

# Magical Moments of the Ring

*By Cindy Battisti*

**Intro:** The Ring Cycle is a series of 4 operas with a connected story, drawn from Norse Mythology. Composer Richard Wagner wrote both music and libretto.

As the entire ring is about 16 hours long, many characters, events and scenes have been edited out of this presentation.

**About me:** I don't have a music degree nor do I speak perfect German so I ask you to excuse my pronunciations!

I came to Wagner's Ring as a fan of mythology and my purpose here is to share this amazing story and magical moments of the epic to inspire you to explore further.

**Leitmotifs:** We will briefly talk about the famous leitmotifs. These are theme songs for a character, place or idea.

**Production:** This production is from ***Opera North*** out of Leeds UK. They are famous for their portable productions that they perform at multiple venues all over the UK.

Essentially, they are concert performances with a lot of visual effects with captions that aid in the telling of the story.

**This entire Ring can be streamed online on Opera North's website  
free with suggested donation:**

<https://www.operanorth.co.uk/the-ring-cycle/>

*Our library system has many choices of books,  
CDs and DVDs of the Ring Cycle Operas for further exploration*

***More resources for Ring Learning here:***

<https://www.operabracelets.com/blog/learning-wagners-ring/>

*Includes Anna Russell's comedic non-PC retelling of the Ring*

## Opera 1: Das Rheingold

The first opera, *Das Rheingold* (*The Rhine's Gold*) begins at the "beginning of the world". We meet some of the first creatures, Rhinemaidens, mermaid like creatures swimming in the majestic River Rhine. They protect a miraculous gold substance- the Rheingold. Someone who renounces Love can take it and become all powerful. Their music is the leitmotif for the beauty and power of nature.

**Rhinemaidens 4:44 minutes** *Jeni Bern, Madeline Shaw, Sarah Castle*

Dwarf Alberich comes along and makes a pass at all three of them - but is rejected. He decides he may as well take the gold and be all powerful. He renounces Love and takes the gold, to their dismay.

Meanwhile... Head God Wotan (we might know him better as Odin) wakes with his wife Fricka to see his beautiful new fortress, Valhalla. *This music will represent Wotan and the fortress Valhalla throughout the Ring.*

**Valhalla 1:00 minute**

BUT: Wotan must still pay giants Fasolt and Fafner, the builders of Valhalla.

Loge (we may know him better as the demi-god Loki) has intel: Alberich has made a Ring out of the Rheingold and is using it to amass a hoard of gold – this could pay off the giants.

Great! Wotan and Loge travel to Alberich, get the Ring off him and have him bring the gold treasure hoard to the giants BUT Alberich curses the Ring: *it will bring death, destruction and heartache to all who wear it.* Earth Goddess, Erda, warns Wotan that the curse is real; he shouldn't keep the Ring.

**Erda 2:00 minutes** *Claudia Huckle*

Wotan reluctantly tosses the Ring on the pile of gold. The giants fight over it and Fasolt is murdered by his brother. Gloom and fear descend, everyone realizes the curse is active.

Wotan's son Donner (we know him as Thor) clears the air with a thunderbolt. His brother Froh creates a rainbow bridge for the Gods to cross over into Valhalla.

**Rainbow Bridge 3:20 minutes** *Thor: Andrew Foster Williams Froh: Mark Le Brocq*

The Rhinemaidens continue to lament their lost gold as the Gods rise to Valhalla

**Entrance of the Gods to Valhalla: 3:16 minutes**

*Wotan: Michael Druiett Loge: Wolfangs Albinger-Sperrhackle*

## Opera 2: Die Walkure *The Valkyrie*

A pair of twins, Siegmund and Sieglinde, separated in childhood are reunited. They aren't immediately aware of who the other is and before you know it, they fall in love – yup you heard it right. By the way, Wotan is their father. There's a special sword that Wotan has left them. Siegmund calls it Nothung which means "Needful". They run away from her husband in the night.

**Love Duet 4:49 minutes** *Siegmund: Michael Weinius Sieglinde: Lee Bisset*

Now, we meet Wotan's favorite daughter Brunnhilde. She is a Valkyrie; these are goddesses that fly over battlefields carrying slain warriors to the afterlife in Valhalla. You'll hear the Famous Valkyrie leitmotif.

**Brunnhilde 1:40 minutes** *Brunnhilde: Kelly Cae Hogan Wotan: Robert Hayward*

Initially Wotan instructs her to protect Siegmund in the coming fight. But after his wife Fricka (Goddess of Marriage) protests, he reverses and tells her **not to do so**.

After meeting Siegmund and seeing his love for Sieglinde, Brunnhilde decides **SHE WILL help him**. Never-the-less, Wotan ensures that Siegmund dies. Brunnhilde escapes carrying Sieglinde away on her horse. Scene changes to Brunnhilde's Warrior sisters gathering after battle.

**Ride of the Valkyries 2:26 minutes**

Brunnhilde arrives with Sieglinde and Wotan is in hot pursuit. The panicked Valkyries come up with a plan for Sieglinde's escape. In grief, Sieglinde would rather die, but Brunnhilde reveals that Sieglinde is pregnant! This music will be important and is known as the motif of love's redemption.

