13 & 16 November 2025

SIMONE YOUNG CONDUCTS

SIEGFRIED

Presenting Partner







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Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the Orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's concerts encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, and collaborations with guest artists from all genres, reflecting the Orchestra's versatility and diverse appeal. Its award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, and the Orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program.

The Orchestra's first chief conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdenêk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013, followed by David Robertson as Chief Conductor from 2014 to 2019. Australian-born Simone Young commenced her role as Chief Conductor in 2022, a year in which the Orchestra made its return to a renewed Sydney Opera House Concert Hall.

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Associate Concertmaster

Alexandra Osborne

Associate Concertmaster

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Alexander Norton

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Benjamin Tjoao Dominic Azzi* SECOND VIOLINS

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2025 CONCERT SEASON

Thursday 13 November 4.30pm Sunday 16 November 2pm Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House

SIMONE YOUNG CONDUCTS SIEGFRIED

THE RING CYCLE IN CONCERT

SIMONE YOUNG conductor
SIMON O'NEILL Siegfried
MIINA-LIISA VÄRELÄ Brünnhilde
GERHARD SIEGEL Mime
WOLFGANG KOCH Wanderer
WARWICK FYFE Alberich
TEDDY TAHU RHODES Fafner
SAMANTHA CLARKE Waldvogel
NOA BEINART Erda

RICHARD WAGNER (1813-1883) *Siegfried* (1876)

Act I

INTERVAL

Act II

INTFRVAL

Act III

Pre-concert talk

By David Larkin on the Lounge Level of the Northern Foyer at 3.45pm (Thursday), 1.15pm (Sunday)

Estimated durations

Act I – 82 minutes Interval – 60 minutes Act II – 74 minutes Interval – 30 minutes Act III – 80 minutes

The concert will run for approximately 6 hours

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Daniel Linton-France

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WELCOME

Welcome to **Simone Young conducts Siegfried**, the third chapter of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's in concert presentation of Wagner's monumental *Ring* Cycle.

As Presenting Partner for this concert, we are delighted that our support helps bring one of the greatest achievements in Western art to the Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House.

Since its establishment in 1990, Hantec Group has grown from its roots in Hong Kong into a recognised leader in financial services and diversified industries. As we proudly celebrate our 35th anniversary, we reflect on a journey defined by excellence, innovation and our unwavering commitment to empowering businesses and investors worldwide

In Siegfried, Chief Conductor Simone Young leads the Orchestra and a world-class cast in a story that explores courage, transformation and the triumph of the human spirit. Internationally acclaimed heldentenor Simon O'Neill performs the title role, joined by an exceptional ensemble of artists for this rare and exhilarating concert experience.

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We are proud of our partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, which reflects our shared commitment to excellence and to enriching Sydney's vibrant cultural life.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Hantec invite you to immerse vourself in this extraordinary musical journey.

Joanne Ding Chief Executive Officer Hantec Markets Australia





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SYNOPSIS

The story so far:

In Das Rheingold, Alberich – a Nibelung, or dwarf – has foresworn love enabling him to steal a horde of gold from the depths of the Rhine, and with it he has created a ring of great power with which he has enslaved his people. Meanwhile the gods have had two giants, Fafner and Fasolt, build the fortress of Valhalla, and in order to pay them, Wotan, the king of the gods, and fire-god Loge steal the gold from Alberich, who curses the ring. When the horde is handed over the giants fight over the ring, and Fafner kills his brother, and withdraws to the eastern forest where he lives as a dragon. The gods triumphantly enter Valhalla.

Wotan knows that only a pure-hearted hero can win back the ring, so fathers two children, twins Siegmund and Sieglinde, with a mortal woman. In *Die Walküre*, the siblings meet as adults: she in a loveless marriage and he on the run from enemies, who turn out to be kinsmen of Hunding, Sieglinde's husband.

The pair are overcome with love and conceive a child - Siegfried - in the forest before Siegmund's showdown with Hunding. The goddess Fricka is appalled at the adultery and incest, and forbids Wotan from helping Siegmund win the battle. Grief-stricken. Wotan instructs the battle maiden, or Valkyrie, Brünnhilde, to let Siegmund lose, but she disobeys, and bears the pregnant Sieglinde. and the shards of Siegmund's sword, to safety. Wotan steps in to make Siegmund dies; he then strips Brünnhilde of her divinity and casts her into a deep sleep to be awoken by a mortal man. Her last request is to be encircled by fire so that only a brave hero – and they both know that will be the as yet unborn Siegfried.

ACT I

Sieglinde has died in childbirth and the baby Siegfried has been raised in a cave in the forest by Mime, brother of Alberich.

Mime is trying to reforge Siegmund's sword, Nothung, so that he can persuade Siegfried to kill the dragon Fafner, and claim the ring and the golden horde for himself, but fails at the task.

Siegfried – who is entirely without fear – enters pursing a bear to scare Mime. They quarrel, Mime insisting that he has done everything for Siegfried who should love him as a parent. When Siegfried presses Mime on his actual parentage, Mime tells him the story and shows him the broken sword. Siegfried orders Mime back to the forge, and leaves.

The Wanderer – Wotan in disguise – appears and challenges Mime to a game; the loser, unable to answer three questions shall forfeit his head. Mime loses but Wotan knows Mime's fate and lets him keep his head as he takes his leave.

Siegfried reforges the sword himself and with it splits Mime's anvil in two.

SYNOPSIS

ACT II

Near Fafner's lair, the Wanderer meets Alberich, from whom he wrested the ring long ago. Alberich is still determined to regain the ring, and cannot quite believe that Wotan is prepared to let fate take its course. The Wanderer wakes Fafner and suggests he give the ring to Alberich so as not to be killed by Siegfried; the dragon looks forward to his next meal and goes back to sleep..

At dawn, Mime and Siegfried enter. Siegfried drives Mime away, and then settles into a reverie as the forest murmurs and birds sing around him.

Fafner appears, and in a short skirmish is killed by a thrust of the sword to his heart, his last words a warning of Mime's duplicity. Inadvertently tasting the dragon's blood, Siegfried has this confirmed by a bird whose speech he can now understand.

Siegfried enters the cave, and Alberich and Mime appear, each imagining that they will win the spoils. As Alberich withdraws, Mime tries to drug and murder Siegfried to steal the ring; Siegfried kills Mime, and back in the forest asks the birds if they know of a companion for him. Yes, says one: follow me.

ACT III

Wotan wakes Erda, the earth-goddess, from her sleep to ask her counsel, but their exchange merely reinforces the sense of implacable fate. As Erda returns to the earth, Siegfried appears seeking the fire-encircled rock which the birds have told him about. He treats the Wanderer with contempt. In one last gesture of power, Wotan tells Siegfried that he cast the spell of fire and that the sword Nothung has shattered on his spear once before, whereupon Siegfried cuts the spear in two.

Siegfried passes through the flames to find what he thinks is an unconscious knight; removing the sleeper's armour and, seeing Brünnhilde, feels the symptoms of fear for the first time. She wakes and greets the dawn; in a long, ecstatic duet her initial insistence on a spiritual relationship give way to something much more erotic.



Wotan and *Brünnhilde* by German painter Hans Thoma (1839-1924) who sketched costumes for numerous Bayreuth production of the *Ring*.

THANK YOU TO OUR RING LEADERS!

We gratefully acknowledge the support of all the Ring Leaders, including those who wish to remain anonymous. Your generosity and passion have helped the Orchestra bring the *Ring* Cycle to life in Sydney!



