

DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN

WARREN DARCY'S THEMATIC GUIDE

Foreword

The following guide, created by Warren Darcy, was first made public in an appendix to Matthew Bribitzer-Stull's dissertation, "Thematic Development and Dramatic Association in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*" (Eastman, 2001). In a *nota bene* to this guide, Bribitzer-Stull states:

I wish to thank Warren Darcy for graciously allowing me to include his theme guides in my thesis. Readers who consult the guides should be alerted to the fact that Darcy's work is, in large part, a compilation of previous writings. In particular, Darcy relies heavily on earlier work by Deryck Cooke. These guides are included as an aid to the reader of this thesis and are not intended as original scholarship by either Darcy or myself.

My main goals in re-making this guide were threefold: first, to include musical examples, which were not present in Bribitzer-Stull's appendix; second, to offer some editorial corrections that understandably found their way into a document this size; and third, to make more user-friendly the various cross references among the themes themselves. Note that my examples do not always match the Schirmer piano-vocal score precisely, nor do they include dynamics, but they do include articulation.

This guide is a constant work in progress. If you see any errors (including score mistakes, broken links, incorrect thematic references, etc.), please feel free to e-mail them to me at sam.bivens@cim.edu.

Warren Darcy's Guide to the Themes of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*

Wagner's recurrent themes are frequently referred to as "leading motives" (*Leitmotive*), but the term "motive" is often musically inaccurate. Sometimes his melodic ideas are indeed very short (e.g., SERVITUDE [R48]), but often they are complete phrases (e.g., THE RHINEDAUGHTERS [R4]), and sometimes even phrase groups or periods (e.g., THE TARNHELM [R50]). In addition, the *harmonization* of such an idea is often an extremely important, inseparable component. Therefore, recent Wagner scholarship employs the term "theme" to mean a musical idea of any length, whether a motive, a complete phrase, or a period, and "associative" to express the fact that these ideas are often *associated* with specific objects, people, actions, and emotions.

I have listed the themes in order of their appearance according to the following format: page number/system number/measure number (number of measures in length). Thus, the designation 3/2/1 (2) indicates that the theme in question is to be found on page 3, system 2, measure 1, and is 2 measures long. In the case of a vocal theme, the name of the character who sings the theme is listed, as well as a textual reference. In the case of an orchestral theme, the staff (upper or lower) is sometimes indicated. All references are to the Schirmer vocal score.

Many of the identifying "labels" are those suggested by Deryck Cooke (see "An Introduction to *Der Ring des Nibelungen*," London records); others are my own, and a number are traditional. Most of the "thematic catalogs" (by Wolzogen, Lavignac, Newman, etc.) are incomplete; I have attempted to account for every significant theme and figuration in the score. Thematic labels are always capitalized, in order to differentiate the theme itself from that which it designates.

Sometimes Wagner presents a theme in an embryonic form before giving it a characteristic harmonic/melodic/rhythmic shape. In other cases, he presents two different versions of the same idea, both of which he subsequently employs. I have listed all versions and transformations of each theme; in addition, I have added a brief commentary describing the musical derivation, dramatic significance, and associative tonality (if any) of each idea.

1 *Das Rheingold*

1.1 Scene 1

1. NATURE (original form) 1/2/5 (4)

The low E \flat in the double-basses acts as a fundamental to generate the overtone series through the fifth partial (G); the resulting E \flat major triad is lazily arpeggiated upwards by a French horn. This “*creatio ex nihilo*” process represents the creation of the world; the horn timbre and the $\frac{6}{8}$ meter invoke Nature; and the rhythmic emphasis upon the “cheerful” third scale degree (G) suggests peace, contentment, and well-being. This simple triadic gesture is one of the most important “source themes” in the cycle; it generates many other musical ideas. Here, its canonic imitation by 8 horns produces a richly pulsating chord (major triad with emphasized third), suggesting the perfect harmony which prevailed at the beginning of mythic time.

Henceforth, Wagner uses the key of E \flat to symbolize the “natural world.”



2. NATURE (definitive form) 2/3/4 (4)

This variant of NATURE (original form; R1) represents Nature imbued with life, growth, and consciousness; the potential of R1 has been actualized. It is a two-voice combination:

(a) The NATURE theme itself: upper voice

This varies mm. 2–4 of NATURE (original form; R1) by filling-in the triadic gaps with passing tones. After its initial statement, this four-measure idea is sequenced upwards through the E \flat major triad.

(b) THE LIFE-FORCE IN NATURE: lower voice

This upward-striving eighth-note figuration (incorrectly represented in the vocal score) represents Nature’s impulse to life and growth. According to the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, all natural forces are a manifestation of the Will, a blind, ever-striving, incessant impulse to existence which constitutes the real essence of the world. Wagner composed *Das Rheingold* before he read Schopenhauer; however, the correlation between the *Rheingold* Prelude and Schopenhauer’s description of the Will’s various grades of objectification has often been remarked upon.



3. THE RHINE 3/2/1 (2)

This is a rhythmic diminution of NATURE (definitive form; R2); it represents Nature embodied in the primal element *water*, out of which all life arose (and to which all will ultimately return). Like R2, it is a two-voice combination:

(a) THE RHINE theme itself: upper voice

Notice that the basic two-measure motive is spun-out into a 16-measure theme.

(b) THE WAVES: lower voice

A rhythmic diminution of THE LIFE-FORCE IN NATURE (R2b), this figuration now represents the LIFE-FORCE IN WATER. It is shown correctly beginning at 3/6/1 (upper staff).



