

Listening Guide

Wagner: *Die Walküre* (The Valkyrie), Act III, opening and Finale

DATE OF WORK: 1856; first performed 1870, Munich

GENRE: Music drama; second in cycle of 4 (*The Ring of the Nibelung*)

CHARACTERS: Wotan, father of the gods (bass-baritone)
Valkyries, the 9 daughters of Wotan
 Brünhilde, favorite daughter (soprano), Ortlinde (soprano)
 Gerhilde (soprano), Helmwig (soprano)
 Schwertleite (alto), Waltraute (alto), Siegrune (alto)
 Rossweisse (alto), Grimmerde (alto)

ORCHESTRA: Huge orchestra including:
Strings (32 violins, 12 violas, 12 cellos, 8 double basses, 6 harps)
Woodwinds (2 piccolos, 3 flutes, 3 oboes, 1 English horn,
 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons)
Brass (8 French horns, 3 trumpets, 1 bass trumpet, 3 tenor trombones,
 1 bass trombone, 1 contrabass trombone, 4 Wagner tubas,
 1 contrabass tuba)
Percussion (timpani, cymbals, triangle, tenor drum, glockenspiel, gong)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Orchestra sets excited mood and image of flying warriors.
Dotted figure gives way to famous “Ride” theme, heard in minor and major throughout scene.
Focus on huge brass sound; alternation of high and low instruments.
Chilling battle cries from Valkyries.
Continuous fabric of orchestral music and singing.

Act III, Scene 1: Ride of the Valkyries

Orchestral prelude, marked Lively (Lebhaft), in 9/8 meter.
Rushing string figure alternates with fast wavering in woodwinds, then insistent dotted figure [in brackets] begins in horns and low strings:



Swirling string and woodwind lines, accompanied by dotted figure.

Famous "Ride" motive, heard first in minor key in horns:



"Ride" motive, now heard in major key in trumpets:



4-note dotted motive exchanged between low and high brass instruments,
heard above swirling idea.

"Ride" motive heard *fortissimo*, as curtain opens.

(Four Valkyries, in full armor, have settled on the highest peak above a cave.)

TEXT

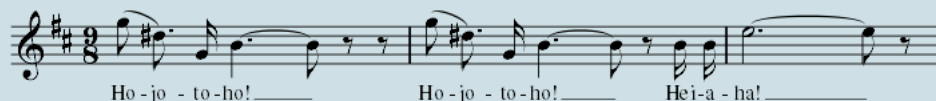
TRANSLATION

GERHILDE (*calling from the highest peak*)

Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Heiaha! Heiaha!
Helmwige! Hier! Hierher mit dem Ross!

Hoyotoho! Hoyotoho! Heiaha! Heiaha!
Helmwige, here! Bring your horse here!

Gerhilde's disjunct battle cry, which is echoed by her sisters:



HELMWIGE (*answering in the distance*)

Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Heiaha!

Hoyotoho! Hoyotoho! Heiaha!

"Ride" motive heard in low brass, first in minor, then major; ideas exchanged between brass instruments.

Climax with timpani and cymbals on following cry, then *descrescendo*.

GERHILDE, WALTRAUTE, SCHWERTLEITE
(*calling out to Br nnhilde, who approaches*)

Heiaha! Heiaha!

Heiaha! Heiaha!

ORTLINDE

Zu Ortlinde's Stute stell' deinen Hengst,
Mit meiner Grauen gras't gern dein Brauner!

Put your stallion next to Ortlinde's mare:
Your bay will like grazing with my grey.

WALTRAUTE

Wer h ngt dir im Sattel?

Who hangs from your saddle?

HELMWIGE

Sintolt, der Hegeling!

Sintolt the Hegeling!

SCHWERTLEITE

F hr deinen Braunen fort von der Grauen:

Take your bay away from my grey.

Ortlindes M res tr gt Wittig, den Irming!

Ortlinde's mare carries Wittig the Irming.

GERHILDE

Als Feinde nur sah ich Sintolt und Wittig!

I only saw them as enemies, Sintolt and Wittig.

ORTLINDE

Heiaha! Die Stute st sst mir der Hengst!

Heiaha! The mare is being shoved by the stallion!

GERHILDE (laughing)

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Der Recken Zwist entzweit noch die Rosse!

The warriors' dispute upsets even the steeds!

HELMWIGE

Ruhig, Brauner! Brich nicht den Frieden.

Be still, my bay! Do not disturb the peace!

WALTRAUTE

Hoioho! Hoioho! Siegrune, hier!

