

“Ride of the Valkyries” from *Die Walküre* (The Valkyrie) (1851-1856)  
Richard Wagner (1813 – 1883)

Wagner drew his inspiration for his vast tetralogy, “The Ring of the Nibelungs,” from Norse mythology; a complete performance lasts some 17 hours. The overall plot concerns the struggle for a ring, fashioned by the evil dwarf Alberich from some gold that he stole from the Rhine-maidens; for he who holds the ring controls the world. As comedienne Anna Russell hilariously puts it: “This is the gimmick!” Part II of the tetralogy, “Die Walküre,” concerns the incestuous love between Siegmund and his sister Sieglinde (both children of Wotan, chief of the gods), and how this immoral act shall be punished. Wotan’s earlier alliance with Erda, the earth goddess, had produced nine daughters, of whom his favorite is Brünnhilde. He raised his daughters to be Valkyries, warrior maidens who gather the souls of fallen heroes to form an army against Alberich. Act III opens with this famous “Ride,” during which, with cries of “Hoyotoho! Heiaha!”, the Valkyries are depicted as they transport the slain warriors to Valhalla, home of the gods.

© Ted Wilks, 2011