

WAGNER NOTES



Siegfried (Stefan Vinke) with Rhinemaidens (Cadie J. Bryan, Alexandra Razskazoff, and Gretchen Krupp). *Götterdämmerung*, Act III, Atlanta Opera. Photo: Raftermen. See review, page.5. Also see reviews of Salzburg, La Fenice, and LA Philharmonic performances.



BREAKING NEWS – Atlanta Opera Announces Two *Ring* Cycles in 2029
Cycle 1: June 9-14, 2029; Cycle 2: June 16-21, 2029

Bayreuth Festival Notes and Updates

- **2026 Bayreuth Festival News:** See complete schedule and recent additions: bayreuther-festspiele.de
- **2026 Bayreuth-oriented WSNY events:** Artist Talks, 10:30 am, Arvena Kongress Hotel: Aug. 11: Georg Zeppenfeld; Aug. 13: Christa Mayer; Aug. 14: Camilla Nylund / Group dinner during each *Ring Cycle* / Schloss Neuschwanstein Tour: Aug. 8 / Two-part *Parsifal* talk with Thomas Launius: TBA / *Rienzi* luncheon: Aug. 17 / Tour of Wagnerzimmer in Eckersdorf: TBA. Registration and further info on events: wagnersocietyny.org/events
- **Radio broadcasts of 2026 Bayreuth performances:** https://www.operacast.com/bayreuth_2026.htm To access a station's stream links, try the Firefox Browser <https://www.firefox.com/en-US/> or click on the station name that will lead to the station home page and listen from there. Many thanks to OperaCast, produced by Geoffrey and Liz Riggs, for their nearly 30 years, now ending, of providing opera listening information. The WFMT Broadcast Series may carry Bayreuth rebroadcasts; please check their Sat. afternoon schedules.
- **2027:** Bayreuth Festival will include *Lohengrin* (new), *Parsifal* (new), *Tannhäuser* (revival) and *Meistersinger* (revival). Four ticket packages have been announced: see the Bayreuth Festival website. Note that the Gesellschaft Friends' ticket allocations are separate from these ticket packages.

WSNY Calendar (see also WSNY website)

- **July 21 (Tues.), 6:00 pm, online only.** John Deathridge and John J. H. Muller IV: Introduction to *Rienzi*. See details on WSNY website.
- **Sept. 15 (Tues.) and 16 (Wed.).** *Rienzi*: Bayreuth production in HD, in two parts. Dolby Screening Room, 1350 Avenue of the Americas at 55th St., New York. Registration and details: WSNY website.
- **Sept. 24 (Thurs.), 7:00 pm.** Bayreuth Festival Reports and Stipendium Reports. National Opera Center, 330 Seventh Ave. at 28th St., New York.
- **Oct. 15 (Thurs.), 6:30 pm.** Joseph Horowitz on Anton Seidl. National Opera Center.
- **Nov./Dec.** TBA.
- **2027: Jan. 13 (Wed.), 6:30 pm.** Annual Meeting and TBA. National Opera Center.
- **Feb. & Apr.** TBA.
- **March.** Recital by Melissa Zgouridi, 2026 awardee of WSNY Singers Competition. Victor Borge Hall at Scandinavia House, 58 Park Ave. at 38th St., New York.
- **May.** WSNY 2027 Singer Auditions. Merkin Hall. TBA.
- **May & June.** 5-part course on *Parsifal*: J. Muller, D. Vesey, P. Phillips. The Juilliard School. TBA.
- **Annual Seminar:** *Parsifal*, during the Met run of May 20-June 1. TBA.

The summer season prompts me to take time to appreciate anew the extraordinary contributions of our many volunteers and supporters, who made our 2025-26 season so memorable. I loved meeting Prof. Josh Borths in April and learned yet more about the young Wagner. At the Singer Competition Final Auditions in May, the quality of the young talent was extraordinary and members were able to attend the finals. About 50 of us showed up in Merkin Hall; our panel of judges made their decisions while we waited, and then announced the awards. It was a great event and we look forward to hearing an awardee in recital in May. (See page 12 for the recipients.)

I'm also looking ahead with eager expectations. The remarkable British Wagner scholar John Deathridge will join us a few days before *Rienzi's* Bayreuth premiere to help us prepare for that momentous occasion. We are again sending two young artists as stipen-

diates to Bayreuth under the auspices of the scholarship program. What was initially a difficult ticket situation has turned out pretty well; many members will be headed for the Green Hill in August. Our September program on summer festivals and new productions is always fun. Joseph Horowitz will join us in October to discuss his new novel based on Anton Seidl's times in New York City. In the spring, Prof. John Muller will be offering a multi-class course on Parsifal, which is also the subject of our annual Seminar—our 46th—during the run of the Met revival. And our plans for a major gala celebration of our 50th anniversary in Fall 2027 continue to take shape.

