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*Richard Wagner*

# LOHENGRIN

**LIVE PERFORMANCE**

Recorded March 21, 1998



Ben Heppner  
Deborah Voigt  
Deborah Polaski  
Hans-Joachim Ketelsen  
Eric Halfvarson

The Metropolitan Opera  
Orchestra and Chorus

**JAMES LEVINE**

*Richard Wagner (1813–1883)*

# LOHENGRIN

Libretto by the composer

Live performance recorded March 21, 1998

The prime example of German operatic Romanticism, *Lohengrin* is among Wagner's most enduringly popular masterpieces. James Levine, whose interpretations of the composer's music have won him renown all over the world, assembled a remarkable lineup of great singing actors for this 1998 radio broadcast of Robert Wilson's strikingly beautiful production. Ben Heppner stars in the title role of the nameless swan knight who fights for the wronged. Deborah Voigt is the innocent Elsa, whose blind trust in her savior is shattered by the evil sorceress Ortrud, sung by Deborah Polaski. And the great Met chorus delivers a star turn portraying a nation rousing itself against the onslaught of barbarians. This set also features a bonus CD with highlights from other memorable performances conducted by Maestro Levine, featuring such extraordinary artists as Plácido Domingo, René Kollo, Pilar Lorengar, Eva Marton, and Anna Tomowa-Sintow.

## CAST IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

THE KING'S HERALD Eike Wilm Schulte

KING HENRY Eric Halfvarson

TELRAMUND Hans-Joachim Ketelsen

ELSA Deborah Voigt

LOHENGRIN Ben Heppner

ORTRUD Deborah Polaski

NOBLES Thomas Studebaker, Matthew Polenzani,  
Gary Martin, Richard Vernon

PAGE Nicholas Frisch

The Metropolitan Opera  
Orchestra and Chorus

CHORUS MASTER Raymond Hughes

James Levine CONDUCTOR

## An Interview with James Levine

Maestro Levine tells the Met's Matt Dobkin why *Lohengrin* is close to his heart—and how this Romantic masterpiece paved the way for the *Ring*.

*Lohengrin is the last opera Wagner finished before starting on the Ring. Where does it fit into his larger body of work?*

First of all, to talk about these works, one has to understand that there are more books written about Wagner than any artist of that entire century, so we're dealing with a subject about which an awful lot has already been said. But of the Wagner works that are performed with regularity—the ten evenings—there are the three so-called early ones: *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*. *Dutchman* is a highly original work, full of energy and atmosphere and influenced to some small degree by Weber. But the two extraordinary works that follow—*Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*—are completely Wagner's own in every conceivable way. They take a gigantic step forward in different ways. *Lohengrin* is striking because it is the first piece with the length and format Wagner used in all his later works. It's a romantic opera in the large three-act shape that he favored. As Wagner's ten major evenings go, *Lohengrin* is less emotionally and psychologically complex than the later works, but it's an important precursor, and it's certainly a masterpiece.

*The title role is a major challenge for a tenor.*

So are all the Wagner tenor parts, but each one in a different way. For *Lohengrin* you need to have a kind of dramatic fire but at the same time

a beautiful, radiant, romantic, high lyrical legato that is reminiscent of a lot of other kinds of music. In that sense there is something Italian about it. *Lohengrin* is often referred to as a more Italianate role, which simply means the cantabile is much more sustained and long-breathed. Tenors with native Latin languages and Italian techniques can fare very well with it and have ever since it was written.

*When did you first conduct the opera?*

For five years or so I agreed to be the music director of the Cincinnati May Festival, a unique old choral and orchestral festival in my hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio. This was a way of trying to give something back to my incredibly supportive and enthusiastic hometown music lovers. And in those years I did my first *Parsifal*, my first *Tannhäuser*, and my first *Lohengrin*, in concert performances. And it so happened that the first Wagner opera that I was able to do fully staged was also *Lohengrin* and that was at the Met. So *Lohengrin* is very close to my heart.

*That first Met performance was in 1976, and you've conducted it here more than 40 times since then.*

And I still find that this piece is touching in a way that is different from the other pieces. This particular performance is from the 2002 broadcast with Ben Heppner, Deborah Voigt, Deborah Polaski, Hans-Joachim Ketelsen, Eric Halfvarson, and Eike Wilm Schulte. But we have an extra CD in this package that we included because it seemed like a golden opportunity to give listeners a chance to hear scenes from other broadcasts with other great singers. There's the Act III Elsa-Lohengrin scene with Plácido Domingo and Anna Tomowa-Sintow and the same scene from my first Wagner broadcast at

the Met, with René Kollo and Pilar Lorengar. We also have the Act II scene between Elsa and Ortrud with Tomowa-Sintow as Elsa and Eva Marton as Ortrud. Eva usually sang Elsa, but I said to her, “Eva, you will be amazing in this part because you really have everything for it. It’ll be a sensation!” And it was! These are all wonderful singers, and I had a marvelous time with all of them.

