

TWILIGHT: GODS TEXT AND TRANSLATION

SYNOPSIS

PROLOGUE

Erda, Mother Earth, introduces us to the story of a golden ring that gives eternal power to whoever possesses it. For generations, gods, giants, and dwarves have fought for possession of the ring, and many have died in their power-hungry pursuit. Brünnhilde, Erda's daughter with the chief god Wotan, is the one destined to bring about the end of this struggle – although at the beginning of this story, she is simply a woman in love with the hero, Siegfried. As a token of his love, Siegfried gives Brünnhilde the ring, unaware of its corrupting influence.

SCENE 1: Waltraute's Story

The ring was made from gold stolen from the depths of the river. The chief god Wotan, who desires omniscient power above everything else, is so desperate to possess the ring, he has created Siegfried as a warrior to claim it. But disillusioned from generations of violence, Wotan now believes all his plans are vain illusion. He wastes away on his throne, awaiting his death and the destruction of his empire. Brünnhilde's sister Waltraute reports to her sister on the sad state of their father.

SCENE 2: Generations of Hatred

Wotan's chief rival is Alberich, a small-minded man obsessed with claiming the ring for himself. Like Wotan, he too has fathered a son to serve as his warrior in the battle for the ring: the bitter, loveless Hagen. As Hagen sleeps, his father comes to him in dreams to ensure his son stays the course.

SCENE 3: Siegfried's Death

The only hope for humanity is for the ring to be restored to nature: back in the river, where it was first stolen. The Rheinmaidens, the three sisters of the river who were meant to protect the gold, appear to Siegfried as a



premonition of his death. Hagen stabs Siegfried in the back, and he sings a dying hymn of love to the true hero of this story: Brünnhilde.

SCENE 4: Siegfried's Funeral March

SCENE 5: Brünnhilde's Immolation

Brünnhilde claims the ring from Siegfried's corpse. She mounts her horse and prepares to ride into Siegfried's funeral pyre, an act that precipitates the return of the ring to the Rheinmaidens and the fire to incinerate her father Wotan's palace. The gods and the corrupt world they have created are burned to the ground, with the hope that a new, better world will arise.

What else happens in Wagner's full opera? Visit the TWILIGHT: GODS page at <https://michiganopera.org/season-schedule/twilight-gods/> to hear Marsha Music's re-telling of the tale.

TEXT AND TRANSLATION

Poetic narration by Marsha Music

Sung text translated from the German by Yuval Sharon

PROLOGUE

I am Erda, Mother of Earth

An oracle – a queen - for what it's worth

I know past and future 'cause I'm clairvoyant

I'm primordial, mystical – a little flamboyant

On the banks of the river's flow

The enchanted Rhinemaidens live below

the straits - or some say Le D'etroit

(Forgive me if I sound bourgeois)

Deep down near those misting waves
The Rhinemaidens live in mossy caves
They tread the waters, awake or sleep
And a magic hoard of gold they keep

Down in the marshlands and lagoons
They guard the gold in peace - but soon
A loveless man comes along to steal
And that's when everything got real

For the hoard was stolen and a ring was made
And so the Rhinemaidens were betrayed
Though the ring was imbued with eternal power,
All who wrongly hold it will be devoured

I'm a real live goddess, a stone matriarch
Come with me now and let's embark
Upon this tale of love and fire
Of greed and thievery and ire

A story that you'll hear them sing
The timeless fable of The Ring

*

This is a real soap opera and very compelling
There's a method to this madness I'm storytelling
Of gods and mortals in their pain and glory
So let's get to this crazy story

I have three daughters called the Norns
They sit weaving Time, all nights and morns
My Norn girls sit weaving wisdom and fate

The future of the world woven in their plaits

So with their hands they are braiding hope
The whole world's destiny in strands of rope
But the day did come, Time's fabric was rent
Their seeing of the future was suddenly spent

The future's gone, and Eternity
Is no more a sure possibility
And only light could overcome
this crepuscule, this darkened dawn

A grim, apocalyptic time
It's here that our great tale unwinds

*

Brünnhilde, friends, is our story's grand dame
And Wotan is her father's name
He's God of all the land and sea
Creator of all Eternity

Brünnhilde's mine too, one of my other nine
called Valkyries – yes, they all are mine
And they all live in the palace Valhalla
Where dead warriors are lauded for honor and valor

