

RICHARD WAGNER SIEGFRIED



Jochen Schmeckenbecher
Tomasz Konieczny
Stephen Gould
Violeta Urmana
Matti Salminen
Christian Elsner

Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin

Marek Janowski

Live recording
of the concert performance
in the Berlin Philharmonie
on March 1, 2013



Richard Wagner (1813 – 1883)
Siegfried WWV 86c
Zweiter Tag des Bühnenfestspiels
Der Ring des Nibelungen

Wanderer/Wotan	Tomasz Konieczny , baritone
Siegfried	Stephen Gould , tenor
Brünnhilde	Violeta Urmana , soprano
Erda	Anna Larsson , alto
Fafner	Matti Salminen , bass
Alberich baritone	Jochen Schmeckenbecher ,
Mime	Christian Elsner , tenor
Voice of a little forest bird	Sophie Klussmann , soprano

Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin (Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin)

Wolfgang Hentrich, concertmaster

Robin Engelen, assistant conductor

conducted by **Marek Janowski**

Live recording of the concert performance at the Berlin Philharmonie
on March 1, 2013

Executive producers: Stefan Lang, Maria Grätzel, Trygve Nordwall & Job Maarse

Recording producer: Job Maarse

Balance engineer: Jean-Marie Geijssen

Recording team: Wolfram Nehls, Henri Thaon, Johanna

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Susanne Beyer & Kay Riedel

Editing: Ientje Mooij

Design: Netherlads

Disc 1 (5186 437)

Erster Aufzug (Act One)

1	Vorspiel (Prelude)	4.24
2	Zwangvolle Plage! Müh ohne Zweck! (Mime)	3.17
3	Hoiho! Hoiho! (Siegfried, Mime)	1.40
4	Da hast du die Stücken, schändlicher Stümper (Siegfried)	2.11
5	Als zullendes Kind zog ich dich auf (Mime)	1.16
6	Vieles lehrtest du, Mime (Siegfried)	8.09
7	Einst lag wimmernd ein Weib (Mime)	4.59
8	Und diese Stücke sollst du mir schmieden (Siegfried)	1.44
9	Da stürmt er hin (Mime)	1.09
10	Heil dir, weiser Schmied (Wanderer, Mime)	3.11
11	Hier sitz' ich am Herd, und setze mein Haupt (Wanderer)	9.16
12	Was zu wissen dir frommt, solltest du fragen (Wanderer)	6.35
13	Die Stücken! Das Schwert! O weh, mir schwindelt! (Mime)	2.44
14	Verfluchtes Licht! (Mime)	1.01
15	Heda! Du Fauler! (Siegfried, Mime)	0.25
16	Bist du es Kind? Kommst du allein? (Mime)	2.53
17	Fühltest du nie im finst'eren Wald (Mime)	4.55
18	Her mit den Stücken, fort mit dem Stümper! (Siegfried)	3.09
19	Notung! Notung! Neidliches Schwert! (Siegfried)	7.07
20	Hoho! Hoho! Hohei! (Siegfried)	6.01

Disc 2 (5186 438)

Zweiter Aufzug (Act Two)

1	Vorspiel (Prelude)	6.02
2	In Wald und Nacht (Alberich)	2.21
3	Zur Neidhöhle fuhr ich bei Nacht (Wanderer, Alberich)	6.04
4	Mit mir nicht, had're mit Mime (Wanderer)	2.34
5	Fafner! Fafner! Erwache, Wurm! (Wanderer, Alberich, Fafner)	2.54
6	Nun, Alberich! Das schlug fehl (Wanderer, Alberich)	3.23
7	Wir sind zur Stelle (Mime, Siegfried)	6.13
8	Dass der mein Vater nicht ist (Siegfried)	1.33
9	Aber wie sah meine Mutter wohl aus? (Siegfried)	1.59
10	Meine Mutter – ein Menschenweib! (Siegfried)	8.16
11	Haha! Da hätte mein Lied (Siegfried, Fafner)	3.04
12	Wer bist du kühner Knabe (Fafner)	4.07
13	Zur Kunde taugt kein Toter (Siegfried, Waldvogel)	2.04
14	Wohin schleichst du eilig und schlau (Alberich, Mime, Siegfried)	2.20
15	Was ihr mir nützt, weiss ich nicht (Siegfried, Mime, Waldvogel)	2.28
16	Willkommen, Siegfried! (Mime, Siegfried, Alberich)	8.28
17	Da lieg' auch du, dunkler Wurm! (Siegfried, Waldvogel)	8.21

Disc 3 (5186 439)

Dritter Aufzug (Act Three)

1	Vorspiel (Prelude)	2.26
2	Wache, Wala! Wala! Erwach! (Wanderer, Erda)	2.04
3	Stark ruft das Lied (Erda)	10.17
4	Dir Unweisen ruf' ich's in's Ohr (Wanderer)	3.41
5	Dort seh' ich Siegfried nah'n (Wanderer)	0.51
6	Mein Vöglein schwebte mir fort! (Siegfried)	0.27
7	Wohin Knabe, heisst dich dein Weg? (Wanderer, Siegfried)	5.01
8	Kenntest du mich, kühner Spross (Wanderer)	4.37
9	Mit zerfocht'ner Waffe wich mir der Feige? (Siegfried)	7.03
10	Selige Öde auf wonniger Höh'! (Siegfried)	4.35
11	Das ist kein Mann! (Siegfried)	8.29
12	Heil dir, Sonne! (Brünnhilde, Siegfried)	3.57
13	O Siegfried! Siegfried! Seliger Held (Brünnhilde)	6.15
14	Dort sehe ich Grane, mein selig Ross (Brünnhilde)	8.22
15	Ewig war ich, ewig bin ich (Brünnhilde)	10.36

Playing time disc 1:	76.20
Playing time disc 2:	72.20
Playing time disc 3:	78.50
Total playing time :	3.47.30

The youth who went forth to learn what f... was

When Richard Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* was first staged in the Bayreuth Festspielhaus in August 1876, it was, in Wagner's own words, "a stage festival lasting three days, including a preceding evening". In other words, a trilogy with a prelude. Structurally, Wagner had based the *Ring* on the 2300-year-old Dionysia, the ancient festival held in honour of the god Dionysus – the god of ecstasy, of intoxication, and of wine. The Dionysia often started with a preceding festival eve. A tragedy would be performed on the first day, a comedy on the second, and yet another tragedy on the third. Thus Siegfried, being performed on the second day of Wagner's stage festival, occupied the place of the comedy.

The hero of this comedy is a man acting in accordance with Goethe's great words: "He who acts is always without a conscience; no one except the close observer has a conscience." A winner-type. Inconsiderate, disrespectful, relentless, as unjust as he is successful. True to the ancient pecking order, according to which he who lives by the sword, dies by the sword – and even more so in the further specification provided by the philosopher Simone Weil (1909-1943), according to whom he who does not live by the sword, dies by the cross – our hero does not hesitate to make his way through life, killing without restriction. To this end, he must know no fear: whether fear of stronger opponents, or fear of personal failure; and certainly no respect for the lives, thoughts, or achievements of other people.

