



Stage Director
Herbert Kellner

For immediate release

**WAGNER'S MONUMENTAL *RING* CYCLE, PRESENTED BY
LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO FROM MARCH 28 THROUGH APRIL 16, 2005,
WILL BE CONDUCTED BY SIR ANDREW DAVIS
AND DIRECTED BY HERBERT KELLNER**

**SINGERS WILL INCLUDE OLEG BRYJAK, MICHELLE DEYOUNG, LARISSA
DIADKOVA, PLÁCIDO DOMINGO, JANE EAGLEN, ERIC HALFVARSON,
ALAN HELD, JAMES MORRIS, DENNIS PETERSEN, JOHN TRELEAVEN
AND OTHERS**

One of the great landmarks of opera literature, Richard Wagner's monumental *Ring* cycle, will be presented three times by Lyric Opera of Chicago from March 28 through April 16. The performances will be conducted by Sir Andrew Davis (Lyric's music director and principal conductor, who will conduct the complete *Ring* for the first time), and stage directed by Herbert Kellner. William Mason is the general director. The *Ring* will be sung in the original German with projected English titles.

Tickets for the complete cycle are priced from \$180-\$800, available online at www.lyricopera.org.

The four music dramas encompass 20 hours of performance, involve massive orchestral forces, and feature an all-star cast including Oleg Bryjak, Michelle DeYoung, Larissa Diadkova, Plácido Domingo, Jane Eaglen, Eric Halfvarson, Alan Held, James Morris, Dennis Petersen, John Treleven and others. Herbert Kellner identifies the *Ring* as "the ultimate music theatre piece -- using the most forces,

every kind of theatrical ‘device’ and a union of the highest levels of all the elements -- music, text, stage design, and dramatic interpretation.” Kellner worked closely with the late stage designer August Everding on the original production of the Lyric Opera’s *Ring* cycle in 1992-1993 (conducted by Zubin Mehta). Lyric Opera then presented one of these operas each season through 1995-96, mounting its first complete *Ring* cycle in 1996.

Using his work with Everding on the original 1996 *Ring* as a point of departure, Herbert Kellner has made numerous changes in this production while staying true to the original. What worked well in the original has been left unchanged; what would benefit from improvement has been changed (such as the staging of the ending of *Götterdämmerung*). Many of these decisions are based on conversations that Kellner and Everding had during their work together. Kellner’s concept about *Götterdämmerung* is related also to his work with this opera at ArtPark with Christopher Keene conducting.

Some details from the original production include bungee-jumping Rhinemaidens and Valkyries on trampolines, choreographed by Cirque du Soleil’s Debra Brown; powerful set and costume designs by John Conklin; and lighting by Duane Schuler. Lyric Opera’s *Ring* cycle is The Cynthia Wood and Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Claeysens production.

James Morris and Jane Eaglen will again sing their compelling father-daughter roles of Wotan and Brünnhilde from Lyric’s previous *Ring* (and from last season’s *Die Walküre*). Larissa Diadkova will sing the role of Fricka. Plácido Domingo will portray Siegmund/*Die Walküre*, his first German role at Lyric Opera. Oleg Bryjak will return as Alberich. Michelle DeYoung will portray Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* and Waltraute in *Götterdämmerung*. John Treleven (who made his Lyric debut in the title role in *Siegfried* in 2003-04) will return for the cycles’ *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*. Bonaventure Bottone will portray Loge in *Das Rheingold*. Dennis Petersen will sing the *Rheingold* Mime and David Cangelosi will sing the *Siegfried* Mime. Alan Held will reprise his Gunther from the 1996 *Götterdämmerung*. Additional roles will be taken by Mark Baker, Eric Halfvarson, Raymond Aceto and Jill Grove, among others.

The schedule of performances, all directed by Herbert Kellner, is as follows:

Der Ring des Nibelungen

CYCLE 1

Das Rheingold: Monday, March 28, 2005
Die Walküre: Tuesday, March 29, 2005
Siegfried: Thursday, March 31, 2005
Götterdämmerung: Saturday, April 2, 2005

CYCLE 2

Das Rheingold: Monday, April 4, 2005
Die Walküre: Tuesday, April 5, 2005

Siegfried: Thursday, April 7, 2005
Götterdämmerung: Saturday, April 9, 2005

CYCLE 3

Das Rheingold: Monday, April 11, 2005
Die Walküre: Tuesday, April 12, 2005
Siegfried: Thursday, April 14, 2005
Götterdämmerung: Saturday, April 16, 2005

Conductor: Sir Andrew Davis
Original Production: August Everding
Stage Director: Herbert Kellner
Set/Costume Designer: John Conklin
Lighting Designer: Duane Schuler
Chorus Master: Donald Palumbo

About Herbert Kellner

Herbert Kellner has been associated with top opera companies for more than 30 years, and with Lyric Opera of Chicago for almost twenty years. He made his directing debut with the company in 1987 with a production of Puccini's *Tosca* featuring Renato Scotti and Sherrill Milnes in the leading roles.