She's strong and smart beyond her years
With a warrior's spirit and very few fears
But she has a heart that feels for others
I should know this, because I'm her mother

Now Brünnhilde is his favorite and yes, mine too

She's a truth-tellin' sister and she's tried and true
Now Wotan has a wife – no, he's not all mine
I've been his side goddess for a very long time

He's the King of the gods and he throws his weight
It's power that is always on his plate
He built a hall of the gods but the cost was too great
He had to find gold to help pay the freight

It's Wotan's palace but it also reeks
Because corruption is thick the foundation is weak
For it's power that means everything to him
But to our daughter it's love that wins

So with this conflict, they fell out
He banished her, to a faraway rock
Surrounded by a big ring of fire
Asleep, and waiting for the proper squire

For the only one from far or near
Who could cross that fire without fear
And step inside that ring of flames
Brave enough to get in the game

Strong and brave, and yes, get this -
Awaken Brünnhilde with a kiss
One day he came, his name Siegfried
And he stepped inside the molten ring

And when he pierced that fiery veil
Was in that moment that love prevailed
But he had to leave, he could not linger
And slipped a ring upon her finger
His kisses stirred her loving heart

She wakens, and our story starts

SCENE 1: Waltraute's Story

This is not so easy to condense
But let's one more time, try to commence

The gold was stolen, then stolen again
First by Alberich, a diminutive man
But when Alberich stole it, he had announced
In order to keep it, love he renounced

Then Wotan used the gold like it was almighty dollar
To pay for a brand-new palace - Valhalla
It was paid to the builder, Fafner the Giant
But their deal fell through, they were noncompliant

Now Wotan's enraged and so he burns
He's totally obsessed with the ring's return
He decides he'll produce his very own hero.
His morality in this is just about zero.

He father's twins then makes his new kin
Fall in love with each other, all wrapped in sin
It's like having a twisted mirror view
Only loving those in life who look just like you

They have a son, who's only purpose for existence
Is to get the ring for Wotan – oh what persistence
Now I **bold** Wotan – like I **always** portend
The rule of the Gods is coming to an end!

But he grew his own hero, that incestuous king
Yes, Siegfried was born, just to get him that ring

Sometimes generations are really trapped in
wickedness inherited from way back when

Now Siegfried, didn't seem to care thereof
That the ring is cursed, 'til it's back where it belongs
He heads for Brunhilde in a state of bliss
And Brunhilde wakes up with Siegfried's kiss

Then he gives my daughter the magic ring
She should return it to the Rhinemaidens, do the right thing
Her sister Waltraute runs in and cries
"Our father is dying right before our eyes!

He's laying 'round waiting for his own demise
The ring is cursed, he's come to realize"
But Brunhilde refuses to change her mind
"No, I'm keeping it, Sister, the ring is just fine!"

Yes, my daughter Waltraute, she looks agape -
"But our father Wotan is in very BAD shape!"

WALTRAUTE

Our father summoned us
To heed his bidding,
His grave command:
"Pile up the wood in a pyre!"
The noble clan
Came as he called us,
The sovereign sat
High on his throne.
At his side
In fear and trembling
We gathered;

Surrounding Wotan's hall,
His heroes' battalion!

There he sits,
Speaks no word,
Enthroned in silence,
Stone-cold scowl;
The spear in splinters
Tight in his fist.
He's stopped eating,
Wasting away.
Awe-struck and speechless,
The gods look on like statues.
Both his raven spies
Sent out searching;
If they return
And bring the news he desires,
Then one last time
A peaceful smile
Lights up the face of the god!

All our sisters sank,
Kneeling down, desperate.
Numb, father was deaf to our pleading.
We shouted in vain,
Gripped by a nameless fear.
I couldn't help
Weeping in sorrow;
His glance then grew calm;
He remembered, Brünnhilde, you!
Deeply he sighed,
Closed his eyes then,
And as if dreaming,
Murmured these words:
"She must restore what's stolen:
Send back the ring to its riverbed.

Then the curse shall pass;
The world and I'd be saved!"