Thanks to all of our members, whose continued engagement with our work makes the Wagner Society of New York such a vibrant, successful, and significant enterprise.

F. PETER PHILLIPS
PRESIDENT

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Wagner Notes is published bimonthly by the Wagner Society of New York, Inc. P.O. Box 230949, Ansonia Station, New York, NY 10023-0949. Tel: (800) 573-6148; Email: info@wagnersocietyny.org. **Website:** wagnersocietyny.org ©2026 by The Richard Wagner Society of New York, Inc. All rights reserved. Editor: Nathalie D. Wagner; Email: wagnerring@aol.com; Art Director: Julie Miller.



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Salzburg Easter Festival – *Das Rheingold*

C. Gerhaher, L. Melrose, B. Ryan, C. Morison, S. Brady, J. White, T. Cilluffo; L. Bu, P. Guetti, T. Atkins, G. Kim. Cond.: K. Petrenko; dir.: K. Serebrennikov. Orchestra: Berlin Philharmoniker. Performances of April 1 and 6, 2026.

This year the Salzburg Easter Festival, which was launched in 1967 to perform the Ring Cycle, performed *Das Rheingold*, to be followed by *Die Walküre* in 2027, then interrupted by Arnold Schönberg's *Moses und Aaron* in 2028 (never before heard in the Easter Festival), resuming with *Siegfried* in 2029, and *Götterdämmerung* in 2030. These works were chosen by the Berlin Philharmoniker and its Chief Conductor Kirill Petrenko, which began residency at the Festival this year, to examine society as it faces existential challenges. Russian Director Kirill Serebrennikov set this year's production in the near future in an "Africa covered in permafrost" resulting from climactic or natural disasters in which survivors migrate and regroup.

The Felsenreitschule was dark as the first E-flat major chords were heard, but a video was projected above the stage as the prelude continued. In the video, Alberich (portrayed by a stunt double) is seen sprinting naked, except for 21st century running shoes, across a vast barren lava field. The video continues during the entire opera with different scenes, including molten lava flows, fires, floods, and uninhabitable landscapes. On stage, the Rhinemaidens are seated on a large boulder in a lava field. Alberich appears, now wearing shorts and an old blanket, and the Rhine maidens engage him, exposing the boulder to be the glowing Rhine gold. They are carried on the backs of mortal servants, their feet never touching the ground, as they "swim" around the stage. Alberich, after being taunted, chips off a slab from the Rhine gold and carries it away.

As the opera progresses, power dynamics between different groups are explored. The Gods – Wotan, Fricka, Freia, Donner, and Froh – are seen walking on elevated platforms. Supernumeraries connect the platforms or carry the Gods from one platform to another. The Gods, clad in loose drab costumes with vaguely African ornamentation, depend on them for mobility.



Rhinemaidens (Yajie Zhang, Jess Dandy, and Louise Foor), in the opening scene. Photos: Frol Podlesnyi.

Loge appears with an assistant, wearing red body makeup, and moves around the stage to organize the descent to Nibelheim while Wotan watches from his platform before stepping down and joining Loge. In Nibelheim, they discover that Alberich has control of the Nibelungs (portrayed by members of an African dance troupe Compagnie Baninga) and that he possesses the gold ring (tarnhelm) and gold hoard, but is clad in ragged clothing. When questioned by Loge about his safety, Alberich invokes the tarnhelm, and the Nibelungs form a large coiling serpent, followed by one of the Nibelungs crouching down as a toad. Alberich is tied up and removed to the Gods' encampment, where he surrenders the hoard and tarnhelm, as Wotan forcibly seizes the ring. This production follows the libretto, but not entirely: Freia is carried off and then returned by Fasolt and Fafner, but her mortal maid is covered in gold to secure her release.

The accuracy of Erda's prediction of dark days coming for the Gods is clear. Wotan was cast as a quiet leader having difficulty adapting to a changed world, relying heavily upon Loge. He carried a spear, which seemed useless. The Gods failed to prevent their impending irrelevance, and their departure had no vision of Valhalla and no rainbow bridge; instead,

physical images of the Gods were raised at the back of the stage as each was seated on a board and carried offstage by two supernumeraries. The mortal residents of “Africa covered in permafrost” celebrated the Gods’ departure with high-fives and cigars.

