

Richard Wagner (1813–1883)

Born in Leipzig during the chaotic final years of the Napoleonic wars. Grew up in a loving environment and had a good education. His step father was part Jewish and this may account for his anti-Jewish views.



Career

He began his composing career with a series of instrumental and orchestral pieces including a Symphony, but very soon got into the Theatrical world and Opera through his brother. He was a “bit of a lad “ in his younger days and this pattern continued throughout his life. He shamelessly lived off other people and accumulated enormous debts which he never repaid. He was an ardent Nationalist and took part in a number of insurrections. He wrote in his diary “I am the most German of beings – I am the German spirit”

The Flying Dutchman

This is the legend of a ghost Captain who is condemned to sail until Judgement Day and the only way he can be released is through the love of a faithful woman. Dalan a sea Captain and his crew fall asleep and are captured by the Flying Dutchman. Both boats head for Darlands Port and the **Crew sing happily at being safely back home**

Tannhauser

Music sets the scene of "**Venusburg**" a mythical grotto in which Tanhauser is kept captive by the love of Venus. He tires of Venus who lets him go back to his Castle. His lover Elizabeth and the noblemen welcome him back with a **Parade**. He eventually tires of Elizabeth and makes his way back to Venus. Elizabeth dies and he notices the procession which is bearing her corpse led by **Pilgrims**

Parsifal

Based on an epic poem about the Arthurian knight PERCIVAL and his quest for the holy grail. Parsifal wanders the kingdom of Klingsor a wicked Magician who is trying to steal the Grail but Parsifal kills him and saves the day.

Music prelude to Act 1

Lohengrin

Prelude to act one

A story of the Holy Grail, accusations of murder, mysterious Knights coming to the rescue of an innocent Maiden as her Champion. A battle between good and evil. Good winning of course and the hero Lohengrin sailing away in a boat drawn by a swan.

The Ring Cycle

- ♪ Anna Russell has an “explanation” for the whole of the Ring cycle – this is in four parts on YouTube
- ♪ You might get the gist of it from this extract about the Gotterdamerung



Anna Russell on the Gotterdamerung

- ♪ Anna was “The Queen of Musical Parody”. Her most celebrated routines included a send-up of Gilbert and Sullivan’s most famous operettas and a wickedly funny 30-minute synopsis of Wagner’s *Ring* cycle.
- ♪ She gained a cult following and gave sell-out concerts at the Royal Albert Hall and Carnegie Hall



The Ring of the Nibelungen

The 4 Operas are based on Norse Sagas. The Nibelungen is the title of the Dwarf ALBERICH. The "Ring Cycle" took 26 years to complete. The 4 operas are

**The Rhinegold The Valkyrie
Siegfried Twilight of the Gods**

Although these are individual operas, to understand the story, attendance at all four operas was the intention and expectation of the Composer. The 4 Operas together take 15 hours of listening

The Rhinegold

I have picked two pieces from this opera
**Journey down to Nibelheim and
Visions of Valhalla**

Siegfried

I have chosen two pieces from this opera
**Siegfried's Idyll for small orchestra and
Siegfried's Funeral March**

This is a very complicated opera and I
don't propose to go into it as it will take
too long. All I intend doing is giving you
Siegfried's "tune"

Twilight of the Gods

I have chosen 3 pieces from this opera
Siegfried's idyll (signature tune) his
funeral march and the **Finale**. This opera
Closes the "Ring Cycle" and everybody
including the Gods burn to death!

Lohengrin (again)

Finally I could not leave Wagner without playing this “little number” just to remind those who have heard it before but perhaps in

MORE FORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES