



The Ride of the Valkyries from "Die Walkure" Richard Wagner

(German Composer: Born at Leipsic, Germany, May 22, 1813;
Died at Venice, Italy, February 13, 1883)

Die Walkure is the second and most popular of the four Music-Dramas which comprise Wagner's colossal "Ring of the Nibelungen." It is based upon an ancient Norse legend and takes its name from the nine Valkyries who were daughters of Woton, the All-Father among the Gods, and Erda, the Earth-Goddess of Wisdom. Wearing shining helmets and carrying flashing spears, these valiant maidens rode winged horses through the clouds to the battlefields of the earth from which they took the bodies of slain heroes back to Walhalla, their home in the sky. This was the purpose for which they were created and from which they derived their name (Wal:field of battle, Kuren: to choose).

Such a ride as this occurs at the beginning of the third act of Wagner's opera, so the introduction to this act is generally known as the "Ride of the Valkyrie." Brunnhilde, the leader of the Valkyrie and Wotan's favorite among them, has just disobeyed her father and is riding away from him, carrying her half-sister, Sieglinde, with her in order to protect her from her enraged father. Wotan is in angry pursuit, and their wild ride through the sky is vividly portrayed in one of the most imaginative tone-pictures ever written. For in this music we hear the galloping of horse-hoofs, the whistling of the wind, the shouts, the laughter and the barbarous battle-cry of the Valkyrie Maidens, and finally the furious arrival of the angry Wotan as he appears out of a dark storm from the North.

Richard Wagner has left us many inspired passages of music but few are more daring or more vivid than this exciting composition which brings our Young People's Concert to a brilliant conclusion.

- Wotan was so mad that even the clouds were black -