

Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Sir Andrew Davis, Interim Artistic Director

Thursday, January 31, 2019 at 8:00pm

Saturday, February 2, 2019 at 8:00pm

Sir Andrew Davis, conductor

Lise Davidsen, soprano (Sieglinde)

Simon O'Neill, tenor (Siegmund)

Brindley Sherratt, bass (Hunding)

Richard Wagner

“The Ride of the Valkyries” from Act III of *Die Walküre*

Alban Berg

Three Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 6 (1929 revision)

I. Präludium

II. Reigen

III. Marsch

Intermission

Richard Wagner

Act I of *Die Walküre*

Scene I

Scene II

Scene III

The appearances of Sir Andrew Davis this season are made possible by Hans and Susan Brenninkmeyer.

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ABOUT THE WORKS

Richard Wagner

“The Ride of the Valkyries” from Act III of *Die Walküre*

5
min

Born: Leipzig, Germany, May 22, 1813

Died: Venice, Italy, February 13, 1883

Composed: *Die Walküre*, 1851–1856; concert version of “The Ride of the Valkyries”, 1863

“The Ride of the Valkyries” music from the beginning of Act III of *Die Walküre* (*The Valkyrie*), is arguably the most recognizable of Wagner’s music from his massive four-opera cycle, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelungs*), and perhaps from his entire output. Its presence in popular culture has endured; most memorably, it was parodied in the 1957 animated cartoon, *What’s Opera, Doc?*, featuring Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd, and used to dramatic effect in Francis Ford Coppola’s Vietnam War epic, *Apocalypse Now* (1979), not to mention many other references to it in commercials and television shows to this day.

During Wagner’s lifetime, “The Ride” was a hit with audiences, even before he completed the composition of his cycle. In 1857, with the entire text complete and having written the music to the first two operas, *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, and the first two acts of *Siegfried*, he put the project aside temporarily, to compose *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, but also to earn money by conducting. On December 26, 1862, he led a concert in Vienna, in which he publicly introduced, for the first time, orchestral excerpts from *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, including “The Ride of the Valkyries”. The Viennese audience responded enthusiastically, as did those in Prague, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Pest, Karlsruhe, Breslau, and Munich, to whom Wagner also introduced those extracts.

Such concertizing of excerpts was a conscious promotional strategy by Wagner to drum up support for his *Ring* project—and it worked. In 1864, he resumed work on *Siegfried* and later completed *Götterdämmerung*, eventually staging the entire cycle in 1876 at a festival in Bayreuth, Germany.

For orchestral performances of “The Ride”, Wagner himself supplied this synopsis of the stage action, to be imagined as one listened to the music (translation from the original German by Thomas S. Grey):

The scene represents the peak of a rocky mountainside. Dark strips of cloud scud by the cliffs, as if chased by the storm, illuminated now and then by flashes of lightning. A Valkyrie on horseback comes into view; across her saddle hangs a slain warrior. More Valkyries appear on the scene in similar manner, greeting one another from near and far with wild, exuberant cries. At last they are all assembled on the peak of this place which the sagas later named Brünnhilde’s rock; they put their flying steeds to pasture and take mutual stock of their quarry. This quarry consists of the corpses of heroes slain in battle, those chosen by the Valkyries upon the field of battle to be led, afterward, to Valhalla, where Wotan, the father of battles, will awaken them to new life and where the Valkyries, as wish-maidens, will wait upon them most cordially.

Program note by Hannah Chan-Hartley

Alban Berg

Three Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 6 (1929 revision)

20
min

Born: Vienna, Austria, February 9, 1885

Died: Vienna, Austria, December 24, 1935

Composed: 1913–1915, revised 1929

When the 19-year-old Alban Berg first went to study with fellow Austrian and leading expressionist composer Arnold Schoenberg in 1904, he was little more than an enthusiastic amateur composer of songs. After providing him with formal training in harmony, counterpoint, and music theory, Schoenberg instructed and guided Berg's development in writing instrumental music. Not surprisingly, the student absorbed his teacher's creative preoccupations of the period between 1907 and 1911. These included exploring the late-Romantic tradition of music by Wagner, Brahms, and Mahler, and taking them to their logical modern development: forms dense with motives and layers of thematic material; a harmonic language ever increasing in chromaticism and tonal ambiguity; and the concept of "developing variation," through which the logic and coherence of a musical work depended on all its aspects being derived from a single basic idea.

Berg's *Three Pieces for Orchestra* (*Präludium* [Prelude], *Reigen* [Round], and *Marsch* [March]) is considered to be his most complex instrumental work, perhaps even the most complex of all his works. In it, he sought to synthesize the aesthetic principles he learned from Schoenberg and those of another of his musical idols, Mahler. Among the work's Mahlerian traits are its instrumentation (a very large orchestra including expanded wind and brass sections, two harps and celesta, and a large battery of percussion), his use of *ländler* and march idioms, and direct references to Mahler's works—the *Präludium* is modelled after the opening movement of

the Ninth Symphony (Berg had attended its first performance in Vienna in June 1912). Additional Mahlerian references include the *Reigen*, which is modelled after the *Scherzo* of Mahler's Seventh, and the hammer blows at the end of the *Marsch*, which allude to the finale of Mahler's Sixth Symphony.

Schoenberg's influence prevails in Berg's dense network of themes and motifs that recur and are constantly developed throughout the work's three movements, much of them derived from a single three-note cell that emerges to form the opening theme of the first two movements and starts the third.

The complexity of this thematic networking is such that it defies straightforward analysis in a program note. In more general terms, the listener should seek to experience the individual movements as one dramatic arc, with an inexorable progress to the climax—the hammer blows and the final fanfares at the end of the *Marsch*. As one hears, or senses, the thematic material being presented incrementally, with each successive movement accumulating many new themes, this end-weighted directionality becomes more and more evident, so that the end of the third movement feels something like a collapse, as if under the sheer weight of it all. Listen too for a "motto theme," first introduced by the horns near the beginning of the *Präludium*; it will be emphatically recalled toward the end of the *Marsch*, underscoring our sense of a large-scale unity to the work.

Program note by Hannah Chan-Hartley

ABOUT THE WORKS

Richard Wagner Act I of *Die Walküre*

60
min

Composed: 1851–1856

Die Walküre is the second part of Richard Wagner’s colossal four-opera cycle, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Some time has passed since the gods entered their stronghold, Valhalla, at the end of *Das Rheingold*. Act I of *Die Walküre* brings the drama back “down to earth,” with the love story of Siegmund and Sieglinde. They are (spoiler alert!) the parents-to-be of Siegfried, the fearless hero who will eventually obtain the ring of power and, following the self-sacrifice of his love, the Valkyrie Brünnhilde, pay with his life to return it to the Rhine and bring about the end of the gods.

Like all great epics, the *Ring* cycle, the story of which Wagner fashioned himself from Scandinavian and medieval German sources, is rich and complex in meaning. At the heart of the work, however, as notable Wagner writer Barry Millington has observed, “lies the conflict between love and power: humankind’s progress towards self-knowledge and compassionate understanding of others is constantly threatened by the desire for power and by the compromises we are forced to negotiate in our daily lives.” One central topic Wagner explores is the notion of free, unconditional love—that it cannot be subjugated to the law or the institution of marriage as the mere establishment and perpetuation of property rights. The marriages depicted in

Die Walküre—between the gods Wotan and Fricka in Act II, and between Siegmund and Sieglinde in Act I—are loveless. That Siegmund and Sieglinde are brother and sister who fall in love with one another may be a challenging concept to accept, but their relationship serves to make Wagner’s point that only beyond the legal constraints of marriage can true love be found.

A concert performance (i.e., without sets and minimal stage action) of a Wagner opera like the one you are experiencing tonight allows you to focus on one of the most significant contributions Wagner made to the operatic art form—that is, the elevated role of the orchestra in the voicing of the overall drama. Not merely accompaniment, the orchestral part is, rather, a network of “leitmotifs,” musical ideas with distinct and consistent associations to a character, object, idea, or emotion. As the drama progresses, these motifs reappear, modified in various contexts, thereby accumulating additional layers of meaning and thus creating a psychological dimension to the words being sung and the action seen. Leitmotifs may occur as foreshadowing (or orchestral “anticipation”), or in the context of reminiscence or recollection.

The following description summarizes the plot of Act I and points to its key musical motifs:

Scene I: The orchestral prelude depicts a violent thunderstorm. Siegmund, pursued by foes and on the point of exhaustion, takes shelter in Hunding’s hut. Sieglinde, Hunding’s wife, tends to him. They begin to forge a deep, largely unspoken, emotional bond; its development, as they gaze at each other with growing interest and emotion, is evident in four musical motifs of questioning, searching quality, three of which are scored for the cello section or solo cello, and one for the violins.

