

TONIGHT'S CONCERT

Sir Simon Rattle: An Evening of Wagner

Sunday 24 and Thursday 28 May 2026
Barbican

7pm

Richard Wagner

Excerpts from 'Götterdämmerung':
Dawn and Siegfried's Rhine Journey
Waltraute's Plea to Brünnhilde

Interval

Richard Wagner

Siegfried Idyll

Richard Wagner

Excerpts from 'Götterdämmerung':
Funeral Music
Immolation Scene

Sir Simon Rattle conductor

Anja Kampe Brünnhilde

Elizabeth DeShong Waltraute

London Symphony Orchestra

Concert finishes at approximately 9.15pm

Welcome



Welcome to these London Symphony Orchestra concerts, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle, LSO Conductor Emeritus, in a programme devoted to Wagner. We are delighted that soprano Anja Kampe will be making her LSO debut this evening, appearing alongside mezzo-soprano Elizabeth DeShong, who performed in Meyerbeer's *Le prophète* with the LSO at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in July of 2023.

The concert opens with excerpts from *Götterdämmerung*, the final opera of the *Ring* cycle, beginning with Dawn and Siegfried's Rhine Journey, followed by Waltraute's Plea to Brünnhilde. After the interval, we hear the *Siegfried Idyll*, composed as a personal gift for Wagner's wife, Cosima, before returning to *Götterdämmerung* for its powerful closing scenes: Funeral Music and Immolation Scene.

We hope you enjoy these concerts. Next month, Dirk Brossé conducts *LSO on Film: Blockbusters*, featuring some of cinema's most iconic scores that were originally recorded by the LSO. Sir Antonio Pappano conducts a Half Six Fix performance of Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations the following week. We hope to see you there.

Dame Kathryn McDowell DBE DL
Managing Director

Coming Up

Saturday 13 June
Trafalgar Square

4pm

BMW Classics

Our annual free outdoor summer concert returns! Sir Antonio Pappano leads a programme of selected highlights celebrating the Orchestra's long association with two great British masterworks: Gustav Holst's *The Planets* and Edward Elgar's *Enigma Variations*.

Sunday 18 and Thursday 22 October
Barbican

7pm

Season Opening: Mahler 2 and Fujikura

Sir Antonio Pappano opens our 2026/27 season with Mahler's mighty 'Resurrection' Symphony alongside a world premiere of Dai Fujikura's new work *Amber Alchemy* – inspired by the bees in the rooftop hives at the London offices of Japanese financial services group Nomura, who commissioned the work for their centenary celebrations.

Welcome to tonight's group bookers

Tess Coltvet
Orla McCormick
Samuel Skrede
Pauline Stockman

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are not permitted during the performance.**

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Share Your Thoughts

Visit iso.co.uk/survey or scan the QR code to complete a short survey about tonight's concert.



Excerpts from *Götterdämmerung*

Richard Wagner

Anja Kampe
Brünnhilde
Elizabeth DeShong
Waltraute

- 1 Dawn and Siegfried's Rhine Journey (Prologue)**
- 2 Waltraute's plea to Brünnhilde (Act 1, scene 3)**

Interval
Siegfried Idyll

- 3 Funeral Music (Act 3, scene 2)**
- 4 Immolation scene (Act 3, scene 3)**



1869–74



70 minutes

Programme note by
Nigel Simeone

Götterdämmerung (Twilight of the Gods) is the last of the four operas that comprise Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring of the Nibelung). Though the composer had started to devise its text two decades earlier, he only began serious work on sketching its music in October 1869, while still finishing the third opera in the cycle, *Siegfried*. Once *Siegfried* was completed in 1871, Wagner was able to devote himself entirely to the new opera, which occupied much of the following year. In April 1872, he and his wife Cosima left their house at Tribschen on Lake Lucerne and moved to Bayreuth. They settled into their new home, Villa Wahnfried, on 28 April 1873, and five days later, Wagner began the full orchestral score of *Götterdämmerung*. It was to consume his energy over the next 18 months, but finally, in November 1874, the opera – and, with it, the whole *Ring* cycle – was finished. On the last page of his manuscript, Wagner wrote: 'Completed in Wahnfried on 21 November 1874. I have nothing more to say!'

The premiere of *Götterdämmerung* was given at the newly opened Bayreuth Festspielhaus on 17 August 1876 as part of the first performance of the complete *Ring* cycle – the inaugural production in a theatre Wagner had designed with the specific demands of the *Ring* in mind. It was conducted by Hans Richter, with Amalie Materna as Brünnhilde, in a production directed by Wagner. He made well-nigh impossible demands on what was practicable in a theatre, and was – inevitably – frustrated by some of the staging's technical shortcomings.

It's intriguing to read the sharply contrasting reactions of composers who were present at the first performance. For Edvard Grieg, *Götterdämmerung* 'made a great and profound impression'. He wrote that 'there is no doubt that *Götterdämmerung* is the most effective of the dramas and the one with the most compelling action. In it, all that has gone before is resolved.' While he was reluctant to single out particular passages for praise, he was overwhelmed by Siegfried's Funeral March: 'I do not think that there is anything to measure up to it other than Beethoven's *Eroica*. It is simply incredible.' Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky reviewed the cycle for the St Petersburg newspaper *Russkiye Vedomosti* and proclaimed that the *Ring* was 'an epoch-making work of art'. But in a letter to his brother Modest, sent from Vienna a few days later, he wrote that 'with the last chords of *Götterdämmerung*, I had a feeling of liberation from captivity. It may be that the *Ring* is a very great work, but there has never been anything more tedious and drawn-out than this rigmарole.'

