

[Met Performance] CID:147720

Die Walküre {359} Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles, California: 04/14/1948.

(Review)

Los Angeles, California

April 14, 1948

DIE WALKÜRE {359}

Brünnhilde.....Helen Traubel
Siegmund.....Lauritz **Melchior**
Sieglinde.....Rose Bampton
Wotan.....Joel Berglund
Fricka.....Blanche Thebom
Hunding.....Dezsö Ernster
Gerhilde.....Thelma Votipka
Grimgerde.....Martha Lipton
Helmwige.....Regina Resnik
Ortlinde.....Irene Jessner
Rosswisse.....Lucielle Browning
Schwertleite.....Margaret Harshaw
Sieggrune.....Hertha Glaz
Waltraute.....Jeanne Palmer

Conductor.....Fritz Stiedry

Review of Albert Goldberg in the Los Angeles Times

"MET" PRESENTS "DIE WALKÜRE"

After the phenomenal, popular and financial but somewhat noncommittal artistic success of the [first night] performance, the Metropolitan Opera forces tightened the musical stays, adjusted themselves with professional routine to the problem of a strange theater, and delivered a finely rounded account of Wagner's "Die Walküre," in Shrine Auditorium last night.

The company could well feel pleased and confident, for the [first] night had grossed only \$42 less than \$34,000, setting a new record for the Shrine Auditorium and putting the local sponsors in the clear for the entire season. Last night's attendance again hit the 6,200 mark.

Cast Goes to Work

Thus assured of their welcome the Met singers and, above all, the orchestra set to their Wagnerian task with a will. The leading role brought Helen Traubel as Brünnhilde, Lauritz Melchior as Siegmund, Rose Bampton as Sieglinde, Joel Berglund as Wotan, Deszo Ernster as Hunding, and Blanche Thebom as Fricka, with Fritz Stiedry conducting, and a bevy of the company's best women's voices as the cloud-riding Valkyries.

But fine as were the musical values the news interest belongs to Lee Simonson's much discussed new setting. Since we are to be deprived of the entire "Ring" and even of the promised "Siegfried," it is unfair to judge the complete fitness of new scenery by the two acts of "Walküre" that we were able to witness.

These, however, were somewhat of a disappointment. They seemed to have juggled around tradition without substituting something new of utilitarian value or of added beauty. If one had not known that the rooty protuberances, seemingly of a sequoia, that cluttered up a large part of the first scene were meant to be the base of an ash tree, they might have been taken merely for unlevelled convolutions of the terrain; while the open fire that takes the place of the traditional hearth must have made breathing difficult even for leather-lunged Wagnerian characters. Nor did the jagged planes and geometrical levels of the second act mountain fastness create the desired effect of space and height.

Bird Suggested

The costumes of Mary Percy Schenk, though they add color to the somber drama, also are not completely convincing. Miss Traubel's former Adrian-designed outfit did much more for her and for the character than the present dress, which stresses less the armor motive than it suggests a human red-winged blackbird with gray trimming. And Fricka's costume would have been more in keeping with a Chinese empress than for the outraged goddess of matrimony.

None of this, however, hampered the musical value. Miss Traubel's splendid outpouring of tone embellished the heroic attributes of the part, while the golden tenderness of her voice made memorable the compassion of her announcement of doom to Siegmund.

Mr. Melchior was in better voice than we have heard him in years. The tones were ringing and clear, with none of the baritonal huskiness that has sometimes marred their production, while his conception of the role had all his incomparable dignity and authority.

Appearance Youthful

Miss Thebom was somewhat too youthful and attractive in appearance to make credible the role of neglected wife. Wagner did not make clear precisely what the partner of Wotan's transgressions were like, but they could scarcely have competed with Miss Thebom's charm. The singing, however, was of a high order of competence and brilliance, whatever it may have lacked in shrewish vehemence.

Miss Bampton likewise sang appealingly and did particularly well the scene of Sieglinde's delirium in the second act. Mr. Berglund had not yet entered on his main stint when we were forced to leave, but the suave beauty of his voice made clear the extent of Wotan's dilemma, and he was every inch a god in appearance. Mr. Ernster disclosed a dark bass voice of exceptional power and a thorough command of Wagnerian unpleasantness.

Mr. Stiedry's conducting unrolled the beautiful score with epicurean taste. He knows the value of deliberation and the orchestra responded with a superb demonstration of its capability.

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