Attributes such as piety, or fear of God – or any other "fear" – respect for the stronger person, or consideration for the weaker, are not innate in the human. No child comes into the world fearful: he would never dare to take a single step, if he knew how dangerous this could be. And in order to obtain food, care and attention, he considers no cry too loud, no situation too embarrassing, and no moment too unsuitable. No, in his dealings with his fellow man, the little baby does not even try to adapt until after he has made sure of his first necessities. Then he begins to learn. Or he refuses to do so – and then becomes that supposedly selfish monster, who is not willing to pay tribute to social intercourse.

As far as Wagner was concerned, there was only one rock-solid faith: the faith in oneself. If he had also adapted himself to fit in, who then would have passed on his visions? Thus he resisted enormous financial, political, and social pressure, and realized his full potential at the expense of others. Fascinated by this winner-type, both women and men fell for his story, following his sticky trail, including quite a few of those in his vicinity whom he had fleeced in the past. They fell for his audacity, for the way in which he dealt with other people's

money, for his denigration of the Jews or the French, for the way he claimed the merits, achievements, and monies of his patrons – and even their wives – for himself, or for the way he appropriated the idea of revolution. Wagner's intellectual edifice is a slap in the face to any distinguished revolutionary idea. Liberty, equality, fraternity? Oh no, a hero does not waste his energy on that. *Veni vidi vici*.

Previously

Let us remind ourselves of the facts. The father of the gods, Wotan, had illegally taken possession of the Rhinegold, which the Nibelung Alberich had previously stolen from the Rhine daughters (in exchange for renouncing love). Gritting their teeth, both of them had been forced to return the gold: Alberich to Wotan – but not without first pronouncing a curse on the "ring of omnipotence" for all times; and Wotan to the Giants, the constructors of his own home, Valhalla – but not without nurturing secret plans for the future recovery of the magic ring. With this purpose in mind, the god sowed his male seed in the realms of both the gods and the humans. Enter the first tragedy. Brünnhilde, his daughter by Erda, and Siegmund, his son by an unnamed mother, would have to sort this out, without his personal intervention. However, neither Siegmund nor Brünnhilde were that free and independent of his divine will, as Wotan was forced to admit to his wife Fricka. As chief custodian of the law, he was not permitted to influence events to his liking, his wife Fricka had made that clear to him in no uncertain terms. So the all too human god was forced to act against his own flesh and blood, against his own feelings, thoughts, and intentions, by dispatching poor Siegmund, and by punishing Brünnhilde for her most loveable disobedience by surrounding her with a ring of fire, from which – mind you – she could be liberated and courted one day by only the most noble of all human heroes.

However, Sieglinde, Siegmund's twin sister and his incestuous bride, tipped the scales. Thanks to Brünnhilde, Sieglinde survived the bloodbath, bearing the fruit of brotherly love under her heart and into the deep forest.

Siegfried, the bearer of hope

Now the comedy begins. The highly pregnant Sieglinde takes refuge in the shelter of a grumpy wood gnome, gives birth to a little boy and then dies. The dwarf, none other than Mime, the evil brother of the evil Alberich, recognizes the opportunities offered by assuming the care of the child himself. For apart from her offspring,

Sieglinde has also left behind a ruined sword. And who knows, him being a blacksmith and the boy, one day ... Perhaps the boy could even slaughter the dragon crouching down over the hoard of gold?

We are in the middle of a romantic fairy-tale. The noble myth, the god-like breath of the Wotan/Valkyrie world has made way for the flickering of a merry forge fire in the dark forest. Wagner has made full use of the fairy-tales of the Brothers Grimm, which had just been published in 1850 and contained, among others, the following tales: The story of the youth who went forth to learn what fear was, The two brothers, and Sleeping beauty, to name just three that provided the immediate inspiration for the first two acts of Siegfried. "In this context, a passage from Walter Benjamin's essay 'The storyteller' fits in well, seemingly directed at Siegfried: 'The fairy tale tells us of the earliest events that have affected humanity, in order to shake off the Alp (nightmare creature F.S.-G.), which the myth has placed on its chest. It shows us in the form of the fool how stupidly humanity opposes the myth; it shows us in the form of the youngest brother how its prospects increase as it distances itself from the primeval times of the myth; it shows us in the form of the youth who went forth to learn what fear was, that the things we fear are predictable; it shows us in the form of the wise man, that the questions posed by the myth are simple, as is the question of the Sphinx; it shows us in the form of the animals that come to the aid of the fairy-tale child, that nature does not only consider itself liable to the myth, but much prefers to gather around the human being.'" (Geck, 2012)

ACT 1

Mime and Siegfried

The prelude gets the picture right away. There is no way the whole thing can work. Brooding motifs above a muffled drum roll prime memories of the former treasure of the Nibelungs, of their laborious drudgery to get their hands on it, of Alberich's curse, which rests on the stolen ring. "After the violent overthrow of the tyrant Alberich, Mime has withdrawn well away from the sphere of influence of his demonic brother, secluding himself out in the woods and the caves. These now form the playroom of the boy Siegfried. The blacksmith dwarf has since raised him, more with indifference (or reluctance) than out of the goodness of his heart," thus Peter Wapnewski (1995) sums up the underlying situation. But Mime has a goal in mind. With the help of Siegfried and the repaired sword, he plans on defeating Fafner and depriving him of the gold, in order at last to deceive his vicious brother Alberich. So, even Mime is suffering from the delusion

of global dominance.

Ironically, it is Mime – the most pitiable of all the characters in the entire saga of the Ring, known since the Rheingold as a sniveller and a coward – who is the initial caregiver for the young hero. During the entire course of the myth – between mythical dreams and specific earthly actions – Mime never once stops complaining. He forges sword upon sword, all “child’s toys” that break into pieces as soon as his impetuous foster-son lays hands on them. The boy mocks his craft, despises the care he gives him, spurns food and drink, and dreams from the beginning of eliminating Mime, he wants to “melt him down”, to “put an end to him.” Yet the scolded dwarf still considers this revulsion the boy feels for him as a form of devotion that he cannot do without. Mime’s miserable appeal to Siegfried’s gratitude only excites the latter’s anger and disgust. Peremptorily, the boy makes it clear that he has nothing in common with him, because “a glittering fish never had a toad for a father.” He now wants to learn more from Mime about his name and origin, before leaving him for good. Mime starts moaning his way through a “sentimental litany of merits” (Wapnewski, 1995), but finally states – each time with musical support – the boy’s name, just as his mother was informed of his name by Brünnhilde in Act 3 of the Valkyrie, and that of his mother, Sieglinde. However, he does not reveal the name of the father, keeping for himself a last remnant of “Herrschaftswissen” (= knowledge for the sake of action or control, F. S.-G.). Siegfried’s desire for freedom is evident, especially in a musical sense – how it contrasts with Mime’s earthy-sounding music! Yet the sword has still not been forged, the total separation (of Siegfried from Mime) is not possible.