Christian Gerhaher, best known for his German lieder, sang Wotan in a role debut with intelligent and nuanced vocal delivery that conveyed his apprehension about the future, more as the Wanderer than as Wotan (appropriate in the context of this production). Leigh Melrose’s Alberich was powerful and full of rage, but generated some sympathy after losing his ring. Brenton Ryan as Loge had a commanding stage presence as a wily and ethically challenged agent executing Wotan’s plan to seize the gold hoard. Jasmin White’s rich and melodious contralto delivered a resolute portrayal of Erda. The remaining singers – Gihoon Kim (Donner), Thomas Atkins (Froh), Thomas Cilluffo (Mime), Le Bu (Fasolt), Patrick Guetti (Fafner), Catriona Morison (Fricka), and Sarah Brady (Freia) – each gave a commendable performance.

Conductor Kirill Petrenko led the Berlin Philharmoniker in relatively brisk performances (142



Alberich (Leigh Melrose). Photo: Frol Podlesnyi.

minutes by my watch on April 6). The music was compelling, moving the story forward, tying together stage action, vocal performance, and the projected video. The longest and most enthusiastic applause after the two performances I attended was given to Petrenko and the Philharmoniker; both will return next year. The Festival has also announced that Lise Davidsen will perform Brünnhilde in next year’s *Die Walküre* performances, with the production to be set in America and to include references to Dia de los Muertos as observed in Mexico.

DAVID HUGHES

Upcoming Performances (including Strauss) in the Americas through 2027

- **July 24, 26, 29, 31, Aug. 2.** *Die Aegyptische Helena*. Fisher Center at Bard. Cond.: L. Botstein; dir.: C. Rath. fishercenter@bard.edu
- **August 14-19.** Wagner in Vermont 2026: *Tristan*: Aug. 14 and 19; *Holländer*: Aug. 16; *Parsifal*: Aug. 17. TUNDI Productions. info@tundiproductions.org
- **Oct. 9 & 11.** *Walküre*. Tacoma Opera. Cond.: B. Kwiram; dir.: T. Harper. tacomaopera.com
- **Nov. 17, 20, 23, 26, 29.** *Elektra*. Municipal Theatre of Santiago (Chile). Cond.: P. Bortolameolli; dir.: E. Munoz. opera-nacional-de-chile-o9437
- **November 29, Dec. 1, 3, 5, 6.** *Walküre*. Teatro Colon. Cond.: A. Pérez; dir.: D. Livermore. teatrocolon.org.ar
- **2027: Feb. 4, 6, 10, 12, 14, 16, 20, 2027.** *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Canadian Opera Company. Cond.: J. Debus; dir.: P. Curran. coc.ca
- **March 5, 7, 10, 13.** *Lohengrin*. Dallas Opera. Cond.: E. Villaume; dir.: L. Désiré. dallasopera.org
- **March 13, 16, 19, 21.** *Holländer*. Atlanta Opera. Cond.: I. Lopez; dir.: T. Zvulun. atlantaopera.org
- **May 7 & 8.** *Salome* (semi-staged). Kentucky Opera/Louisville Orchestra. Cond.: T. Abrams; dir.: B. Robinson. louisvilleorchestra.org
- **May 16, 19, 22.** *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (concert). Cleveland Orchestra, cond. F. Welser-Möst. clevelandorchestra.com
- **Nov. 20 & 22.** “Wagner: Myth and Music” (concert). Lyric Opera of Chicago. Cond.: A. Soddy; chorus: M. Black. lyricopera.com

Atlanta Opera's *Götterdämmerung*

L. Lindstrom, S. Vinke, L. Bu, D. Leigh, S. d'Eramo, T. Mumford, O. Vote, C. Lynch, A. Bogdanov, C. J. Bryan, A. Razskazoff, G. Krupp. Cond.: R. Kalb.; dir.: T. Zvulun; designer: E. Rom. Atlanta Opera. Performance of June 7, 2026.



Hagen (David Leigh) with Vassals Chorus, Act III. Photo: Raftermen.

The Atlanta Opera's recent performances of *Götterdämmerung* (May 30; June 2, 6, and 7) marked the capstone of a *Ring* project that formally began with *Das Rheingold* in 2023, though its origins reach back much further. When Tomer Zvulun spoke to the Wagner Society of Santa Fe last summer, he described a vision that had taken shape over more than a decade. Upon his arrival in Atlanta in 2013, he set two goals: to transform the company from a regional company into one of national, even international stature, and—once that foundation had been laid—to mount a *Ring Cycle*, the quintessential international operatic event. That ambition will be fully realized in 2029, and it is not difficult to imagine Wagnerians from New York and beyond making their pilgrimage to Atlanta.