The British composer Hubert Parry, in his late twenties when he attended the 1876 *Ring*, wrote down some impressions in his diary. For him, *Götterdämmerung* 'utterly surpassed my expectations. I was in a whirl of excitement over it and quite drunk with delight.' Twenty years later, George Bernard Shaw – whose writings on Wagner are as contrary as they are thought-provoking – reviewed the 1896 Bayreuth *Ring* for *The Star*. He wrote of *Götterdämmerung*: 'The music is from beginning to end the very luxury of sound woven into a

gorgeous tissue by a consummately skilful master.' He also singled out the scene with Waltraute's plea to Brünnhilde: 'Waltraute's description of Wotan waiting in Valhalla for his doom surpassed expectation in its beauty of sound ... producing the golden moment of the first act.'

In 1877, a year after the first Bayreuth *Ring*, Wagner, Hans Richter and several of the original cast (including Amalie Materna as Brünnhilde) gave a series of concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London. The aim of this Wagner Festival was to help the composer recoup some of the enormous expenses of the Bayreuth *Ring*. While it made no dent in Wagner's huge debts, from an artistic point of view, it gave London's concert-goers an opportunity to hear extracts from the operas for the first time. Reactions were predictably mixed: Wagner's detractors were out in force, but so were his most passionate devotees, including the unnamed critic for the *Daily News* who reviewed the fifth concert (given on 16 May 1877), which included two of the same scenes as this evening's programme (Siegfried's Funeral March – which was encored – and Brünnhilde's Immolation):

'The selections from *Götterdämmerung* were given under the lead of Hans Richter ... Siegfried's Funeral March ... had to be repeated. It is a marvellous piece of heroic biography, told in this new marvellous language of music which Wagner has revealed to us. The closing scene ... was sung by Madame Materna with deep emotion and splendid dramatic power. She seemed

to lose herself completely in the character ... She rendered the long farewell in such a manner as to keep the audience with her to the last. The entire scene is one of Wagner's masterpieces.'

In 1976, Bayreuth unveiled its Centenary *Ring*. It was directed by Patrice Chéreau and conducted by Pierre Boulez, whose 'Performer's Notebook' was published in the 1977 Bayreuth programme. He said this about Siegfried's Funeral March: 'Purely practically, the Funeral March is to enable Siegfried's body to be removed from the stage [but] it actually fulfils much more important functions ... as music with profound dramatic significance.' Boulez goes on to call it a 'ritual lament for a hero'.

In the closing scene, Brünnhilde joins her beloved, riding into Siegfried's blazing funeral pyre, and the Rhinemaidens finally reclaim the ring and end its curse. With marvellous aptness, the last music we hear in the orchestral epilogue is the simplest and most eloquent expression of redemption through love.

Götterdämmerung: Key Plot Moments

Richard Wagner

Synopsis by
Nigel Simeone

Character
descriptions by
Kate Hopkins

Dawn and Siegfried's Rhine Journey (Prologue)

This purely orchestral music – in effect a miniature tone poem eliding music from the start of the scene with its climactic conclusion – was first put together by the composer Engelbert Humperdinck. It opens with a magnificent evocation of the dawn, described in Wagner's stage directions: 'The red glow of sunrise grows while the firelight from below becomes fainter. The sun rises further until there is broad daylight'. The second part depicts the episode following Siegfried and Brünnhilde's rapturous love scene, as Siegfried sets out on his journey down the Rhine.

Waltraute's plea to Brünnhilde (Act 1, scene 3)

In this pivotal scene, Waltraute visits her sister Brünnhilde, who is alone on the rock where she once lay asleep. Waltraute brings alarming news from Valhalla: Wotan has returned from his wanderings, his spear shattered and his power waning. He is no longer able to influence events and has ordered the World Ash-Tree to be cut down and its branches piled up around Valhalla as firewood. The gods have gathered around him in Valhalla to learn the worst. Wotan now sits clutching his broken spear while the uneasy Valkyries attempt to console him. Waltraute tells Brünnhilde that she alone can save this situation – and lift the Nibelung Alberich's curse – by returning the ring that she wears to the Rhinemaidens; in Wagner's stage directions, she 'throws herself at Brünnhilde's feet' and tries to convince her sister that she should relinquish the ring for the good of the gods. Her plea falls on deaf ears: now that Brünnhilde is mortal and has

come to know human love, she will not part with ring that Siegfried gave her as a token of their love. A despondent Waltraute rushes away as stormy thunderclouds rise up from the woods.

Interval
Siegfried Idyll

Siegfried's Funeral March (Act 3, scene 2)

The evil Hagen has slain Siegfried, thrusting his spear into the hero's back. Siegfried's body is taken to the Hall of the Gibichungs to the sound of a solemn and dramatic funeral march. In his stage directions, Wagner wrote: 'The Vassals raise Siegfried's body and carry it away in a solemn procession ... The moon breaks through the clouds and lights up the funeral procession ever more brightly as it reaches the heights. Then mists rise from the Rhine and gradually come forward to cover the whole stage.'

Brünnhilde's Immolation Scene (Act 3, scene 3)

Brünnhilde orders Siegfried's body to be cremated on a funeral pyre. She bequeaths the cursed ring to the Rhine, then rides into the fire on her horse Grane to lift Alberich's curse and to join her husband in death. The Rhine bursts its banks and Hagen makes a desperate attempt to salvage the ring, but is swept away by the flood as the Rhinemaidens finally reclaim their treasure. The gods assembled in Valhalla are engulfed by flames. The scene ends with the Redemption motif, symbolising the purification of the world through self-sacrificing love. Once the gods are entirely consumed by flames, the curtain falls.