Kellner joined the production staff of Lyric Opera in 1975 as an assistant stage manager after graduating from Indiana University with a Master's Degree in Opera Stage Direction. He became the resident stage director and acting coach for the Lyric Opera Center for American Artists in 1984, where he taught acting, did private coaching and directed productions such as *Hansel and Gretel*. In 1985, he became the executive stage manager of Lyric Opera of Chicago, a position he held for ten years. During this period, Mr. Kellner directed some thirty operas, including such critical successes as *The Rake's Progress* and *The Medium* for Skylight Opera in Milwaukee, and *Götterdämmerung* at the ArtPark Festival in 1987. Kellner recently staged *Tristan und Isolde*, starring Ben Heppner and Jane Eaglen, for Lyric Opera.

In addition to Lyric Opera, Mr. Kellner has been associated with companies such as Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Music Center Opera, San Francisco Opera, New Orleans Opera, San Diego Opera and Portland Opera (where, in 1995, he made his debut directing *The Barber of Seville*). He has directed operas such as *La bohème*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Tosca*, *La traviata*, *Il trovatore*, *Elektra*, and *Le nozze di Figaro* at companies across the country. Mr. Kellner made his European debut in Pforzheim, Germany, assisting on a production of Lortzing's *Waffenschmied*. In 1990, he made his Swiss debut assisting John Copley on a production of Rossini's *Tancredi* at the Theatre du Genève. Kellner has worked with some of the top people in the field, including Sir Peter Hall, Jean-Pierre Ponnelle and Francesca Zambello.

Herbert Kellner was assistant director for the Dallas Opera's world premiere production of *Therese Raquin* in 2001, and directed that work for L'Opéra de Montreal and San Diego Opera in 2002 and 2003, respectively.

Knowing that singers have to be comfortable and look good as well as serve the dramatic intention of the composer, Kellner has made changes in the production to suit the individual personalities and styles of the singers, within the framework of the characters they portray.

Except for James Morris and Jane Eaglen, this is a new cast, and he has made changes in scenery and dramatic elements. The puppets -- giant dragon and wooden birds -- will be used more prominently than in the original production, now being integrated into the action, more than being decorative props. He has added visual action through the use of additional projections to help keep the story line moving, particularly during interludes. The lighting will be somewhat different, and there will be new costumes and makeup for the singers. Kellner's concept involves making the *Ring* a world myth, not just a German myth. John Conklin, the original designer with Scott Marr, and lighting designer Duane Shuler are working closely with Kellner as a team.

The Role of the Opera Director

Herbert Kellner describes the opera director as being responsible for “the visual interpretation of the work, to make images -- through the movement of singers and presence of scenery -- so that audiences get the point visually along with the music and the words.” His teamwork involves the conductor, designers, and associate and assistant directors.

“Directing,” says Kellner, “is 90% psychology. One must find a way to motivate and influence singers to give what needs to be given – to get the performance out of them. The other 10% is to know the piece so well that performers will trust the director.”

Kellner is extremely pleased to be working with Sir Andrew Davis on his first *Ring* cycle. Each scene is approached musically first, then Kellner and Davis come together; it is a highly collaborative effort because the music and the action are so unified and complex.

These performances of the *Ring* are part of a long process of study that has involved Herbert Kellner for the better part of thirty years, since his student days. He has studied not only the Wagner scores but books on the composer, the mythology on which much of the *Ring* is based (when he lived in Germany in the late 1970s and early 1980s, he read the *Ring of the Nibelungen* in both English and German as well as all of the myths and Greek tragedies that Wagner drew from).

Kellner's score looks like a work of art of its own – with staging diagrams of where people should stand, where they should move. What was originally indicated in the score will differ from what will eventually happen on the stage, changing with the personalities of the actors. Kellner says that he “builds on ideas in a process that is very organic and constantly changing. It is, in the truest sense of the words, live theatre.”

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION:

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