

IMMORTAL PERFORMANCES



RESTORATION 2012

THE DREAM RING RESTORATION

The original release of the Dream Ring on Guild Historical began in 2002 and was completed in 2003. It was largely greeted with considerable enthusiasm, though a few critics expressed their disapprovals of such fusions. It did meet with a warm reception by well-known music lovers, including Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation and Rork Music of San Francisco. Through the invaluable help of Bill Newsom and Lisa Delan, the Gettys financed the re-mastering of the Dream Ring and its CD release on our own label.

The remastering has, in some instances, drawn on new sources, but, for the most part, the work done on the four performances, using newly developed restoration techniques, was to enlarge the sonic spectrum, make the sound, overall, more natural, correct a few significant pitch problems in the original release and re-study the entire Ring to further develop the dynamics between *piano* and *forte*. Some of the sound is substantially improved (as, for instance, some of *Rheingold*, most of *Walküre*, and *Siegfried* and much of *Götterdämmerung*).

The sonic improvements do not extend to the *Rheingold* Prelude and opening scene with the Rhinemaidens and Alberich: these could barely be improved over the work I did for the Guild release. The change into somewhat improved sound begins late in CD-1 and increases in the clarity of the voices, gradually enlarging in scope, focus, presence and improved tone on CD-2. Especially important is the remake of the entire Erda-Wotan scene with noticeably lessened surface noise.

The restoration of *Walküre* is another matter as the changes in it are significant. These include improved sonic scope, more natural tone, correction

of pitch problems which afflicted our previous Guild release (some portions of Act I being off-pitch). You will also be pleased by the replacement of the sonically degenerated portions that marred *Du bist der Lenz* and enlarged dynamic contrasts between *piano* and *forte* throughout the entire performance. Act III offers numerous instances of improved sonic range producing heightened emotional impact.

The sound for the *Siegfried* starts off with a small tonal difference to our Guild release in 2002. From nine minutes on (Tr. 4), the sonics take on increasing solidity and naturalness, which will thereafter characterize this restoration, not to mention an enlarged dynamic range. The improved sound is particularly welcome in the Act I Forging Scene and Act III final duet.

In *Götterdämmerung*, one change of considerable importance is the replacement of the opening Norn Scene and the Melchior - Flagstad Dawn Duet from the 1939 Met broadcast, with the 1937 Covent Garden performance with Furtwängler conducting (he conducts most of this *Götterdämmerung*). The remake of Siegfried's arrival in Act I has considerably less surface noise and better joins. The Rhinemaidens Scene in Act III (CD-4) is also completely changed, is in better sound with smoother transitions. The role of Hagen, formerly sung by Deszo Ernster is now sung by Ludwig Weber throughout. Overall, you may note improved clarity and more overtones to the voices in many passages.

Beyond this, some additions and some changes in texts, photos and paintings improve the large booklets – these are the visual and intellectual corollary of the emotional impact of the performances. We trust that those who purchased the original albums some 10 years ago will find that the performances they admired in the first release are even more thrilling now.

Richard Caniell

“Astoundingly successful! This must be considered a veritable triumph of sound restoration and engineering. A true voice-oriented Wagnerite should be happy he or she has lived to hear this . . . the most gloriously sung Ring ever heard on records, with sound reproduction far in advance of anything we might have expected from the sources to which Caniell had access. This Ring has enhanced all Wagnerite’s performance-experience of the most gigantic work in the history of vocal music.”

Joe Pearce, President
New York Vocal Record Collection Society
Critic: Opera Quarterly, N.Y. Wagner Society

John Steane once wrote that to learn how Wagner could be sung, the public in general had to wait for the great days of Melchior, Schorr and Flagstad. Well, here’s the chance to experience such an occasion – seize it!

Christopher Fifield, Critic
Classical Music Web

“The singing is staggering; those who claim that the Golden Age of Wagner is long gone are absolutely right.”

Robert Levine, Senior Editor
Classic Today

“Only someone with the most intimate knowledge of these recordings could have effected such seamless aural transitions . . . It is an extraordinarily brave and surprisingly successful venture and the transfers of the older material are extremely good. All in all, an inspired climax to Richard Caniell’s ‘Dream’.”

Robert Cowen, Critic
Gramophone
April 2003