SCENE 2: Generations of Hatred

So Alberich, remember back?
from whom the Ring was first be-jacked?
Now Alberich he wants a son
But long ago he renounced all love

So he figures out how to keep it real
And makes a straight up "business" deal
A barter that cannot be beat
With a, shall I say..."lady of the street"

So of this loveless union, Hagen's born.
and from his birth was vengeance sworn
He carries all of the ancestral hate
Born of his father's wicked DNA

For so many times, in blood relations
Hatred runs through generations
So full of rage this man-child be
He grew up with the constant dream

To take the ring and bring it back
to father, who has felt the lack
of power, with the lack of ring
Give it back and it will bring

Dominion, force and might you see
and rule for all eternity

He wants the ring for his selfish dreams
To give to his father and all that means

So Hagen now, he plots to take
The ring from Siegfried, and thus make
the world before **him**, take a bow
To be in control and this is how

His father, Alberich comes in a dream
To make sure Hagen's still on his team.

ALBERICH

Are you sleeping, my son?
You sleep and shun the one
Abandoned by all sleep?

HAGEN

I hear you, wicked father!
Why do you come in dreams to haunt me?

ALBERICH

Remember the strength
That you were born with,
If you've the courage
That your mother gave you at birth!

HAGEN

If courage came from her,
I'll stay always ungrateful
That she gave in to your lust.
Too old much too soon,
I hate the youthful;
Never at peace!

ALBERICH

Hagen, my son!
Hate all the happy!
Your unhappy,
Suff'ring father
Needs your love just that way!
If you're clever,
Strong and bold,
All of our enemies
Won't stand a chance:
They'll soon be destroyed by our hate.
He stole the ring from my hand,
Wotan, that treacherous burglar,
He now has been conquered
By his own hero;
To Siegfried he lost
All power and might;
With his clan of gods and heroes
He waits in fear for destruction.
So I fear him not:
All of them must be destroyed!
Are you sleeping, my son?

HAGEN

And who shall be heir
To all their might?

ALBERICH

Me...and you!
The world shall be ours.
If I can trust
My faithful boy,
If it be fury we share.
Wotan's spear
Was shattered by Siegfried:

When Fafner, the dragon,
Was slayed at his hand,
He plundered the ring as his prize.
Power and might
Passed as his bounty,
God and dwarves
All bow to his rule.
But that most fearless hero
Is safe from my curse;
He knows nothing
About the ring;
He makes no use
Of its power.
Laughter and loving fill his days,
Throwing away all his life.
We are the ones to bring his destruction!
Are you sleeping, my son?

HAGEN

I do as you ask me:
Siegfried is mine.

ALBERICH

The golden ring,
That ring – that's all that matters!
Brünnhilde loves Siegfried
And now holds the ring;
If she should tell
Him to return it,
If the river maidens,
Whose love I renounced,
Should ever get back the ring,
We've lost it; gone is our gold,
Not a chance to win it again.
Tenacious hatred
I taught you, Hagen,

So you could claim revenge:
My ring regained,
To Siegfried and Wotan's despair!
Swear to me, Hagen, my son!

HAGEN
The ring will be mine –
Leave me in peace!

ALBERICH
Swear to me, Hagen, my heir!

HAGEN
I need no oath;
Silence your suff'ring!

ALBERICH
Stay true, Hagen, my son!
Faithful hero! Stay true!
Stay true! True!

SCENE 3: Siegfried's Death

So let's go back to the river where this all began,
The Rheinmaidens' gold stolen, then stolen again
This is Siegfried's last chance to give back the ring
But of course, you know, he doesn't listen to a thing

His demise was foretold by his own hard head
I knew it would happen; he might end up dead

RHEINMAIDENS
Weialala leia,
Wallala leialala.
Miss Sunlight,

Shine upon the hero
Who will give us back our gold!
Then once again,
When it is returned,
We shall enjoy its shining splendor!
Rhinégold,
Radiant gold!
How joyously you'll shine then,
Brighter still in water!

WOGLINDE
That must be his horn!

WELLGUNDE
He's not the one.

FLOSSHILDE
He thinks he's all that!

(The three Rheinmaidens see Siegfried.)

Farewell! Siegfried!
You'll die today;
And your ring goes back to Brünnhild;
It's she who rescues the world!
Not you! Not you! Not you!

(They turn away and exit.)

RHEINMAIDENS
Weialala leia,
Wallala leialala...

SIEGFRIED
A woman as the hero?

Not the story I was taught!
“A man is born strong and hard,
The woman so much softer.”
A girl who knows no fear?
That must be a fairy tale!
What if
Life could be truly fair?
Our myths would show the world
Equality –
Picture that!

RHEINMAIDENS

La, la!

(Siegfried is stabbed by Hagen and falls to the ground.)

