



BY RICHARD
WAGNER
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RIDE OF THE VALKYRIES



THE STORY—well, a short snippet of it...

Wotan has 9 daughters. These are the Valkyries whose task it is to recover heroes fallen in battle and bring them back to Valhalla where they will protect Wotan's fortress. Wotan hopes for a hero who will take a ring from the dragon. Wotan has two other children who live on Earth; twins called Siegmund and Sieglinde. They grow up separately but meet one day. Siegmund plans to battle Sieglinde's husband as she claims he forced her to marry him. Wotan believes Siegmund wants to capture and keep the ring and won't protect him. He sends one of his Valkyrie daughters to bring him to Valhalla but he refuses to go without his sister. She tries to help him in battle against her father's wishes but sadly he dies. Meanwhile, the Valkyries congregate on the mountain-top, each carrying a dead hero and chattering excitedly when the daughter arrives with Sieglinde. Wotan is furious and plans to punish her.

Prelude	An introductory piece of music. A prelude often opens an act in an opera
Act	A musical, play or opera is often split into acts. There is often an interval between acts

THE MUSIC

- Ride of the Valkyries is only part of a huge major work. It is taken from a cycle of 4 massive operas known as The Ring of the Nibelungs or The Ring for short. It takes several evenings at the theatre to watch the whole of The Ring from start to finish.
- The 4 operas are based on Norse mythology. It is about a family of gods and their pursuit of a magical golden ring. There's even a dragon in it—sounds like Lord of the Rings doesn't it?
- Ride of the Valkyries is the prelude to Act 3 of the second opera known as Die Walkure. Wagner did not want Ride of the Valkyries to be performed separately from the rest of The Ring—but it is today
- Ride of the Valkyries has been used in modern film music as it is so dramatic
- The music sounds like flying and swooping just like the Valykyries riding horses across the sky and swooping down, picking up fallen heroes for Valhalla

THE COMPOSER

- Wagner loved the brass section and even invented the Wagner Tuba which looks like a cross between a French horn and saxophone
- Wagner was a German composer and theatre director
- He revolutionised opera and turned it into ambitious musical drama. There was exciting staging and costume
- Wagner married Liszt's daughter (see The Wall of Fame) - she was 24 years younger than him!
- Wagner wrote the Bridal Chorus which is popularly played at weddings when the bride walks down the aisle
- Mahler was a huge admirer of Wagner's work (see The Wall of Fame) - so was Adolf Hitler!