Scene II : Hunding arrives, to a sharply rhythmic motif—introduced by Wagner tubas—that becomes associated with him and dominates this scene musically. Siegmund tells Sieglinde and Hunding the sad story of his early life. (At the mention of his father “Wolfe”, we briefly hear the Valhalla theme from *Das Rheingold*, played by the horns, a musical clue that Siegmund’s father is in fact, Wotan, the chief of the gods.)

Siegmund then tells of his unsuccessful attempt to save a young woman forced into a loveless marriage. At the end, he is unable to give his name; the lower strings, bassoons, and horns, however, play a darkly noble theme, the so-called “Wälsung” motif, a foreshadowing of his discovery of his true origins in the next scene. Hunding now realizes that it was Siegmund who killed Hunding’s kinsmen to save the young woman, and that he is harbouring an enemy in his house. He grants Siegmund shelter for the night, but says that, come morning, Siegmund will have to fight for his life.

Scene III: Hunding has departed for bed and Sieglinde goes with him, leaving Siegmund to ponder on acquiring a sword about which his father once told him. A flare from the fire briefly illuminates the tree at the centre of the hut, in which the hilt of the sword can be clearly seen—the moment is marked by the sword

motif played by solo trumpet. Sieglinde returns to Siegmund, and shares with him the story of her wedding to Hunding, the festivities of which were interrupted by the arrival of a stranger (note the appearance of the Valhalla theme), who thrust into the tree’s trunk a sword that has since remained there, unmoved. Siegmund ardently embraces Sieglinde, proclaiming that both sword and wife will be his.

The main door of the hut suddenly flies open, revealing a beautiful spring night. Siegmund sings of spring and love as brother and sister, to which Sieglinde replies that he is the spring for which she has so longed. They come to realize that they are the long-lost Wälsung siblings, children of Wotan; Sieglinde gives her brother the name of Siegmund. Thus empowered, Siegmund sings “Heiligster Minne höchste Noth” (Highest need of holiest love), a dramatic thematic recalling of the dwarf Alberich’s renunciation of love in *Das Rheingold*, but now as if a total reversal of that dark statement. Siegmund pulls the sword out of the tree and he and Sieglinde embrace rapturously.

Program note by Hannah Chan-Hartley

THE ARTISTS



Sir Andrew Davis **conductor**

Sir Andrew Davis, Interim Artistic Director, served as TSO Music Director from 1975 to 1988, when he was named TSO Conductor Laureate.

Sir Andrew Davis is the Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Chief Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Maestro Davis's career spans over 40 years during which he has been the musical and artistic leader at several of the world's most distinguished opera and symphonic institutions, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra (conductor laureate; chief conductor, 1991–2004), Glyndebourne Festival Opera (music director, 1988–2000), and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (Conductor Laureate; Music Director, 1975–1988), where he has also been named Interim Artistic Director from 2018 to 2020. He also holds the honorary title of Conductor Emeritus from the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. One of today's most recognized and acclaimed conductors, Sir Andrew has conducted virtually all of the world's major orchestras, opera companies, and festivals.

Born in 1944 in Hertfordshire, England, Maestro Davis studied at King's College, Cambridge, where he was an organ scholar before taking up conducting. His wide-ranging repertoire encompasses the Baroque to contemporary, and spans the symphonic, operatic, and choral worlds. A vast and award-winning discography documents Sir Andrew's artistry, with recent CDs including the works of Berlioz, Elgar, Grainger, Delius, Ives, Holst, Handel, and York Bowen. The recording of Handel's *Messiah* (with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir) was nominated for a 2018 GRAMMY® for Best Choral Performance, and the York Bowen recording was nominated for a 2012 GRAMMY® for Best Orchestral Performance. Maestro Davis currently records exclusively for Chandos Records.

In 1992, Maestro Davis was made a Commander of the British Empire, and in 1999, he was designated a Knight Bachelor in the New Year Honours List.



Lise Davidsen **soprano**

These performances mark Lise Davidsen's TSO début.

Rarely has a young singer made such an enormous impact on the classical music industry as Lise Davidsen. A superb talent, the Norwegian soprano shot to prominence in summer 2015 when she was crowned winner of both the Operalia and the Queen Sonja competitions.

In May 2018, Davidsen signed an exclusive recording contract with Decca Classics, with her début album slated for release in spring 2019. The 2018/19 season sees Davidsen making her hugely anticipated Bayreuth debut as Elisabeth in a new production of *Tannhäuser* conducted by Valery Gergiev. The role is also a vehicle for her returns to Opernhaus Zürich and Bayerische Staatsoper. Other highlights include her début as Liza in *Queen of Spades* at Oper Stuttgart and a company début with Royal Opera House in their *Ring* cycle. On the concert platform, she makes a highly anticipated return to the BBC Proms with Verdi's *Requiem* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Andrés Orozco Estrada, as well appearing at the Edinburgh International Festival with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Vasily Petrenko, and a program of Strauss songs.