Professor Ina Bornkessel-Schlesewsky & Professor Matthias Schlesewsky Supporting Noa Beinart as Erda Ian Dickson AM & Reg Holloway Supporting Simon O'Neill as Siegfried

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ABOUT THE MUSIC

RICHARD WAGNER (1813-1883)

In 1842 Wagner saw the Rhine for the first time and, 'with tears in my eyes I, a poor artist, swore eternal faith to my German fatherland'. The Rhine would soon embody 'the world's beginning and its end' in Wagner's great cycle of operas, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*; but now, it symbolized the end of several precarious and impecunious years.

After his father's death, when Richard was six months old, the family moved with his new stepfather Ludwig Geyer, an actor and playwright, from Leipzig to Dresden. The young Wagner wrote a tragedy 'like Hamlet and King Lear rolled into one', with 47 deaths on stage before interval. Only when he heard Beethoven's music for Goethe's Egmont did Wagner understand that his vision could only be realised in music as powerful as Beethoven's – and that only he could compose it.

In 1837 Wagner accepted a music directorship in Riga. Hopelessly in debt (not for the last time), he and Minna had to smuggle themselves and a Newfoundland dog into Prussian territory and onto a cargo vessel to London. A violent storm obliged the ship to take refuge in a Norwegian fjord; Wagner claims to have heard the story of the Flying Dutchman from the sailors at that time. From London they travelled to Boulogne where the popular German-Jewish composer Giacomo Meyerbeer provided Wagner with letters of introduction to influential Parisians. In 1842 he returned to Germany, and saw the Rhine.

Wagner lived in Dresden until early 1849, but his support of the republican cause in the 1848 revolution meant that he and Minna had to flee the country. Binary themes of sacred and erotic, power and renunciation, tradition and innovation emerge in his works of the 1840s and remain crucial to Wagner's output in librettos and treatises. The philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer led Wagner to approve Buddhism's teaching about the ultimately illusory nature of reality and Christianity's teaching on renunciation.

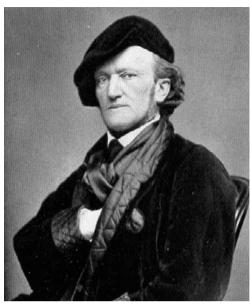


Photo of Richard Wagner in Paris, 1867.

In 1864, 18-year-old Ludwig became King of Bavaria, paid Wagner's debts and gave him a ministerial salary. The king's generosity and Wagner's cohabitation with Liszt's married daughter, Cosima, caused scandal, so they withdrew to the luxury of the villa 'Triebchen' on Lake Lucerne.

Wagner chose the Franconian town of Bayreuth for his dreamed-of festival, presenting the first full *Ring* in 1876. *Parsifal*, in which Wagner revisits the Arthurian world of *Lohengrin* and *Tristan* as a vehicle for his own take on Schopenhauer and the Christian notion of grace, appeared in 1882. His health was failing, and having settled for a time in Venice, he died there in 1883.

Wagner's 'eternal faith to my German fatherland' led to a toxic, though sadly not atypical, anti-Semitism, partly directed, in resentful ingratitude, against Mendelssohn or Meyerbeer, who had helped advance his career. Discussing *Parsifal*, however, director Stefan Herheim insists that Wagner 'actually did not serve as propaganda for Hitler and Nazi racial theory, simply because the work's core deals with a concept that in no way correlates with Fascism: pity!'

The characters

Mime a Nibelung, or dwarf, and Siegfried's auardian

Siegfried a young boy who knows no fear

The Wanderer king of the Gods, Wotan, now roams the earth in disquise

Alberich Mime's brother, and the Nibelung who first stole gold from the Rhine maidens and fashioned the Ring

Fafner a dragon, once a giant, who now guards the Nibelung hoard

Erda the Earth goddess

A woodbird

Brünnhilde the Valkyrie who, as punishment for disobeying Wotan, has been held in a magic sleep, surrounded by a ring of flames

The background

In 1848 Wagner drafted the libretto for Siegfried's Death, but, like George Lucas with his Star Wars franchise, he found he needed more back-story. So he drafted Young Siegfried in which the hero, utterly without fear, kills the dragon Fafner and wins the love of the Valkyrie Brünnhilde. Then, of course, Wagner needed to explain why Brünnhilde had disobeyed her father Wotan, the King of the Gods, (by saving Siegfried's pregnant mother) and her punishment – being cast into a magic sleep on a high mountain surrounded by flames, and why the whole complicated business had arisen when a dwarf stole some

gold from the Rhinemaidens and forged a ring which was promptly stolen and reluctantly handed over to some giants. The complete work contains, as Wagner wrote to Liszt, 'the world's beginning and its end'.

The librettos complete, Wagner wrote the music in order of performance, but only in 1876 was the resulting *Ring* Cycle performed at the purpose-built theatre in Bayreuth.

The sources

As Deryck Cooke has written, Wagner derived his material from several sources (including his own invention). Siegfried (or Sigurd), as dragon-slaying hero, appears in numerous medieval German and Norse accounts; in the German *Nibelungenlied* his parents are alive and happily ruling their own kingdom, and Brynhild is a queen of (probably) lceland whom he must 'woo' on behalf of the Burgundian king, in a bruising triathlon.

But in *biðreks saga*, German stories complied in Old Norse in the mid-13th century, Sigurd is an orphan, brought up in the woods by a smith called Mime. Mime, who isn't a dwarf, sends Sigurd into the forest, hoping that the dragon will rid him of the overbearing thug that Sigurd has become (the dragon has no hoard in this version); Sigurd kills the dragon with a flaming tree, cooks and eats it, and suddenly understands the speech of the birds who tell him to kill Mime. He does, and then goes to the castle of Brynhild who gives him her horse, Grane.



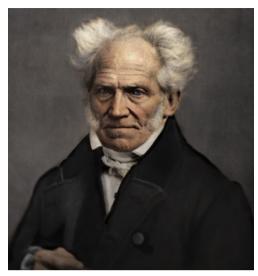
Wagner got the dwarfish smith, called Regin, the cashed-up dragon, and the sleeping Valkyrie on a rock ringed with fire from the *Poetic Edda*, a collection made in Iceland between 1150 and 1250; from the *Prose Edda* and *Volsunga saga*, written a little later in Iceland, he took the forging of the shattered sword and Siegfried's use of it to kill the dragon. In the *Prose Edda* the dragon Fafnir and Reginn (i.e. Mime) are brothers; and when Sigurd tastes the blood of the dragon, the helpful birds are identified as nuthatches.

The goddess Erda, who appears in Act III, is largely a confection of Wagner's. The Eddas refer only to Jord (Earth) who is the mother of Thor. The earth mother that rises from earth to dispense wisdom is a fusion of this idea with that of the *völva* or prophetess, who in the *Poetic Edda* recites the story of the world's creation to Odin (Wotan).

From Gesamtkunstwerk to Schopenhauer's philosophy

In the 'geology' of the *Ring* the evenly laid-down strata of the cycle are interrupted by a chasm between Acts II and III of *Siegfried*; more than a decade passed between Wagner's completion of Act II in 1857 and his beginning work on Act III, during which time he composed *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger*, and wrote several polemics that signal a significant change in musical technique, dramaturgy and aesthetic philosophy.

In 1852 Opera and Drama articulated Wagner's idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk, or 'totally integrated work of art', where text, music and scenography are equal partners. In Die Walküre Wagner almost entirely fulfils his ideal. As early as 1854, however, he began reading the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) in whose Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung (The World as Will and Idea or The World as Will and Representation), he discovered 'very, very serious truths'. Schopenhauer held that ultimate reality, what he called Will, was unitary and non-rational, and that between it and the world of phenomena are Ideas which correspond to Platonic ideals – archetypes that allow us to make sense of what we experience. The arts, said Schopenhauer, reflect this mediation,



Colourised portrait of Arthur Schopenhauer (1859) by German photographer Johann Schäfer (1822–1904). Source: Frankfurt am Main University Library/Wikimedia Commons.

through representational Ideas, between ultimate reality and the phenomenal world, except, that is, for music which 'is by no means...an image of the Ideas: but an image of the will itself.' The other arts 'speak only of the shadow, music however, of the essence.' Wagner himself put it: 'music is actually the artistic proto-image of the world itself.'

This would have far-reaching effects on Wagner, notably the increasing primacy of music in his work: the drama of *Tristan* is almost entirely enacted in the music rather than stagecraft; *Parsifal* is his longest opera but sets his shortest libretto. From *Siegfried* on, the leitmotifs, those memorable musical 'tags' (whose common names are not, incidentally, Wagner's) for people, emotions and places, cease to act only as aids to reminiscence or prediction. There is a much greater profusion of them, and as Jack Stein notes, their contrapuntal interplay 'becomes its own justification.'

Siegfried is often referred to as the 'scherzo of the *Ring*', but is more like the extended development section of a sonata-form movement. Nevertheless it is legitimate in view of a smallish cast of characters and occasional comic moments: Siegfried's first appearance with a bear in tow; something approaching a wisecrack from the dragon when warned of Siegfried's approach;

and the titter often aroused by Siegfried's awestruck realisation that the sleeping Brünnhilde 'is no man'. And despite two violent deaths there are moments of great serenity and of ecstatic pleasure.

In Siegfried, too, the deployment of the voices powerfully affects the opera's musical 'shape'. The first act and all but the final scene of the second are dominated by men's voices: tenors in Act I, and, briefly, lower voices in Act II. The woodbird at the end of Act II is the first female voice we hear, and her song points towards a world beyond the forest where we meet Erda, and finally, in a radiant dawn, Brünnhilde.

ACTI -

Mime and Siegfried

Das Rheingold and Die Walküre begin with orchestral preludes that, at first glance, represent the physical setting of the opening scene – the depths of the Rhine and a storm in a forest.

As Siegfried opens, however, we are clearly somewhere else: inside the mind of the brooding character we are shortly to see on stage. Over a motionless rumble two dyads (chords of two notes only) sound a wide interval apart. The brooding mind soon contemplates the hammering rhythms of the 'Nibelung' motif and the harmonically ambiguous (almost circular) motif of the Ring. Only now does the score climb into the treble range.

The brooder is Mime, the Nibelung smith who has fostered Siegfried. The only sword (announced by its fanfare-like trumpet motif) that is strong enough for the boy is Nothung (Needful), Siegmund's sword that shattered against Wotan's spear in *Die Walküre* - but the anxious Mime hasn't the skill to repair it, and the weapons he does make are instantly shattered by Siegfried's strength. Mime's intentions are by no means pure: he hopes to use Siegfried's fearlessness to kill the dragon Fafner (whose four-note motif growls distantly in the depths) and take control of the Nibelung hoard – and the Ring – for himself.

Mime is interrupted by the appearance of Sieafried (and a bear), the former announced by his horn-call, and many 'ho-hos' and 'ha-has' that take him to a top C in no time at all. The bear, having dutifully scared Mime, is let go, and Mime and Sieafried settle in for a session of mutual loathing and some sword shattering. Wagner's musical characterisation is simple but effective: Sieafried tends to sina in stepwise diatonic phrases (occasionally letting fly with the chordal horn-call motif) while Mime sings short (of course) phrases that are often chromatic and angular, with wide leaps and fussy grace-notes that Siegfried mimics. The dialogue hinges on Mime's insistence (laced with the 'vearning for love' motif) that Siegfried should be grateful for everything Mime has done for him: Sieafried knows from observing the forest creatures that offspring resemble their parents and that whatever Mime says he is not Siegfried's parent.

Intriguingly, Wagner quotes the 'magic sleep' music from *Die Walküre* as Mime finally tells Siegfried the full story of his parentage, and presents him with the shards of the sword, Nothung. Siegfried, sensing that he may escape this loathed creature, runs into the forest.

The Wanderer

The 'magic sleep' music creates a sense of transformation without clear harmonic goal. A similar motif now sounds – pairs of only distantly related chords played slowly and softly – as a mysterious figure in blue cloak, large hat and carrying a spear enters. The Wanderer is, of course, Wotan, seemingly resigned to his loss of power. In music of calm grandeur, offset by Mime's awkward phrases, he offers the wager that if one or other cannot answer three questions he will forfeit his head. Mime wastes the opportunity: Wotan asks the question that Mime ought to have: who will be able to reforge Nothung? Wotan lets Mime keep his head as he knows that Siegfried will have it soon enough.

The reforging of Nothung

As the Wanderer leaves, Mime is gripped by a hallucination of the dragon, in music derived from the 'Magic Fire' music from *Die Walküre*. This music will come in handy soon after, when Siegfried bowls back in – all major tonality and buoyant rhythm – as Mime tries to describe fear to him. Siegfried will learn fear, but only *after* passing through the fire.

Siegfried demands that Mime reforge Nothung, and when Mime demurs, begins to file the sword into powder which he melts in a crucible and pours into a mould. In his 'song at the forge', Siegfried sings an echo of Siegmund's invocation to the sword in *Die Walküre*, 'Nothung, Nothung! Neidliches Schwert!', and launches into something like an old-fashioned aria. Mime provides a counterpoint as he explains his plan to kill Siegfried when Fafner has been dispatched. Finally, as the sword has been tempered in water, its motif extended into glorious melody, Siegfried brings it down on the anvil, cleaving it in two, to a riot of horn-calls.

ACT II -

Alberich and the Wanderer

The second act also begins with a Nibelung brooding, this time Mime's brother Alberich, (who first stole the Rhinegold and forged the Ring) keeping vigil near Neidhöle, Fafner's cave. Below the quiet hum on the orchestra we can make out several motifs from earlier operas: the giants' motif from Das Rheingold is there, but spans the unstable interval of the augmented fourth (the so-called 'devil in music'); we hear a reminiscence of the dragon motif and, naturally, those of the Ring and the curse he placed upon it, and then a swirl followed by throbbing syncopated rhythm, which Robert Donington identifies with 'Alberich's obsessive will'.

A storm rises in Valkyrian dotted rhythms, but subsides, and as the baleful curse motif recedes, the Wanderer enters. A short statement of the Valhalla motif shows that Alberich recognises his old enemy straight away, but as the scene progresses it becomes clear that Wotan is there to witness, not to direct, the events, and that

Mime is ultimately Alberich's only rival for the Ring. To prove it, Wotan wakens Fafner, pretending that the dragon may hand it over to avoid being killed by Siegfried. Fafner doesn't emerge, but remarks that he's looking forward to the hero's arrival as he is hungry.

The Wanderer, noting that all things are subject to fate (to the Rhine motif), rides away on his storm-cloud, and Alberich hides himself in the cleft of the rock to the accompaniment of the 'curse' motif.

Mime and Siegfried

Horn-calls signal the arrival of Siegfried and Mime, with the boy hoping to be taught fear. Their exchange descends again into acrimony and Siegfried sends Mime away. Wagner's masterstroke at this point is to have Sieafried fall into introspection as he reclines under a lime (linden) tree, enjoying the forest's tranquillity, imagining his dead mother and trying to fashion a reed-pipe with which to talk to the birds. Apart from the intrinsic beauty of the scene, weaving woodwind bird-song and yearning love-motifs in limpid string textures, it separates the scene of aggression between Mime and Siegfried from the latter's impending heroic deed, and casts Siegfried in a more sympathetic light than has been the case so far.

