

[Met Performance] CID:266010

Das Rheingold {111} Metropolitan Opera House: 09/22/1981.

(Debuts: Eva Randová, Birgit Finnilä, Heinz Zednik, Eleanor Bergquist
Review)

Metropolitan Opera House
September 22, 1981

DAS RHEINGOLD {111}

Wagner-Wagner

Wotan.....Franz Ferdinand Nentwig
Fricka.....Eva Randová [Debut]
Alberich.....Franz Mazura
Loge.....Ragnar Ulfung
Erda.....Birgit Finnilä [Debut]
Fasolt.....John Macurdy
Fafner.....Aage Haugland
Freia.....Ellen Shade
Froh.....Gerd Brenneis
Donner.....Vern Shinall
Mime.....Heinz Zednik [Debut]
Woglinde.....Eleanor Bergquist [Debut]
Wellgunde.....**Brenda Boozer**
Flosshilde.....Isola Jones

Conductor.....Erich Leinsdorf

Director.....Herbert Von Karajan
Staged by.....Wolfgang Weber
Set designer.....Günther Schneider-Siemssen
Costume designer.....George Wakhevitch
Lighting designer.....Gil Wechsler

Das Rheingold received four performances this season.

Review of Bill Zakariasen in the Daily News

Voices, Sets give 'Rheingold' a glow

The Metropolitan Opera gave the first installment of its "mini Ring cycle -- Das Rheingold" -- Tuesday night. "Siegfried" follows this evening, but in the meantime its predecessor "Die Walküre" and successor "Götterdämmerung" will have to wait on ice until the Gospel According to Richard Wagner can be properly fulfilled.

With the exception of tenor Ragnar Ulfung as Loge, the large "Rheingold" cast was completely new since the "Ring" was last performed at the Met during the 1974-75 season. So was the conductor in a way, since Erich Leinsdorf last led "Rheingold" here in 1962, when the production was different. Leinsdorf is, of course, a practiced hand in Wagner's music, and his conducting had admirable clarity and pace. His conception of "Rheingold" stressed the symphonic more than the descriptive, but I'm not quite sure it works best that way. The orchestra, except for the noticeably asthmatic horn contingent, was in good form.

The cast was able, with the new Nibelungs stealing the show. Franz Mazura was as fine an Alberich as I've

witnessed - his potent baritone, venomous, yet human, command of text and his gnarled appearance rounded out a complete characterization. As his partner in crime Mime, debuting tenor Heinz Zednik sniveled and scrounged wonderfully, without neglecting vocal niceties,

Franz Ferdinand Nentwig's baritone is lighter than what one usually hears in Wotan, but his lean sound seems to fit the "Ring's" first chapter very well, and he captured the god's nobility as well as his fatal flaws. Debuting mezzo Eva Randova wisely realized that the "Rheingold" Fricka isn't the shrewish termagant she becomes in "Walküre." She gave Mrs. Wotan a pleasingly sultry character and smooth, colorfully shaded vocalism.

Aage Haugland and John Macurdy were excellent as the giants Fafner and Fasolt, though I wish they were made to look taller. Debuting contralto Birgit Fiinnila sang the ominous prophecy of that green-faced torso Erda with properly sepulchral tone. The rest of the excellent lineup, all in fine vocal and dramatic estate, included Eleanor Bergquist (another debutante), Brenda Boozer and Isola Jones as the Rheinmaidens, Ellen Shade as Freia, Gerd Brenneis as Froh, and Vern Shinall as Donner. Ulfung's Loge was potently vocalized and acted in a properly wily manner, though I prefer a true heldentenor in the part.

Gunther Schneider-Siemmsen's monumental sets remain among the most impressive in the Met's warehouse, and Wolfgang Weber's staging breaks considerably fewer "Ring" traditions than some current ones we've seen.

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