Götterdämmerung

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA
2010–11 SEASON

Timings:	**Act I:**	1 hour, 50 minutes
	Intermission:	25 minutes
	Act II:	1 hour
	Intermission:	25 minutes
	Act III:	1 hour, 15 minutes

Total Running Time: 5 hours, 5 minutes (including bows)

First performance: Bayreuth, Festspielhaus, August 17, 1876.

First performance in the U.S.: New York, Metropolitan Opera, January 25, 1888

First San Francisco Opera performance: November 9, 1935

Orchestra: 3 flutes, 1 piccolo, 3 oboes, 1 English horn, 3 clarinets, 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 8 French horns (4 doubling on Wagner tubas), 3 trumpets, 1 bass trumpet, 2 trombones, 1 bass trombone, 1 contrabass trombone, 1 tuba, 2 timpani, 2 percussionists, 2 harps; 51 strings (14 first violins, 12 second violins, 10 violas, 8 cellos, 7 basses).

Backstage instruments: 3 trombones are used to simulate the sound of "Stierhorns," rough-sounding primitive instruments made from the horn of a bull; 2 added horns for the echoing horn calls.

Cuts: none.

Production: This San Francisco Opera production receives its premiere with these performances. ***A director's note by Francesca Zambello can be found on pages 18 and 19 of your program.***

For Zambello, much of the *Ring* is driven by the performers and had to be built around the unique personalities of the cast. Her process with the cast involved roundtable discussions of the text, and then she asked them to translate their character's text into the individual singer's native language.

Zambello discussed some of her inspirations and references for the characters in *Götterdämmerung* on the Company's *Ring* blog (found at ***sfopera.com/ringblog***): "Singers and actors prepare for roles in many different ways and our *Ring* cast is no different. Of course, there are many great sources, like the Nordic legends, but sometimes it is helpful to see things that are

more connected to contemporary life. I find that it is often helpful for people to watch films, read books or look at artwork to experience more deeply the essence of a character they are playing. Sometimes operatic inspiration can come from unusual places. The Gibichungs (Gunther, Gutrune, and Hagen) were inspired by *They Shoot Horses Don't They*, the 1969 American film directed by Sydney Pollack based on the 1935 novel of the same name by Horace McCoy. Gutrune in particular was inspired by *The Handmaid's Tale*, the 1985 book by Margaret Atwood that was adapted into a 1990 film starring Natasha Richardson."

The cables that the Norns handle are 1.5" backer rod that has been covered with black cable sheath. The plugs are connected with rare earth magnets and various plastic jars. The glassware used in Act I was designed by the Properties department and is made of Plexiglas and aluminum. It had to be designed so as not to shatter or roll down the rake if accidentally dropped. The potions on stage are two kinds of Gatorade, and the blood used for the blood oath is V-8 juice. The Tarnhelm is a specially designed piece of lined metallic fabric, much like chainmail. It is fairly see-through, so there have been no special provisions made for Ian Storey as he wears it while singing.

The plastic bottles that litter the Rhine in Act III were collected by the Properties department from the staff and crew of San Francisco Opera over the past two months. The quick change that happens between the first and second scenes of Act III (which has to take place in one minute, twenty seconds) is accomplished by several stagehands (in addition to the Rhinemaidens) who collect the bottles, as well as nets that enclose piles of bottles. The deer stands in Act III come from a hunting catalog and are counterweighted for the stage's rake so they can be safely climbed. The sapling at the end of the opera is actually a shrub that has been cut to look like an ash sapling. It was "rescued" from a local nursery that no longer wanted the plant, and it is regularly watered and sits on one of the War Memorial Opera House's parapets for sunlight when not being used in the production.

Role debuts: Nina Stemme as Brünnhilde, Ian Storey as Siegfried, Andrea Silvestrelli as Hagen, Melissa Citro as Gutrune, Daveda Karanas as the Second Norn and Waltraute, Ronnita Miller as the First Norn, Heidi Melton as the Third Norn, and Renée Tatum as Flosshilde.

Past San Francisco Opera Casts:

	Brünnhilde	Gutrune	Waltraute	Siegfried	Gunther	Hagen	Director	Conductor
1935	Flagstad	Manski	Meisle	Melchior	Schorr	List	Agnini	Bodanzky
1936	Flagstad	Manski	Meisle	Melchior	Schorr	List	Agnini	Reiner
1947	Traubel	Resnik	Harshaw	Svanholm	Czaplicki	Alvary	Wymetal	Steinberg
1969	Shuard	Martin	Lilova	Thomas	Mazura	Lagger	P. Hager	Suitner
1972	Nilsson Lindholm	Napier	Lilova	Thomas	Stewart	Grant	P.Hager	Suitner
1985	Marton	Day	Dernesch	Kollo	Devlin	Tomlinson	Lehnhoff	de Waart
1990	Jones Martin Behrens	Day	Ciesinski (Katherine)	Johns Kollo	Devlin	Halfvarson	Feldman	Schneider Runnicles
1999	Jones Martin Behrens	Day	Ciesinski (Katherine)	Johns Kollo	Devlin	Halfvarson	Feldman	Schneider Runnicles

The 1935, 1972, 1985, 1990, and 1999 Götterdämmerungs were parts of complete stagings of the Ring.