Killing the dragon

Siegfried is heroic in killing the dragon, as the music tells us, but the dragon is perhaps less than determined save his own life, and exhibits noble wisdom in the leaving of it. Here Wagner's new approach becomes clear: the motifs that sound at this point are those of the 'curse', 'love' and Siegfried-as-hero and are presented not as a series of motifs of reminiscence one by one, but in counterpoint: a purely musical process has overtaken the previous method of using the leitmotifs.

As Fafner dies, Siegfried retrieves his sword from the monster's heart and accidentally tastes Fafner's blood. Suddenly he understands the woodbird, who, singing a version of the Rhinemaidens' song from *Das Rheingold*, tells him to secure the Ring and the Tarnhelm which will make him invisible.



Siegfried kills Fafner by English illustrator Arthur Rackham (1867–1939).

Siegfried sets off

While Siegfried enters the cave there is grimly comic scene between the Nibelung brothers who disappear as he returns, as the woodbird warns him of Mime's treachery. Siegfried understands, and when Mime reappears, Wagner's music superbly renders the duplicity between what he says and means. When Mime tries to drug Siegfried he is killed by Siegfried's sword.

Siegfried seals the cave with the dragon's body, and rests under the lime tree, again falling into reverie about his absent family. He asks the bird to find him a companion. The bird tells him of a bride, asleep in a rocky fastness and surrounded by fire. The music glows and flickers, and as Siegfried's impetuosity flares and he rushes off stage, the curtain falls.

ACT III

The Wanderer and Erda

As we might expect post-*Tristan*, Act III is much more focused on psychology than action, and this is expressed principally in the abstract process of music.

The Prelude contains some nine leitmotifs. in counterpoint, but we can hear that Erda - mother of the Valkyries - with her rising diatonic leitmotif, is about to confront Wotan. who has reverted to his authoritarian self. represented by the Spear motif. Erda's dreams 'are thought and knowledge' but in this curious scene it transpires that she has slept through Die Walküre and doesn't know of Brünnhilde's punishment. Moreover Wotan never articulates a specific question to her, and she tells him to ask the Norns, who weave the thread of fate. He comes to the conclusion that Siegfried, without fear and without aid from Wotan, has won the Ring and will be immune to Alberich's curse. Erda returns to her dreaming.

Siegfried and Wotan

Wotan waits and the music duly becomes lighter, more diatonic and rhythmically simple as Siegfried and the woodbird enter. This encounter mirrors the riddling scene with Mime in Act I, but again Wotan is less the wandering seeker of wisdom as the patriarchal figure demanding respect. Siegfried grants him only contempt, and learning that Wotan's spear was the one on which Nothung once shattered, slices it through, leaving Wotan finally powerless.

Siegfried climbs through the flames of Brünnhilde's rock, until he emerges on the summit to the sound of a long, completely unaccompanied melody for violins that makes its way through the whole compass of the instrument. We are suddenly aware of the dense, torrential nature of the music thus far (even the 'Forest Murmurs' is underpinned by unfulfilled longing, so not wholly peaceful), and we might agree with Siegfried's odd sentiment that it is a 'blessed wasteland' or 'emptiness.' In this magical calm Siegfried sees first the steed, Grane, then what at first he takes to be a very pretty knight asleep in armour that Siegfried removes. (Siegfried can't have been listening when the woodbird, and Wotan, have told him a bride called Brünnhilde).

Love and death

With his infamous cry 'Das ist kein Mann!' in Wagner's febrile music, Siegfried learns fear, but as Brünnhilde awakens to his kiss and greets the dawn, Wagner opts for radical simplicity: wind chords decorated by harp arpeggios and trilling strings.

The duet that concludes the work naturally reflects the musical manner of Tristan und Isolde, in which a long span of chromatic music constantly defers resolution as an image of erotic longing. Before the music and the drama reaches its goal, though, Brünnhilde must somewhat reluctantly accept the loss of her divinity. Insisting that her love for Sieafried is eternal and spiritual. she sings a new motif (familiar as the main theme of the Siegfried Idyll), simple and lyrical, but her resistance is finally broken. As she embraces Sieafried she has a premonition of the fall of Valhalla, and their final words are 'shining love, laughing death.' Which brings us back to Schopenhauer and his embrace of radical renunciation. It is the only thing that will save the earth, as we will see in Götterdämmerung.

Gordon Kerry © 2025



Hans Thoma's costume design for Wotan for the 1879 *Ring* Cycle.

WAGNER'S SIEGFRIED AND THE POWER OF NATURE

Wagner's *Ring* has had countless causes and motivations projected onto it – some earnestly interpreted, others invented for ruthless political purposes. But as Wagner expert and scholar Dr Peter Bassett argues, one of Wagner's deepest motivations in writing the work has been overlooked.

Siegfried, the third instalment in The Ring of the Nibelung, marks a transition from the old mythological view of humanity, dominated by the gods, to a focus on the power of nature – the world as we see and know it. Indeed, the crucial scene at the beginning of Act Three between Wotan (as the Wanderer) and Erda, whose name is the Old High German word for 'Earth', is at the crux of this transition when Wotan bequeaths the future to a child of nature: Siegfried.

It is difficult to think of any composer who has been more actively concerned with nature and the animal world than Richard Wagner. By the late 1870s, he had become a founding member of the International Society for the Prevention of the Scientific Torture of Animals, and he denounced as morally reprehensible both the study of artificially induced diseases in animals and the use of impoverished hospital patients as guinea pigs. Work on Sieafried was interrupted in 1856 (after Act Two) for the composition of Tristan und Isolde and Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, before being finished in 1871. But devotion to nature stayed with Wagner until the end of his life, as the Good Friday scene in Parsifal reminds us.

The boy Siegfried is an innocent abroad in a very dangerous and unsympathetic world. He's a teenager when we first encounter him. After Sieglinde died giving birth, he was raised by Mime, Alberich's bitter brother, who wanted to use him to recover Alberich's ring and then to kill him. Siegfried is a product of the forest and his five senses, which is why he feels a kinship with his friend the bear, the birds of the air, the fish of the streams, and even the gentle doe which he associates instinctively with his unknown mother. He has learned about love not from Mime but from observing the creatures of the forest. In response to the boy's demands to see proof of his father's death in

battle, Mime produces the shattered pieces of the sword Nothung ('Needful'). A scene between Mime and the Wanderer (Wotan) follows, in which Mime learns that the only person who can reforge Nothung is one who doesn't know fear. After the Wanderer leaves, Siegfried returns and reforges the sword, and the First Act comes to a dramatic close. Nature empowers the boy to learn much about himself and to establish a link with his longlost mother and father. We cross from the physical world to a metaphysical one when we hear the dragon and the Woodbird speaking. They speak in *Siegfried* because we are in the realm of sign and symbol, allegory and illusion.

While working on Siegfried at the time of the Franco-Prussian war, Wagner wrote the text for a satire entitled A Capitulation. based on *The Birds* by Aristophanes, first performed in Athens in 414 BC. Aristophanes' play is about two disgruntled Athenians who enlist the help of birds to establish Cloudcuckooland, a rebel utopia in the sky suspended between men and gods. One of the functions of Cloudcuckooland is to intercept communications between the gods and their worshippers on earth, and, as a result, Olympus is cut off. The gods become irrelevant to human beings, which is what happens in the story of the Ring. The Woodbird enables Siegfried to view the cosmic order in a totally different way and to ignore the gods. Thus, the voice of nature becomes a catalyst for change.