Mime and the Wanderer

No sooner has Siegfried stormed away, than a Wanderer enters Mime’s cave. The Wanderer. Mime should really have recognized him, because the stranger had been present when Loge questioned him in mythical times past about Alberich and the Rhinegold. Of course, the god, who is wearing a floppy-brimmed hat, refrains from using his musical signature – he still bears the “W” at the beginning of the word (“Wanderer”), otherwise he is now actually “another person” (i.e. “Anderer” in German, a close observer, as in the sense applied by the above-mentioned Goethe); the divine Valhalla motif is heard as infrequently as the spear motif. Instead, his imposing entrance is supported by four “pillars” of chords, themselves the symbol of intertwined wandering through all the various keys. Wotan must be careful not to make the same mistake as in Hunding’s house, when

he rammed the sword Notung into the ash-tree incognito so that the free man, Siegmund, would some day find it and use it for the god’s purposes. That had gone completely wrong. So therefore, he was not planning to intervene now, nor to give any instructions for the repair of Notung. At least, not directly. The travelling globe-trotter challenges Mime to a “war of wits”. Although doomed to fail from the outset, Mime – in his vanity – cannot resist being addressed as “wise blacksmith,” as had also been the case when Loge long ago greeted him as “wise one”. Wagner uses the procrastinating “war of wits” in order to recapitulate past events, he draws the “newcomer” into his total concept of the Ring of the Nibelung in a dependable manner. The musical motifs traipse through like beautiful accessories, portraying the subterranean world of the Nibelungs, the earthly fate of the giants and – with smug pomp – the supernatural “race ... on cloudy heights.” The Wanderer even describes himself as the “Licht-Alberich” (= lord of light, light elf: Alberich meaning elf, or magical being, power, F.S.-G.), thus placing himself in dangerous proximity to his detested adversary. Surely by now, Mime should have realized who was sitting opposite him. But Wagner had permitted the weakling to ask only the questions for which he already knew the answers. He had, however, not asked about anything unknown to him, but that could be useful. For example, how to restore Notung the sword. But the guest forces this knowledge upon him, unrequested. Fearfully, Mime wagers his head and gives up in a moment of lucidity: “Wotan’s eyes fell on me, peered into my cave: before him my natural wit melts away.” Indeed, he is wise enough to realize that the now ensuing message, “Only one who has never felt fear, shall forge Notung anew”, would hardly be to his benefit. The Wanderer has achieved his goal, has placed Notung indirectly in Mime’s cave for Siegfried. Laughing at his own astuteness (as opposed to his past direct intervention of planting the sword in the ash trunk in Hunding’s house), he pledges Mime’s head to “him, who has never learned fear”.

Mime and Siegfried at the forge

Mime remains behind, deeply disturbed, the entire available musical arsenal of fear and terror building up in front of him. In a delirium of fear, Wagner’s music crosses over “the threshold to Impressionism”

(Rappl, 1967). When the fresh-faced Siegfried returns, accompanied by waves of the blaring sword motif, it seems as if he has been listening at the door: that is how clearly the music reveals his future destiny. Mime does something paradoxical, and yet existential: he attempts to teach the young hothead the meaning of fear. And not simply because he has finally found something in which he himself excels – rather, in the best case scenario, this could even save his life. Of course, in that case, Notung would not be forged back into one piece, and therefore, Fafner would not be slain, nor the gold seized. The blacksmith is in a real quandary and reflects on his true vocation: namely, that of an intriguer. As Siegfried proves to be completely unresponsive to fear, Mime steers him gently toward the forging of the sword. Equally amazed at Siegfried’s radical course of action – he files down the remains of the weapon, in order to melt them down and remould them, instead of the soldering the two parts together, as had tried Mime previously – the fearful little dwarf comes up with a plan to do away with the “instrument of his will”, i.e. Siegfried, after the latter has slain the dragon: for this purpose, he intends to use the weapon of the weak, namely poison. Thus ensues a grotesque scene at the hearth: one man forging his new sword like a man possessed, bawling out the most cheerful little song; the other brewing his treacherous potion, screeching out the nastiest little song. For now, the only thing Siegfried shatters at the end is Mime’s anvil. But the dwarf congratulates himself in exhilaration: “Hi, Mime! How lucky you are!”

Alberich and the Wanderer

Now the action starts. As yet, the two are still leading a symbiotic existence. Mime needs Siegfried as swordsman. And Siegfried needs Mime as a guide in order, perhaps, to still learn the meaning of fear. Even the prelude makes it clear: Fafner, the groaning and grunting dragon, is the victim. His once robust fourth has augmented into a tritone (= augmented fourth), which sounds at once monstrous, pitiable, accursed. But first, another special encounter takes place: the Wanderer comes across Alberich while both are roaming around outside Fafner's cave. But unlike in times gone by, when he deprived Alberich of his powers, the great adversary does not seem to want to intervene, he wishes only to be an observer: "I came to watch, not to act". Alberich's hot-tempered warnings, in places almost a literal repetition of Fricka's words in Act 2 of *The Valkyrie*, are not even necessary. Threatening in his helplessness, he indulges in fantasies of omnipotence as did shortly before his ill-fated brother. But Wotan remains unperturbed, so sure he is of himself. This is not easy to understand for the former lord of the black elves. His brother Mime has nurtured a viper in his bosom that now wants to again grab what he alleges belongs to him; on the other hand, his adversary actually appears to remain neutral. One could easily lose heart here, especially when the other also suggests waking the dragon together, and warning him of his slayer. But Wotan turns out to be the better connoisseur of the human, of the elf, and of the dragon. He knows that Fafner is not going to be cajoled into anything. So Wotan just laughs at Alberich's new curse: "I shall yet see you all overthrown!" Even if he is proven right at the end.

Mime, Siegfried and ... // caesura // ... Fafner

Mime and Siegfried arrive at the spring near Fafner's cave. Once again, the blacksmith warns the youth of the danger (although he should really encourage him). But the latter merely inquires coolly after the location of the monster's heart, so that he knows where to stab him, and pronounces the wish that the dragon may first "gulp" down Mime while taking a drink. Then he lies down to rest under a lime tree ...

At this point, Wagner interrupts work on the piece, and on July 28, 1857 he writes to Franz Liszt that he has "finally decided ... to give up the obstinate undertaking of the completion of my *Nibelungs*. I have escorted my young Siegfried into the beautiful solitude of the forest, where have I left him under the lime tree and taken leave of him with

heartfelt tears." Ten days previously, he had already added a memo to the orchestral outline for the second act of Siegfried: "Already decided to do *Tristan*." Admittedly, Wagner continued working on the completion of the orchestral sketch of the second act until the following August; but then for seven years, something else became more important. His love for Mathilde Wesendonck had so dramatically affected all his thoughts and feelings, that nothing remained as it was before. Not only *Tristan* and *Isolde*, but also *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* bear witness to the process of change and maturation that Wagner had undergone: once again, he had made a radical quantum leap, with regard to himself and also his artistic expression. Nevertheless, he returned to Siegfried and the Ring at the end of 1864. On the one hand, this was due to the specific instructions he had received from King Ludwig II of Bavaria to complete the entire project (and in return for which the king would take over the horrendous debts Wagner had accumulated over the decades); and on the other, due to a character trait of Wagner's, who in the end simply could not abide abandoning work like this, which "seemed like giving up" (Wapnewski, 1995). He completed the first fair copy of the second act in December 1865, and the second in February, 1869. The score of the third act kept Wagner busy from 1869 to 1871.