SIEGFRIED

Brünnhilde!
Holiest bride!
Awake! End your slumber!
Who forced you
Into your sleep?
What fear made him
Plunge you so deep?
Your groom has come
To kiss you awake;
He frees you – again,
Breaking your bondage:
Rejoice in Brünnhilde’s love!
Oh, see her eyes now,
Open forever!
Oh, feel her breathing,
Waves of warm wind!
Sweetest surrender!
Holiest terror!
Brünnhild’ welcomes me home!

SCENE 4: Funeral March

So Siegfried is dead?? Siegfried is dead!!
Brünnhilde takes the ring, and let it be said
She now understood her father's late desire
To be rid of the curse through the heat of fire

Most say this story just makes no sense
But I'm here to tell you - in the present tense
That we *all* have had our own taste of this
That fire hot madness of just a kiss

And we can see today so much disarray and strife
Killing and conflict as a way of life
And the darkness and plague that's upon our days
and the violence that rules and the chaos that reigns

There are warring souls and so much arrogance
Conflict and killing and great pestilence
To pandemic and plague, the world has succumbed
The end of days - it *now* has come

Jealousy, envy and skies fire red
And discarding and lying and defiling the bed
And courting then ghosting and boldfaced lies
And bragging and boasting, and making hearts cry

And always there are those who dwell
Inside their own fiery, burning hell
They cope with circumstances dire
Living in their own ring of fire

Waiting for their sweet release
That they may be restored some peace
My remarkable daughter stepped up to let go
To evil powers she just said, "No!"

Brünnhilde saw through the lies and greed
The narcissism and deceitful bad seeds
She turned her back on the power game
She said yes to love, and loved without shame

Brünnhilde was a seeker of love and truth
A super empath, she saw right through
That gaslit gibberish, she was being duped
Those tricks and games played on her too

The gods of greed and hatred now must fall
The end of those gods will free us all
To rise from the ashes a Phoenix must burn
Unlock all the many lessons to learn

So she ignites the flame on her father's pyre
Come on baby, light that fire

SCENE 5: Immolation

Build his pyre
Like a strong grove,
The riverbank now
A pile.
Blazing bright,
Light up the flame
That will ring 'round his form:

A hero here
Returns to the earth.
With my horse back at my side,
We shall join him there in the fire!
For to share the greatest glory
With him is the last desire
Of my soul.
Obey my last command!

How did this come to be?
O gods, look down on us,
Crying mercy.
Why don't you see
All my torment and pain?
Look down on the fruit of your crimes!

I see your ravens
Savagely circling:
Let them return with the message
You fear and yet you crave:
"Rest now, rest now, you god."

Fly home, you ravens!
Tell your lord the story
Of my last battle cry!
'Round Brünnhilde's mountain
Make your flight.
Where you see fire,
Conjure Loge to Walhall!
For the gods' destruction
Brings a new day.
So I throw the flame
That topples Walhall's wall!

Grane! Let's fly!
One final ride!

Can't you tell, old friend,
The path I have chosen!
Our hero shining, lying in flames,
Siegfried, my shield and my sword.

Rejoice in our union, bray with elation!
Joyous ablaze, and laughing in embers!
And there is a fire burning deep in my soul,
Rising brightly, spreading all through my heart,
My love embracing, embraced by his love,
The holiest blessing: forever as one!

Heiajoho! Grane! Bring us together!
Siegfried! Siegfried!
See! Love now lights up the sky!

EPILOGUE

Brünnhilde rides off into the death valley
On a trusty stallion - like Mustang Sally
The Rhinemaids grab the ring of gold
Returned it to the waters, deep and cold

The river overflows, the sky turns a red hue
And soon, my friends, Hagen's dead, too
The fire reached Valhalla's walls
Engulfed the gods, Wotan and all

So here's the lesson, as we speak
Although our heroine may seem weak
Just lying on a rock in a ring of fire

Waiting for her love - who'd become a liar

But stillness sometimes hides the steel
Of gathering strength, of quiet zeal
Of rest before a major fight
Of prayer before a grueling night

And here today are hallowed halls
That must come down, 'tis time to fall
Constructed of a filthy sod
of hate and greed, those lesser gods

Tis time to see them *all* be gone
Their twilights given way to dawn
And generations bound and trussed
Be loosed and freed and lifted thus

The twilight of old gods is soon
The time of *Götterdämmerung*