Near the cave of Fafner, the giant-turned-dragon, a desperately lonely Siegfried tries to imagine what his mother was like. The boy rests in the shade of a linden tree and the music takes on a most delicate and tender quality. We hear the womb-like sounds of the forest murmurs and the call of the Woodbird – music which had a profound effect on me as a teenager. There is good reason to

FEATURE ARTICLE

think that, for Siegfried, the Woodbird is the voice of his mother's love, warning her son of danger and leading him to Brünnhilde. In a letter to his own mother in 1846, Wagner wrote: 'Nature lovingly reminds us that we are part of her, like trees. And when I feel myself as one with nature, I long for you.'

In due course, Mime's plan to end the life of the young Siegfried results in his own death, and Siegfried sets off, following the bird to find Brünnhilde asleep on the mountain top and to begin a new life. In the sunlight on top of the mountain, Siegfried notices the horse Grane, Brünnhilde's closest connection with the world of nature. In the prologue to Götterdämmerung she will give Grane to Siegfried so that, in effect, she will remain with him on his journey through the world. But in the land of the Gibichungs, Hagen separates Grane from Siegfried which leads to Siegfried's forgetting of Brünnhilde and to his death.

When Siegfried awakens Brünnhilde, her first words are addressed not to the man before her but to the sun. But these are, in a sense, one and the same because in Norse mythology the cycles of nature were often symbolised poetically as the trials of love. Siegfried can be interpreted as a sun lord who, armed with a sunbeam, dispels the darkness. In greeting the sun Brünnhilde is greeting Siegfried himself at the start of this day of days, ushered in with a kiss. As events unfold in *Götterdämmerung*, the tragic separation and fiery reunion of the lovers mirrors the solar transit from dawn to dusk. Again, there are parallels with nature.

Eventually, Brünnhilde too embraces change; the realities of the natural world have replaced the mythic power of the gods. 'Farewell, splendour of the gods,' sings Brünnhilde. 'Let the twilight of the gods – *Götterdämmerung* – now draw near I live by the light of Siegfried's star, radiant love and laughing death.'

Read more from Dr Peter Bassett at peterbassett.com.au



Siegfried having defeated the Dragon (1889) by Hans Thoma.



Photo by Peter Brew-Bevan

SIMONE YOUNG AM conductor

Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Chief Conductor, Simone Young has previously held the posts of General Manager and Music Director of the Hamburg State Opera and Music Director of the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg, Music Director of Opera Australia, Chief Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of both the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. Her appointment as Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has recently been extended through until the end of 2029.

An acknowledged interpreter of the operas of Wagner and Strauss, she has conducted complete cycles of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Bayreuth Festival, Vienna Staatsoper, Berlin Staatsoper, Hamburg Staatsoper and, in 2026, La Scala Milan.

Simone Young has an extensive and celebrated recording catalogue. Her first performance as Chief Conductor in Sydney, featuring Mahler's Symphony No.2 Resurrection and the world premiere of William Barton's Of the Farth was released worldwide on Deutsche Grammophon, and performances of Elgar & Vaughan Williams, Das Rheingold and Gurrelieder have been filmed for Sydney Symphony On Demand. Her Hamburg recordings include the Ring Cycle, Mathis der Maler (Hindemith), Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln (Schmidt) and symphonies of Bruckner, Brahms and Mahler. She has also recorded Benjamin Britten Folksongs and songs of Richard Strauss with Steve Davislim, and songs by Wagner and Strauss with Lisa Gasteen.

Simone Young's return invitations to the great orchestras of the world next year will include the Suisse Romande, the Orchestre nationale de Lyon, West German Radio Orchestra Cologne, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France Paris, National Symphony Orchestra Washington, Los Angeles Philharmonic, the San Francisco and Montreal Symphony Orchestras, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra,

Philharmonia Orchestra, London and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Manchester. She also returns to ANAM, Melbourne to lead their orchestra in a 30th birthday celebration Gala performance.

Firmly established as one of the world's leading opera conductors, 2026 will see Simone Young return to the Berlin Staatsoper (*Lohengrin* and *Nabucco*), La Scala Milan (the *Ring* Cycle) and the completion of the Sydney Symphony's *Ring* Cycle in concert with *Götterdämmerung*.

The presentation of Sydney Symphony Orchestra's *Ring* Cycle in concert, commencing in 2023, has played to sold out audiences, standing ovations and 5-star reviews. A second, feature-length documentary film, *Knowing the Score*, showcasing Simone Young and her career was also internationally released in 2023.

In 2025 Simone Young was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Sydney. Her many accolades also include the 2024 Conductor of the year (British Opera magazine), Honorary Member (Ehrenmitglied) of the Vienna State Opera. the 2019 European Cultural Prize Vienna. a Professorship at the Musikhochschule in Hamburg, Honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Western Australia and New South Wales, Griffith University and Monash University, the Sir Bernard Heinze Award, the Goethe Institute Medal, the 2013 Helpmann Award for Best Individual Classical Music Performance and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France.

SIMON O'NEILL Siegfried

New Zealander Simon O'Neill is one of the finest heldentenors on the international stage. He has frequently performed with the Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Berlin, Hamburg Vienna and Bayerische Staatsopern, Paris Opera, Teatro alla Scala and the Bayreuth, Salzburg, Edinburgh and BBC Proms Festivals, appearing with a number of illustrious conductors including Daniel Barenboim, Sir Simon Rattle, James Levine, Riccardo Muti, Valery Gergiev, Sir Antonio Pappano, Pierre Boulez, Sir Mark Elder, Sir Colin Davis, Edo de Waart, Kent Nagano, Fabio Luisi, Sir Donald Runnicles, Sir Simon Rattle, Christian Thielemann, Jaap van Zweden, Daniel Harding, Simone Young, Andris Nelsons, Pietari Inkinen, Esa Pekka Salonen and Gustavo Dudamel.

Simon's performances as Siegmund in *Die Walküre* at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden with Pappano, Teatro alla Scala and Berlin Staatsoper with Barenboim, at the Metropolitan Opera with Runnicles in the celebrated Otto Schenk production returning with Luisi in the Lepage *Ring* Cycle and in the Götz Friedrich production at Deutsche Oper Berlin with Rattle were performed to wide critical acclaim. He was described in the international press as 'an exemplary Siegmund, terrific of voice', 'THE Wagnerian tenor of his generation' and 'a turbo-charged tenor'.

Most recently, Simon performed the title role in Tristan und Isolde at Staatsoper Hamburg under Kent Nagano and returned to the Opéra National de Paris as Loge in the new Calixto Bieito production of Das Rheingold with Heras-Casado. He also performed Mahler's Das Lied von der Erde in Lyon, Düsseldorf, Strasbourg, and Zurich. This season, he takes on the title role of Siegfried in concert with the Sydney Symphony and Simone Young, followed by performances of Beethoven's Symphony No.9. He returns to the Hangzhou Philharmonic for Siegfried in Götterdämmerung and makes his South American debut as Tristan at Teatro Municipal de São Paulo. On the concert stage. Simon tours a program of Wagner scenes and arias with Pietari Inkinen and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, performs Das Lied von der Erde in Sydney and Parma, and performs the solo tenor in Mahler's Symphony No.8 at the Reykjavik Arts Festival.