Götterdämmerung remains Wagner's most problematic opera, and for reasons largely inherent in its genesis. The libretto was conceived decades before the music, leaving Wagner to set a text rooted in *Lohengrin*-era dramaturgy—complete with an Act II wedding chorus—but using a musical and philosophical language that had evolved far beyond it. The ideological shift during this gestation period is just as

striking: from Feuerbach to Schopenhauer, from revolutionary optimism to metaphysical resignation.

The original conception, *Siegfrieds Tod*, emerged from Wagner's Dresden years, steeped in revolutionary fervor. In that earlier vision, corruption and materialism would be overcome through love; the Nibelungs would be freed; gods and humanity alike would be purified without annihilation. Wotan would endure, presiding over a redeemed world, with Siegfried as a figure of salvation—akin to Lohengrin, even to Parsifal. Siegfried's purpose, in this conception, was nothing less than the redemption of the gods.

By 1876, however, that vision had darkened. The Bayreuth *Götterdämmerung* is less about heroism than about treachery, manipulation, and collapse. This duality of two different visions creates a structural problem: how to justify Brünnhilde's apotheosis of Siegfried as a hero when, in this opera, he has scarcely acted as one. Wagner's solution is musical rather than textual. "Siegfried's Funeral Music," which precedes the final scene, constructs a retrospective heroism that we never actually see in *Götterdämmerung*; it is a sonic biography assembled from leitmotivic memory: the

Volsung lineage, the love of Siegmund and Sieglinde, the sword, the youthful hero, and Brünnhilde's love. Only then can the Immolation Scene proceed with emotional credibility.

Zvulun proves an ideal interpreter of this complex work. Serving as both general and artistic director as well as stage director, he balances fidelity to Wagner's stage directions with a strikingly modern visual language. His use of video and projection is not decorative but dramaturgical; the brutalist architectural aesthetic (*bréton brut*) of the Gibichung world—heavy, block structures with their hard edges and intentional sense of weight—were designed by Erhard Rom. Watching these heavy vertical structures finally collapse to the fiery ground was a cathartic experience.

The *Ring* has always possessed a proto-cinematic quality, and Zvulun realizes it with unusual fluency. The Immolation Scene in particular achieves a rare synthesis of musical, visual, and symbolic elements; even Grane appears, as Wagner specifies, but is often omitted. Zvulun's background in multimedia is evident here, and he makes a compelling case for the future of opera as an integrated visual and musical form.

Musically, the performance was consistently strong. The orchestra, under Roberto Kalb, played favorably at a level alongside some European opera orchestras. Kalb's conducting allowed the drama to unfold with natural momentum. The horns showed some fatigue at the close, a minor blemish. The chorus, prepared by Walter Huff, was exemplary in projection, diction, and intonation.

I reviewed the Staatsoper unter den Linden's Oct. 2025 *Ring Cycle* (Thielemann/Tcherniakov) in these pages and cannot resist making comparisons. That production boasted a more illustrious cast but was undermined by incoherent staging. In Atlanta, the opposite held true: a strong but not starry ensemble, elevated by first-rate theatrical realization.

Lise Lindstrom's Brunnhilde combined intensity with vulnerability. After a somewhat restrained Act I, she rose to full stature in Act II and then delivered a compelling Immolation Scene. Stefan Vinke as Siegfried performed with direct, unforced tone and



Brunnhilde (Lise Lindstrom), Act III. Photo: Raftermen.

secure upper register. Particularly notable was Le Bu's Gunther (who was a recent Met Lindemann Young Artist): a sharply characterized portrayal that, together with Sylvia d'Amaro's unusually vivid Guttrune, rendered the Gibichung siblings a genuinely menacing pair. David Leigh (WSNY's 2017 Ursula Springer awardee) brought solid vocal weight and effective stage presence to Hogan, though with some limitations at the top. Aleksey Bogdanov was an excellent Alberich. Tamara Mumford's Waltraute was deeply felt, especially in conveying Wotan's quiet despair.

Atlanta is fortunate to have a leader of Zvulun's vision and capability. Still under 50, he has already transformed the company's scale and ambition. If this *Götterdämmerung* is any indication, the 2029 *Ring Cycles*, just announced, will not merely fulfill a long-held goal but will establish Atlanta as a major destination for Wagner performance.

BRYAN GILLIAM

Ring Roundup: Cycles (and partials) through 2030

Full cycles or individual *Ring* operas. We welcome additions; send to wagnerring@aol.com Always check websites.