"Siegfried under the linden tree. The music provides a sensualization of nature in true impressionistic fashion, thanks to the extreme sophistication of the orchestral sound, which is justly regarded as a perfect example of descriptive art. The movements of the quavers of the weaving forest shimmer as if they were flowers and leaves touched by a soft wind, they 'weave' a web of sounds above the setting" (Wapnewski, 1995). For the first time, Siegfried displays milder emotions, even a certain tenderness. He is at one with nature, his thoughts turn to his mother, which in turn leads him to dream of a future love for a "mortal woman". The boy is growing up! Here, Wagner forgets all about his resolutions with regard to his new music theatre, and presses ahead with sound-painting and an exquisite forest-bird concert, entertaining the opera-lover with a bizarre dialogue at the moment the young Siegfried first experiences the awakening of masculine stirrings. On the one hand, the graceful chirping of the little birds; on the other hand, the croaking of the young man on a clumsy reed pipe (a thankless task for the cor anglais). Depth psychology has had a real field day with this.

Siegfried's instrument is still the horn, which Mime made for him and which he has had with him from the start. With this, he is able to mimic the bird-song, as well as himself: in other words, he can play the Siegfried motif. In quite an infantile, yet also considerably

adolescent manner, he hopes to attract "a dear companion" with these notes.

The dragon approaches. Fafner is heaving himself out of the cave. Siegfried begins a testosterone-filled dispute with him. The music takes the lead once more in this unequal confrontation, at the end of which the monster is left lying in its own blood. Then the purpose behind this first murder committed by Siegfried is satisfied. The dying Fafner turns back again into a simple giant, his musical motif is again full of normal fourths. He now becomes teacher to the boy, making him clear-sighted and, by means of his blood, also "clear-hearing". Suddenly, Siegfried can understand the language of the birds. For the first time, he has access to a source of knowledge other than Mime!

The little forest bird tells him of the existence of ring, Tarnhelm, and treasure hoard in the cave. Siegfried takes the ring and the Tarnhelm – not because of their mythical powers, but as trophies, and he leaves the treasure be. "[Of course, the smartest thing would have been to leave both instruments of power behind with the treasure trove, as they will compulsively lead him into the machinations of the power struggles and eventually crush him. But on further thought, that would have led to the following: either Mime or Alberich would have seized the ring, and it would have been impossible to foresee the consequences...]" (Wapnewski, 1995).

Mime and Alberich, Siegfried and the little forest bird

The two empty-handed brothers fight over what they still do not have. On the verge of finally poisoning the dragon-slayer with the potion he has brought with him, the fearful Mime first conjectures that the Wanderer might well again have intervened. Then unexpected danger arrives from above, from the little forest bird. Thanks to the effect of the dragon's blood, Siegfried is now able to understand the bird's song. In other words, the bird can make Siegfried understand Mime's intentions, the significance of what he is really thinking behind his flattering words. This results in an insane dialogue between what is being said and thought on the one side, and jovial derision on the other. Mime proves himself to be a very bad Mime (in the dramatic sense), he literally risks his neck with careless talk, so that Siegfried's fatal stroke at the end merely sets the seal on what had long since been inevitable. Siegfried has now committed his second murder. Nevertheless, the audience still feels sympathetic towards him, because he is a man of action, a winner, and on top of it all, a Robin Hood, who – without any personal pursuit of profit – challenges the for the most part ill-gotten gains of others, and thus cons them out of them. All Alberich does, is laugh bitterly at Siegfried's murder of his brother from a safe distance. He has not come any closer to

possessing the ring.

Now, Siegfried is truly an orphan. Once again, the lime tree offers him a place to rest. Once again, the little bird helps the young man, who still wants to meet a “good companion,” on his way. “A most wonderful wife,” says the little bird, is waiting for him, “who knows not fear.” “My little bird, that is I!”, Siegfried is a bit slow on the uptake, and does not hear the faint sounds of sorrow that the little bird has mixed into the joyful prophecies. Off we go, to learn the meaning of fear!

ACT 3

The Wanderer and the Wala

The prelude, which indicates “a wild landscape at the foot of a rocky mountain,” already ensures the most avid attention. It reveals a kind of musical “interim balance sheet” to the expert Wagner connoisseur. Wotan’s world rides in with the Valkyries. Closely intertwined, both the Wanderer motif and the spear motif are heard. However, the all-knowing, slumbering Erda rests far below the scene of the performers, audible in gurgling nature motifs derived from the E-flat-major Rheingold motif, which however is now heard in the minor key. Her solemn ascent leads into an ominous descent, the end, once again anticipating the twilight of the gods (as earlier in the Rheingold).

Wotan calls up the Wala, as he calls the earth goddess here, a mythical amalgamation of the names of Gaia (Earth) and Völfa or Völu (seer). He wants her to rid him of his worries. But the wise woman refers to the fate-spinning Norns, then to Wotan’s Achilles heel: Brünnhilde. The Father of the gods feels his blood boiling. He does not wish to be reminded of his unruly daughter. Boastfully, he points out the attributes of his omnipotence. This in turn displeases the Wala. She wants to return to the bosom of the earth, and Wotan cannot prevent her doing so. Defiantly, he calls her “unwise one” and persists in his self-deceptive game with the “valiant Volsung”, who is now to come into his inheritance, as he has taken possession of the ring “without any advice from me”. Together with the wise child of Wala and Wotan, the Valkyrie Brünnhilde – so Wotan persuades himself – his son will carry out “the deed that will redeem the world”.

Once again, Wotan has now (following two “male-only acts” at the beginning of Siegfried) consulted with one of his wives – with Erda, the mother of Brünnhilde. However, just as Fricka would and could not help him, when he sought to win her over to idea of a victory for Siegmund, now again Erda denies him a favourable word with regard

to Siegfried’s mission.

The scene is of the greatest importance, the conversation between the gods explains both the origin and the destiny of the protagonists. Needless to say, here the music manages to convey far more than the text.

