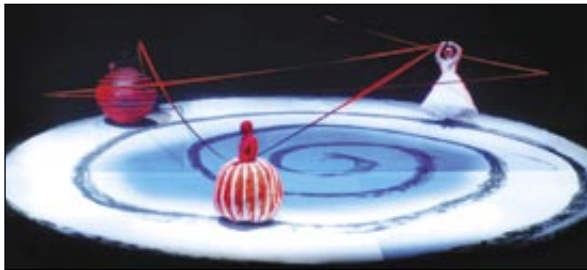


Final Round – LA Opera's *The Ring*

By Robert F. Adams / Special to CASA

LA OPERA'S INTOXICATING PRODUCTION OF WAGNER'S THE *RING CYCLE*, extended its grip with the last two "music-dramas," *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*. A fascinating journey, I have encountered members of the production team, serious Wagner Opera fans ("Ring Nuts") and other diverse patrons.

Reminiscent of a fairy tale, *Siegfried* is an entertaining "scherzo" and contains comic elements as a counterpoint to the tragic preoccupations of the other parts of the *Ring*. Although emotionally chilly, *Siegfried* was visually remarkable. Director Achim Freyer's interpretation continued a kaleidoscope of off-the-wall imagery. In this version, the title character Siegfried had blue skin, and clown makeup. The threatening dragon Fafner looked like a forest-green mini-Godzilla,



Götterdämmerung

complete with red-lighted breath. At the intermission filmmaker Quentin Tarantino exclaimed to me, "I expected a larger dragon, but I liked the red breath!" The setting for the "ring-of-fire" scenes in the last act was

spectacular. Tenor Vitalij Kowaljow as the Wanderer (i.e. Wotan- the master God masquerading as a human) continued to gain command, creating one of the definitive performances of the whole *Ring*.

Götterdämmerung, the last of the four "music dramas" is a long work, (over six hours with intermissions - Rich Capparella from KUSC described it to me as the "coffee opera" due to the length). A dramatic highlight occurred in a scene between Michelle De Young playing valkyrie Waltrude visiting Brünnhilde (portrayed by soprano Linda Watson) to report the downward trajectory of the Gods. The scene was set and staged beautifully, and in combination with the

powerful score, provided a dramatic crescendo. Production designer Petra Weikert (Freyer's assistant from Berlin) mentioned that this *Ring*

is "visually complex, much more so than other versions" as the symbolic visual aspects lent a mysterious universality to the staging.

Being further drawn into this spell-binding subject of music, myth, and magic,



Siegfried

Photos by Monika Ritterhaus

I attended a fascinating day-long seminar at the Getty Villa near Malibu for discussions of the classical sources Wagner utilized (Ancient Greek Drama, mythological counterparts to the characters, etc). This seminar was put together by the J. Paul Getty Museum and LA Opera education program directors as part of the Los Angeles-wide *Ring* Festival. Conductor James Conlon discussed his attraction to the *Ring*, preparing for this opportunity for years and stated that the work "challenges, as the *Ring* is open-ended, and available for a multitude of interpretations, reflecting its genius and its timelessness."

By the end of June, the *Ring Cycle* will have concluded. However, post-*Ring* discussions will focus on the merits of this interpretation, pitting traditionalists versus appreciators. The eclectic approach by LA Opera has been enchanting, difficult, and complex, but in the end, the effort has flourished.

LA Opera's final performance of *Götterdämmerung* is at 5pm Sat, June 26th. There may be tickets available. For more information call 213-972-8001 or visit LAOperaRing.com.

Marquis Seminar- Wagner's Mythology: Roots and Inspiration at The Getty Villa was held on June 19th. For other cultural seminars, performances and/or tour information offered by the Getty, visit www.Getty.edu.

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