Hoyoho! Hoyoho! Siegrune, here!

Wo s umst du so lang?

Where were you dallying so long?

"Ride" motive heard as Siegrune arrives.

SIEGRUNE

Arbeit gab's!

There was work to be done!

Sind die and'ren schon da?

Are the others already here?

SCHWERTLEITE, WALTRAUTE

Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Heiaha!

Hoyotoho! Hoyotoho! Heiaha!

GERHILDE

Heiaha!

Heiaha!

GRIMGERDE, ROSSWEISSE (appear illuminated by flash of lighting)

Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Heiaha!

Hoyotoho! Hoyotoho! Heiaha!

WALTRAUTE

Grimgerd' und Rossweisse!

Grimgerde and Rossweisse!

GERHILDE

Sie reiten zu zwei.

They are riding abreast.

Ride motive heard fortissimo, at change to major key, in full orchestra with cymbals and triangle.

HELMWIGE, ORTLINDE, SIEGRUNE

Gegr sst, ihr Reisigel! Rossweiss'

Greetings, riders! Rossweisse

und Grimgerde!

and Grimgerde!

ROSSWEISSE, GRIMGERD

Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Heiaha!

Hoyotoho! Hoyotoho! Heiaha!

THE OTHER 6 VALKYRIES

Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Heiaha! Heiaha!

Hoyotoho! Hoyotoho! Heiaha! Heiaha!

Gradual decrescendo in orchestra.

GERHILDE

In 'Wald mit den Rossen zu Rast und Weid'! Into the woods with the steeds to rest and graze.

ORTLINDE

F hret die M hren fern von einander, Place the mares far from each other,
Bis unsrer Helden Hass sich gelegt! Until our heroes' hatred is abated!

VALKYRIES (laughing)

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

HELMWIGE

Der Helden Grimm b sste schon die Graue! The heroes' anger made even the grey suffer!

VALKYRIES (laughing)

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

ROSSWEISSE, GRIMGERDE

Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Hoyotoho! Hoyotoho!

THE OTHER 6 VALKYRIES

Wilkommen! Willkommen! Welcome! Welcome!

(Shorter recording ends here.)

Act III, closing of Scene 3: Wotan and Br nnhilde

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Sense of endless melody and continuous orchestral sound.
Richly chromatic harmony for heightened emotional effect.
Use of 4 recurring themes (leitmotifs) magic fire, magic sleep,
slumber, Siegfried

(Wotan clasps Br nnhilde's head in his hands. He kisses her long on the eyes. She sinks back with closed eyes, unconscious in his arms. He gently bears her to a low mossy mound . . . and lays her upon it. He looks upon her and closes her helmet, his eyes rest on the form of the sleeper, which he covers with the great shield of the Valkyrie. He turns slowly away, then again turns around with a sorrowful look.)

(He strides with solemn decision to the middle of the stage and directs the point of his spear toward a larger rock).

A forceful trombone passage precedes Wotan's invocation of Loge:



Wotan's evocation of Loge, god of fire:



Lo - ge, h r!

Lau - sche hie-her!

WOTAN

Loge, h r'! Lausche hieher!	Loge, listen! Harken here!
Wie zuerst ich dich fand, als feurige Gluth,	As I found you first, a fiery blaze,
wie dan einst du mir schwandest,	as once you vanished from me,
als schweifende Lohe;	a random fire;
wie ich dich band, bann' ich dich heut'!	as I allied with you, so today I conjure you!
Herauf, wabernde Lohe,	Arise, magic flame,
umlod're mir feurig den Fels!	girdle the rock with fire for me!

(He strikes the rock thrice with his spear)

Loge! Loge! Hieher!	Loge! Loge! Come here!
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(A flash of flames issue from the rock, which swell to an ever-brightening fiery glow. Bright shooting flames surround Wotan. With his spear he directs the sea of fire to encircle the rock; it presently spreads toward the background, where it encloses the mountain in flames.)

"Magic fire" music heard in full orchestra:

"Magic sleep" motive evoked in descending chromatic line in woodwinds:

"Slumber" motive, heard in woodwinds:

WOTAN (singing text to Siegfried motive)

Wer meines Speeres Spitze f rchtet,	Whosoever fears the tip of my spear
durchreite das Feuer nie!	shall never pass through the fire!

(He stretches out the spear as a spell. He gazes sorrowfully on Br nnhilde. Slowly he turns to depart. He turns his head again and looks back. He disappears through the fire.)

Brass in fortissimo announcement of "Siegfried" motive; long orchestral closing: