



**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA'S 2011 *RING* CYCLE  
A BOX OFFICE TRIUMPH**

**NEW PRODUCTION OF WAGNER'S *DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN*  
A CRITICAL AND PUBLIC SUCCESS**

SAN FRANCISCO (July 11, 2011)—San Francisco Opera's June–July 2011 performances of Richard Wagner's epic four-opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*) sold to 99.96% of ticket capacity, selling 44,055 tickets across 14 performances and generating \$7,236,673 in box office income. Patrons travelled from 21 countries and 46 states to attend three complete cycles of *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* as well as stand-alone performances of the latter two operas. This new production marks the sixth time San Francisco Opera has presented Wagner's *Ring* cycle since 1935 and furthers the Company's successful tradition of strong ticket sales and positive critical and public response to the *Ring*.

"I am exceedingly pleased, despite a tough economic climate, to have been able to present this Mount Everest of operatic works with some of the preeminent Wagnerian artists of our day here in San Francisco," commented San Francisco Opera General Director David Gockley. "I salute the cast, creative team, crew, orchestra, chorus and administrative staff of this great Company for their commitment to excellence and indefatigable spirit. I also want to thank our loyal donors who gave so generously to make this new production possible and our enthusiastic audiences who came from around the world to join us for these outstanding performances. I will always cherish this *Ring* cycle as a highlight of my 40-year career in opera, and I am genuinely heartened by the broad scope of its success."

These performances marked the complete production premiere of Francesca Zambello's new *Ring* staging with sets by Michael Yeorgan, costumes by Catherine Zuber, lighting by Mark McCullough and

projections by Jan Hartley with S. Katy Tucker. *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried* were co-productions with Washington National Opera and *Götterdämmerung* was a new San Francisco Opera production premiere. Of the Zambello *Ring*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* wrote: “Stage director Francesca Zambello combed the text and music of Wagner's magnum opus to create a *Ring* that is at once penetrating, humorous and compassionate.”

The international roster of singers featured Nina Stemme as Brünnhilde, Mark Delavan as Wotan, Jay Hunter Morris as Siegfried (*Siegfried*), Ian Storey as Siegfried (*Götterdämmerung*), Gordon Hawkins as Alberich, Elizabeth Bishop as Fricka, David Cangelosi as Mime, Anja Kampe and Heidi Melton as Sieglinde, Brandon Jovanovich as Siegmund, Stefan Margita as Loge, Gerd Grochowski as Gunther and Andrea Silvestrelli as Hagen. The most noted breakout star of the cast was Swedish soprano Nina Stemme, who sang her complete *Ring* cycle debut as Brünnhilde in this production. Of her performance, *The Wall Street Journal* wrote: “The star of this *Ring* was Nina Stemme, a striking, fully realized Brünnhilde. Her dark, burnished soprano blazed, slicing through the orchestra, and softened into gentleness as the only character who truly understands the power of love. She brought passion to her acting and sounded as fresh at the end as she did in the beginning.” *The New York Times* also noted: “As in *Die Walküre*, the standout in the final two operas was the soprano Nina Stemme. . . In the punishing Immolation Scene at the end of *Götterdämmerung*, far from sounding vocally spent, Ms. Stemme took her singing to higher levels of burnished brilliance and expressive depth. A riveting presence, she was committed to the moment in every phrase she sang, every gesture she made. She received an ecstatic ovation.”

Of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra, conducted by former San Francisco Opera Music Director Donald Runnicles, the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote: “In the pit, the Opera Orchestra has undertaken feats of musical heroism night after night, and Runnicles has shaped the cycle's rhythmic flow with uncanny dexterity.”

This mounting of Wagner's monumental work gave San Francisco Opera the opportunity to partner with many Bay Area organizations in presenting ancillary activities ranging from concerts and lectures to panel discussions and symposia. Also special to this occasion, the Company commissioned celebrated Bay Area artist Michael Schwab to create an original image inspired by the production which was used as cover art for the program magazine and on limited edition posters. Surrounding the preparation and performance period for the *Ring* cycle, San Francisco Opera also launched its first-ever blog, *Notes from Valhalla* (<http://sfopera.com/ringblog>), which attracted impressive website traffic.

Performances of *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* have been recorded for the San Francisco Opera International Radio Broadcast, available locally on Classical KDFC (90.3 in San Francisco, 89.9 in the North/East Bay, 89.7 in Eureka, 92.5 in Lakeport/Ukiah) on the following dates: *Das Rheingold* (September 4), *Die Walküre* (October 2), *Siegfried* (November 6) and *Götterdämmerung* (December 4). The *Ring* operas will also be broadcast both nationally and internationally through the WFMT Radio Network. At this time, there are no immediate plans to release this new San Francisco Opera *Ring* cycle on DVD or to remount this production in the near future.

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