

Leinsdorf's pair of Wälsungs, Dutch soprano Gré Brouwenstijn as Sieglinde and Jon Vickers as Siegmund, could hardly be bettered, with Vickers providing the greatest Siegmund on records since Melchior. As great an artist as he was singer, Vickers provides a vivid characterization as the impassioned lover in Act I, and he and Nilsson are extremely moving in Act II's Todesverkündigung scene, rendered in vocalism that is simply superb.

Finally, Leinsdorf brings out an enormous, all-enveloping warmth in this score (fabulously captured by Wilkinson), reminding us that Wagner reached almost cult status for the sensuality of his music, while Solti seems more focused on the music's athletic elements and a certain brashness that pervades much of his music-making, despite the excellence of his orchestra—the sensuous possibilities of this score too often elude him. There is also a “knock'em dead” sonic aspect to the Solti Ring, in keeping with Culshaw's desire to produce a recording that was its own kind of experience, as opposed to endeavoring to capture a real live performance. As revealed in the present high-resolution remastering of Leinsdorf's Die Walküre, his more lustrous, more organic performance presents an enormously satisfying account of this great score, arguably providing us with a closer approximation of the ecstatic experience that the composer intended.

Decca is currently reissuing the Solti Ring on SACD (the format of which is DSD64), based at last on new modern dubs of the original master tapes, but even ardent fans of that famous set may want to supplement it with Leinsdorf's very different account of Die Walküre. At some point in the future, perhaps HDTT can release Leinsdorf's complete Ring based on the 1961-62 Met broadcasts, based on the line-sourced tapes I own that, although mono, have far better sound than the off-the-air recordings upon which various independent labels have relied for sources in releasing these broadcasts.

by John Haley



Erich Leinsdorf - London Symphony Orchestra

Birgit Nilsson • Gré Brouwenstijn • Rita Gorr

Jon Vickers • George London • David Ward

Wagner

Die Walküre

HDTT is pleased to present this new high-resolution transfer and restoration of a classic recorded performance of Wagner's *Die Walküre* brilliantly conducted by great Wagner conductor Erich Leinsdorf. Not long before this recording was made in 1961, a deal was struck between RCA Victor and Decca/London to make recordings in London, sometimes using Decca's personnel, that would initially be released on the RCA label, but after a period of time would revert to ownership and release by Decca. A number of operatic recordings were made pursuant to this arrangement, including an *Aida* featuring American soprano Leontyne Price and Canadian tenor Jon Vickers, conducted by Georg Solti, and a *Flying Dutchman* featuring Austrian soprano Leonie Rysanek, American-Canadian George London bass-baritone, and American bass Giorgio Tozzi, conducted by Antal Dorati. All of these recordings featured a number of singers who were prominent leading singers at New York's Metropolitan Opera.

Conductor Erich Leinsdorf, a Wagnerian conductor of long experience, was conducting a complete Ring Cycle during the Met's 1961-62 season (all of which was broadcast), featuring outstanding Wagnerian soprano Birgit Nilsson in her first Ring Cycle at the Met. Nilsson had debuted in her native Sweden at about age 28, not reaching the Met until her debut there as *Isolde* in 1959, already past age 40. However, she had a very long vocal prime and became one of the most sought-after dramatic sopranos of the 20th Century, known for her enormous vocal stamina and reliability, as well as her huge, voluptuous voice that seemed to rejoice in her trumpeting, tireless upper register. In the Met's 1961-62 Ring Cycle, Nilsson sang all three Brünnhilde's in the Ring operas where that character appears. Outstanding bass-baritone George London appeared as *Wotan* in *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried*, but for the broadcast of *Die Walküre*, the part of *Wotan* was taken by another outstanding bass-baritone, Otto Edelmann. We are very fortunate that London's excellent *Walküre* *Wotan* was captured in the instant recording, which was made in September, 1961, right before the 1961-62

Met season began. The tie-in to the Met Ring was pointed out by the statement "Selected by the Metropolitan Opera" on the cover of the RCA LP set, although the Met company played no part in the recording.

RCA had contemplated recording a complete Ring Cycle conducted by Leinsdorf, whose glowing interpretations certainly merited such, but fate provided otherwise. *Die Walküre* was recorded at one of Decca's premiere recording locations in London, Walthamstow Town Hall, with the top-flight London Symphony Orchestra, recorded by one of the greatest recording engineers of the day, Kenneth Wilkinson, who made a multitude of terrific recordings for Decca (as HDTT customers will be well aware). However, another Decca producer, John Culshaw, had undertaken a much different Ring Cycle recording in Vienna, with Georg Solti leading the Vienna Philharmonic, which was to be the first complete Ring Cycle recorded in stereo. The first installment of the Solti Ring was *Das Rheingold*, recorded in 1958, in brilliant sound, and the last installment was *Die Walküre*, recorded in 1965. Once Leinsdorf's recording of *Die Walküre* became a Decca property, any notion of a Leinsdorf Ring Cycle was toast, and this outstanding recording, which many feel is superior to Solti's effort, became basically a stepchild at Decca.