- **NEW: In NYC - 2027:** One *Ring Cycle* (concert) - Carnegie Hall: March 18, 19, 21, 23. Cond.: S. Nosedá. Zurich Opera House Orchestra. carnegiehall.org
- **In NYC - 2030:** Metropolitan Opera: cycles: Spring 2030. Cond.: Y. Nezet-Seguin; dir.: Y. Sharon. Preceded by: *Rheingold*: Spring 2028; *Walküre* and *Siegfried*: 2028-29. metopera.org
- **2026-2029 (July).** Saaremaa (Estonia) Opera Days. Individually, from 2026-2029, with many Estonian singers. *Rheingold*: July 18, 2026; *Walküre*: July 17, 2027; *Siegfried*: July 22, 2028; *Götterdämmerung*: July 21, 2029. Cond.: R. Joost dir.: M. Dijkema. saaremaaopera.com
- **NEW: 2026: July 2, 5.** Baltic Opera (Poland). *Walküre*. Cond.: A. Kober; dir.: J. Fulljames. balticoperafestival.pl
- **2026: July-Aug.** Bayreuth Festival: Special (AI) *Ring Cycle*. bayreutherfestspiele.de/en (see Bayreuth website for annual information and updates)
- **2026 (updated):** Opéra Nationale de Paris. 2 cycles: Nov. 6, 7, 10, 13; Nov. 15, 17, 19, 22. With exhibition and talks. (See WSNY website.) Cond.: P. Heras-Casado; dir.: C. Bieito. operadeparis.fr [WSNY has a block of tickets for Cycle 1; see WSNY website.]
- **NEW 2026. Nov. 19, 22.** Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Australia. *Götterdämmerung* (concert). Cond.: S. Young. sydneyoperahouse.com
- **NEW 2026. Nov. 29, Dec. 6.** Teatro Colon. *Walküre*. Cond.: A. Pérez; dir.: D. Livermore. teatrocolon.org
- **NEW 2027:** Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich. Cond.: V. Jurowski; dir.: T. Kratzer. Preceded by *Walküre*: June 25, 28, July 1, 4, 8, 2026. <http://www.staatsoper.de> **NEW:** Co-production with Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona; their dates TBA.
- **2027-2028 (TBA):** Royal Opera, Covent Garden, London. Cond.: TBA; dir.: B. Kosky. Preceded by *Siegfried*: March-Apr., 2026. *Götterdämmerung*: Jan. 21, 24, 27, 30, Feb. 3, 7, 2027. Cond.: A. Pappano; dir.: B. Kosky. rbo.org.uk
- **2027-2030.** Norwegian National Opera & Ballet. Cond.: E. Gardner; dir.: T. Gürbaca. operaen.no
- **2028.** San Francisco Opera. 3 cycles: June 13-18, June 20-26, June 27-July 2. Preceded by *Rheingold*: May 29-June 22, 2027. Cond.: E. S. Kim; dir.: F. Zambello (revival). With ancillary events. sfopera.com
- **2029.** Korean National Opera: *Ring Cycle*, individually. *Rheingold*: Oct. 29, Nov. 11, 2026. Cond.: L. Fioroni; dir.: L. Königs; Seoul Arts Center. kno_1962@nationalopera.org
- **2029?** Opera Cologne. *Ring Cycle* over 3 seasons. Dates TBA. Preceded by *Walküre*: March-May, 2026. opera.koeln/de
- **NEW 2029:** Atlanta Opera. 2 Cycles: June 9-14; June 16-21. Cond.: R. Kalb; dir.: T. Zvulun. Preceded by individual *Ring* operas through June 2026. With ancillary events. atlantaopera.org
- **2030:** Grange Park Opera, Surrey, UK. Orchestra: English National Opera. Cond.: A. Negus / H. Sever; dir.: C. Edwards. Preceded by *Rheingold*: June-July 2026; *Walküre*: June 2027. *Siegfried*: June 2028. *Götterdämmerung*: June 2029.
- **UPDATES** Salzburg Easter Festival. Berlin Philharmonic. Cond.: K. Petrenko; dir.: K. Serebrennikov. Preceded by *Rheingold*: Mar.-Apr, 2026 (reviewed in this issue); *Walküre*: March 20, 25, 29, 2027. *Siegfried*: 2029; *Götterdämmerung*: 2030: The *Cycle* is staged over five Easter Festivals, as *Moses und Aron* has been inserted in 2028. salzburgerfestspiele.at/en and berliner-philharmoniker.de/en This *Ring* production is now a co-production with Danish Royal Opera. staatsoper.de
- **NEW 2030:** *Ring Cycles*: Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona. Cond.: J. Nott; dir.: T. Kratzer. Co-production with/ see Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich. Dates TBA, between the 2026/27 and 2029/30 seasons. staatsoper.de

Venice – Lohengrin and More

B. Jagde, A. R. Schneider, D. Herbert, C. Otelli, C. Migini. Cond.: M. Stenz; dir.: D. Michieletto. New production by Fondazione Teatro La Fenice, in co-production with Fondazione Teatro dell'Opera di Roma and Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia. Teatro La Fenice Orchestra and Chorus, Venice. Performance of April 15, 2026.