4. THE RHINEDAUGHTERS 5/4/1 (7)

This pentatonic idea belongs to a family of themes which may be collectively called the VOICES OF NATURE. Here, it represents the life-force in Nature manifesting itself as a vocal utterance, and objectifying itself in the three Rhinedaughters (elemental spirits). The triadic outline of NATURE (R1 and R2) may be discerned through the pentatonicism; the undulating melodic contour suggests the act of swimming. The theme is characteristically harmonized by a pedal $\frac{6}{4}$ chord (here, an A \flat major triad).

Wagner's term *Rheintöchter* is almost always translated as "Rhinemaïdens," for no good reason.



5. ALBERICH'S AGGRESSION (first form) 12/2/1 (3)

On its first appearance, this theme describes Alberich's clumsy attempts to scale the rocks. It comprises two parts:

- (a) mm. 1–2: his upward progress.
- (b) m. 3: his downward checks.

This second unit is later used independently of the first.

The melodic line is harmonized by parallel first-inversion chords. The grace notes and staccato figures originated with Alberich's entrance (see p. 8); they now coalesce into the dwarf's personal theme, which is spun-out into a twelve-measure bar form (3+3+6).



6. FEMININE ALLURE 15/1/3 (2), Wellgunde

This two-bar idea is based upon a two-note motive featuring a descending diminished fifth. It first accompanies Wellgunde's flirtations, but later is associated with Freia, and much later still (in a transformed version) with Guttrune (G15); it thus seems to depict feminine seductiveness in general.



7. ALBERICH'S AGGRESSION (second form) 18/3/4 (1), Alberich

This is a vocal augmentation of ALBERICH'S AGGRESSION (first form; R5b).



Schein' ich nicht schön dir,

8. LOVE (embryonic forms)

This source theme is a basic term in Wagner's musical language, and represents one of the two main symbols of the *Ring* (the other being power). It does not appear in its definitive form until much later (associated first with Freia, Goddess of Love, then with love in general). Here, however, it is adumbrated in order to express: a.) Flosshilde's promise of sexual love, and b.) Alberich's anguish over unrequited love. Flosshilde's version was itself anticipated by the 9–8 appoggiaturas (over a dominant pedal) at 19/3/4 ff.

(a) 21/3/3 (2), Flosshilde



An-muth mein Aug'_

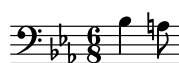
(b) 24/2/2 (1), Alberich



drit-te, so traut,

9. ANGUISH (embryonic form of SERVITUDE) 24/1/3 (1/2), Alberich

This descending semitone recurs frequently throughout the *Ring*. It sometimes (as here) expresses a general outburst of anguish; later, it represents SERVITUDE (R48) to the Ring, a state into which most of the characters ultimately fall. It also lies at the heart of many other themes (e.g., SPEAR [R24 and R35], THE POWER OF THE RING [R54], etc.). It first appeared at 11/1/1 ff., when, as a \downarrow 9–8 appoggiatura over a dominant pedal (thus a dark version of 19/3/4 ff.), it accompanied Alberich's initial expression of desire.



We-he!

10. THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' MOCKERY 25/2/3 (1), Woglinde

This vocal idea is a rhythmic variant of notes 3–6 of THE RHINEDAUGHTERS (R4). Here, it initiates a four-bar phrase.



Schä-me dich, Al-be!

11. ALBERICH'S SMOLDERING FURY 28/1/1 (7), Alberich

Although this vocal theme rarely occurs, it vividly expresses Alberich's seething rage at the rejection of his amorous advances. Notice the use of the ANGUISH (R9) semitone at "Gliedern" and "glüht."



Wie in den Glied-ern brün-sti-ge Gluth mir brennt und glüht! Wuth und

Min-ne, wild und mäch-tig, wühlt mir den Muth auf!

12. ALBERICH'S THREATS 30/4/2 (1)

This agitated figure accompanies Alberich as he shakes his clenched fist at the Rhinedaughters. It derives from p. 29, mm. 2–4, which itself is a transformation of the RHEINDAUGHTERS theme (R4) via the variant of their MOCKERY (R10); its violence is underscored by the diminished seventh harmony. Its subsequent abbreviation and resolution perfectly reflect the dissipation of Alberich's anger as he watches the Rhinegold awaken; the dotted rhythm is then transferred to the GOLD fanfare (R13).

**13. THE GOLD'S MAGICAL LIGHT** 31/1/3 (triplet figure), upper staff

This oscillating figure, a triad whose fifth alternates with its upper neighbor (thus, a so-called “5–6 shift”), appears throughout Wagner's works with a fairly consistent dramatic meaning: it often signifies either magic in general or magical transformation in particular (cf. TARNHELM (R50), LOGE/MAGIC FIRE [FEAR variants; S30], or even the SWAN theme from *Lohengrin*). Here, it symbolizes the *magical life-force* (primal energy) which lies dormant within the Gold, a force which the sun's rays awaken; this force is morally neutral, and may be harnessed for good or ill. Notice how the rhythmic activity increases as the Gold gradually “comes to life” (a symbolic rebirth).

**14. THE GOLD** 31/2/1 (2), lower staff

This fanfare, a rhythmic reshaping of notes 2–5 of the NATURE theme (R1), represents the Gold as an element of Nature, a natural resource containing unrealized potential. Like other Nature themes, it is sequenced upwards through the major triad on its initial appearance; the G major harmony serves as dominant preparation for the upcoming C major (pp. 33 ff.), which in the *Ring* serves as a tonal symbol for light and truth.