**Sieglinde's Blessing 2:12 minutes** *Brunnhilde: Kelly Cae Hogan Sieglinde: Lee Bisset*

Furious at Brunnhilde's disobedience, Wotan decides that Brunnhilde will be stripped of her immortality, put into a magic sleep and left for any passing man to take. Arguing that she was only doing what he really wanted, she begs for a ring of fire to protect her, ensuring only a great hero can win her. Wotan agrees.

**Wotan & Brunnhilde 5:00 minutes** *Brunnhilde: Kelly Cae Hogan Wotan: Robert Hayward*

Wotan calls for Loge, the fire god, to come and protect Brunnhilde with a ring of fire.

The magic fire music has a lullaby quality to it but you will also hear the horns rise in the leitmotif of the Ring's curse. Wotan (having worn the ring only a few minutes) will be cursed by being separated from his beloved daughter.

**Magic Fire Music 3:00 minutes** *Wotan: Robert Hayward*

## Opera 3: Siegfried

17 Years pass. Sieglinde has died in childbirth. Her son Siegfried is raised by the dwarf Mime-Alberich's brother. He's hoping Siegfried can help him get the Ring.

BTW- the giant Fafner has succumbed to the Rings curse – in that it has turned him into a dragon. (So, you can see how Mime needs help with his "get the ring" plan)

Mime has the pieces of Sigmund's sword Notung, but cannot fix it. Finally, Wotan visits and lets on that only Siegfried can fix the sword. Which he does accompanied by fabulous music!

**Forging song 2:52 minutes** *Siegfried: Lars Cleveman Mime: Richard Roberts*

Now you'll hear the famous Siegfried Leitmotif that you may know from the Bugs Bunny Cartoon "What's Opera Doc?". After a bit of discussion and goading Siegfried kills Fafner and becomes heir to the Ring and its treasure.

**Siegfried kills Fafner 3:08 minutes** *Siegfried: Lars Cleveman Fafner: Mats Almgren*

He gets the dragon's blood on his hand – it burns and he sticks his finger in his mouth – the Dragon Blood gives him the power to understand birds.

The Woodbird advises him to take the Ring and treasure. She warns him Mime will try to kill him. Once Siegfried dispatches Mime, she tells him to go get Brunnhilde for his wife!

**Woodbird 1:00 minute** *Siegfried: Lars Cleveman Woodbird: Jeni Bern*

On his way to the ring of fire protecting Brunnhilde, an arrogant and ignorant Siegfried confronts Wotan and breaks the god's sacred spear. His power broken, Wotan concedes the world's fate to Siegfried and Brunnhilde.

**Confrontation with Wotan 2:46 minutes** *Wotan: Bela Perencz Siegfried: Lars Cleveman*

Siegfried is able to pass through the fire where he finds Brunnhilde sleeping. After what seems like a long time, he figures out he has to kiss her to wake her.

**Brunnhilde Awakens 2:16 minutes** *Brunnhilde: Katherine Broderick*

It takes some convincing, but Brunnhilde finally falls in love with Siegfried. You'll hear echoes of the Valkyrie theme as she bids her old life farewell. The Ring/curse theme runs subtly underneath reminding us that we are not really at a happy ending.

**Love Duet 3:00 minutes** *Brunnhilde: Katherine Broderick Siegfried: Lars Cleveman*

## Opera 4: Gotterdammerung

### *The Twilight of the Gods*

Some time has passed, Brunnhilde has taught Siegfried wisdom and now he wants to go off on adventures. He gives her the Ring as her wedding ring and she gives him her sacred horse Grane to set forth on adventures. You'll hear the Siegfried leitmotif as he goes on his Rhine journey.

*Brunnhilde: Kelly Cae Hogan Siegfried: Mati Turi*

#### **The Rhine Journey 4:41 minutes**

Now we meet the Gibichungs- siblings Gunther and Gutrune with their half-brother Hagen (BTW Hagen is actually Alberich's son!). They have a plan: Gunther will marry Brunnhilde: Gutrune will marry Siegfried. They will give Siegfried a potion to make him forget about Brunnhilde.

This plan comes to pass. It's all very complicated but the double wedding happens.

*HOWEVER. Hagen needs Siegfried dead to get the Ring and treasure for his dad.*

When they are out hunting, Hagen gives Siegfried a potion to restore his memory and stabs him in the back. Siegfried dies remembering the moment Brunnhilde awoke to him.

**Siegfried remembers, dies 3:52 minutes** *Siegfried: Mati Turi*

#### **Siegfried's Funeral music 2:26 minutes**

After a load of arguing over who gets the Ring now, Brunnhilde calls things to order - She is his real wife. She commands a huge funeral pyre to be built. Placing the ring on her finger she tells the Rhinemaidens to take the Ring back from her ashes to end the curse. She then leaps into the fire on her horse.

In the final sequence you will hear a return of the leitmotifs for the Rhinemaidens as they claim the Ring and the Valhalla theme as the flames of the pyre consume the world and realm of the Gods.

You will hear the Ring/Curse horns rise up but they are swallowed in the motif of love's redemption as the world is born anew.

**Twilight of the Gods 7:00 minutes** *Brunnhilde: Kelly Cae Hogan*

***Thank you so much!***

*I hope you will be inspired to explore the Ring Cycle further.*