Eggs hanging from the ceiling over the mystified crowd. Photo: Michele Crosera.

It has been a contentious season in Venice. Last fall, Nicola Colabianchi, the new director of the opera house, announced that he had chosen a new music director for the theater: Beatrice Venezia. Venezia has close connections with the government of Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, and is the daughter of a former fascist politician and, according to reports, is a proto-fascist herself. More importantly, she was chosen without the input of the chorus and orchestra, and they did not take kindly to the snub. They had announced that Venezia, who has conducted mostly in South America, is not up to the job of leading one of Italy's major theaters and have called for her dismissal. Protests have included a strike that cancelled a performance of *Wozzeck*, wearing buttons, street protests--including by the chorus--calling for resignations of both Colabianchi and Venezia, and the orchestra murmuring nasty things between the movements of the annual Holy Saturday concert.

In the midst of this, after a hiatus of many years, *Lohengrin* returned to the Teatro La Fenice in April, in a production shared with the opera companies of Rome and Barcelona. It was a joy to listen to the opera in a small theater (La Fenice has just 900 seats), similar

to that for which Wagner wrote. In a small space, the audience is not far from the action, and is drawn into the stage activity.

It was a night of heroic singing. Brian Jagde was a tremendous Lohengrin, and his rendition of "In Fremde Land" will surely be remembered as one of the definitive interpretations of this piece. He has mastered the art of singing softly while still being heard and understood. The overall effect was mesmerizing. The other powerhouse singer on the stage was Chiara Migini as Ortrud. Although her costume brought to mind Cruella de Vil, she artfully combined the subservience and hatred necessary for the role.

The Elsa of Dorothea Herbert was somewhat disappointing, because she acted and sang deranged right from the start. One got the feeling that Lohengrin was not rescuing a damsel-in-distress, but rather was dealing with a crazy woman. Consequently, her singing was less sincere than hysterical, and never fully convincing.

Claudio Otelli as Telramund and Anthony Robin Schneider, a last-minute substitute as Henry the Fowler, were vocally astute and believable as their characters.

The La Fenice orchestra played spectacularly for Markus Stenz, and emitted ethereal sounds throughout. The audience did not applaud at the end of the overture, and the contrast between the stillness with which it ends, and the rhythmic pulse which begins Act I was enthralling.

The direction, by Damiano Michieletto, was less successful. Designer Paolo Fantin gave us a stage surrounded by wood paneling; it looked like someone's basement. To this dull background was added, at times, a bathtub (which appeared for a time in each act), the young Gottfried (ditto), and eggs in various sizes. When they appeared, hanging from the ceiling and moving up and down, they brought to mind the light show that happens at the beginning of concerts at Geffen Hall.

There were some very confusing moments, one of which occurred at the end of Act I. There was no trial by combat; instead, a large spigot descended from the sky and spewed a (supposedly) hot liquid on the two combatants sequentially. Telramund was burned by the fluid and his arm burst into flame, while Lohengrin was unscathed. There was also no swan, but Lohengrin entered dragging a child's coffin,



Elsa (Dorothea Herbert), surrounded by enemies.
Photo: Michele Crosera.

which, when opened, contained swan feathers.

In short, it was a musically wonderful and dramatically dull performance. There was also an imbedded joke with the performers—the La Fenice chorus was joined by the Hungarian National Male Choir, though one of the first lines of the libretto is “Herr Gott, bewahr uns vor der Ungarn Wut!” (Lord God, spare us from the wrath of the Hungarians).

And, at the final performance of Lohengrin, it was announced that Venezi had resigned from the position that she never even got to begin, eliciting more excitement than the opera itself.