Götterdämmerung: Characters

Brünnhilde (Anja Kampe):

Brünnhilde was born a Valkyrie – a divine warrior maiden. Her father Wotan, ruler of the gods, took away her divinity after she disobeyed him and attempted to save the warrior Siegmund in battle. Wotan then put Brünnhilde to sleep surrounded by a ring of fire, stipulating that only a great hero could awake her. In the opera *Siegfried*, Brünnhilde is awakened by Siegmund's son Siegfried, and the pair soon fall in love. In *Götterdämmerung*, Brünnhilde comes to realise the complexities of human emotions. After suffering betrayal, and committing it herself, she attains wisdom, manages to break the curse of the Nibelung's ring that has destroyed many lives, and ends the corrupt regime of the gods.

Waltraute (Elizabeth DeShong):

Waltraute is one of Brünnhilde's eight sisters. In Act 1 of *Götterdämmerung*, she visits Brünnhilde in secret to beg her to return the cursed Nibelung ring to the river Rhine, where it belongs. However, Brünnhilde refuses: she was given the ring as a love token from Siegfried, and now values human love more than the gods' happiness. Waltraute is devastated.

Waltraute's Plea to Brünnhilde

Text & Translation

Original Text

Brünnhilde

*Altgewohntes Geräusch
raunt meinem Ohr die Ferne.
Ein Luftroß jagt im Laufe daher;
auf der Wolke fährt es wetternd zum Fels.
Wer fand mich Einsam auf?*

Waltrautes Stimme

*Brünnhilde! Schwester!
Schläfst du oder wachst du?*

Brünnhilde

*Waltrautes Ruf, so wonnig mir kund!
Kommst du, Schwester?
Schwingst dich kühn zu mir her?
Dort im Tann dir noch vertraut –
steige vom Roß
und stell den Renner zur Rast!
Kommst du zu mir?
Bist du so kühn,
magst ohne Grauen Brünnhild'
bieten den Gruß?*

Waltraute

Einzig dir nur galt meine Eil!

Brünnhilde

*So wagtest du, Brünnhild' zulieb,
Walvaters Bann zu brechen?
Oder wie – o sag –
wär' wider mich Wotans Sinn erweicht?
Als dem Gott entgegen Siegmund ich schützte,
fehlend – ich weiß es –
erfüllt' ich doch seinen Wunsch.
Daß sein Zorn sich verzogen, weiß ich auch;
denn verschloß er mich gleich im Schlaf,
fesselt' er mich auf den Fels,
wies er dem Mann mich zur Magd,
der am Weg mich fänd' und erweckt' –
meiner bangen Bitte doch gab er Gunst:
mit zehrendem Feuer umzog er den Fels,
dem Zagen zu wehren den Weg.
So zur Seligsten schuf mich die Strafe:
der herrlichste Held gewann mich zum Weib!
In seiner Liebe leucht' und lach' ich heut' auf.*

Translated Text

Brünnhilde

I can hear old, familiar sounds
from far away.
A winged horse is coming this way;
It sweeps through the clouds like a storm.
Who has come looking for me in my solitude?

Waltraute's Voice

Brünnhilde! Sister!
Are you asleep or awake?

Brünnhilde

That's Waltraute's voice.
Is it you, sister?
Have you flown here to me?
Leave your horse to rest in the woods.
Have you come to me?
You've been brave enough
to come and see me.
Aren't you afraid?

Waltraute

I came to find you as fast as I could!

Brünnhilde

Then for love of me you were brave
enough to break father's ban?
Or could it be that Wotan is no
longer so angry with me?
When I protected Siegmund against him
and I know it was wrong
I was doing what he wanted.
I also know that his anger died down.
Although he sealed me in sleep,
imprisoned on this rock,
and left me, a virgin,
to the man who found me
and woke me, he granted my wish,
encircling the rock with blazing fire
to keep cowards away.
This was how my punishment brought
me the greatest happiness: The greatest
of heroes won me as his wife.

*Lockte dich, Schwester, mein Los?
An meiner Wonne willst du dich weiden,
teilen, was mich betraf?*

Waltraute

*Teilen den Taumel, der dich, Törin erfaßt?
Ein andres bewog mich in Angst,
zu brechen Wotans Gebot.*

Brünnhilde

*Angst und Furcht fesseln dich Arme?
So verzieh der Strenge noch nicht?
Du zitterst vor des Strafenden Zorn?*

Waltraute

*Dürft' ich ihn fürchten, meiner
Angst fänd' ich ein End'!*

Brünnhilde

Stauend versteh ich dich nicht!

Waltraute

*Wehre der Walung, achtsam höre mich an!
Nach Walhalla wieder treibt mich die Angst,
die von Walhalla hieher mich trieb.*

Brünnhilde

Was ist's mit den ewigen Göttern?

Waltraute

*Höre mit Sinn, was ich dir sage!
Seit er von dir geschieden,
zur Schlacht nicht mehr schickte uns Wotan;
irr und ratlos ritten wir ängstlich zu Heer;
Walhallas mutige Helden mied Walvater.
Einsam zu Roß, ohne Ruh noch Rast,
durchstreift' er als Wanderer die Welt.
Jüngst kehrte er heim;
in der Hand hielt er seines Speeres Splitter:
die hatte ein Held ihm geschlagen.
Mit stummem Wink Walhallas Edle
wies er zum Forst, die Weltesche zu fällen.
Des Stammes Scheite hieß er sie schichten
zu ragendem Hauf rings um der Seligen Saal.*

Today his love delights me.
Does my fate attract you, sister?
Do you want to share in my joy?

Waltraute

Share the frenzy that's consumed you, you fool?
Something else has driven me
to disobey Wotan's orders.

Brünnhilde

Are you still frightened of him, then?
Hasn't he forgiven me yet?
Are you afraid he will punish you?

Waltraute

If that was all,
I wouldn't be frightened!

Brünnhilde

I don't understand.

Waltraute

Then listen to me.
My anxiety drives me back to Valhalla,
just as it drove me here to you.

Brünnhilde

What has happened to the eternal gods?

