

SIEGFRIED

Richard Wagner; This is the third music drama in the Ring of the Nibelung

Act One

The Nibelung dwarf Mime has raised Siegfried so that he might kill the giant Fafner, who has used the magic Tarnhelm to change himself into a dragon in order to guard the Ring and the gold. Mime has yet to make a sword that the boy cannot shatter or repair the broken sword of his father's. When Siegfried asks the truth about his parentage, Mime explains that he took in the wandering Sieglinde, who then died in childbirth, and shows him the sword fragments as proof. The Wanderer (Wotan in disguise) enters and challenges Mime to a contest of wits, offering his head if he fails to answer any three questions. He answers each of Mime's questions, but when Wanderer asks his questions, Mime is at a loss, not knowing the answer to "who will forge the broken sword, Nothung." The Wanderer reveals that only he who knows no fear can mend it and, leaving Mime's head as a prize for the fearless one, departs. To protect his life, Mime resolves to teach Siegfried fear by taking him to the dragon's lair. As the impatient youth forges the sword himself, Mime plots how he will offer Siegfried a drugged drink after he slays the dragon, kill him, and capture the Ring.

Act Two

Alberich watches over Fafner's cave and boasts of his ambitions for world power. The Wanderer, in vain, goads Alberich to seize the dragon's loot before Mime and Siegfried beat him to it. Although Mime warns Siegfried of the dragon's terrible powers, the boy is undaunted. A forest Bird calls and Siegfried, wanting to understand it, tries to communicate with it. He eventually blows his horn, waking Fafner. Siegfried slays him, and, pulling his sword from the dragon's heart, smears his hand with blood; it burns and he puts his hand to his mouth. Tasting the blood, Siegfried finds that he understands the birdcall: the Ring, the gold, and the Tarnhelm now belong to him. When Siegfried enters the cave, Alberich and Mime argue over who will claim the booty. Through the interpretive powers of the dragon's blood, Mime's true intentions are revealed, and Siegfried kills him. The Forest Bird tells Siegfried that a bride awaits him, surrounded by a ring of fire.

Act Three

Wotan, still in his Wanderer disguise, asks Erda how to stop the hand of fate. She refuses to answer questions regarding the fate of the world, but eventually reveals the impending doom. Wotan, however, no longer fears the end of the gods. Siegfried, led on by the Forest Bird, engages in a heated exchange with the Wanderer. When the Wanderer tries to prevent Siegfried's access to Brünnhilde, the youth shatters his grandfather's spear with Nothung. The Wanderer steps aside, and Siegfried rushes up the rocks and discovers a sleeping form through the flames. He kisses Brünnhilde, and she awakes. Despite her fears and her disappointment at her new mortality, she greets the sun and light after her long sleep, then sees her hero-husband. The two joyfully hail each other in ever-increasing love.