
Die Walküre

Seen opening night: July 28, 2026



The exceedingly high musical standards continue: the ever-reliable Volle magisterial as Wotan; Vogt shifting from biting Loge-mode to an intensely lyrical Siegmund; Elza van den Heever simply marvelous as Sieglinde; Thielemann in full command.

The production was also

somewhat better. I still have issues with the approach, but the execution was clearer and cleaner. Rheingold was a second-by-second flood of constantly shifting and morphing images. Nothing remained observable long enough to draw any inference of meaning, (The experience was exhausting.) Things slowed down considerably tonight. The images remain largely abstract and opaque in meaning, but some were relatively concrete and offered intimations of being representative of something familiar. (I think I caught a hint or two of Wieland Wagner's 1951 disc set at moments.) Some were even photographic. But sometimes this clarity only increased the confusion: what exactly was the chain of associations that led the AI to produce a photograph of Thomas Mann during Siegmund's narration of his life with his father, Wolf, during Act I?

There were also repeated violations of the prime objective (the "vocal performers [occupying] the focal point of the staging"). These occurred with increasing frequency as the evening progressed: in much of Act III (and occasionally earlier) the sculptures ... sorry, singers were largely or completely blanked out by the AI images.

The singers were given more latitude to move about, which helped sustain a modicum of dramatic action. But not consistently. The Walküres were maddeningly static: stand, sing, march off when their music ended.

And the costumes remained largely uniform, oversized, dark, not to mention highly unflattering to the singers. A kind of generic "Game of Thrones" vibe. (I couldn't even distinguish the players when they came out for their curtain calls.)

And Hitler made his first appearance tonight. Apparently references by Wotan and Brünnhilde to the idea of protecting her in her sleep by allowing only a hero without fear to penetrate the magic fire consistently triggered photos of der Führer.

Nonetheless, a far more satisfying evening (albeit with continued qualms about the whole organizing concept).