Waltraute

I'll tell you.
Since he left you here,
Wotan has not sent us to war.
Lost and aimless we rode out to battle,
while he ignored Valhalla's brave heroes.
Alone, without resting,
he roamed the world as the Wanderer.
Recently he came home.
In his hand he held his splintered spear.
A hero had broken the shaft.
He sent Valhalla's warriors to the forest
to cut down the world ash-tree.
He ordered them to heap the logs
around the sacred hall.

Waltraute's Plea to Brünnhilde (continued)

Text & Translation

*Der Götter Rat ließ er berufen;
den Hochsitz nahm heilig er ein:
ihm zu Seiten hieß er die Bangen sich setzen,
in Ring und Reih' die Hal' erfüllen die Helden.*

*So sitzt er,
sagt kein Wort,
auf hehrem Sitze stumm und ernst,
des Speeres Splitter fest in der Faust.
Holda's Äpfel rührt er nicht an.
Stauern und Bangen binden starr die Götter.
Seine Raben beide sandt' er auf Reise:
kehrten die einst mit guter Kunde zurück,
dann noch einmal, zum letztenmal,
lächelte ewig der Gott.
Seine Knie umwindend, liegen wir Walküren;
blind bleibt er den flehenden Blicken;
uns alle verzehrt Zagen und endlose Angst.
An seine Brust preßt' ich mich weinend:
da brach sich sein Blick –
er gedachte, Brünnhilde, dein!
Tief seufzt' er auf,
schloß das Auge,
und wie im Traume raunt' er das Wort:
'Des tiefen Rheines Töchtern
gäbe den Ring sie wieder zurück,
von des Fluches Last
erlöst wär' Gott und die Welt!'*

*Da sann ich nach:
von seiner Seite durch stumme
Reihen stahl ich mich fort;
in heimlicher Hast bestieg ich mein Roß
und ritt im Sturme zu dir.
Dich, o Schwester, beschwör ich nun:
was du vermagst, volend' es dein Mut!
Ende der Ewigen Qual!*

Brünnhilde

*Welch banger Träume Mären
meldest du Taurige mir!
Der Götter heiligem Himmelsnebel
bin ich Törin enttaucht:
nicht faß ich, was ich erfahre.
Wirr und wüst scheint mir dein Sinn;
in deinem Aug', so übermüde,*

He called the council of the gods,
and taking the throne of state:
he ordered the anxious gods to sit beside him,
around them ranks of heroes filled the hall.

There he sits,
without saying a word,
silent and solemn on his sacred throne.
He firmly holds holds the spear's
splinters in his hand.
He will not touch Holda's apples.
The gods sit numbed with amazement.
He has dispatched his two ravens.
If ever they were to return with good news,
then Wotan would smile once more
into eternity.
We Valkyries lie at his feet;
He is blind to our glances.
Terror and dread consume us all.
As I lay weeping at his side,
his fixed gaze softened –
He was thinking about you, Brünnhilde!
He sighed deeply, closed his eyes,
and whispered as if in a dream:
'If she would give the ring back to the
Rhine's daughters in its depths,
then the world and the gods
would be free from the weight of its curse!'

I thought about this,
then stole away from beside him
through the silent ranks;
I mounted my horse in secret haste
and rode like the wind to you.
I beg you, sister, have the courage
to do what only you can achieve!
End this torment of the gods!

Brünnhilde

Why do you bring me these tales
of fearful, tormented dreams?
I am just the fool who has been banished
from the misty heights of the gods:
I don't understand what you tell me.
Your senses appear chaotic and wild to me.
The fire has gone from your eyes,

*glänzt flackernde Glut.
Mit blasser Wange, du bleiche Schwester,
was willst du Wilde von mir?*

Waltraute

*An deiner Hand, der Ring,
er ist's; hör meinen Rat:
für Wotan wirf ihn von dir!*

Brünnhilde

Den Ring? Von mir?

Waltraute

Den Rheintöchtern gib ihn zurück!

Brünnhilde

*Den Rheintöchtern, ich, den Ring?
Siegfrieds Liebespfand?
Bist du von Sinnen?*

Waltraute

*Hör mich, hör meine Angst!
Der Welt Unheil haftet sicher an ihm.
Wirf ihn von dir, fort in die Welle!
Walhallas Elend zu enden,
den verfluchten wirf in die Flut!*

Brünnhilde

*Ha, weißt du, was er mir ist?
Wie kannst du's fassen, fühlose Maid!
Mehr als Walhallas Wonne,
mehr als der Ewigen Ruhm
ist mir der Ring:
ein Blick auf sein helles Gold,
ein Blitz aus dem hehren Glanz
gilt mir werter als aller Götter
ewig währendes Glück!
Denn selig aus ihm leuchtet mir Siegfrieds Liebe,
Siegfrieds Liebe!
O ließ' sich die Wonne dir sagen!
Sie – wahr mir der Reif.
Geh hin zu der Götter heiligem Rat!
Von meinem Ringe raun ihnen zu:
Die Liebe ließe ich nie,
mir nähmen nie sie die Liebe,
stürzt' auch in Trümmern Walhalla
strahlende Pracht!*

You seem exhausted.
You look pale and wan.
What do you want from me?

Waltraute

The ring on your finger,
Listen to me:
For Wotan's sake, throw it away!

Brünnhilde

Give away the ring?

Waltraute

Give the ring back to the Rhinemaidens!

Brünnhilde

To the Rhinemaidens? The ring?
Siegfried's pledge of love?
Are you mad?

Waltraute

Listen to me, the fate of the world
hangs on it.
Throw it away, into the water!
End Valhalla's despair
and throw the accursed thing into the water!