Siegfried and the Wanderer

Only just having assured himself of his semblance of power, the God seeks to prove his position to himself ad absurdum. The proud God can not afford another mistake, so he once again checks the suitability of his grandson, the young and ignorant Siegfried, for the “position” of the hero. In the second scene, he places himself in Siegfried’s path. The latter’s origin is identified by the Volsung motif. However, the relieved “joyful and good-humoured” laughing of the Wanderer enrages the young firebrand, who then threatens the elderly stranger. At first, Wotan disguises his displeasure, although this can already be heard in the orchestra: the motif from Wotan’s argument with Fricka, and then again from his altercation with Brünnhilde is already familiar. Increasingly, the badly behaved youth provokes the Wanderer with the floppy hat, until Wotan does justice to his name, and erupts into unbridled rage. The ravens flutter up. Later on they herald Siegfried’s death, but here they simply threaten the little forest bird without further consequences, because it is showing Siegfried the way to Brünnhilde’s rock: “You shall not take the way it showed!” But was it not Wotan himself who set out precisely this path, who determined that his legacy should go to the “valiant Volsung”? At the last moment, by the threat of being deposed by his grandson frightens the old man: “He who wakes her [i.e. Brünnhilde], he who wins her, deprives me of my power for ever!”. Without further ado, Siegfried tests his sword against the spear of the annoying Wanderer, of the “old gossip,” whom he believes to be his father’s enemy, and he offers him the choice of ending up like Mime. So Wotan fights Siegfried, and they are accompanied by their magnificent music. This time, the sword triumphs in the contest between the two divine weapons. The spear shatters, and with it, Wotan, together with the ancient laws and the ancient order: “Forward then! I cannot stop you!”.

Fafner, Mime, and even Wotan have buckled before the new man of action, the dynamic doer par excellence. Through all this resonates Erda’s sombre prophecy of the all-encompassing, final ending. “In fact, on closer inspection, it appears that Siegfried’s role as a second, ‘improved’ Wotan consists mainly of battling against Wotan’s legacy. Although ostensibly he acts with spontaneity, he is in the end still

only a product of that ominous story, from which no character in the Ring can escape. And this story is especially present in the medium of music: both the characters from the Rheingold, as well as their motifs, keep turning up all throughout the Siegfried” (Geck, 2012).

Wagner is well aware of what he has written and composed in this scene: “See how he confronts Siegfried in the third act! Here, facing his own downfall, he is finally so involuntarily human, that – despite his best intentions – once again the old pride stirs, namely (please note!) incited by – covetousness of Brünnhilde; for she has become his most sensitive spot. He no longer wishes, as it were, to just be pushed aside, but to fight and fall – to be defeated” (quoted from a letter of January 25, 1854 to August Rockel).

As his grandfather’s spear shatters, Siegfried has also assumed the role of Oedipus. Together with the throne, he must now also occupy the bed: “Now I can win a dear companion!” On the blazing rocks, Brünnhilde has spent the past generation waiting for the Fearless One. In order to reach her, he must vanquish the wall of flames. Wagner is in his element, the flames waft upwards from 32 violins, the sparks are thrown up from six harps. Finally, in ascending violin garlands, the fire is extinguished. Siegfried is about to experience his greatest happiness, and suddenly the fate motif barges in. In the past, it set the seal on Siegmund’s death, now it startles Siegfried. “Superficially, Siegfried’s triumphing over the unknown Wanderer is also Wotan’s triumph – namely, the requisite ‘parricide,’ which liberates the free man from the burden of the story; but subliminally, Wotan’s irrational behaviour spoils his grandson’s prospects for the future. As he permits his longed-for heir to make his way without any knowledge of history or the world, instead of putting his own unproductive world knowledge to productive use in him, he is simply thrusting him out on a slippery slope: for Siegfried lacks the complex, prudent knowledge, that the Greeks called ‘metis’ and awarded to the Titan in the name Pro-Metheus, he is defenceless against the intrigues of the world.” (Geck, 2012)

The two who went forth ... –

Siegfried and Brünnhilde

Cautiously, the valiant hero approaches the sleeping figure. The ride of the Valkyries and Wotan’s farewell, destiny and sword – the motifs form a guard of honour, are equally curious as Siegfried himself. Siegfried is expecting to find a warrior, removes the armour – and realizes that she is female. He, who has never before seen a woman. What does he do? He begs for his mother and learns the meaning of

fear! Here at last, the fairy-tale of The story of the youth who went forth to learn what fear was has come to its end. The comedy surrounding Siegfried leaves the world of the fairy-tale, and swings up into those mythical spheres that are worthy of the forthcoming events. And it is no coincidence that Wagner reveals a whole new (sound) world to his Siegfried as he stares at the sleeping girl's mouth ("Sweetly quivers her rosy mouth. How its soft trembling soothes my fear!"). "...over the pedal point F, a diminished seventh chord with a suspended major seventh, as can also be found in the third act of Tristan and Isolde in the context of Tristan's delirium, 'Ah Isolde! Isolde! How lovely you are!'", based here on the note E" (Geck, 2012).

Finally the hero plucks up courage, calls out to the sleeping girl as did Wotan to the Wala. But she does not budge, she wants to be woken in a different way: by a kiss. Involuntarily, one is reminded of Kundry and Parsifal in this moment of ritual. Is the Damocles sword of disaster already hovering over the scene between Brünnhilde and Siegfried? Based on this realization, Wagner concocted the essence of his last work: "Strong is the magic of the seeker, yet stronger still that of the man who renounces."

Anyway, the kiss takes place to the accompaniment of the renunciation of love motif. In the Rheingold, Wellgunde had stated the ominous price for power and property to this sequence of notes. To this music, Loge had sworn that nothing in the world could replace "woman's beauty and delight." And precisely this music was heard when Siegmund (Valkyrie, Act 1) seized the sword in the ash-tree; at the moment of his greatest bliss; and his most tragic loss.

However, his son Siegfried resolves to choose for the right to love, "though I die in doing so!" A "love-awakening" then follows in the very best operatic tradition, nevertheless, the likes of which have not been heard previously in the history of music. Brünnhilde and Siegfried praise the sun (whereas Siegmund and Sieglinde had once praised the "May moon / moon of delight"). Another case of incest is celebrated in breath-taking rapture, a forbidden relationship, yet one predestined between Wotan's virginal daughter (who has been sleeping for the past generation) and his grandson. The couple waltzes in their common past, mentions the mothers, although Siegfried does not understand most of it. His Eros only knows that he is now permitted to release himself from the bonds of fear caused by the presence of the woman. To this end, he is prepared to risk everything: he wants the woman. Or otherwise, death. Brünnhilde is startled by so much impetuosity, she fears for her "senses, wisdom and reason," fears losing herself in the act of surrender: "I am Brünnhilde no more!" She is right. But Wagner turns to one of his slickest tricks

to dispel all doubts: he ensnares both the hesitant lovers and the ecstatic audience with a bewitchingly beautiful melody. Within the delicate cocoon of the Siegfried idyll, all fears disappear into thin air. (This birthday gift from Richard to Cosima, who had been his official wife for the past four months, on 25 December 1870 also represents the intimate lullaby for their joint son Siegfried, who saw the light of day on June 6, 1869, while Cosima was still married to Hans von Bülow. On June 14, the final composition sketches for Siegfried were completed; and on June 15, Cosima asked von Bülow for a divorce; on June 16, her wish was granted.)

