

## NEW PRODUCTION

Tape transcript of a discussion between Director F. and Conductor K. July 12, 2007.

Recently discovered and saved by Hedahedo

The following should not be misinterpreted as a satirical attempt. It is a disguised Warning by the Musician General, that tampering with material of art may be hazardous to your taste buds, both physical and mental. All names and places mentioned, however, are purely fictitious, with the exception of one that remains unchanged forever.

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“I think it’s high time that we’re finally getting our acts together,” F. cautioned impatiently. “After all, opening night of ‘Siegfried’ is only about two weeks away!”

“Well, you’ve got it easy,” the conductor complained. “Although I must admit, it was a genial move to start the Ring cycle with the second act of ‘Siegfried’ instead of with that boring scene at the bottom of the Rhine. I mean, these days the waters are so muddy, anyway. It’s just, I’m not entirely convinced that the dragon should be emerging from the main entry of the Food and Drug Administration. But then my job is really so much more difficult than yours...”

The director was not in a mood to listen to K.’s moping again and interrupted: “So we have agreement then that Walhalla will be shown as a control tower? What with Wotan as the captain and Loge as a chief air traffic controller, this is simply a logical measure. But I’m still not convinced the Rhine Daughters should appear as flight attendants. Somehow that seems to be such a blatant truism.”

“Yeah, yeah, for you it’s easy...” the conductor began again meekly.

“See, there has to be a credible arc between the control tower and Hunding’s temporary hide-away in his mountain hellhole in Eastern Afghanistan,” director F. explained sternly. “After all, as an al Qaida symbol... there: you can transpose Hunding’s return to an F-flat minor staccato. With hysterical piccolos! That’s easy, and it has never been done before! I honestly don’t know why you always say it’s easy for me when there are so many complex...”

“Hey, since you demanded to eliminate the horns in the Death Annunciation scene, I’m kind of left out in the rain with finding a proper orchestral texture. The contra-bassoon and snare drum alone just won’t do. It was so much easier in the old days, before the last barrier finally fell when Mertens in Munich decided to have a go at the score as well, not only the text, in bringing The Ring to a meaningful today’s setting.”

Surprisingly, F. kept quiet. “If you think about it,” K. continued, “always to associate the tuba with the dragon and the high flutes with fire, it was really boring in the old days. But the responsible task remains, not to mess too much with Wagner’s original intentions, while innovating the message for contemporary drama lovers.” K. was on a roll now.

“Just look at *Götterdämmerung*: they depicted the Gibichungenhalle in front of a nuclear power plant in Zurich, in Buenos Aires it was Wall Street, and in Detroit they used real black Cadillacs for the funeral scene. But the Gibichungen as capitalist bankers are so entirely passé! It was only when Furtmangler finally dared to replace the greed motif with those British Airways flower girls’ song that we saw a real break-through on the music side. And just see how fast the audience adapted to new dimensions, new thinking, away from the old symbol-laden leit-motivic cross references. What I really meant to say,” K. concluded, “is that my responsibility for the score is much greater than your simple textual fidelity. Who cares these days if Hagen is really Hunding’s son, and not as we always used to believe...”

“Why must you always try to belittle my responsibility?” F. questioned, irritated. “As we all know today, Wagner intended his texts to be pliable. ‘Next year we’ll do everything differently!’ There we go! It follows that my responsibility to recreate *The Ring* for today’s consumers is far more extensive than your simple re-instrumentation or maybe transposing Wotan’s farewell to a progression from b-minor to a real blazing Darmstädter C-Major. I wish you’d finally acknowledge that fact!”

“OK, OK,” K. appeased, “you can have your control tower. Just let me have the radar blips in time for my oboist to practice that transition from staccato to legato when the passenger bridge is positioned at the end of Rhinegold!”

“Sure thing, my assistant is working on the blip symbolism as we speak. So let’s move on then. We’ve already had the Valkyries as paratroopers in Bayreuth – what if we let them hijack Wotan’s plane instead? Not original enough? I see...” F. was clearly insulted.

“Look, I’ve got to work on the music for the Nibelheim scene. Although to show Nibelheim as a crowded passenger terminal is a fine allegory, your constant loudspeaker announcements are still disturbing my musicians. I need to find stronger, more stringent instrumentation.”

“You do what you’ve got to do!” F. remarked. “As for me, I’ve finally found the solution for the three horns: they will be trading the wood of the World Ash Tree as futures at the Chicago Stock exchange. Now we can finally move on!”

“The forest murmurs have always seemed overly romantic to me,” the conductor announced excitedly. “By giving these bars to the three alphorns in unison, it will sound way more farsighted...”

“I think we can safely leave the designation ‘*Bühnenfestspiel*’ for the cycle,” F. said. “After all Wagner knew what he was doing.”