Brünnhilde

Do you know what it means to me?
But how could you?
Feelless maiden!
This ring is more than Valhalla's heaven,
more than the glory of the gods.
One glance at its shining gold,
one flash of its holy radiance
means more to me than the
eternal happiness of the gods!
Siegfried's love for me shines from it
like a blessing, Siegfried's love!
If only I could describe it to you.
This is what the ring means to me.
Go back to the gods' holy council.
Tell them this about the ring:
I will never renounce love,
and they will never take love from me,
though the splendour of Valhalla
collapses in ruins.

Waltraute's Plea to Brünnhilde (continued)

Text & Translation

Waltraute

*Dies deine Treue?
So in Trauer entlässest du
lieblos die Schwester?*

Brünnhilde

*Schwinge dich fort!
Fliege zu Roß!
Den Ring entführst du mir nicht!*

Waltraute

*Wehe! Wehe!
Weh dir, Schwester!
Walhalla Göttern weh!*

Brünnhilde

*Blitzend Gewölk, vom Wind
getragen, stürme dahin:
zu mir nie steure mehr her!
Abendlich Dämmern deckt den Himmel;
heller leuchtet die hütende Lohe herauf.
Was leckt so wütend
die lodernde Welle zum Wall?
Zur Felsenspitze wälzt sich der feurige Schwall.
Siegfried!
Siegfried zurück?
Seinen Ruf sendet er her!
Auf! – Auf, ihm entgegen!
In meines Gottes Arm!
Verrat! – Wer drang zu mir?*

Waltraute

Is this your idea of loyalty?
You see your sister in despair,
and yet you coldly turn her away?

Brünnhilde

Leave me!
Go!
You will never take the ring from me.

Waltraute

Woe to you, sister,
woe to the gods of Valhalla!

Brünnhilde

Go, you raging storm-cloud,
carried by the wind,
and never come towards me again:
Evening twilight dims the sky.
The guardian fire burns brighter.
Why does the wall of flame
flare up so fiercely?
The flames are growing stronger.
Siegfried!
Siegfried returning!
Up! Up to meet him!
Into my god's arms!
I've been betrayed!
Who's forced his way to me?

Translation by Simon Rees



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Siegfried Idyll

Richard Wagner



Programme note
by **Nigel Simeone**

The year 1870 was a busy one for Richard Wagner: in June, *Die Walküre* was first performed in Munich, and in August, he was finally able to marry Cosima von Bülow after the dissolution of her marriage to Hans von Bülow. The opera *Siegfried* was nearing completion (it was finished in February 1871), and Wagner also found time to write his extended essay on Beethoven.

The *Siegfried Idyll* was a happy by-product of *Siegfried* – drawing on music from Act 3 of the opera for its starting point. It was written at the villa in Tribschen on the shore of Lake Lucerne, where Wagner also composed *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Siegfried*, and where he began *Götterdämmerung*. Cosima's birthday was on 24 December (she turned 33 in 1870), but she always celebrated it on Christmas Day. In her diary for Christmas Eve, she noted that she was 'giving R[ichard] no present, and will receive none from him – so that is all right'. Little did she know that she would be waking up the next morning to a glorious musical birthday present – originally called the *Tribschen Idyll*. The circumstances of the first performance are surely among the most enchanting for any new piece, described by Cosima in her diary for Christmas Day, 1870:

'When I woke up I heard a sound, it grew ever louder, I could no longer imagine myself in a dream: music was sounding, and what music! After it had died down, Richard came in to me with the children and put into my hands the score of his 'Symphonic Birthday Greeting.' I was in tears, but so, too, was the whole household; R. had set up his orchestra on the stairs and thus consecrated our Tribschen for ever'.

After breakfast, the musicians (members of the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, conducted by Hans Richter, who had also taught himself the trumpet for this occasion) gathered downstairs to play the piece again, alongside Beethoven's Septet and the Wedding March from *Lohengrin*. The full title of the *Idyll* referred to Richard and Cosima's son, Siegfried (born in 1869), whose pet name was Fidi: 'Tribschen Idyll with Fidi's birdsong and an orange sunrise'. This emphasises the intimate, family context in which the piece was conceived: its origins were as a celebration of domestic bliss, for private enjoyment. A few years later, financial pressure forced Wagner to offer it to Schott for publication and it was issued in 1878 with the definitive title of *Siegfried Idyll*.

Richard Wagner

1813 (Germany) to 1883 (Italy)



Contemporaries

Giuseppe Verdi,
Robert Schumann

Key events

1843: Premiere
of *The Flying
Dutchman*

1849: Flees
Germany following
participation in the
Dresden Uprising
1876: Bayreuth
Festival inauguration
with premiere of *Der
Ring des Nibelungen*

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Coming up:

1 & 12 July 2026
Tristan and Isolde
with Sir Antonio
Pappano

Composer profile
by **Timmy Fisher**

Egotistical, profligate, adulterous and anti-Semitic, Richard Wagner remains one of history's most controversial composers. And yet, he was also capable of great generosity, and his remarkable contribution to opera has made him an inescapable, undeniable artistic force.

Wagner was born in Leipzig in 1813. Though he would later try to cultivate notions of an untutored genius, he had a reasonable musical education and as a young man cut his teeth as a music director with several theatre companies in Germany and Latvia (then part of the Russian Empire). He completed his first opera, *Die Feen* (The Fairies) in 1834, though his first true German Romantic opera, *The Flying Dutchman* (1840–41), was written several years later in Paris, where he had fled to escape creditors.

After taking a post at the King of Saxony's court in Dresden, Wagner then wrote *Tannhäuser* (1842–45) and *Lohengrin* (1845–48). But his watershed years came in Zurich, where he fled in 1849, following his role in Dresden's failed May Uprising. Here, in a series of essays, he detailed a new form of music drama – a *Gesamtkunstwerk* ('complete artwork') – that fused music with poetry and drama.