Brünnhilde regains her self-confidence. But she still resists her importunate hero: "Love yourself and let me be." But his hormones are up and running: "Be mine!". One last time, the object of his courtship delays and, with her, the orchestra. The fate motif gives a warning. Then there is no stopping it. The music celebrates it with abandon: Siegfried and the Valkyrie sink into each other's arms, as once did Siegmund and Sieglinde.

Subsequently

So far, Siegfried has acted almost blindly, i.e. without any knowledge, without any understanding of the situation, just following his instincts. And so far, he has made no mistake! Only when he begins to calculate, to listen to the counsel of others, rather than trusting his own instinct, does he lose. Wagner was obsessed by this kind of ideal hero. In Parsifal, he again took the matter to extremes, there right at the very end, with the added dimension of compassion.

Let us not forget Loge's prophecy of the end of the "preceding evening" to the Ring of the Nibelung: "They hasten to their end, though they think themselves strong and enduring!". This also applies to the two lovers. The second tragedy is about to take place.

Steffen Georgi

English translation: Fiona J. Stroker-Gale

Biographies

Marek Janowski



Marek Janowski has been artistic director of the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin since 2002, and was offered a lifetime position by the orchestra in 2008. From 2005-2012, he was also artistic and musical director of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in Geneva. Between 1984-2000, as musical director of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, he led the orchestra to international fame as the leading French orchestra. In addition, he had been artistic director of the Gürzenich Orchestra in Cologne (1986-1990), the Dresdner Philharmonie (2001-2003), and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo (2000-2005).

Marek Janowski receives regular invitations to guest-conduct from leading orchestras world-wide, thanks to his fresh and unusual insights into works that tend to be underestimated, or apparently over-familiar. He is in demand as guest conductor throughout the world, and works in the USA on a regular basis with the Pittsburgh Symphony (where he holds the Otto Klemperer Guest Conducting Chair), the Boston and San Francisco Symphony Orchestras, and in Europe with the Orchestre de Paris, the Orchester der Tonhalle Zurich, the Danish National Symphony Orchestra in Copenhagen, and the NDR-Sinfonieorchester Hamburg.

Marek Janowski was born in Warsaw in 1939, but grew up and was educated in Germany. He has accepted positions as general music director in Aachen, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Hamburg, Freiburg im Breisgau, and Dortmund. Since the late 1970s, he has appeared regularly at all the major opera-houses world-wide, including the Metropolitan Opera New York, Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, San Francisco, Hamburg, Vienna, and Paris. More than 50 recordings – most of which have received various international prizes – including many opera recordings and complete symphonic cycles over the past 35 years have demonstrated the special mastery of the conductor Marek Janowski. To this day, his complete recordings (1980-83) of Richard Wagner's tetralogy *The Ring of the Nibelungs* with the Staatskapelle Dresden is considered one of the most musically interesting ever to have been made of this work. His numerous recording projects with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin include a series of live recordings of Wagner's 10 major operas, to be completed in 2013.

Tomasz Konieczny | baritone (Wanderer/Wotan)



Following his sensational success as Alberich and Wotan at the Vienna State Opera, Tomasz Konieczny will continue to perform here during the coming years in the *Ring*, as well as in other roles, such as Amfortas and Kurwenal. In November 2012, he was an impressive Wotan in performances of *Rheingold* and the *Valkyrie* (both also since released on CD) with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin. Since 2006, he has been a member of the ensemble of the Deutsche Oper am Rhein, where major roles have included Golaud, Amfortas, Kurwenal, the Dutchman, Barak, Balstrode, Selim, Falstaff, and Escamillo.

Tomasz Konieczny was born in Lodz, Poland in 1972. He first studied drama at the Film Academy there, and worked as an actor in the theatre, participating in several film and television productions. He began his vocal studies at the Fryderyk Chopin Academy in Warsaw, later continuing at the Academy of Music in Dresden under Christian Elsner. He was a prize-winner at the 33rd International Dvořák Singing Competition in Karlsbad in 1998.

He made his début as a singer in 1997 at the Poznań Opera as Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro*. Various engagements to him to Leipzig, St. Gallen, Chemnitz, and Mannheim, where he worked from 2002-2005 as a member of the ensemble at the National Theatre. Tomasz Konieczny has been a regular guest at the Budapest Wagner Days Festival since 2006, where he has already sung Amfortas, Wotan / Wanderer and Kurwenal. Major opera-houses such as Semperoper Dresden and the Deutsche Oper Berlin have engaged him to sing Alberich; at the Teatro Real Madrid, he has sung Dr. Kolenaty; Amfortas, at the National Theatre in Prague; Biterolf, at the Opéra National de Paris; Pizarro, at the Kennedy Center in Washington, and at the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich; and in the summer of 2012, Stolzius in Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* at the Salzburg Festival. Moreover, Tomasz Konieczny is also in demand in the concert repertoire, singing music by composers ranging from Bach to Penderecki. He made his début with the RSB in December 2008, singing in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9.

Stephen Gould | tenor (Siegfried)

On March 27, 2012, Stephen Gould added a brilliant success to the long list of his achievements interpreting roles by Wagner when he sang Tristan in the RSB-Wagner cycle under the direction of Marek



Janowski (also recorded for CD). The American singer, one of the most sought-after tenors world-wide for the great Wagnerian roles, studied at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, beginning his career as a baritone before "ascending" to heroic tenor.

After his first engagement at the Landestheater Linz, he made his début at the Bavarian State Opera in 2001. In 2004, he sang *Tannhäuser* for the first time in Bayreuth, after which he was immediately invited to sing the role of Siegfried in the *Ring* during the summers of 2006 - 2008. His 2012 schedule included Wagner roles such as Erik in *The Flying Dutchman* at the Vienna State Opera; *Tannhäuser* at the Vienna State Opera and in Tokyo; *Parsifal* and *Tristan* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin; *Tristan* in Tokyo; and in his signature role as Siegfried in *Siegfried* and *The Twilight of the Gods* in New York, Vienna and Munich. However, Stephen Gould's repertoire is not limited to the German specialist roles; it also includes roles such as Verdi's *Otello*, Aeneas in *Les Troyens*, and Britten's *Peter Grimes*. Eminent conductors with whom he has worked include: Daniel Barenboim, James Levine, Christian Thielemann, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Kent Nagano.

In 2007, Stephen Gould made his début with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Marek Janowski, as Waldemar in Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* in Monte Carlo and Berlin. In June 2007, he sang the title role in Wagner's *Siegfried* with the RSB in a well-received concert performance of Act III, with the unforgettable Elizabeth Connell as Brünnhilde.