**15. NATURE IN MOTION (WATER)** 33/2/1 (1), upper staff

This figuration (a rapid upward surge followed by a slower and longer descent) appears in the *Ring* to represent Nature in physical (external) motion. Here, it depicts the swirling water currents resulting from the Rhinedaughters' swimming; it signifies their joy in the Gold expressed as physical action, just as R16 signifies their joy in the Gold expressed as a vocal utterance.

**16. THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' JOY IN THE GOLD** 36/1/2 (4), Rhinedaughters

With this joyful C major song, the Rhinedaughters “celebrate the glory of the gold in its natural setting” (Cooke). As the drama proceeds, Wagner will gradually transform this theme to express the various effects of Alberich’s terrible realization of the Gold’s potential (e.g., the baleful THE POWER OF THE RING [definitive form; [R54](#)]). The idea comprises two parts:

(a) mm. 1–2 (“*Rheingold! Rheingold!*”)

This cry expresses the Rhinedaughters’ joy through the 6–5 melodic progression (a traditional method of expressing an outburst of pleasure). Later, it will be transformed (in minor) into the SERVITUDE ([R48](#)) theme.

(b) mm. 3–4 (“*heia jahaie! heia jahaie!*”)

This cry will later be transformed (in minor) to express the misery of the enslaved NIBELUNGS ([R45](#) and [R47](#)).

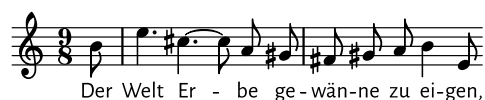
Notice that on their initial appearance (33/1/1 ff.), these two parts are reversed in order; however, the version at 36/1/2 ff. is the definitive one.



17. THE RING (original form) 41/3/4 (2), Wellgunde and upper staff

On its initial appearance, this crucial theme sounds harmless enough, even cheerful (E major); Wellgunde cannot imagine that anyone would actually renounce love in order to forge the Ring. Notice the characteristic parallel thirds (orchestra).

Wagner himself called this the “*Welterbe*” (“World Inheritance”) theme, presumably because of the words associated with its first appearance.

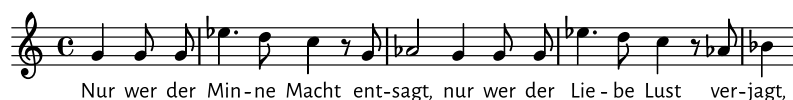


18. THE RENUNCIATION OF LOVE (first form) 43/1/1 (4), Woglinde

This C minor theme expresses the tragedy inherent in the act of forswearing love; more generally, it signifies “the general lovelessness prevailing in the power-ridden world of the drama” (Cooke). As the *Ring* proceeds, many of the main characters remake Alberich’s terrible deed by somehow choosing power over love even if, as with Siegmund, they do it unwittingly).

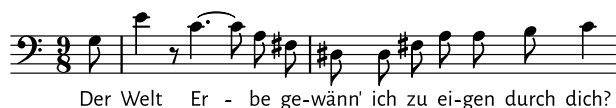
In its original form, this theme recurs to signify the actual act of renunciation (whether Alberich’s or someone else’s); however, it is later transformed into a second version which appears in a variety of situations.

In the *Ring*, Wagner uses C minor as a tonal symbol for darkness (in both a literal and a symbolic sense).



19. THE RING (intermediate form) 47/4/3 (2), upper staff and Alberich

As Alberich muses over the possibility of world power, the original “innocent” form of this theme (restated at 47/3/3 ff. in C major) gives way to a darker E minor version. Remember that this idea first appeared in E major (THE RING [original form; [R17](#)]). The basic tonal conflict of the entire period is C/E, a pairing which will return in Act III, Scene 3 of *Siegfried*.



20. THE RING (definitive form) 53/6/3 (2), upper staff

Now that the Gold has been stolen, and the actual forging of the Ring is imminent, the theme assumes this characteristic form. Like the NATURE themes (R1 and R2), it linearizes a chord, a sinister dissonance rather than a major triad. The upper voice outlines a half-diminished seventh chord, while its doubling a third lower outlines a fully diminished seventh chord. The contour of the theme suggests the circular shape of a ring. THE RING is no longer tied to any tonality; it may appear in any key at any time, suggesting the Ring's power to affect every character and dramatic situation. In *Götterdämmerung*, the dissonant chord underlying this theme (D \sharp -F \sharp -A-C-E, a diminished-minor ninth chord) begins to eat its way more and more into the harmonic fabric of the music, creating an atmosphere of progressive dissolution.



21. NATURE IN MOTION (Air) 54/1/1 (1/4), upper staff

The figuration representing swirling water currents (THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' JOY IN THE GOLD; R16) is gradually transformed into one suggesting air currents and mist, as the scene changes from the depths of the Rhine to the mountain heights.



22. THE RING/VALHALLA TRANSFORMATION 54/5/1 (2)

Beginning at 53/6/3, the chromatic RING theme (R17, R19, and R20) is gradually changed into the diatonic VALHALLA theme (R23; both the Ring and Valhalla are symbols of power). This immediately links Alberich and Wotan, who both aspire to rule the world (but by different means). The penultimate stage of this transformation (54/5/1 ff.) expresses WOTAN'S DREAM OF POWER, out of which Fricka attempts to awaken him; this awakening is a symbolic rebirth, as Wotan begins a new stage in his career. Notice the dominant ninth harmony and the return of the pedal Eb, which thus frames the entire first scene (however, this pedal is no longer harmonically static, as it was in the Prelude).