Simon made his Bayreuth Festival debut in the title role of Lohengrin in the Hans Neuenfels production with Andris Nelsons and returned as Parsifal in the Stefan Herheim production with Daniele Gatti. Other notable engagements include opening La Scala's season as Siegmund in Die Walküre with Barenboim and the Wiener Staatsoper with Welser-Möst. He returned as Siegmund in the Keith Warner Royal Opera House, Covent Garden Ring Cycle where he also performed Lohengrin, Fidelio, Stolzing in Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg and Parsifal. He debuted with the Hallé Orchestra as Siegfried in concert with Sir Mark Elder at the Edinburgh Festival and with Jaap van Zweden with the Hong Kong Philharmonic – both performances released on CD. He debuted as Der Kaiser in Die Frau ohne Schatten at the Berlin Staatsoper with Simone Young and as the Tambourmajor in Wozzeck with Levine at the Metropolitan Opera.

Simon became an Officer of New Zealand Order of Merit in the 2017 Queen's Birthday Honours, he is an alumnus and holds a Doctor of Music (Honoris Causa) from Victoria University of Wellington and is an alumnus of University of Otago, Manhattan School of Music and Juilliard Opera Center. He is a Fulbright Scholar, was the 2005 Arts Laureate of New Zealand and was a grand finalist in the 2002 Metropolitan Opera National Auditions, returning as guest artist in 2007. He also appears on the 1998 New Zealand \$1 performing arts postage stamp.



Photo by Albert Comper

MIINA-LIISA VÄRELÄ Brünnhilde

Making her debut at the 2025 Bayreuther Festspiele as Ortrud (*Lohengrin*), 'Miina-Liisa Värelä was the standout voice of this performance — her vocal power seems limitless. Her performance full of energy and contrast, and her stage presence was intensely dramatic.' – *Resmusica*.

Building a strong profile in the German dramatic repertoire, Miina-Liisa Värelä is a sought-after interpreter of Die Färberin (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), a role she performed most recently in landmark new productions at Festspielhaus Baden-Baden under Kirill Petrenko and Berliner Philharmoniker, and at Semperoper Dresden under Christian Thielemann. Now established as a leading Wagnerian, Värelä has also garnered tremendous acclaim as Isolde (*Tristan und Isolde*) with Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra under Gustavo Dudamel, and at both Glyndebourne Festival Opera and BBC Proms under Robin Ticciati.

Värelä's 2025/26 season is no less impressive. It includes her anticipated debut as Brünnhilde (Die Walküre) first in concert with Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia under Daniel Harding in Rome, before bringing the role to the stage in Tobias Kratzer's new production at Bayerische Staatsoper under Vladimir Jurowski, which will include the full Ring Cycle in the coming seasons. She also returns to Oper Frankfurt as Isolde under Thomas Guggeis, and continues her celebrated new association with Bayreuther Festspiele as Kundry (Parsifal) under Pablo Heras-Casado. In concert, she joins Orchestre de Paris and Daniel Harding as Sieglinde, and London Philharmonic Orchestra and Robin Ticciati in Sibelius' Kullervo.

Operatic triumphs of recent seasons include her debut as Leonore (*Fidelio*) with Canadian Opera Company under Johannes Debus, the title role in Ariadne auf Naxos and Ortrud (*Lohengrin*) at Gran Teatre del Liceu under Josep Pons, *Elektra* at Landestheater Linz and Die Färbering at Bayerische Staatsoper, Oper Frankfurt and at the Verbier Festival. At Finnish National Opera, where she debuted as Turandot, she recently paid tribute to Aulis Sallinen as Anna in a new production of *Ratsumies* under Hannu Lintu, and she sang her first Tosca on the stage of the Savonlinna Festival, conducted by Lorenzo Passerini.

A native of Finland, Värelä is a graduate of the esteemed Sibelius Academy and a laureate of competitions including Lappeenranta and Belvedere. She is a regular presence on the concert platform with a repertoire including works like Shostakovich, Symphony No.14, Wagner, Wesendonck Lieder and Strauss, Vier letzte Lieder, marking her as a soprano of rare artistry and formidable presence.



Photo by Illusia Photography

GERHARD SIEGEL Mime

Born in Germany, Gerhard Siegel graduated from the Leopold Mozart Conservatory in Augsburg, where he studied singing with Liselotte Becker-Egner. He was a member of the Trier and Dessau companies and was then hired in Augsburg. In 1995 he won the International Hans Gabor Belvedere Competition in Vienna.

From 1999 to 2006, he was a member of the Nuremberg company, where he sang Bacchus (*Ariadne in Naxos*), Herod (*Salome*), Mefistopheles (Busoni's *Doktor Faust*), Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*), Florestan (*Fidelio*), Laca (Jenůfa), Serguei (*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*), Walter von Stolzing (*The Master Singers of Nuremberg*), and the title roles in *Parsifal* and *Siegfried*.

He sang Max (Freischütz) at the KomischeOper Berlin, Tum Tum (Hindemith's Das Nusch-Nuschi) in Cologne. Florestan at Granada Festival, Parsifal in Kassel, Tannhäuser in Augsburg, the title role in Weill's Der Protagonist at Bregenz Festival. Max (Krenek's Jonnyspieltauf) in Cologne, the Captain (Wozzeck) at Teatro Real Madrid, Paris Opera, Metropolitan Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera and Salzburg Festival, Sellem (The Rake's Progress) at the Theater an der Wien. Chouiski (Boris Godunov) in Munich, Alwa (Lulu) at Grand Théâtre de Genève, Tristan (Tristan and Isolde) in Augsburg, Herod at Vienna Staatsoper, Zurich Opera and Verbier Festival, Midas (Danae's Love) at Salzburg Festival 2017, the Witch (Hänsel and Gretel) at Royal Opera House London and the Metropolitan Opera, the Emperor (Die Frau ohne Schatten) at Verbier Festival 2019 and Piet (Le Grand Macabre) in Dresden.

He made his debut as Mime at the New York Metropolitan Opera and Bayreuth Festival, as well as in Cologne with Jeffrey Tate at the New National Theatre in Tokyo, the Royal Opera House in London, the Mupa in Budapest and the Paris Opera.

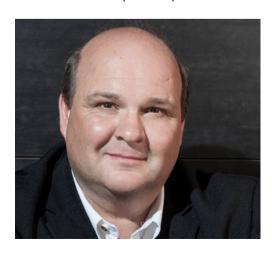
Gerhard Siegel is also a composer: he composed, among others, a stage version of Heinrich Heine's *Deutschland – ein Wintermärchen*, premiered in Trier.

A central part of his repertoire today is Mime in Das Rheingold and Siegfried. He sang it in his debuts at the Metropolitan Opera, Bayreuth Festival and the Jeffrey Tate-directed Ring at Cologne Opera, but also at London's Covent Garden and under Jun Märkel in Tokyo. Another artistic highlight was Schönberg's Gurrelieder (Klaus-Narr) on tour with Michael Gielen and SWR Symphony Orchestra as well as with the Vienna Philharmonic under Zubin Metha.

After Mime in Das Rheingold and Siegfried in Barcelona, Dresden, New York and Tokyo, Lulu in Amsterdam, Wozzeck (Captain) in Chicago and Salzburg (Festivals), Prince Schuisky in Boris Godunov in Munich, Herodes at the Vienna State Opera, Zurich Opera House, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and at the Verbier Festival under Charles Dutoit and Midas in Love of Danae at the Salzburg Festival was followed in 2017 by the Witch at the Metropolitan Opera New York.

After a break of about 19 months due to the pandemic, things started again with a new *Salome* in Budapest and the opera *Die Verkennung des Lucullus* at Stuttgart State Opera.

In the next years, Chowanschtschina, Wozzeck and Elektra at the Opera National de Paris will follow, as well as a concert tour as Loge in Das Rheingold with the Rotterdam Orchestra under Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Cardillac and Salome at the Vienna State Opera, Mahagonny and Salome at the Metropolitan Opera.