## CD ONE (75:10)

### ACT I

- |    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 1  | Vorspiel  | 9:14 |
| 2  | “Hört! Grafen, Edle, Freie von Brabant!”<br>Herald, King Henry, Chorus                                  | 4:41 |
| 3  | “Dank, König, dir, dass du zu richten kamst!”<br>Telramund, King Henry, Herald, Chorus                  | 6:42 |
| 4  | “Seht hin! Sie naht, die hart Beklagte!”<br>King Henry, Elsa, Chorus                                    | 3:28 |
| 5  | “Einsam in trüben Tagen”<br>Elsa, King Henry, Telramund, Chorus   | 7:25 |
| 6  | “Des Ritters will ich wahren”<br>Elsa, King Henry, Herald, Chorus                                       | 2:50 |
| 7  | “Ohn’ Antwort ist der Ruf verhallt!”<br>Telramund, Elsa, King Henry, Herald, Chorus                     | 4:26 |
| 8  | “Nun sei bedankt, mein lieber Schwan!”<br>Lohengrin, King Henry, Elsa, Chorus                           | 5:12 |
| 9  | “Wenn ich im Kampfe für dich siege”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa  | 4:05 |
| 10 | “Welch holde Wunder muß ich seh’n?”<br>Lohengrin, Telramund, King Henry, Chorus                         | 3:49 |
| 11 | “Nun höret mich, und achtet wohl”<br>Herald, Lohengrin, Telramund, King Henry, Elsa, Ortrud, Chorus     | 6:57 |
| 12 | “Durch Gottes Sieg ist jetzt dein Leben mein”<br>Lohengrin, King Henry, Elsa, Ortrud, Telramund, Chorus | 4:30 |

### ACT II

- |    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 13 | Einleitung   | 4:12 |
| 14 | “Erhebe dich, Genossin meiner Schmach!”<br>Telramund, Ortrud           | 3:32 |
| 15 | “Was macht dich in so wilder Klage doch vergehn?”<br>Ortrud, Telramund | 3:58 |

**CD TWO (71:27)****ACT II** (continued)

- |    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 1  | “Du wilde Seherin! Wie willst du doch geheimnisvoll”<br>Telramund, Ortrud                              | 7:24 |
| 2  | “Euch Lüften, die mein Klagen”<br>Elsa, Ortrud, Telramund  | 3:45 |
| 3  | “Elsa!...Wer ruft?” – “Entweihte Götter!”<br>Ortrud, Elsa  | 5:29 |
| 4  | “Ortrud, wo bist du?”<br>Elsa, Ortrud  | 4:04 |
| 5  | “Könntest du erfassen”<br>Ortrud, Elsa, Telramund  | 6:42 |
| 6  | “In Früh’n versammelt uns der Ruf”<br>Chorus   | 4:47 |
| 7  | “Des Königs Wort und Will’ tu’ ich euch kund”<br>Herald, Chorus  | 6:10 |
| 8  | “Nun hört! dem Lande will er uns entführen?”<br>Four Nobles, Telramund, Chorus                         | 2:05 |
| 9  | “Gesegnet soll sie schreiten”<br>Chorus  | 5:10 |
| 10 | “Zurück, Elsa! Nicht länger will ich dulden”<br>Ortrud, Elsa, Chorus                                   | 5:18 |
| 11 | “Heil! Heil dem König!”<br>King Henry, Elsa, Lohengrin, Chorus   | 3:13 |
| 12 | “O König! Trugbetörte Fürsten!”<br>Telramund, King Henry, Lohengrin, Chorus                            | 5:26 |
| 13 | “Welch ein Geheimnis muß der Held bewahren?”<br>King Henry, Ortrud, Telramund, Lohengrin, Elsa, Chorus | 4:41 |
| 14 | “Mein Held, entgegne kühn dem Ungetreuen!”<br>King Henry, Lohengrin, Telramund, Elsa, Chorus           | 7:05 |

**CD THREE (62:03)****ACT III**

- |    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 1  | Vorspiel   | 2:51 |
| 2  | “Treulich geführt, ziehet dahin”<br>Chorus   | 4:30 |
| 3  | “Das süße Lied verhallt”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa  | 4:15 |
| 4  | “Wie hehr erkenn’ ich unsrer Liebe Wesen!”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa                            | 3:20 |
| 5  | “Atmest du nicht mit mir die süßen Düfte?”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa                            | 4:26 |
| 6  | “Höchstes Vertrau’n hast du mir schon zu danken”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa                      | 7:47 |
| 7  | “Weh’! Nun ist all’ unser Glück dahin!”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa                               | 5:38 |
| 8  | “Heil König Heinrich!”<br>King Henry, Four Nobles, Chorus                                | 6:21 |
| 9  | “Macht Platz dem Helden von Brabant!”<br>Lohengrin, King Henry, Chorus                   | 6:17 |
| 10 | “In fernem Land”<br>Lohengrin, King Henry, Chorus  | 6:13 |
| 11 | “Mir schwankt der Boden!” – “Mein lieber Schwan!”<br>Elsa, Lohengrin, King Henry, Chorus | 5:55 |
| 12 | “Weh! Weh! du edler holder Mann!”<br>King Henry, Ortrud, Lohengrin, Elsa, Chorus         | 4:23 |