1.2 Scene 2

23. VALHALLA 55/1/1 (19) and 57/1/1 (21)

This lengthy, majestic theme represents Wotan's fortress, which he built in order to consolidate his power. The castle stands as a concrete symbol of his rather lofty aspirations, but it is a *static* symbol; the *dynamic* symbol of his power is the *Spear*.

The VALHALLA theme contains several parts, each of which may appear independently:

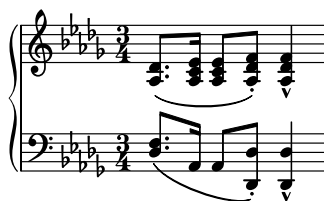
(a) PART I: 55/1/1 (2)

This two-measure idea is often used to signify either THE FORTRESS itself or Wotan as its lord. As mentioned (see [R22](#)), it is a diatonic transformation of THE RING ([R17](#), [R19](#), and [R20](#)); “the harmonic contrast between them expresses the much nobler character of Wotan’s conception of absolute power compared with Alberich’s” (Cooke).



(b) PART II: 55/2/1 (1)

This reworking of m. 2 of the theme expresses WOTAN'S ASPIRATIONS TO POWER by the three-note *rising* figure D \flat –E \flat –F.



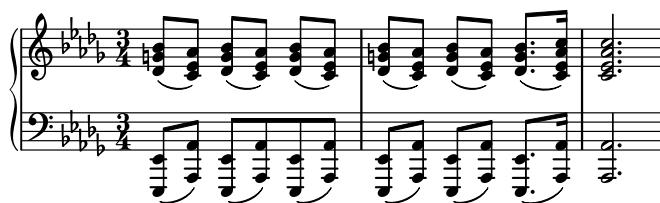
(c) PART III: 55/4/3 (1)

This inverts PART II into a *falling* three-note figure (C–B \flat –A \flat). It suggests the SECURITY OF THE FORTRESS.



(d) PART IV: 55/5/1 (3)

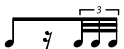
This repeated two-chord oscillation (drawn from PART III) is later used to express PEACE ([W69](#)), tranquility, and rest.



(e) PART V: 57/4/6 (3)

This cadential figure summarizes the noble character or MAJESTY OF THE FORTRESS; the last four notes are similar to LOVE ([W7](#)), perhaps indicating that Valhalla was built at the expense of love.



(f) FANFARE: 55/1/4 ()

This repeated-note trumpet fanfare, a military gesture, suggests Wotan's warlike nature and the fact that Valhalla will soon become a military stronghold; it will later be transformed into the JOY OF BATTLE fanfare ([W3c](#)), and into a funereal figure associated with the proximity of death. Ultimately, it will dominate THE FUNERAL PYRE ([G4](#) and [G21](#)), as the hour of Valhalla's destruction draws near.



Henceforth, the key of D \flat serves as a tonal symbol for Valhalla.

24. THE SPEAR (embryonic form) 58/3/2 (3)

This imperious descending scale begins in D minor with the ANGUISH ([R9](#)) semitone ($\hat{6}-\hat{5}$); its inexorable downward progress is finally checked by an E major triad.

Wotan's Spear is the agency of his power, analogous to Alberich's Ring; like the dwarf, Wotan fashioned it by ravishing Nature (the World Ash Tree). The theme sometimes refers to the Spear itself, sometimes to the treatiest engraved on its shaft; but both object and theme always symbolize WOTAN'S WILL TO POWER, his will towards lawful world-domination.

The descending minor scale suggests the negative, harmful aspects of Wotan's egoism; as the cycle proceeds, both theme and Wotan undergo many transformations. In *Die Walküre*, the key of D minor symbolizes Wotan's unfree will (objectified in Siegmund); E major symbolizes the compassionate love (objectified in Brünnhilde) which opposes this will, just as the E major triad here checks the D minor scale.

The theme was adumbrated at 56/4/2 ff., at Wotan's awakening.



25. DOMESTIC BLISS 61/1/4 (4), Fricka

This is the first of a family of themes which express the inspiring power of women; these ideas are musically linked through the interval of a falling seventh ("Wohnung").

This particular theme first appears when Fricka extols to Wotan the joys of a comfortable domestic life in Valhalla. Fricka, of course, is the Goddess of Marriage. The theme reappears in Act III, Scene 3 of *Siegfried*, where it musically sanctifies the marital union of Siegfried and Brünnhilde.



26. FREIA (original form) 64/1/1 (3), upper staff

The initial, agitated version of this theme depicts Freia fleeing from the Giants; it later settles into a slower, definitive form. Freia is the Goddess of Love (equivalent to the Roman Venus or the Greek Aphrodite), and her theme reappears throughout the Ring to express LOVE (R8 and W9) in its various aspects. It contains two parts:

(a) PART I: 64/1/1 (1)

This rising arpeggio with chromatic passing tone will later express the *sensual* aspect of love. It was adumbrated at 63/2/1 (upper staff).

(b) PART II: 64/1/2 (first 4 notes)

This four-note figure (here, C–B–F \sharp –A) is Wagner’s basic LOVE theme (R8); it will later express the *compassionate* aspect of love. Here, it is sequenced to depict Freia’s distress. (N.B.: Contrary to many commentators, this motive does *not* express Flight!)



27. THE GIANTS 68/1/1 (7)

This ponderous theme is characterized by repeated notes, heavy dotted rhythms, a forceful 5–1 bass (which later infects the melodic line), and a suggestion of the Phrygian mode (on C). Wagner “puns” with this last element: C ultimately turns out to be the dominant of F major/minor. The theme is restated in A (68/3/3 ff.), then finally on F (69/2/1 ff.); hereafter, the F/f tonality is associated with the Giants.

Measure 3 of the theme is melodically similar to THE NIBELUNGS (R45 and R47), and suggests a connection between these two races. The theme was rhythmically adumbrated at 58/4/1 (lower staff) and 64/3/5 ff., when the Giants were mentioned.



28. IRREVOCABLE LAW (original form) 71/2/1 (4), Fasolt

This theme is connected with the irrevocable character of the treaties sworn and engraved on Wotan’s spear. The basic three-note motive (see orchestra) features a falling diminished seventh (tonally implying the key of f); this motive is sequenced a major second lower (implying e \flat).



29. THE TREATY WITH THE GIANTS 72/1/2 (5), Fasolt

This theme combines the rising NATURE (R1 and R2) arpeggio (infected by the rhythm of THE GIANTS [R27]) with the descending scale of THE SPEAR (R24 and R35); it almost always appears as a two-part canon (here, voice imitated by low strings), since there are two Giants. This fusion of complementary opposites indicates that Wotan's deceitful treaties violate the laws of Nature. After its initial appearance in E \flat (NATURE), the theme is almost immediately repeated by the orchestra in F minor (GIANTS). This suggests that the stupid but honest Giants are much closer to Nature than Wotan is; in Scene 4, they will re-enter in the key of E \flat (see 181/4/3 ff.).



30. FREIA (intermediate form) 73/3/2 (3), upper staff

During Wotan and the Giants' discussion of Freia, her theme has gradually slowed down and worked towards a definitive version; first at 69/3/5 (upper staff), then at 72/4/5 (upper staff), although these appearances involve only the ascending arpeggio. The present version states both parts in a slow, expressive version; Fasolt doubles Part II, the LOVE (R8) motive ("wonnig und mild").

These slower versions occur in the key of D major, which is now associated with Freia and her attributes: love, youth, and beauty.



31. FREIA'S GOLDEN APPLES 74/2/1 (2), Fafner

In addition to being the Goddess of Love, Freia is also the Goddess of Youth and Beauty, qualities which her apples bestow upon the gods. The apples are, in a sense, the gods' equivalent of the Rhinegold; when Freia is taken away, darkness (old age) descends. More generally, they symbolize what one loses by renouncing love: youth, happiness, and fertility.

Appropriately, m. 1 of the theme is a major-mode form of THE RENUNCIATION OF LOVE (first form; R18), while m. 2 is a variant of THE GOLD theme (R14). Also, the entire theme resembles part of the song in which the Rhinedaughters praised the Gold (see 33/2/3 ff.—"Leuchtende Lust...hehr!").



32. TWILIGHT 74/4/1 (6)

This theme represents the premature old age and decay resulting from the loss of Freia's apples; it concretely symbolizes the consequences of Wotan's renunciation of love (his bartering away of Freia). It contains two segments:

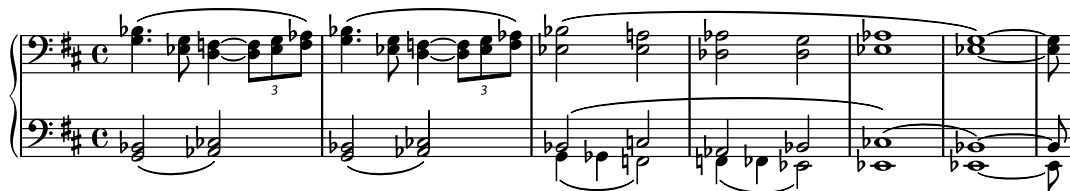
- (a) the TWILIGHT motive: 74/4/1 (1)

This is a variant of m. 1 of the GOLDEN APPLES theme (R31).

- (b) the TWILIGHT chords: 74/4/3 (1)

The descending chromaticism of this two-chord progression (major first-inversion triad, major/minor seventh) represents death and decay.

The entire six-bar theme prolongs an $E\flat$ major triad, which in the overall tonal context (D major) functions as Neapolitan ($\flat II$). In the *Ring*, the Neapolitan consistently appears as a tonal symbol for death, dissolution, and decay. (N.B.: In this case, the *harmonic function*, not the tonal level, is crucial.)



33. FROH 75/4/2 (7)

Froh is Freia's brother, and this exuberant variant of the GOLDEN APPLES theme (R31) expresses his youthful optimism, a sentiment which soon vanishes (along with its theme) from the world of the *Ring*.



34. DONNER'S WRATH 76/1/5 (2) and 76/4/2 (4)

This rather empty unison flourish expresses Donner's blustery, aggressive nature. Although Wotan cannot permit violence against the Giants, he will soon find more use for Donner's aggression than for Froh's optimism.





35. **THE SPEAR (definitive form)** 77/1/2 (5)

Wotan's first use of his Spear in the cycle is underscored by the appearance of its powerful definitive form on the trombones. Wotan here "imposes the law by the main force of his will" (Cooke).

This form was approached at 70/4/1 (4), when Fasolt reminded Wotan of the binding force of the treaties.



36. **IRREVOCABLE LAW (definitive form)** 77/2/2 (5)


Transposing IRREVOCABLE LAW (original form; R28) a half-step lower yields A–C–D \sharp –G–B \flat –C \sharp ; the D \sharp (E \flat) and C \sharp are here transferred from the vocal line to the orchestral counterpoint.

37. **LOGE** 77/4/2 ff.