JEFF S. DAILEY

Release of Landmark Dallas Symphony Orchestra's *Ring Cycle* Recording

Maestro Fabio Luisi is a brilliant Wagner conductor; he was acclaimed for the complete concert performances of the *Ring Cycle* by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra in Oct. 2024 (and previously for the Met *Ring Cycle* in 2010-12). “The result was a massive musical experience...with strength, beauty, and virtuosity,” wrote Bryan Gilliam in *Wagner Notes*, Jan. 2025. The recording of the concert version of the complete Cycle by Maestro Luisi, with Dirk Sobotka, is now available for a limited time at the Wagner Society of NY shop. The collaboration with Delos, the American label of Outthere Music, marks the start of what will surely be a long and fruitful partnership between Delos and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Released just in time for the 150th Anniversary of the Bayreuth Festival, this land-



mark recording is presented as a handsome 13-CD box set, and will surely become a staple in any Wagnerian library. If you are interested, please visit wagnersocietyny.orgshop

Die Walküre with the Los Angeles Philharmonic

J. Faselt, J. McCorkle, S. Howard, R. S. Green, C. Goerke, L. Ammann, R. Miller, S. Molteno, T. Perotta, T. Raven, Z. Reams, A. Shiner, L. Wilde. Cond.: G. Dudamel; dir.: A. Arvelo. LA Philharmonic. Performances of May 22, 23, and 24, 2026 (one act per day).



Wotan (Ryan Speedo Green) as Brünnhilde (Christine Goerke), pleads with him, Act III. Photo: Elizabeth Asher.

There was a distinct feeling of epochal change during the presentation of *Die Walküre* by the LA Phil at Walt Disney Concert Hall, which extended over three days, with one act each day. Elements of design suggested various phases in the 150-year performance history of the *Ring*. Costumes, in the striking designs of Cindy Figueroa, were mainly traditional; modernity, however, was clearly present on the irregularly shaped platform stage and the narrow forestage in front of the orchestra that allowed the action to come closer to the audience at crucial points. The orchestra, a mighty gathering of well over a hundred instrumentalists, including six harps, played with a sonority and transparency that Wagner could only have heard in his imagination, never in actuality. In comparison to the often-hooded sound of Bayreuth, this performance provided open, gloriously sweeping melody, and was part of the final days of Gustavo Dudamel's artistic leadership of the LA Phil. (The Orchestra, under Dudamel, performed *Das Rheingold*

here in Jan. 2024 and was reviewed in the March 2025 issue.) Dudamel has lost none of the ease, liteness, and precision that characterizes his conducting, while the immense care with which he builds climaxes and, especially in Wagner, ensures the coherent interchange of the leitmotifs, leading to moments of breathtaking excitement.

An orchestra in an open pit can spell danger for singers, particularly in Wagner, but they survived the peril of drowning in sound with flying colors. Jamez McCorkle has already made a name for himself internationally, but his performance as Siegmund established him as one of the finest of current Heldentenors. Siegmund is a tricky role; he has heroic aspirations, but they are always thwarted, which can all too easily lead to reductive self-pity. With McCorkle, however, we first felt the immense burden of tragedy that curbs Wagner's heroes; baritone elements in the voice highlighted Siegmund's frenzied despair. Jessica Faselt as Sieglinde had difficulty in summoning the

power that sparks the intense blaze of passion that transforms Siegmund in Act I. By Act III, however, she had found the true heart of the character, leaving the stage on “O hehrstes Wunder” in a blaze of glory. (Faselt was WSNY’s Ursula Springer Awardee in 2019.)

While Ryan Speedo Green has already earned much acclaim, he is still relatively new to the role of Wotan, having only played it once before at Santa Fe. His Wotan was full of impulse and anger, but with a center of restraint in the character, revealed in a superbly delivered monologue, when Wotan achieved profound insight into himself. Green’s meticulously delivered German allowed Wagner’s poetry to resonate throughout the role. The most experienced Wagnerian was Christine Goerke as Brünnhilde. Her partnership with McCorkle in the *Todesverkündigung* was magnificent and fully met the complex shifts of sensitivity that occur at this crucial moment. The power of Brünnhilde’s pleading at the end equaled the impact of Wotan’s anger and leant a heroic quality to his overwhelming declaration of love for her.

Hunding is usually a character one dismisses from one’s mind after his brief appearance in Act I, but Solomon Howard presented an interesting reading. The same can be said of Sarah Saturnino, whose regal Fricka was a standout performance; the formality of her gestures suited the wider context of Disney Hall superlatively, and she was the most effective performer in filling the space. She also unforgettably communicated to Wotan the tragic message at the heart of the *Ring*. Meanwhile the future of Wagnerian singing seemed to be assured in the brilliant ensemble of unusually harmonious Valkyries: Alexandria Shiner, Teresa Perotta, Lindsay Ammann, Ronnita Miller, Laura Wilde, Zoie Reams, Taylor Raven, and Siphokazi Molteno.