WOLFGANG KOCH Wanderer

Wolfgang Koch is one of the most important dramatic baritones in the opera world.

In the 2025/26 season, he will appear as the title role in Verdi's Falstaff at the Hamburg State Opera before taking on the role of the Wanderer in concert performances of Siegfried in Sydney under Simone Young. The Berlin State Opera will present him as Telramund in Lohengrin, a role he will also perform in the new production (Erath/Mallwitz) at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden. At the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, he will be heard as Jochanaan in Salome under Thomas Guggeis, and at the Wagner Days Budapest he will appear as Amfortas (Parsifal) under Adam Fischer.

Wolfgang Koch's repertoire encompasses the areat baritone roles of both the German and Italian traditions. At the Bavarian State Opera, he made his role debuts as Alfio and Tonio in the new production of Cavalleria rusticana and I Pagliacci, and also appeared again as the Forester (The Cunning Little Vixen) and Telramund (Lohengrin). He has sung Wotan/ Wanderer (Der Ring des Nibelungen) both at the Bayreuth Festival and in Munich under Kirill Petrenko. As Hans Sachs (Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg), he also performed at the Munich Opera Festival under Petrenko's direction. He has sung Amfortas and Klingsor in Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, and at the Salzburg Easter Festival. As Borromeo (Palestrina), he achieved great personal success at the Vienna State Opera under Christian Thielemann. He made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera in 2019 as Scarpia (Tosca). Koch has also appeared as Falstaff at both the Bavarian and Vienna State Operas. He performed Dallapiccola's II prigioniero under Kirill Petrenko with the Berlin Philharmonic.

One of his signature roles is Barak (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), which he has sung in a new production at the Vienna State Opera under Christian Thielemann and under Kirill Petrenko in Baden-Baden. He has also performed this role in Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, and at the Salzburg Festival. The Bavarian Kammersänger achieved major acclaim as Michele in Puccini's *Il trittico* at the Bavarian State Opera. At the Vienna State Opera, he portrayed the title role in a new production of Gottfried von Einem's *Dantons Tod.*

His extensive repertoire also includes the Dutchman (*Der fliegende Holländer*), Kurwenal (*Tristan und Isolde*), Telramund (*Lohengrin*), Mandryka (*Arabella*), the Count (*Capriccio*), Jochanaan (*Salome*), Pizarro (*Fidelio*), the Forester (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), Prometheus (*Die Vögel*), the title roles in *Mathis der Maler* and *Lear*, Borromeo and Morone (*Palestrina*), as well as Busoni's *Doktor Faust*.

In addition to the aforementioned houses, Wolfgang Koch has performed at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in London, the Opéra de Paris, the San Francisco Opera, the Oper Frankfurt, the Theater an der Wien and in Tokyo.

Beyond his operatic work, Wolfgang Koch is a regular guest on the world's major concert stages, performing, among others, Schönberg's *Die Jakobsleiter* with the Berlin Philharmonic under Kirill Petrenko. His artistry is documented in numerous CD and DVD releases, including *Der Ring des Nibelungen* from Hamburg (as Alberich), *Lear* (Reimann) and *Palestrina* (Pfitzner) from Frankfurt, *Palestrina*, *Doktor Faust* and *Lohengrin* from Munich, *Parsifal* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* from Salzburg, and *Parsifal* (Barenboim and Tcherniakov) from Berlin.



Photo by Michael Dürr

WARWICK FYFE Alberich

Helpmann Award-winning Australian baritone Warwick Fyfe is widely acclaimed for his powerful stage presence and vocal versatility across a diverse repertoire.

In 2023, he returned to Opera Australia as Amonasro (Aida) and Alberich (Der Ring des Nibelungen), and to Melbourne Opera as Wotan/The Wanderer in their landmark Ring Cycle. His 2024 engagements included Scarpia (Tosca) for Opera Australia, Vodnik (Rusalka) for West Australian Opera, and Schoenberg's Gurrelieder with the Sydney Symphony. In 2025, he made his role début as Hans Sachs (Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg) for Melbourne Opera, and performs Vodnik (Rusalka) for Opera Australia, Ferrando (Il trovatore) for West Australian Opera and Alberich (Siegfried) in concert with the Sydney Symphony.

Other notable appearances include Beckmesser (Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg), Sancho Panza (Don Quichotte), Geronio (Il turco in Italia), Barone di Trombonok (Il viaggio a Reims), and Klingsor (Parsifal) for Opera Australia; Alberich (Das Rheingold) for the Japan Philharmonic and Tianjin Symphony; Athanaël (Thaïs) and Amonasro for Finnish National Opera; Bartolo (Il barbiere di Siviglia) for Victorian Opera; Peter (Hansel and Gretel) and Wotan (Die Walküre) in Singapore; Bottom (A Midsummer Night's Dream) for the Adelaide Festival; and Pizarro (Fidelio) in Melbourne and Perth.

A long-standing principal artist with Opera Australia, Warwick's past roles include the title roles in *Rigoletto*, *Falstaff* and *Der fliegende Holländer*, as well as Mandryka (*Arabella*), the Four Villains (*The Tales of Hoffmann*), Dr Schön (*Lulu*), Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Wolfram (*Tannhäuser*), Papageno (*The Magic Flute*), Germont (*La traviata*), Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), and Pizarro.

His extensive concert repertoire spans work with all major Australian symphony orchestras, as well as the Warsaw Symphony, Singapore Symphony, Orchestra of the Music Makers (Singapore), Orchestra Wellington and Auckland Philharmonia. Highlights include Bartók's Bluebeard's Castle, Brahms' Ein deutsches Requiem, Orff's Carmina Burana, Handel's Messiah, Bach's St Matthew Passion and Mass in B Minor, Mahler's Symphony No.8, Beethoven's Symphony No.9, and Mozart's Requiem.

Warwick received a Helpmann Award in 2013 for his portrayal of Alberich in the Melbourne *Ring* Cycle and was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in 2015 to study Wagnerian technique in Germany, the UK and the USA.



Photo by Jeff Busby

TEDDY TAHU RHODES Fafner

Teddy Tahu Rhodes has performed with the opera companies of San Francisco, Austin, Washington, Philadelphia, Dallas, Cincinnati, Houston, the Metropolitan Opera, Hamburg Staatsoper, Bayerische Staatsoper - Munich, Theatre du Châtelet - Paris, Welsh National Opera and Scottish Opera.

Past seasons include Escamillo (Carmen, Hambura, Paris, Munich, Bilbao, Metropolitan Opera, OA), Don Giovanni (OA, WA Opera), Emille de Bec (South Pacific, OA Australian Tour) and The King and I (OA Australian Tour). Teddy debuted the roles of Méphistophélès (Faust, SOSA and WA Opera) and Sweenev Todd (Victorian Opera), a concert tour From Broadway to La Scala (Australia and NZ) and Scarpia (Tosca, WA Opera, Opera NZ). More recently Teddy has performed in William Tell and I Capuleti e i Montecchi (Victorian Opera), Titurel (Parsifal, Victorian Opera), Lord Sidney (Il Viaggio a Reims, OA) and Enrico VIII (Anna Bolena, OA).

Most recently Teddy performed Theseus (A Midsummer Night's Dream, Adelaide Festival), Nourabad (Les Pêcheurs de Perles, Victorian Opera), Festival of Outback Opera (Opera Qld), he toured Australia with Josh Piterman and Guy Noble in Concert, was head judge for the Lexus Song Quest in New Zealand, toured with flautist Jane Rutter, Jack Rance (La Fanciulla del West, Freeze Frame Opera WA), Don Magnifico (La Cenerentola, Launceston, Victorian Opera), a series of Christmas Concerts in WA (Freeze Frame Opera), Opera by the Lake, Opera in the Quarry, Mozart Requiem, Capriccio (Victorian Opera) an Australian concert tour with Guy Noble, The Piolot (The Little Prince, Freeze Frame Opera), St Matthew Passion with Perth Symphonic Chorus, Elijah with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and Rambaldo (La Rondine, Victorian Opera).