Solti assembled a fine cast for all of the Ring operas, again featuring Nilsson as Brünnhilde, but in general Leinsdorf's cast for *Die Walküre* was superior. Solti's greatest liability was a once very distinguished *Wotan*, Hans Hotter, who by 1965 was in vocal shambles, such that all the canny characterization he could muster could not overcome the fact that his insecure, wobbly and weak voice simply could not manage the part any longer. His scenes can be a real trial to listen to. It remains a mystery why he was not replaced for such an important project. Leinsdorf's George London is infinitely superior, singing with great distinction, and his characterization of the Ring's male protagonist is at least the equal of Hotter's.

DISC ONE:

Act I

01. Prelude to Act I (3:21)
 02. Wess' Herd dies auch sei [Siegmund] (11:49)
 03. Müd'am Herd fand ich den Mann [Sieglinde] (4:25)
 04. Friedmund darf ich nicht heissen [Siegmund] (9:27)
 05. Ich weiss ein wildes Geschlecht [Hunding] (4:55)
 06. Ein Schwert verhiess mir der Vater [Siegmund] (5:24)
 07. Schläfst du, Gast? [Sieglinde] (1:01)
 08. Der Männer Sippe sass hier im Saal [Sieglinde] (5:33)
 09. Winterstürme wichen dem Wonnemond [Siegmund] (2:55)
 10. Du bist der Lenz, nach dem ich verlangte [Sieglinde] (7:38)
 11. War Wäise dein Vater [Sieglinde] (0:20)
 12. Siegmund heiss' ich und Siegmund bin ich [Siegmund] (3:37)
- Act II (beginning)
13. Prelude to Act II (1:59)
 14. Nun zäume dein Ross, reisige Maid! [Wotan] (1:11)
 15. Dir rat' ich, Vater, rüste dich selbst [Brünnhilde] (1:36)
 16. Der alte Sturm! die alte Müh'! [Wotan] (4:15)
 17. So ist es denn aus mit den ewigen Göttern [Fricka] (5:15)
 18. In wildem Leiden erwucks er sich selbst [Wotan] (3:04)

Die Walküre**from Der Ring des Nibelungen****Words and Music by Richard Wagner**

Conductor - Erich Leinsdorf

Orchestra - London Symphony Orchestra

Soprano Vocals [Brünnhilde] - Birgit Nilsson

Soprano Vocals [Sieglinde] - Gré Brouwenstijn

Mezzo-soprano Vocals [Fricka] - Rita Gorr

Tenor Vocals [Siegmund] - Jon Vickers

Baritone Vocals [Wotan] - George London

Bass Vocals [Hunding] - David Ward

Valkyries: Marie Collier [Gerhilde, soprano], Julia Malyn [Ortlinde, soprano], Margreta Pierkes [Waltraute, mezzo-soprano], Joan Edwards [Schwertleite, mezzo-soprano], Judith Elcine [Helmwige, soprano], Noreen Berry [Sigurne, mezzo-soprano], Maureen Guy [Grimgerde, contralto], Josephine Veasey [Rosswisse, mezzo-soprano].

Recording Info: Recorded by RCA Victor in collaboration with Decca Records at Walthamstow Town Hall, London, England, September, 1961 Engineer [Recording] - Kenneth Wilkinson Producer - Erik Smith

DISC TWO:

Act II (conclusion)

19. Was verlangst du? [Wotan] (4:44)
20. Schlimm, fürcht'ich, schloss der Streit [Brünnhilde] (1:01)
21. O heilige Schmach! [Wotan] (3:55)
22. Als junger Liebe Lust mir verblich [Wotan] (15:43)
23. O sag', künde! was soll nun dein Kind? [Brünnhilde] (6:37)
24. Raste nun hier [Siegmund] (9:54)
25. Siegmund! Sieh' auf mich! (Todesverkündigung) [Brünnhilde] (19:01)
26. Zauberfest bezähmt ein Schlaf [Siegmund] (3:27)
- 27.kehrte der Vater nur heim! [Sieglinde] (0:57)
28. Wehwalt! Wehwalt! Steh' mir zum Streit [Hunding] (2:52)
29. Geh' hin, Knecht! [Wotan] (1:48)

DISC THREE:

Act III

30. Hojotoho! Hojotoho! (Ride of the Valkyries) [Gerhilde] (7:04)
31. Nach dem Tann lenkt sie das taumelnde Ross [Waltraute] (1:14)
32. Schützt mich und helft in höchster Not! [Brünnhilde] (3:16)
33. Nicht sehre dich Sorge um mich [Sieglinde] (2:08)
34. So fliehe denn eilig [Brünnhilde] (2:59)
35. Steh', Brünnhilde! [Wotan] (4:32)
36. Hier bin ich, Vater [Brünnhilde] (8:53)
37. War es so schmäählich, was ich verbrach [Brünnhilde] (4:26)
38. Als Fricka den eig'nen Sinn dir entfremdet [Brünnhilde] (5:39)
39. So tatest du, was so gern zu tun ich begehrt [Wotan] (3:43)
40. Wohl taugte dir nicht die törg'e Maid [Brünnhilde] (4:02)
41. Und das ich ihm in Stücken schlug [Wotan] (3:49)
42. Leb'wohl, du kühnes herrliches Kind! (Wotan's Farewell) [Wotan] (2:51)
43. Der Augen leuchtendes Paar [Wotan] (8:49)
44. Loge, hör'! lausche hierher! (Magic Fire Music) [Wotan] (4:29)



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