The embodiment of his theories came in the four-opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring of the Nibelung, 1854–74) and in his medieval romance *Tristan and Isolde* (1857–59). Steeped in myth and utopian ideas of redemption through love, expressed in music of intoxicating power, these works remain his most popular today.

Wagner's next opera, the romantic comedy *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (The Mastersingers of Nuremberg), was completed on the shores of Lake Lucerne, where he eventually settled in 1865 with his soon-to-be second wife, Cosima (Franz Liszt's daughter). Now living off a stipend from the King of Bavaria, he embarked on a long-held ambition to establish a festival dedicated to the unveiling of his *Ring*.

The foundation stone of the Bayreuth Festival Theatre was laid in 1872, and four years later, three *Ring* cycles were given there, attended by many of Europe's leading musicians. Wagner's final opera, *Parsifal*, was premiered at Bayreuth in 1882. He died in Venice the following year, of heart disease. His widow, Cosima, took on the directorship of the Bayreuth Festival, which continues to be run by the Wagner family to this day.

Immolation Scene

Text & Translation

Original Text

Brünnhilde

Starke Scheite schichtet mir dort
am Rande des Rheins zuhauf!
Hoch und hell lodre die Glut,
die den edlen Leib
des hehresten Helden verzehrt.
Sein Roß führet daher,
daß mit mir dem Recken es folge;
denn des Helden heiligste Ehre zu teilen,
verlangt mein eigener Leib.
Vollbringt Brünnhildes Wunsch!
Wie Sonne lauter strahlt mir sein Licht:
der Reinste war er, der mich verriet!
Die Gattin trügend, treu dem Freunde,
von der eignen Trauten, einzig ihm teuer,
schied er sich durch sein Schwert.
Echter als er schwur keiner Eide;
treuer als er hielt keiner Verträge;
lautrer als er liebte kein andrer.
Und doch, alle Eide, alle Verträge,
die treueste Liebe trog keiner wie er!

Wißt ihr, wie das ward?
O ihr, der Eide ewige Hüter!
Lenkt euren Blick auf mein blühendes Leid,
erschaut eure ewige Schuld!
Meine Klage hör, du hehrster Gott!
Durch seine tapferste Tat,
dir so tauglich erwünscht,
weihdest du den, der sie gewirkt,
dem Fluche, dem du verfliebst.
Mich mußte der Reinste verraten,
daß wissend würde ein Weib!
Weiß ich nun, was dir frommt?
Alles, alles, alles weiß ich,
Alles ward mir nun frei!
Auch deine Raben hör ich rauschen;
mit bang ersehnter Botschaft
send ich die beiden nun heim.
Ruhe, ruhe, du Gott!
Mein Erbe nun nehm' ich zu eigen.

Translated Text

Brünnhilde

Make a funeral pyre
on the banks of the Rhine!
Let a fire blaze high
that will consume this hero's body.
Lead his horse here,
so it can follow the warrior with me.
My own body longs to share
the hero's holiest honour.
Do as I ask.
He shone on me like sunlight.
He was the purest, the one who betrayed me.
Deceiving his wife, loyal to his friend,
he kept himself apart from his
true love with his sword.
A man more honest never took a vow,
no truer man ever made a promise,
A more honest man never loved.
No one was ever purer in love,
and no one so betrayed all vows,
all promises, and his truest love!

Do you know why?
Heavenly guardian of vows!
Look at my grief,
and see your eternal guilt.
Look down on my grief, mighty god.
Through his bravest deed,
which you so wanted him to do,
you sacrificed him to the curse
which had fallen on you.
This innocent man had to betray me
so that I could learn wisdom!
Do I know now what it is you wish?
Everything – I know everything.
All is clear to me now.
I hear your ravens stirring;
I'm sending them home
with the news you dread and long for.
Rest, rest now, O god.
Now I take my inheritance.

*Verfluchter Reif! Furchtbarer Ring!
Dein Gold faß ich und geb es nun fort.
Der Wassertiefe weise Schwestern,
des Rheines schwimmende Töchter,
euch dank ich redlichen Rat.
Was ihr begehrt, ich geb es euch:
aus meiner Asche nehmt es zu eigen!
Das Feuer, das mich verbrennt,
rein'ge vom Fluche den Ring!
Ihr in der Flut löset ihn auf,
und lauter bewahrt das lichte Gold,
das euch zum Unheil geraubt.
Fliegt heim, ihr Raben!
Raunt es eurem Herren,
was hier am Rhein ihr gehört!
An Brünnhildes Felsen fährt vorbei.
Der dort noch lodert, weiset
Loge nach Walhalla!
Denn der Götter Ende dämmert nun auf.
So – werf ich den Brand in
Walhallas prangende Burg.
Grane, mein Roß,
sei mir gegrüßt!
Weißt du auch, mein Freund,
wohin ich dich führe?
Im Feuer leuchtend, liegt dort dein Herr,
Siegfried, mein seliger Held.
Dem Freunde zu folgen, wieherst du freudig?
Lockt dich zu ihm die lachende Lohe?
Fühl meine Brust auch, wie sie entbrennt;
helles Feuer das Herz mir erfaßt,
ihn zu umschlingen, umschlossen von ihm,
in mächtigster Minne vermählt ihm zu sein!
Heiajoho! Grane!
Grüß deinen Herren!
Siegfried! Siegfried! Sieh!
Selig grüßt dich dein Weib!*

Cursed, fearful ring,
I take your gold and give it away.
Wise sisters in the deep waters,
daughters of the Rhine,
thank you for your good advice.
I give you what you long for:
take it from my ashes!
The fire that burns me
will clean the curse from the ring.
Guard it deep in the river,
the shining gold that was stolen from you,
the cause of all misfortune.
Ravens, fly home
and tell your master
what you have heard here.
Pass by Brünnhilde's rock, and send Loge,
who still burns there, to Valhalla.