Awards include an ARIA Award, two Helpmann Awards, a *Limelight* Award, a Green Room Award plus a MO Award. Solo discography includes *Mozart Arias*, *The Voice, Vagabond, The Bach Arias* and *Mozart Reauiem*.

In 2024 Teddy was appointed to the University of Adelaide's Elder Conservatorium of Music where he plays a leading role in its Classical Voice department as a teacher and mentor.



SAMANTHA CLARKE Waldvogel

Australian/British soprano Samantha Clarke was the winner of the 2019 Guildhall Gold Medal and prize winner in the 2019 Grange International Festival Singing Competition. Samantha studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, as a Sir John Fisher Foundation and Independent Opera Scholar, under the tutelage of Mary Plazas. She is a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama Opera School as a Baroness de Turckheim Scholar, Help Musicians, Tait Memorial and Countess of Munster Trust Scholar and studied with Yvonne Kenny.

In addition to the 2019 Guildhall Gold Medal, Samantha is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Leverhulme Royal Northern College of Music Award, the Dame Eva Turner Award and the Michael and Joyce Kennedy Award for the singing of Strauss.

In the 2025/26 season Samantha returns to Opera Australia as Euridice (Orfeo ed Euridice), and is Artist in Residence with the West Australian Opera where she will make role debuts as Juliette (Roméo et Juliette) and Tatyana (Eugene Onegin). Her concert engagements include The Creation with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra/Eivind Aadland and on tour with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment/Václav Luks, Waldvogel in concert performances of Siegfried with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra/Simone Young, Mozart's Mass in C Minor with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra/Nicholas Carter and Messiah with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra/Sofi Jeannin, Later in 2026, she performs Mozart's Requiem, Mendelssohn's Elijah and Woglinde (Götterdämmerung) in concert with Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Her operatic roles include: Violetta (La traviata), Fiordiligi (Cosi fan tutte), Helena (A Midsummer Night's Dream), Donna Elvira (Don Giovanni), Pamina (Die Zauberflöte), Countess (Le Nozze di Figaro), Anne Trulove (The Rake's Progress), The Governess (The Turn of the Screw) and the title role in Theodora.

Recent and future engagements include Countess (Le nozze di Figaro) at Garsinaton. Fiordiliai (Cosi fan tutte) with English National Opera, the Seiji Ozawa Music Academy in Japan, Grange Festival and Opera Oueensland, Cleopatra (Giulio Cesare) and Theodora for Pinchgut Opera, Woglinde (Das Rheingold), Marzelline (Fidelio) and Mendelssohn's (Midsummer Night's Dream) with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Simone Young, Violetta (La traviata) with The Grange Festival, Opera Australia and West Australian Opera, a US tour with the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra, Messiah and War Requiem with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Beethoven's Symphony No.9 in Tasmania and Britten's Les Illuminations with Western Australia Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Edward Gardner.

Samantha features on the Resonus label's recording *Samuel Barber: The Complete Songs* with accompanist Dylan Perez.



Photo by Benjmain Ealovega

NOA BEINART controlto

With a voice of arresting depth and rare expressive power, Noa Beinart is rapidly carving out a distinct place on international stages. A true contralto, she moves seamlessly between eras and styles, from the intricate lyricism of the Baroque to the towering emotional and vocal demands of Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen.

In the 2025/26 season, Noa makes her role debut as Handel's Orlando in a new production at the Opéra national de Lorraine and Opéra de Caen, conducted by Christophe Rousset. She will also make her debut at the Mozartwoche in Salzburg as Dritte Dame in Die Zauberflöte, directed by Rolando Villazón, and returns to the Opéra national de Paris as the Third Nymph in Rusalka. At the Bayerische Staatsoper, she appears as First Maid in Elektra and as Schwertleite in a new Die Walküre under Vladimir Jurowski and Tobias Kratzer. Concert highlights include her return to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra as Erda in Siegfried with Simone Young, and performances of Mahler's Resurrection Symphony with Zubin Mehta and the Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale. She also joins Les Talens Lyriques and Christophe Rousset for a recording of Porpora's Ifigenia in Aulide.

In the 2024/25 season, Noa returned to the Wiener Staatsoper as Erda in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, to Opernhaus Zürich as Amastre in *Serse* and to the Bayerische Staatsoper as Hannah in *The Passenger*. She made her Royal Danish Opera debut in the title role of Vivaldi's *Griselda*. In concert, she sang Mahler's Symphony No.8 with the Wiener Symphoniker under Philippe Jordan, the *Alto Rhapsody* with Eva Ollikainen, and Mahler's Symphony No.3 with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Simone Young.

Recent operatic highlights include her Royal Opera House, Covent Garden debut as 1st Maid in Christof Loy's new Elektra under Sir Antonio Pappano, and returns to Opernhaus Zürich (Die Walküre), Bayerische Staatsoper (Gianni Schicchi, Elektra, The Passenger), Wiener Staatsoper (Daphne), and the Bayreuth Festival (Götterdämmerung). She made her debut with the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin as the First Norn in Dmitri Tcherniakov's production of Götterdämmerung conducted by Christian Thielemann, and has appeared at the Opéra National de Paris (Die Walküre) and the Salzburg Festival (Elektra, Die Zauberflöte).

Noa Beinart was born in Tel Aviv and between 2020–2023 was a member of the ensemble at the Wiener Staatsoper, where she sang a wide range of roles including Erda (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*), Maddalena (*Rigoletto*), Auntie (*Peter Grimes*), and Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*). She previously trained in the Opera Studio of the Bayerische Staatsoper and is a graduate of the Hanns Eisler Hochschule für Musik in Berlin.



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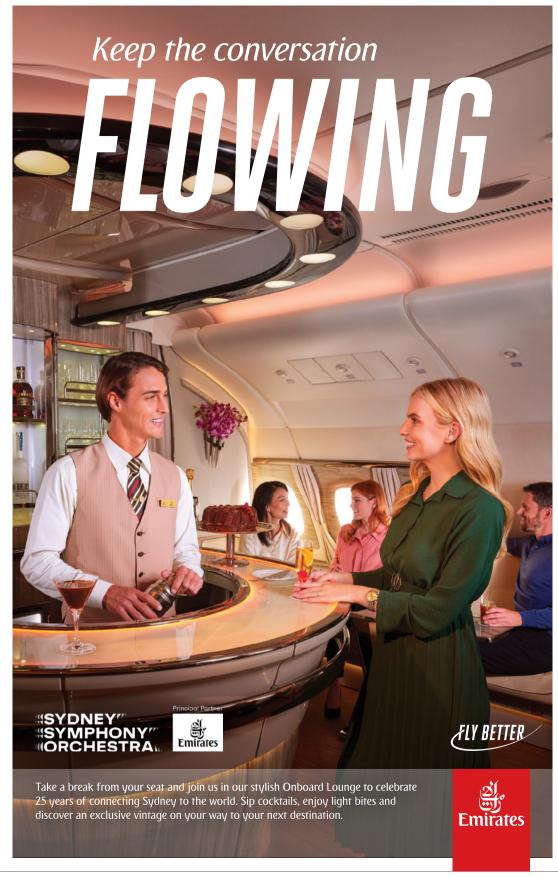


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