Loge is one of the key characters in the tetralogy, even though he personally appears only in *Das Rheingold*. On the *literal* level, he is a.) the God of Fire, and b.) the God of Trickery and Deception; the second attribute is represented by his anthropomorphic appearance in *Das Rheingold*, the first by his fire in the rest of the cycle. On the *symbolic* level, his fire represents primary energy in its purest form—eternally in flux, endlessly becoming (cf. the philosophy of Heraclitus). This comes very close to Schopenhauer's concept of the Will itself—that blind, incessant, self-conflicting striving which the philosopher posited as the *Ding an sich*, the noumenon, the essence of the world, the ultimate reality. This primal energy later objectifies itself in both Siegfried and Brünnhilde, but in Loge's fire it appears in a pure state. Loge has achieved an almost total separation of intellect and will.

Loge's music contains three basic elements:

(a) i. 77/4/2 (4)

A four-note figure featuring two chromatically related perfect fourths (e.g., $F\sharp-C\sharp$ and $D-G$) is sequenced upwards by step. The resultant *ascending* line is a chromatic diminution of the definitive NATURE theme (**R2**); one can see this by separating the theme into two rhythmic layers: . The “upper line” ($F\sharp-G-G\sharp-A$ etc.) varies **R2a**, while the lower line varies **R2b**.



ii. 78/2/3 (4)

This is an inversion of a.1; the chromatically rising fourths are now *descending* fifths. It represents the first inversion of the basic NATURE (**R11** and **R2**) idea, forecasting the later THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS (**R66**) and indicating that Loge will be a prime mover in the final downfall (the return to Nature). It was adumbrated in augmentation at 65/4/2 (2) and 70/4/5 (3).



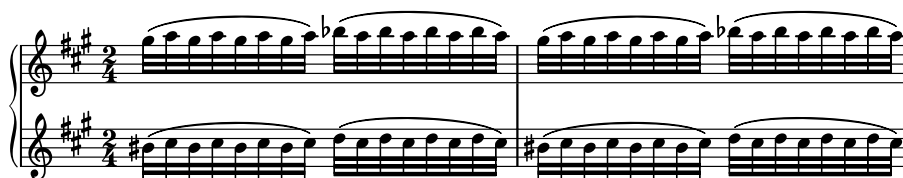
(b) 77/4/6 (2)

An ascending chromatic scale (a “pure” form of a.1).



(c) 78/1/2 (2)

A measured trill.



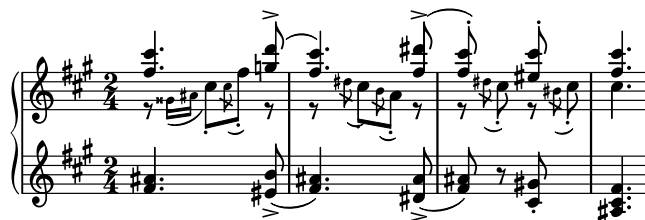
All three parts are harmonized by parallel major first-inversion triads (only hinted at in the vocal score); this recalls ALBERICH'S AGGRESSION (**R5**), an expression of the Will manifested in the dwarf's physical strivings. Refer to the orchestral score to see how ingeniously Wagner orchestrates Loge's music.

38. LOGE'S MAGIC FIRE 78/1/4 (4)

This idea, used later to accompany the physical appearance of Loge's primal fire, is appropriately based upon the MAGIC source theme of THE GOLD'S MAGICAL LIGHT (**R13**): a 5–6–5 shift over a triad. In m. 2, the fifth ($C\sharp$) of the $F\sharp$ tonic

triad is neighbored by D \sharp ; this D \sharp is supported by its doubling an octave lower, creating an apparent I–vi–I progression (henceforth the definitive harmonic form of the MAGIC source theme). The theme is accompanied by “flickering” string figurations, which were adumbrated at 64/4/3 ff.

The chromatic nature of Loge’s music renders its tonality somewhat elusive (like the god himself!), but F \sharp seems implied. Thus F \sharp stands temporarily as a tonal symbol for falsity and deception, as C major (a tritone away) stands for truth.



39. SCHEMING (original form) 84/2/1 (2)

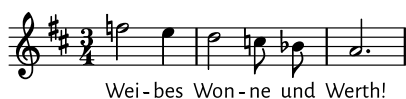
This descent of a seventh, harmonized in parallel thirds, derives from THE RING (R20, notes 1 and 4). It is here played by strings as a passing reference to Loge’s craftiness; later, however, it attaches itself to Alberich and Mime in its definitive tone color (bassoons).



40. THE RENUNCIATION OF LOVE (second form) 85/4/1 (3), Loge

The transformation of THE RENUNCIATION OF LOVE (second form; R18) into this second version began at 62/4/1 (2), when Fricka sang its first phrase in D minor (“*Lieb und Weibes Werth?*”) above a $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{4}$ bass line. The second stage occurred at 73/2/1 (2), when Fasolt sang “*Weibes Wonne zum Pfand*”; here the orchestra reversed the last two melodic notes of the phrase ($\hat{5}$ – $\hat{6}$) as well as the $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{4}$ bass line (creating a iv^7 –V progression). Finally, at 85/4/1 (3), Loge fills in the remaining melodic gap ($\hat{7}$), and his descending scale from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{5}$ is doubled at the lower third by the orchestra.

This second version may occur in either major or minor, in any key, usually as a cadence but with a variety of dramatic meanings. Here, it refers to that which men give up by renouncing love: “Woman’s beauty and worth.”