Violeta Urmana | soprano (Brünnhilde)



During the finale of Wagner's *Twilight of the Gods* in Paris in January 2013, Violeta Urmana made the repertoire "leap" that will define her career in the coming years. Her performance of Brünnhilde's final song under Marek Janowski received tumultuous applause in Paris. In the concert, which is recorded on this CD, she made

her personal role début – as well as her RSB début – as Brünnhilde in *Siegfried* in the concert performances of Wagner's opera cycle with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra under Marek Janowski. After this first success as Brünnhilde, she will go on to perform *Kundry* and *Isolde* in 2013 at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. She will also sing *Isolde*, one of her current showpiece roles, during the summer at the BBC Proms in London under Semyon Bychkov.

Violeta Urmana, a native of Lithuania, is now regarded as one of the leading singers in the Italian and German dramatic soprano repertoire, performing roles such as Aida, Amelia, Elisabetta, Gioconda, Leonora, Tosca, Norma, Sieglinde (Bayreuth, 2001), and Isolde. Previously, she had made a name for herself singing mezzo-soprano roles such as Kundry and Eboli in the major international opera-houses, under conductors such as Claudio Abbado, Daniel Barenboim, Bertrand de Billy, Pierre Boulez, Riccardo Chailly, James Conlon, James Levine, Jesús López Cobos, Fabio Luisi, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Sir Simon Rattle, Donald Runnicles, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Franz Welser-Möst, and Christian Thielemann.

As a concert and recital singer, Violeta Mana performs an extensive repertoire, ranging from Johann Sebastian Bach to Alban Berg, and receives regular invitations for guest-performances in all the major music centres of Europe, the USA, and Japan. Numerous CDs document her talent as a singer. In 2002, she received the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Singers in London; and in 2009, the title of "Österreichische Kammersängerin" (= Austrian award) in Vienna.

Anna Larsson | contralto (Erda)



Anna Larsson gained an international reputation in 1997 after Claudio Abbado invited her to perform Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with the Berlin Philharmonic. Since then, she has interpreted the alto parts in Gustav Mahler's symphonies world-wide, in performances with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, and the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras. Her concert repertoire, however, covers a much wider range: it extends from Monteverdi right up to the 20th century. She has sung under such conductors as Claudio Abbado, Daniel Barenboim, Herbert Blomstedt, Bernard Haitink, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Lorin Maazel, Kurt Masur, Seiji Ozawa, Simon Rattle, and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Anna Larsson was born in Dalarnas County in middle Sweden, and completed her musical education at the University College of Opera in Stockholm. She has earned an excellent reputation performing Erda at the prestigious opera-houses in Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Salzburg, and Stockholm, as well as at the Festival Aix-en-Provence. She has also appeared in roles such as Waltraute, Orphée, Fricka, and Dalila at the Royal Opera in Stockholm, the Berlin State Opera, the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, Valencia, Florence, at the Salzburg Festival, the

Aix-en-Provence Festival, Copenhagen, and at the Finnish National Opera. Other opera roles included in her repertoire are: Debussy's Geneviève, Gluck's Orfeo, Monteverdi's Ottone, Britten's Lucretia, Handel's Orlando and Andronico, and Strauss's Gaea in Daphne.

Anna Larsson made her first guest-appearance with the RSB for the concert performances of Wagner's Siegfried, which was recorded on CD.

Matti Salminen | bass (Fafner)



The Finnish bass Matti Salminen is an institution in the world of opera. In Berlin in particular, he has been celebrated for more than 40 years. In 1977, he first sang Pogner in The Mastersingers of Nuremberg at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. In 1969, he made his début as Philip II in Verdi's Don Carlos at the Finnish National Opera. His career has taken him from Cologne to Milan's La Scala (where he made his début as Fafner), and thence directly onwards to the Bayreuth Festival. He has been a regular guest there since 1976, performing the roles of Fasolt, Hunding, Daland, and King Marke.

Other roles in Matti Salminen's repertoire include Hagen, Gurnemann, Osmin, Sarastro, Kaspar, Rocco, Gremin, Monteverdi's Seneca and the title role in Boris Godunov. In September 2000, he sang the title role – created especially for him – in the première of Aulis Salminen's opera King Lear in Helsinki.

Two recordings in which Matti Salminen participated have received Grammy awards: a 1983 recording of the Ring of the Nibelungs (Bayreuth Festival) and a 1992 recording of the Twilight of the Gods (Metropolitan Opera, New York).

Since the first integral digital recording of the Ring cycle with the Staatskapelle Dresden in the 1980's, the Finnish bass has worked together regularly with conductor Marek Janowski. Matti Salminen is the only singer of the former cast who is now also taking part in Janowski's current Wagner cycle in Berlin. In 2010, he sang the role of Daland in the Flying Dutchman; the following year (2011) the role of the Nightwatchman in the Mastersingers with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin; and for this production of Siegfried, he sang the role of Fafner, as he did previously in Dresden in 1982, also under Janowski. And as in 1983 in Dresden, in March 2013 he also sang Hagen in Berlin in the Twilight of the Gods.

Matti Salminen was born in Turku in Finland. He studied first at the Turku Music Institute, continuing after graduation at the Sibelius

Academy in Helsinki. Further studies took him to Italy and Germany.

Jochen Schmeckenbecher | baritone (Alberich)



Jochen Schmeckenbecher made an acclaimed début with the RSB in the concert performances of their Wagner opera cycle in November 2012 as Alberich in the Rheingold (also recorded on CD). Following successful role débuts as Kurwenal (Tristan and Isolde) at the Opéra de Lyon (Kirill Petrenko), as well as Dr. Kolenaty in Věc

Makropulos (= The Makropulos Case) at the Salzburg Festival (Esa-Pekka Salonen), Jochen Schmeckenbecher made his role début as the Musiklehrer (= music teacher) in Strauss' Ariadne auf Naxos at the Vienna State Opera in September 2011. He has also sung this role at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Dresden Semper Opera, La Scala in Milan, and at the Theater an der Wien. After first singing Wozzeck in Dortmund in 2004, he enjoyed further success in this role in a new production by Calixto Bieito at the Gran Teatro del Liceu in Barcelona, at the Teatro Real in Madrid, and at the Hamburg State Opera, among others.

He has sung the role of Beckmesser at the Hamburg State Opera, the Graz Opera, and the Volksoper Wien. At the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin, his many roles have included Faninal, Beckmesser, Musiklehrer (= music teacher), Biterolf, and Klingsor, the latter roles under conductor Daniel Barenboim. Furthermore, Jochen Schmeckenbecher has given guest performances in New York, Dallas, Philadelphia, Santa Fe, and at the San Francisco Opera – most recently as Faninal (Der Rosenkavalier).

During the 2012-2013 season, highlights included his début at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, and the role of Alberich in the complete Ring of the Nibelungs at the Frankfurt am Main Opera.

In concert, Jochen Schmeckenbecher has had great success in Cerha's Baal-Gesänge (= Baal songs) at the Vienna Konzerthaus, in Schubert's Alfonso und Estrella with the Berlin Philharmonic under Nikolaus Harnoncourt; in Bach's St. John Passion in Madrid under Frans Brüggen; in songs from Des Knaben Wunderhorn under Kirill Petrenko in Bregenz; and in Mahler's Symphony No. 8 and Janáček's Glagolitic Mass in Dallas.