**BONUS CD (64:44)****FEBRUARY 16, 1985 ACT III**

Plácido Domingo LOHENGRIN Anna Tomowa-Sintow ELSA  
 Eva Marton ORTRUD Donald McIntyre TELRAMUND

- |   |   |       |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | “Das süße Lied verhallt”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa                         | 4:14  |
| 2 | “Wie hehr erkenn’ ich unsrer Liebe Wesen!”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa       | 3:21  |
| 3 | “Atmest du nicht mit mir die süßen Düfte?”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa       | 4:53  |
| 4 | “Höchstes Vertrau’n hast du mir schon zu danken”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa | 10:28 |

**ACT II**

- |   |   |      |
|---|---|------|
| 5 | “Euch Lüften, die mein Klagen”<br>Elsa, Ortrud, Telramund | 3:53 |
| 6 | “Elsa!...Wer ruft” – “Entweihte Götter!”<br>Ortrud, Elsa  | 5:35 |
| 7 | “Ortrud, wo bist du?”<br>Elsa, Ortrud                     | 4:06 |
| 8 | “Könntest du erfassen”<br>Ortrud, Elsa                    | 5:36 |

**DECEMBER 4, 1976 ACT III**

René Kollo LOHENGRIN Pilar Lorengar ELSA

- |    |   |       |
|----|---|-------|
| 9  | “Das süße Lied verhallt”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa                         | 4:25  |
| 10 | “Wie hehr erkenn’ ich unsrer Liebe Wesen!”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa       | 2:57  |
| 11 | “Atmest du nicht mit mir die süßen Düfte?”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa       | 4:36  |
| 12 | “Höchstes Vertrau’n hast du mir schon zu danken”<br>Lohengrin, Elsa | 10:33 |

## Synopsis

**ACT I** Antwerp, first half of the 10th century. On the banks of the river Scheldt, a herald announces the German King Henry, who has come to enlist the Brabantines' support against an attack from the Hungarians. The king asks Count Telramund why there is fighting and disorder in the Duchy of Brabant. Telramund accuses the young Elsa of having murdered her brother, Gottfried, heir to Brabant's Christian dynasty, to win the throne for herself and an unknown lover. Telramund claims that he is the rightful successor. When Elsa is called to defend herself she at first remains silent. Then she tells of a dream, in which she saw a knight in shining armor who will come to her rescue. Telramund is unimpressed, but since he has no proof for his accusations, the king calls for judgment through combat. None of the men present will take up arms to defend Elsa. Only when she prays does a foreign knight appear, in a boat magically drawn by a swan. He offers Elsa his hand in marriage and promises to fight for her, on the condition that she never ask his name or origin. She agrees and the knight defeats Telramund, establishing the innocence of his bride.

**ACT II** Telramund blames his wife Ortrud, a follower of the old pagan religion and descendant of the country's previous rulers, for his disgrace, since she had persuaded him to falsely accuse Elsa. Ortrud replies by telling Telramund that if Elsa were to ask the stranger his name, he would lose his powers. They swear to have their vengeance. When Elsa appears, Ortrud attempts to arouse her distrust and curiosity about the stranger, but Elsa innocently offers Ortrud her friendship. The foreign knight is proclaimed guardian of Brabant, while Telramund, who has been banned, enlists four noblemen to help him against his rival. At the cathedral gate, Ortrud and Telramund attempt to stop Elsa and the stranger's wedding—she by suggesting that the unknown

knight is in fact an impostor, he by accusing him of sorcery. Elsa is beginning to have doubts but again proclaims her faith in her future husband. The stranger in turn declares that the only person who can command him to reveal his origin is his bride. Accompanied by King Henry, the couple enters the cathedral.

**ACT III** Alone in the bridal chamber, Elsa and the stranger express their love. But she grows more and more anxious and, unable to hide her uncertainty any longer, finally asks him who he is and where he has come from. Before he can reply, Telramund and his men burst in with swords drawn. The stranger kills Telramund and orders the nobles to bear the body to the king, then sadly tells Elsa that he will answer her questions in front of the Brabantine people.

Back on the banks of the Scheldt, the knight reveals his secret: his name is Lohengrin and his home is the temple of the Holy Grail at the distant castle of Montsalvat, where his father, Parzival, is king, and where he must now return. The swan reappears and Lohengrin is about to step onto the boat when Ortrud rushes in. Ecstatic about Elsa's betrayal, she declares that the swan is really Gottfried, Elsa's brother, whom she had enchanted; with Lohengrin gone, no one will ever bring him back to life. But Lohengrin has heard her. With a prayer, he makes Gottfried appear in place of the vanished swan and names the boy ruler of Brabant. Then he leaves. Ortrud falls to the ground, and Elsa, calling for her lost husband, collapses dead.

PRODUCTION Robert Wilson

SET DESIGNER Robert Wilson

LIGHTING CONCEPT Robert Wilson

COSTUME DESIGNER Frida Parmeggiani

LIGHTING DESIGNER Heinrich Brunke

This production of *Lohengrin* was made possible by a gift  
from Gilbert S. Kahn and John J. Noffo.

TOTAL RUN TIME: 273 MIN

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