Further performances this season include "Vier letzte Lieder" with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, the Stavanger Orchestra, and the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra; an open-air concert with Oslo Philharmonic; her début as Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Sir Andrew Davis, and with the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra and Edo de Waart; "Wesendonck Lieder" and "Rückert-Lieder" with the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra; and solo recitals with James Baillieu at Opernhaus Zürich and Schubertiada Vilabertran.



Simon O'Neill **tenor**

These performances mark Simon O'Neill's TSO début.

Simon O'Neill is a Fulbright Scholar and became Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the 2017 Queen's Birthday Honours list. Described as the "Wagnerian tenor of his generation," Simon O'Neill has performed at the Metropolitan Opera (Levine, Luisi), Teatro alla Scala Milan and Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin (Barenboim), Wiener Staatsoper (Thielemann), Deutsche Oper Berlin (Runnicles), Bayerische Staatsoper (Petrenko), Hamburgische Staatsoper (Nagano), and Salzburg Festival (Muti); as Lohengrin and Parsifal with the Bayreuth Festival; and as Parsifal, Siegmund, Lohengrin, Florestan, and Soltzing at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

Recent concert highlights include: Florestan in Rome (Pappano); title role of *Siegfried* in Hong Kong (van Zweden); *Glagolitic Mass* in Prague (Inkinen) and Berlin (Rattle); Erik in *Der fliegende Holländer* at the Ravinia Festival (Conlon); *Gurrelieder*, *Fidelio*, and Mahler 8 at the BBC Proms; *Gurrelieder* (Runnicles), *Die Walküre* (Davis), Mahler 8 (Harding), and the title role

THE ARTISTS

in *Siegfried* (Elder) at the Edinburgh Festival; *Das Lied von der Erde* with the London Symphony Orchestra (Rattle); and Siegmund with the Berlin Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, and Dallas Symphony Orchestras. A wide discography includes his award-winning solo album *Father and Son, Wagner Scenes and Arias* (EMI), and his first lieder recording on Decca recently released.

In 2018/19 he returns to the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin (Kaiser in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Siegmund, and Florestan), Wiener Staatsoper and Bayerische Staatsoper (Parsifal), Leipzig Opera (Siegmund), and Deutsche Oper (Calaf in *Turandot*, and Tannhäuser).

Future seasons include his début appearances at the Glyndebourne Festival and Santa Fe Opera, Florestan in San Francisco, and his first staged Siegfried in the new Herheim *Ring* for Deutsche Oper Berlin.



Brindley Sherratt

bass

These performances mark Brindley Sherratt's TSO début.

Born in Lancashire, bass Brindley Sherratt studied at the Royal Academy of Music, of which he is now a Fellow and Visiting Professor.

Highlights in his 2018/19 season include Fafner in the *Ring* cycle and Claggart in a new production of *Billy Budd* at Covent Garden; Judge Turpin in a new production of *Sweeney Todd* at the Opernhaus Zurich, and Sarastro in a new production of *Die Zauberflöte* at the Glyndebourne Festival. He also sings Hunding in concert performances of *Die Walküre* with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Sir Andrew Davis, and with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and Omer Meir Wellber.

Notable career highlights have included Sarastro at the Vienna State Opera, the Netherlands Opera, and Covent Garden; Claggart at the Aldeburgh and Glyndebourne Festivals, the BBC Proms, and the Teatro Real in Madrid, and in New York at the Brooklyn Academy of Music; Ochs in *Der Rosenkavalier* for the Glyndebourne Festival and the Welsh National Opera; Arkel in *Pelléas et Mélisande* for the Oper Frankfurt and the Opernhaus Zurich; Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence; Doctor Wozzeck at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Geronte de Revoir in *Manon Lescaut* for the Metropolitan Opera.

In demand on the concert platform, he works regularly with the world's leading orchestras and conductors including the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House with Pappano; the Philharmonia with Sir Andrew Davis; the Hallé Orchestra with Elder; the Mahler Chamber Orchestra with Harding; the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra with Bicket; the Monteverdi Choir with Gardiner; the Scottish Chamber Orchestra with Nézet-Séguin, and the Orchestre des Champs-Élysées and Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen with Langrée.