For the end of the gods has come.
I throw the flame
at Valhalla's proud towers.
Grane, my horse,
I greet you.
Do you know where I am leading you?
To where your master lies,
radiant in the fire.
Siegfried, blessed hero.
Do you want to follow him?
Do the flames draw you to him?
Feel how I am burning;
a fire grips my heart
to embrace him, held in his arms,
one with him in love!
Grane!
Greet your master.
Siegfried, Siegfried, look!
Your wife greets you.

Translation by Simon Rees

London Symphony Orchestra

OPERA

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Sir Simon Rattle

Conductor Emeritus



Sir Simon Rattle was born in Liverpool and studied at the Royal Academy of Music. From 1980 to 1998, he was Principal Conductor and Artistic Adviser of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and was appointed Music Director in 1990. In 2002, he took up the position of Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, where he remained until the end of the 2017/18 season. Sir Simon was appointed Music Director of the London Symphony Orchestra in September 2017, a position he remained in until the 2023/24 season, when he became Conductor Emeritus. That same season, Sir Simon took up the position of Chief Conductor with the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks in Munich. He is a Principal Artist of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Founding Patron of Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. In 2024, he was announced as the Principal Guest Conductor, Rafael Kubelik Chair, of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra.

Sir Simon has made over 70 recordings for the EMI record label (now Warner Classics) and has received numerous prestigious international awards for his recordings on various labels. His most recent recordings include Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*, Helen Grime's *Woven Space*, Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Turnage's *Remembering* and Beethoven's *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, which were all released by the LSO's own record label, LSO Live.

Sir Simon regularly tours within Europe, the United States and Asia, and has longstanding relationships with world-leading orchestras. He regularly conducts the Staatskapelle Berlin, Berlin Philharmonic, Chamber Orchestra of Europe and the Czech Philharmonic. He has conducted opera productions at the Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, Berlin State Opera and at the Festival d'Aix en Provence.

Music education is of supreme importance to Sir Simon, and his partnership with the Berlin Philharmonic broke new ground with the education programme *Zukunft@Bphil*. He and the Berlin Philharmonic were appointed International UNICEF Ambassadors in 2004, the first time this honour has been conferred on an artistic ensemble. In 2019, Sir Simon announced the creation of the LSO East London Academy, developed by the LSO in partnership with ten East London boroughs. This free programme aims to identify and develop the potential of young East Londoners between the ages of 11 and 18 who show exceptional musical talent.

Sir Simon was awarded a knighthood by Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1994 and received the Order of Merit in 2014. He received the Order of Merit in Berlin in 2018. In 2019, he was given the Freedom of the City of London.

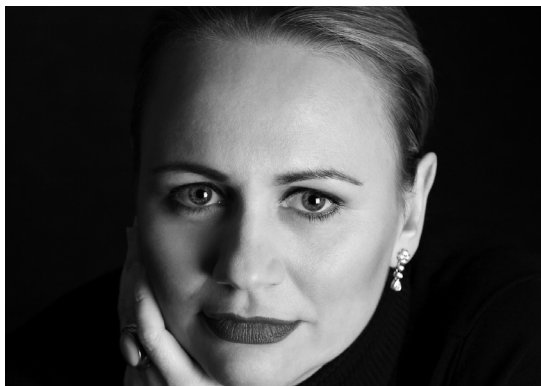


Next on stage with the LSO

Thursday 7 January 2027 7pm,
Barbican
John Adams at 80

Anja Kampe

Brünnhilde



The German soprano Anja Kampe is one of the most sought-after singers of our time. During the 2025/26 season, she has sung Brünnhilde in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, Marie in Berg's *Wozzeck* and Ortrud in Wagner's *Lohengrin* for the Berlin State Opera, Ariadne in Richard Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Hamburg State Opera and the Vienna State Opera, and Kundry in Wagner's *Parsifal* at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich. In June, she sings Kundry at the Wagner Days Budapest. Concert appearances have included *Die Walküre* (Act 3) with the Budapest Festival Orchestra under Iván Fischer. This July, she sings Isolde in a concert performance of *Tristan and Isolde* with Radio France Montpellier under Jaap van Zweden.

Other important recent engagements have included Isolde at San Francisco Opera and the Berlin State Opera, Ortrud at the Semperoper Dresden, Giorgetta in Puccini's *Il trittico* and Marie in new productions at the Vienna State Opera, Senta in Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* in her debut at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, Minnie in Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* in a new production at the Berlin State Opera under Sir Antonio Pappano,

Kundry and Puccini's *Tosca* at the Berlin State Opera under Barenboim, Kundry at the Opéra National de Paris and the Teatro Real de Madrid and Sieglinde in Wagner's *Die Walküre* at the Bayreuth Festival and the Munich Opera Festival under Kirill Petrenko. For The Royal Opera in London, she has sung Senta and Marie.

Noted concert performances include Richard Strauss' *Hölderlin Hymns* with the Berlin Philharmonic and Christian Thielemann, Berg's *Altenberg Lieder* with the Berlin Philharmonic and Philippe Jordan, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the Vienna Musikverein under Philippe Jordan and Tove in Schoenberg's *Gurre-Lieder* at the Edinburgh Festival. Other concert repertory includes Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* with the SWR Symphony Orchestra in Stuttgart.

In addition to conductors already mentioned, Kampe has worked with Claudio Abbado, Semyon Bychkov, James Conlon, Mark Elder, Adam Fischer, Daniele Gatti, Daniel Harding, Marek Janowski, Simone Young, Vladimir Jurowski, Jesús López-Cobos, Fabio Luisi, Nicola Luisotti, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Kent Nagano, Andris Nelsons, Kazushi Ono, Donald Runnicles, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Christian Thielemann, Sebastian Weigle and Franz Welser-Möst. Important directors with whom she has collaborated include Calixto Bieito, Willy Decker, Claus Guth, Andreas Homoki, Peter Konwitschny, Harry Kupfer and Dmitri Tcherniakov.

She features on DVDs including *Die Walküre* from Salzburg Easter Festival, *Der fliegende Holländer* from Zurich and *Parsifal* from the Berlin State Opera. Her other recordings include *Tristan and Isolde* and Beethoven's *Fidelio* from Glyndebourne and Schreker's *Die Gezeichneten* from Los Angeles.

Elizabeth DeShong

Waltraute



Lauded equally for her musicianship and commanding stage presence, the American mezzo-soprano Elizabeth DeShong has established herself as a regular on concert and operatic stages worldwide.

DeShong has performed extensively throughout the world with such companies as the Metropolitan Opera, New York, San Francisco Opera, Opéra national de Paris, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los Angeles Opera, Canadian Opera Company, English National Opera, Vienna State Opera, The Royal Opera, Stuttgart Opera, the Zurich Opera, Opéra National de Bordeaux, the Glyndebourne Festival, Santa Fe Opera and the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence. The list of symphony orchestras with which she has performed includes the Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of St Luke's, Cincinnati Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony, the Royal Flemish Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Oregon Symphony, Houston Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, The English Concert and the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia.

In opera, her repertory includes key roles by Handel (Bradamante and Ruggiero in *Alcina*, Juno and Ino in *Semele*), Verdi (Ulrica in *Un ballo in maschera*, Azucena in *Il trovatore*), Wagner (Fricka in *Das Rheingold*), Rossini (Calbo in *Maometto II*, Arsace in *Semiramide*, Angelina in *La Cenerentola*, Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*), Puccini (Suzuki in *Madame Butterfly*), Mercadante (Odoardo Douglas in *Il proscritto*), Tchaikovsky (Polina in *The Queen of Spades*), Bellini (Adalgisa in *Norma*), Mozart (Sesto in *La clemenza di Tito*), Humperdinck (Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*), Richard Strauss (the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, for which she was named Washington National Opera's 'Artist of the Year' in 2010) and Britten (Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).

This season, she has sung Ulrica for the Teatro San Carlo in Naples and Paris' Opéra-Bastille and Galatea in Handel's cantata *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* at the Zurich Opera House. Other recent engagements have included Azucena for Stuttgart State Opera, Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* in Vienna, Medoro in Handel's *Orlando* for the Théâtre du Châtelet, Octavia in John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* at La Scala, Milan.

DeShong features on DVDs of The Royal Opera and Glyndebourne's productions of *Madame Butterfly*, the Metropolitan Opera's pastiche opera *The Enchanted Island* and San Francisco Opera's production of *Lucrezia Borgia*. Her recording of Handel's *Messiah* with the Toronto Symphony under Andrew Davis (Chandos) was nominated for two Grammy Awards. Recent recordings include Handel's *Alcina* under Marc Minkowski and Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* with the London Symphony Orchestra under Mark Elder.

London Symphony Orchestra

On Stage

Leader

Benjamin Marquise
Gilmore

First Violins

Seohee Min
Clare Duckworth
Ginette Decuyper
Olatz Ruiz de
Gordejuela
Maxine Kwok
Stefano Mengoli
Claire Parfitt
Harriet Rayfield
Sylvain Vasseur
Dmitry Khakhmouov
Grace Lee
Aaron You-Xin Li
Dániel Mészöly
Djumash Poulsen
Rhys Watkins

Second Violins

Julián Gil Rodríguez
Sarah Quinn
Miya Väisänen
Matthew Gardner
Naoko Keatley
Alix Lagasse
Belinda McFarlane
Iwona Muszynska
Csilla Pogány
Louise Shackelton
Juan Gonzalez
Hernandez
Lyrit Milgram
Polina Makhina
Chelsea Sharpe

Violas

Eivind Ringstad
Malcolm Johnston
Germán Clavijo
Thomas Beer
Julia O'Riordan
Sofia Silva Sousa
Robert Turner
Mizuho Ueyama
Luca Casciato
Errika Collins
Matthias Wiesner
Michelle Bruil

Cellos

David Cohen
Laure Le Dantec
Alastair Blayden
Salvador Bolón
Daniel Gardner
Amanda Truelove
Judith Fleet
Hamish Jamieson*
Silvestrs Kalnins
Morwenna Del Mar
Raphaël Unger

Double Basses

Rodrigo Moro Martín
Mehdi Nejjoum-
Barthélémy
Patrick Laurence
Thomas Goodman
Joe Melvin
Will Priest
James Trowbridge
Adam Wynter

Flutes

Gareth Davies
Amy Yule
Imogen Royce

Piccolo

Patricia Moynihan

Oboes

Juliana Koch
Rosie Jenkins
Kara Battley

Cor Anglais

Thomas Hutchinson

Clarinets

Sérgio Pires
Chi-Yu Mo
James Gilbert

Bass Clarinet

Ferran Garcerà Perelló

Bassoons

Daniel Jemison
Joost Bosdijk

Contrabassoon

Martin Field

Horns

Timothy Jones
Angela Barnes
Alex Willett
Jo Withers
Tommaso Rusconi

Wagner Tubas

Tim Ellis
Alex Harris
Max Garrard
Jonathan Maloney

Trumpets

James Fountain
Adam Wright
Katie Smith

Bass Trumpet

Rebecca Smith

Trombones

Simon Johnson
Jonathan Hollick

Bass Trombone

Eddie Curtis

Contrabass

Trombone
Paul Milner

Tuba

Ben Thomson

Timpani

Nigel Thomas
Patrick King

Percussion

Neil Percy
David Jackson
Sam Walton

Harp

Bryn Lewis
Anneke Hodnett
Fiona Clifton-Welker
Heather Brooks

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