goal to never have to play it—boy, did I get the wrong gig!

If you could ask the composer Richard Wagner a question about *The Ring*, what would it be?

Why do you make the harpists wait SO LONG between each entrance?

What advice would you give to somebody seeing *The Ring* for the first time?

I think people are unnecessarily intimidated by *The Ring*. My advice is to just let yourself go! The music has such amazingly kaleidoscopic harmonies and such flow—just go along for the ride!

What is your strategy for coping with the long hours required to perform *The Ring*?

My colleagues and I have very different challenges in this arena. In the harp section, we sometimes sit for over an hour just waiting for our next entrance, and in *The Valkyrie* and *Twilight of the Gods*, we wait until literally the last few minutes of a five-hour opera to jump in and play some of the most technically challenging music in the cycle. Our challenges are to keep mentally alert and physically limber.



Denni Sayers

Movement Director

Have you been involved in any of *The Ring* operas before?

This is my first *Ring* cycle, but I have been studying it for about a year in preparation.

Which of the characters in *The Ring* appeals to you the most?

Partly because of the concept of this production, I hugely admire Brünnhilde, her strength, and her courage to act independently of Wotan, despite all of his threats. She always follows her conscience, and I admire that.

What is your favorite musical moment in *The Ring*?

It's almost impossible to pick one moment. I think what I love about the music is the way the leitmotifs support the story telling so clearly. I've worked very intensively with the Valkyrie sisters, and I love the power of their music.

What is your strategy for coping with the long hours required to produce *The Ring*?

Our rehearsal schedule is very full on, so I try to keep myself fit by doing a workout every day. I am also giving a Valkyrie Boot Camp to the cast. We all need lots of stamina to bring this to fruition. Also loving your work is a great help in making it not so exhausting. The days fly by.

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

Ready to start all over again, having made so many fascinating discoveries during the rehearsal process. I feel this is a work I will want to return to several times.



Arya Anoush Balian

Supernumerary (Age 12)

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

I first became aware of *The Ring* when I was doing research for my sixth grade presentation on operas. I guess my preconception was when I saw a picture of a lady in a Viking hat—it was hilarious! Then, when I found out the WNO was doing *The Ring* and needed lots of kid supers, I was totally excited to do it!

What advice would you give to somebody seeing *The Ring* for the first time?

Get ready for fun! Excitement! Kids smeared in dirt running around! Unbelievable music!

What is your strategy for coping with the long hours required to perform *The Ring*?

Honestly, the rehearsals are so much fun that I don't want them to end! There are a lot of rehearsals, but that is to make sure we are all doing our parts perfectly. I love learning from Ms. Zambello especially. She is amazing.

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

Wishing I could start all over again and that we are just beginning the process. I get PSD or "Post Show Depression" after a show closes. So we say, "How do you manage PSD? Well, do another show!"



Adria Sternstein Foster

Principal Flute, WNO Orchestra

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

The first time I became aware of *The Ring* was my freshman year at Juilliard. I was taking an Orchestra Repertoire class for wind and brass players. Each week, we would read though important orchestral works together as a wind section and get coached by the conductor. I remember I had to prepare "Forest Murmurs" from *Siegfried*. I instantly became enthralled and entranced by Wagner's music and was totally hooked from that moment on.

Have you been involved in any of the *Ring* operas before?

I joined the orchestra in 1994 so I am lucky to have played all four operas of *The Ring*. Playing this music is an experience like no other. The operas are long, but somehow in Wagner's music time seems to stand still, and you are transported into another world. My biggest thrill is simply to be a part of the texture of this massive orchestra. To be in the middle of it all—with the sheer magnitude of sound that is put out, the vibrations pulsing, and the gripping intensity of the music—is incredible. To put it in a less sophisticated way—playing the operas of *The Ring* is totally mind-blowing!

What is your favorite musical moment in *The Ring*?

The "Magic Fire" music at the end of *The Valkyrie*. I don't know how one cannot be moved by this achingly beautiful, yearning, and poignant music in which one grieves, yet also has hope. It is a deeply cathartic moment.

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

I think for the orchestra it will feel like we've been through a tremendous journey together. It will be exhausting yet exhilarating—an experience we will cherish and remember forever. We will probably have a big party, knowing us!



Anne Ford-Coates

Hair and Makeup Designer

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

I think like many an American child, I first became aware of it from Bugs Bunny. So, you know, I thought Elmer Fudd was in it.

Which of the characters in *The Ring* appeals to you the most?

Brünnhilde and the Valkyries. What can I say? I love a tough girl rebel in leather. It's the 90s child in me.

What is your strategy for coping with the long hours required to produce *The Ring*?

Ok, well I may have cause to regret saying this later, but I think the schedule is so well made and so well managed, that even though the hours are long I will take them in stride. And we've all been preparing for this for ages, so hopefully the preparation was the successful strategy.

When you have come to the end of the cycle of *Ring* performances, how do you expect to feel?

I imagine I'll feel a mixture of pride and relief as well as sad to say goodbye to this cast, which is chock full of awesome!

What aspect of *The Ring* are you most looking forward to?

Hearing it with orchestra for the first time, particularly at the final dress rehearsals when I'll get to really experience the cycle, and spending time with the many people who've come together to make this happen. I feel very lucky to be part of this.



Gordon Hawkins

Alberich

When did you first become aware of *The Ring*?

As a college student, I would listen to the recordings of George London, Gustav Neidlinger, and Jon Vickers. I marveled at the timbre of their voices and sheer majesty of their vocal projection. Over the past 20 years, I have been fortunate enough to sing *The Ring* in London, Berlin, Washington, Seville, Seattle, and San Francisco. My first Alberich was conducted by the great Heinz Fricke here in Washington. I remember how playful and intimate he was with the music. I eagerly look forward to continuing my musical journey with Maestro Auguin. Over time, I have become more aware that the power in Wagner's *Ring* lies as much in its authentic, emotional intimacy as it does in the majestic climactic arcs.

What is your favorite musical moment in *The Ring*?

When the orchestra begins the E-flat major chord of *The Rhinegold*. You can just sense that the entire audience has been waiting for the voyage to begin.

What is your strategy for coping with the long hours required to perform *The Ring*?

There are times when I give myself completely to the music, the drama, and the completeness of *The Ring*. How can you not? But experience has taught me the necessity of pacing myself. The rehearsal period can be unusually long, and if one is not careful, it can become very easy to wear yourself down prematurely. When my energy level is high, I like singing out and performing with full dramatic intensity during rehearsal. When it is not (we are all human, after all) I will mark vocally, but not dramatically. Every artist in this production is working on aspects of *The Ring* in some way, shape, or form. I want to make sure that I am available to my colleagues for their explorations, as well as my own.

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CLASSIC.



Photo by Cory Weaver

MADAME BUTTERFLY
Production designed
by Jun Kaneko

CONTEMPORARY.



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CHAMPION
by Terence Blanchard
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AMERICAN.



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THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT
starring Lawrence Brownlee
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