41. NATURE IN MOTION (EARTH) 85/4/3 (1), lower staff

The figuration, which first represented swirling water currents (NATURE IN MOTION [WATER] [R15]), then air currents and mist (NATURE IN MOTION [AIR] [R21]), is now slowed down into a version more appropriate to the earth; it accompanies Loge’s tale of his quest, and in *Die Walküre* will preface Siegmund’s “Spring Song.”



42. FREIA, PART I: SENSUAL LOVE (definitive form) 85/4/7 (2), upper staff

The basic NATURE (R1 and R2) arpeggio (here, D major) is varied by a triplet and a chromatic passing tone; this sinuous definitive version of Freia's theme now refers to the *sensual* aspect of love between man and woman. Its derivation from the NATURE theme reflects Wagner's view that such love is natural, in contrast to Wotan's (and society's) unnatural laws and restrictions.



43. THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' JOY IN THE GOLD/THE POWER OF THE RING TRANSFORMATION 88/3/1 (4), upper staff

Wagner now begins to transform R16, which expressed THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' JOY IN THE GOLD in its natural state, into a theme expressing Alberich's sadistic pleasure in wielding the Ring forged from the Gold. At this stage, the orchestra merely plays R16 in the minor mode; the first seventh chord is now fully-diminished, rather than half-diminished.



44. THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' LAMENT FOR THE GOLD (embryonic form) 89/2/1 (4)

The last two measures of THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' JOY IN THE GOLD (R16; in its original C major) are melodically modified (replacing the "heia jaheia" unit); when this variant is expanded in Scene 4, the first two measures will be harmonically modified as well. The Rhinedaughters' joy has changed into a lament for their lost Gold.



45. THE NIBELUNGS (embryonic form) 92/3/2 (1), upper staff

This rhythmically varies m. 3 of THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' JOY IN THE GOLD/THE POWER OF THE RING TRANSFORMATION (R43); it ultimately derives from the Rhinedaughters' cry "heia jaheia!" (R16b). Their "joy in the potentiality of the gold has been transformed into the Nibelungs' misery in working on the gold, musically as well as dramatically" (Cooke).



46. FREIA, PART II: COMPASSIONATE LOVE (definitive form) 112/5/2 (3), lower staff

Alberich's cry of "die dritte, so traut" (LOVE [embryonic form; R8b]) is whipped into a fury by the orchestra beginning at 111/6/4 to depict his descent to Nibelheim from the Rhine after Scene 1. His "thwarted desire for love has turned bitter, and is being transformed into a fierce lust for power" (Cooke).

Now, at 112/5/2 ff., this same four-note motive is played in rhythmic augmentation by the brass. In this slow but powerful minor mode form, it is "like the lament of love itself, expelled from this world of naked power" (Cooke). In *Die Walküre*, this idea will attach itself to the doomed lovers Siegmund and Sieglinde. In general, however, the slow version of this theme represents the *compassionate* side of love, as opposed to its sensual aspect.



47. THE NIBELUNGS (definitive form) 113/1/1 (1), top staff

This one-bar motive, often used as a rhythmic ostinato, suggests the dwarves' hammering as they toil in the mines for Alberich. Although ultimately derived from the Rhinedaughters' "*heia jaheia*" cry (R16b), its repeated notes and $\hat{5}-\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{5}$ melodic progression link it with THE GIANTS (R27; see m. 3).

Henceforth, the key of B \flat minor (the relative minor of Valhalla's D \flat major) functions as a tonal symbol for Alberich's power over the Nibelungs. It is important to realize that the Ring gives Alberich direct power only over his fellow dwarfs; it is by means of the gold which they mine that he hopes to conquer the world.



48. SERVITUDE 114/3/1 (1), lower staff

This two-note descending semitone has two sources: Alberich's cry of ANGUISH (R9) and THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' JOY IN THE GOLD (R16a), now distorted). In its present form (doubled in bare octaves), the idea represents the Nibelungs' painful enslavement to Alberich and the Ring; when the idea returns at 121/5/2 ff., the grace notes suggest Alberich whipping the dwarfs.



1.3 Scene 3

49. MIMES ANGUISH 116/1/3 (2), Mime

This rhythmic diminution of ANGUISH (R9) and SERVITUDE (R48; sometimes inverted) depicts Mime's howls of pain at his mistreatment by Alberich. Presently he is enslaved to Alberich; in *Siegfried*, he will be enslaved to the Ring itself, through his desire to possess it.



50. THE TARNHELM 118/3/2 (16)

This mysterious theme was adumbrated at 95/3/2 ff.; its first phrase was stated at 117/2/6 ff.; it now appears in its definitive two-phrase form.

It begins with the MAGIC source theme, as this appeared in LOGE'S MAGIC FIRE (R38); now, however, the harmonic progression occurs in *minor* ($g\sharp$: i-vi-i). The antecedent phrase cadences on a B-F \sharp open fifth (implying III); the consequent embellishes this perfect fifth with an E minor triad (melodically suggesting SERVITUDE [R48]) before proceeding to an authentic cadence (V-I). The period is thus held together by a structural i-III-V-I harmonic progression.

Literally, the Tarnhelm is a device for effecting a magical transformation; *symbolically*, it reveals the wearer's innermost nature in all its horror, depicting Alberich as a ferocious serpent and a loathsome toad; Fafner as a stupid, loutish dragon; and Siegfried as a cruel, heartless Gibichung. It is thus an agent for revealing and releasing "the beast within."

In *Das Rheingold*, the Tarnhelm is associated with the key of $g\sharp$; in *Götterdämmerung*, its tendency to tonicize B is emphasized.



