

Rattle: Wagner's Siegfried Idyll and Scenes from Götterdämmerung

Sunday, May 24, 2026 · 19:00 · Barbican
Sir Simon Rattle, conductor · Anja Kampe, soprano · Elizabeth DeShong, mezzo-soprano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	WAGNER 1813–1883 <i>Götterdämmerung: Dawn and Siegfried's Rhine Journey</i>	8'
2	WAGNER 1813–1883 <i>Götterdämmerung: Waltraute's Narration</i>	32'
3	WAGNER 1813–1883 <i>Siegfried Idyll</i>	18'
4	WAGNER 1813–1883 <i>Götterdämmerung: Siegfried's Funeral Music</i>	12'
5	WAGNER 1813–1883 <i>Götterdämmerung: Immolation Scene</i>	18'
TOTAL MUSIC		88'

Richard Wagner

1813–1883

8 minutes

Götterdämmerung: Dawn and Siegfried's Rhine Journey

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen first for the ‘Dawn’ music: a slow, mysterious build as day breaks over the mountain, the orchestra glowing into warmth and light, with the lovers’ great themes rising up. Then comes the transition into the ‘Rhine Journey’ proper: listen for the surging, rippling string figures depicting the flowing river, the heroic horn-call associated with Siegfried, and the brilliant orchestral sweep as the music gathers tremendous momentum. Listen, too, for the recurring leitmotifs (themes for Siegfried, for the ring, for the Rhinemaidens and the Rhinegold) woven through the texture. The excerpt ends in a blaze of orchestral

splendour, a glorious curtain-raiser brimming with the energy and promise that the rest of the opera will so devastatingly betray.

Richard Wagner

1813–1883

32 minutes

Götterdämmerung: Waltraute's Narration

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

This is a scene of mounting tension and dread. Listen for Waltraute's growing urgency and fear as she paints her vivid picture of the gods' doom; Wagner gives her music great dramatic sweep, ranging from hushed, awe-struck description to anguished pleading. Listen especially for the orchestra, which functions almost like a second narrator: a web of leitmotifs conjures Valhalla, Wotan's spear, the World Ash Tree, the gods' twilight and the all-important ring and curse motifs, so that the orchestra 'shows' what Waltraute describes. Listen for the contrast between Waltraute's desperation and Brünnhilde's unyielding refusal, and for the way the music darkens toward the inevitable catastrophe. The mezzo-soprano (here Elizabeth DeShong, as Waltraute) carries this gripping monologue, a tour de force of Wagnerian narrative singing.

Richard Wagner

1813–1883

18 minutes

Siegfried Idyll

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the hushed, dawn-like opening: a gentle, rising string melody that seems to wake slowly into being (the same music that crowns the love duet at the end of the opera *Siegfried*). The whole piece has the quality of a tender, glowing reverie, unfolding without drama or conflict.

Listen for the moment, partway through, when the oboe gently introduces a simple folk lullaby ('Sleep, little child, sleep'), a touchingly domestic touch for a new father. Listen, too, for the warm horn calls and the way the various themes intertwine and grow, building to a few radiant climaxes before subsiding into peace. This is music of pure contentment and love; let its intimacy and warmth wash over you, a serene island of private happiness between the grandeur and tragedy of *Götterdämmerung*.

Richard Wagner

1813–1883

12 minutes

Götterdämmerung: Siegfried's Funeral Music

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the hammer-blows of fate: the great, crashing chords and the relentless, tread-like funeral rhythm in the timpani that underpin the march. Then listen for the procession of leitmotifs, which Wagner deploys here like a series of memorial portraits: the themes of the Volsung race, of Siegmund and Sieglinde (Siegfried's tragic parents), of the sword Nothung, of Siegfried's love and his heroism, each rising up in turn, blazing out on the brass.

Listen for the way the music builds in wave after wave to two tremendous climaxes, the brass proclaiming Siegfried's heroic themes in overwhelming splendour, before sinking back into desolate grief. This is Wagner using the orchestra alone to mourn a hero and to recall an entire saga in a few unforgettable minutes; it is music of crushing emotional power, and it leads directly toward the cataclysm of the opera's final scene.

Richard Wagner

1813–1883

18 minutes

Götterdämmerung: Immolation Scene

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the journey from grief and solemnity to transcendence. Brünnhilde's farewell begins gravely; listen for the great soprano line riding over the orchestra as she addresses the dead Siegfried, the gods and the Rhine. Listen for the procession of leitmotifs that Wagner gathers up here: themes of the ring, the curse, the gods, Siegfried, and, crucially, the soaring melody often called the 'Redemption' theme, which will have the very last word.

Listen for the great orchestral conflagration as Brünnhilde leaps into the flames: the 'Magic Fire' music blazing up, the 'Rhine' music swelling as the river rises, the crashing collapse of Valhalla (the 'Valhalla' theme overwhelmed). And listen, finally, for the extraordinary closing pages, where, out of all the destruction, the orchestra rises to a hushed, glowing statement of the redemptive theme, sublime and consoling, bringing the entire

cycle to rest. Anja Kampe sings Brünnhilde; this is one of the supreme challenges and glories of the dramatic-soprano repertoire, and an overwhelming close to the concert.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/lso-2026-05-24-rattle>

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