The production of Wagner in Disney Hall will always be handicapped by the challenges of the stage space. The hall encourages bold, rhetorical acting, suited to opera, but this is at the expense of Wagner’s most spectacular effects. The stage cannot have sufficient machinery for the spectacle and the hall has a limited supply of lights; therefore, certain effects –



Jessica Faselt, holding Siegmund’s sword, with Brünnhilde (Christine Goerke), Act III. Photo: Elizabeth Asher.

pulling the sword from the tree and the magic fire – were disappointing. This was aggravated by the odd scenery, designed by Frank Gehry before his death in Dec. 2025, which was composed of massive wads of “paper” that covered the organ and back wall of the hall. This violated the soaring lines that give Disney Hall such distinction, and it was uncertain what the scenery indicated – was it clouds, glaciers, mountain peaks? However, the white horses, lit from inside, that dominated Act III were most attractive. Stage spectacle lacked clarity, but sonic spectacle was sensational. As Wotan approached the Valkyries in Act III, the entire hall shook with thunder, with the loudest noise I have ever heard in a *Ring* production, and I loved every overwrought decibel of it! Stage director Alberto Arvelo made the most of the limited space, while Cori Ellison as dramaturg assured that the action, dismissed by some as obscure and difficult, unfolded with clarity and compulsion.

The set-up of Disney Hall may have been non-Wagnerian, but it fully embodied Wagner’s massive sense of tragedy and his celebration of love, human and divine. One can only hope that Dudamel’s schedule as incoming music director of the New York Philharmonic will allow him to return to Los Angeles for *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*.

SIMON WILLIAMS

Singers Competition Awardees

The Wagner Society of New York has announced the winners of its coveted singers' awards. Following auditions held at Merkin Hall on Friday, May 22, 2026, mezzo-soprano Melissa Zgouridi was awarded the Robert Lauch Memorial Fund Award (\$7,000) and tenor John Kun Park was awarded the Ursula Springer Award (\$4,000).

Encouragement grants of \$1,500 were extended to tenor Joseph Sacchi and bass-baritone Byung Gil Kim. Grants of \$500 were made to soprano Emma Berggren, soprano Hannah Crawford, tenor Michael Deshield, soprano Emily Michiko Jensen, tenor Nathan Shafer, tenor Matthew Sink, and soprano Johanna Will.

The judging panel included the Wagner Society of New York's Singers Committee Co-Chairs Cori Ellison, Tyson Deaton, and Deborah Surdi, along with Ken Benson and Roger Malouf. The special guest judge was the distinguished pianist and coach, Craig Rutenberg.

Applications were received from thirty-one artists, and after a rigorous review, eleven were selected to take part in the final auditions.



Melissa Zgouridi



John Kun Park

Melissa Zgouridi, the 2026 Robert Lauch Memorial Fund Awardee, will be presented in recital on Tuesday, March 16, 2027, in Victor Borge Hall at Scandinavia House, New York.

Related to the Society's longtime interest in and support of young, promising dramatic singers, the Wagner Society of New York Fund for Singers was established in 2025, to further benefit talented singers in one of the most challenging repertoires in classical music. The Society invites individuals and organizations to contribute to this Fund, through earmarked donations to the Society, and it is grateful for your support.

In Memoriam



Photo: Marbeth, WSNY, March 18, 2005.

Speight Jenkins (Jan. 31, 1937, Austin, TX-May 30, 2026), General Director of Seattle Opera from 1983 until 2014, fell in love with opera at age 7 and pursued it for the rest of his life. He was a music critic for *Opera News* and the *New York Post*, and served as the host for many Metropolitan Opera events. But his huge legacy was Seattle Opera which he developed, following the company's *Ring*-devoted predecessor Glynn Ross, into one of the leading US opera companies, with its ambitious programming, nurturing environment for young artists, and dynamic presentations of the *Ring*; he was "hands on" in every aspect of opera production. He was the recipient of many honors, an honoree of the National Endowment for the Arts in 2011, and a recipient of WSNY's Anton Seidl Award at the Society's March 2005 program (photo at left). The scroll he received on that occasion, when he spoke to the Society, noted: "...a passionate and politically active advocate for culture...member of the National Council on the Arts...a frequent lecturer

and participant on opera broadcasts and telecasts." Many thousands flocked to Seattle Opera's dynamic *Ring* productions in 1986, 1987, and 1991, which included lectures and symposia, with Speight present from morning to (mid)night. In addition to the *Ring*, he presented other innovative productions and education programs and services with Seattle Opera, which named a street in his honor on his retirement. Tribute from Joseph Horowitz: <https://www.artsjournal.com/uq/2026/06/americas-greatest-opera-boss-has-died.html>