Christian Elsner | tenor
(Mime)



Christian Elsner has firmly established himself as a Wagner tenor thanks to his internationally acclaimed interpretation of the title role in a concert performance of Wagner's *Parsifal* in the RSB Wagner cycle on April 8, 2011 (also available on CD), and previously, in February 2010, his début at the Semperoper Dresden as Siegmund in Wagner's *Valkyrie*.

He sang the role of Siegmund in the summer of 2012 under Simon Rattle with the Berlin Philharmonic. In November 2012, he made his role début as Loge (in the *Rheingold*) under Marek Janowski, and on March 1, 2013 made his first appearance as Mime in *Siegfried* for this recording.

The tenor was born in Freiburg, and studied singing with Martin Gründler, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, and Neil Semer. As a concert singer, Christian Elsner is a regular guest at the international festivals and also in all the major concert halls of Berlin, Vienna, Milan, London, New York, and Tokyo. He also performs regularly with the RSB under Marek Janowski. He has sung under conductors such as Herbert Blomstedt, Adam Fischer, Carlo Maria Giulini, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Thomas Hengelbrock, Marek Janowski, Mariss Jansons, Fabio Luisi, Sir Neville Marriner, Yannik Nezet-Seguin, and David Zinman, and has participated in many recordings for radio and CD productions.

With pianists such as Hartmut Holl, Graham Johnson, Charles Spencer, Gerold Huber, and his regular duo partner Burkhard Kehring, the tenor has given recitals throughout Europe. In addition, Christian Elsner dedicates himself with great joy to writing children's books (recently, his book *Lennie und der Ring des Nibelungen* [= Lennie and the Ring of the Nibelungs] was published), and to teaching voice at the Hochschule für Musik in Würzburg (= University of Music in Würzburg).

Sophie Klussmann | soprano
(voice of a little forest bird)



Sophie Klussmann was born in Freiburg, and took lessons in violin, piano, ballet, and singing while still at school. After studying musicology (Freiburg, Hamburg), she transferred to the Academy of Music in Detmold in 1997 to study under Thomas Quasthoff, where she received her opera diploma in 2003. The soprano concluded a postgraduate course with Klesie Kelly-Moog at the Cologne Music

Academy in 2006. That same year, Sophie Klussmann was a prize-winner at the Würzburg Mozart Festival Competition.

Especially in the concert field, she has made a name for herself under the direction of Marek Janowski, Michael Gielen, Ari Rasilainen, and Simon Halsey. Sophie Klussmann has already performed with the RSB several times in Berlin, Zurich, Paris, and Valencia. Most recently, she sang the role of one of the flower girls in Wagner's *Parsifal* in the RSB Wagner cycle in 2011. The singer is active both in the field of early music and contemporary music. Concert engagements have taken her on a tour of Europe with the Collegium Vocale Gent under the direction of Marcus Creed (*Handel's Brockes Passion*), to the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival and the Beethoven Festival in Bonn, to Prague, and also on a concert tour with trumpeter Reinhold Friedrich to Beijing.

Since the 2009-2010 season, Sophie Klussmann has been a member of the ensemble of the Halle Opera, where her roles have since included Pamina, Nannetta, Dorinda, Wellgunde, Cherubino, and the soprano part in *Carmina Burana*.

Robin Engelen | musical assistant



Robin Engelen is accompanying the Wagner cycle performed by the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra as musical assistant to conductor Marek Janowski. The Cologne conductor studied under Wolf-Dieter Hauschild and Günter Wand. In 1999, he was engaged as solo répétiteur at the Staatsoper Stuttgart; in 2003, he became associate conductor there; and in 2004, he was appointed musical assistant to the artistic director, Lothar Zagrosek. Until 2006, he conducted productions of *The bartered bride*, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, *The Magic Flute*, *Idomeneo*, and *Busoni's Doktor Faust*. The latter production was chosen as "performance of the year" by the magazine *Opernwelt*.

Since the 2010-2011 season, Robin Engelen has been Chief Conductor and Assistant Music Director at Theater Bonn. In the season 2012-2013, the Bonn productions he is conducting include *Norma* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, as well as *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Hänsel und Gretel*. For the 100th Anniversary of Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, Robin Engelen is conducting concerts in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, as well as in Belgium and France.

In the autumn of 2013, he has been invited to conduct at the opera houses in Ghent and Bergen. Since 2002, he has worked closely with

the International Bach Academy in Stuttgart and its Artistic Director Helmuth Rilling. He also collaborates closely with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, which he has led on tour in Korea, Italy and Turkey.

He has conducted the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Halle State Philharmonic Orchestra, the Dusseldorf and Brandenburg Symphony Orchestras, the Berlin Konzerthaus Orchestra, the State Philharmonic Orchestra of Rhineland-Palatinate, the Berlin Comic Opera, the Mannheim Opera, and the State Opera in the far-eastern city of Yakutsk.

In addition to concerts at the Oregon Bach Festival, the Rheingau Music Festival, the Ars Musica Festival, the Tongyeong International Music Festival, the European Music Festival Stuttgart, and the Beethoven Festival in Bonn, he has directed annual opera performances in the Russian city of Vladivostok since 2009.

Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin
(Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin)

Since 2002, the beginning of the era of Marek Janowski as artistic leader and chief conductor, the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin has earned itself a prominent position among the top Berlin orchestras as well as among the German radio orchestras. The remarkable level achieved under Marek Janowski has made the RSB highly attractive to top international conductors. After working with conductors such as Andris Nelsons, Kristjan Järvi, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Juraj Valcuha, Vasily Petrenko, and Ludovic Morlot in past years, during the 2012-2013 season Josep Pons, Karel Mark Chichon, and Jakub Hrusa, among others, also made their début with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin.

The RSB is the oldest radio symphony orchestra in Germany, and was founded in the early days of radio in October 1923. Under its various chief conductors – including Sergiu Celibidache, Eugen Jochum, Hermann Abendroth, Rolf Kleinert, Heinz Rögner, and Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos – the RSB has become a flexible symphonic orchestra, where great composers of the 20th century have also been happy to conduct their own works. These have included Paul Hindemith, Richard Strauss, and Arnold Schönberg, to mention a few.

The collaboration with Deutschlandradio, the main shareholder of the ROC GmbH Berlin, of which the RSB is a member, has resulted in many marvellous recordings. Currently, a great deal of effort is concentrated on recording the Wagner cycle with the Dutch recording label PentaTone. Six of the live recordings have already been released and have immediately triggered a world-wide response.

The tenth release in the recording of the complete symphonies of Hans Werner Henze for the WERGO label is yet to be released. The season 2012-2013 included guest-performances at the Festival in Montreux, in northern Italy, and at the Festival in Colmar, as well as the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival and the Chorin Music Summer Festival, where the orchestra has made regular appearances over the years.