51. ALBERICH'S POWER OVER THE NIBELUNGS 120/1/4 (6), Alberich

This theme expresses Alberich's evil tyranny; it contains two parts:

(a) 120/1/4 (2)

Alberich's repeated cry "*Hoho!*" features an ascending $\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ vocal line (always a melodic symbol for strength) and an orchestral harmonization of SERVITUDE (R48; $E\flat-D$).

(b) 120/2/2 (4)

The tritone on "*Niblungen all*" expresses Alberich's evil; a traditional musical symbol for demonic forces, it will return in *Götterdämmerung* to represent Hagen. The rising line $B\flat-C-D\flat$ expresses Alberich's aspirations to power. The entire four-bar idea is derived from the upper line of THE RING (R20; the tritone of notes two and four with the rising line of notes 5–7).

When the theme is restated at 120/4/3 ff., the two parts are reversed; Part B is compressed, but Part A is expanded. Part A is similar to DONNER'S POWER OVER THE STORM (R69; also in $B\flat$, a tonal symbol for power). Additionally, it forecasts Hagen's Rallying Cry (G29).



52. SCHEMING (intermediate form) 123/2/3 (2), lower staff

SCHEMING (original form; R39) is now associated with Mime in its definitive tone color (bassoons); however, under the influence of ALBERICH'S POWER OVER THE NIBELUNGS (R51b, its descending seventh has been replaced by a diminished fifth.

Alberich originally entered in the key of g , but his new power has given him a new tonality: $b\flat$. Mime now appropriates the "vacated" key of g .



53. RESENTMENT (embryonic form) 131/4/1 ff.

These syncopated chords express Alberich's resentment against the gods; here they appear in their characteristic tone color (low clarinets), but their distinctive rhythmic and harmonic shape will not appear until Scene 4.



54. THE POWER OF THE RING 133/3/5 (5)

This is the final stage of the transformation of THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' JOY IN THE GOLD (R16) into a theme expressing Alberich's sadistic pleasure in wielding the Ring. Harmonically, it usually tonicizes the dominant of $b\flat$. Like R16, it contains two parts:

(a) mm. 1–2

This distortion of the original "*Rheingold!*" cry harmonizes SERVITUDE (R48); a diminished-seventh chord on E and a major triad on $G\flat$ surround $V/b\flat$, which is deferred until m. 5.

(b) mm. 3–5

This distortion of "*heia jaheia!*" (notes 1–4; see R16b) is elided with a rising three-note figure (F–G–A) which signifies Alberich's aspirations to power. This idea originated in the last 3 notes of THE RING (R20); it also appears in THE TARNHELM (R50, end of Phrase 1) and forms the basis for THE RISING HORDE (R56). At 127/2/5 ff. it appears in rhythmic diminution to express Mime's pitiful aspirations to power.



55. THE ALBERICH/LOGE CONFLICT 137/2/1 (8)

This theme contains two opposing elements:

(a) mm. 1–2

This rising diatonic bass line represents ALBERICH'S DEFIANCE; it is an extension of the three-note figure expressing his ASPIRATIONS TO POWER (see R56).

(b) mm. 3–8

This descending version of LOGE (R37a2) expresses LOGE'S MOCKERY OF ALBERICH'S AMBITIONS. Beginning at 135/2/1, Loge's music has gradually become more diatonic and tonal.

Wagner probably chose the key of A for Alberich's downfall because 1.) it is a half-step lower than Alberich's $b\flat$, and 2.) it is closely related to Loge's original $f\sharp/F\sharp$.



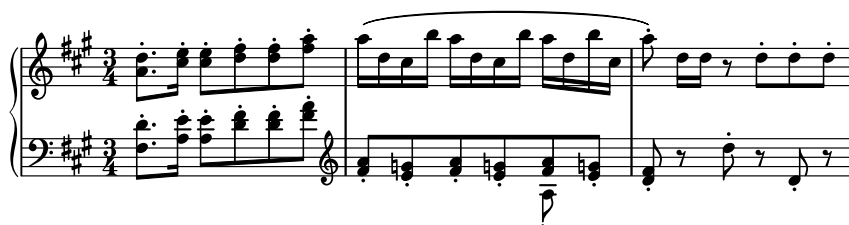
56. THE RISING HORDE 137/4/5 (2)

This three-note ascent ($\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ in minor) derives ultimately from the last three notes of THE RING (R20); it expresses ALBERICH'S ASPIRATIONS TO POWER, just as VALHALLA PART II (R23b) $\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ in major) expresses WOTAN'S ASPIRATIONS TO POWER.

The theme is sequenced by ascending steps to suggest "some monstrous evil rising from the depths to engulf the world" (Cooke). It finds its characteristic tonality (Alberich's $b\flat$) at 143/1/5 ff.

**57. THE ARROGANCE OF POWER** 144/4/2 (3)

This idea combines a rapid version of VALHALLA PART II (R23b) with a diatonic form of LOGE (R37; first heard in this tonally stable version on pp. 135–136). At this point it represents Loge's mockery of Alberich's ambition to conquer Valhalla; later in the cycle (especially in *Siegfried*) it will represent the ambition itself.

**58. THE DRAGON (SERPENT)** 150/3/1 (1), lower staff

This four-note motive derives from Phrase 1 of THE TARNHELM (R50; cf. p. 150, mm. 4–7, upper line). The rising sequences suggest the beast lifting its head; the intervallic augmentation depicts its jaws opening. Wagner's term "Wurm" can mean either serpent or dragon—in either case, a monstrous reptile. The theme is later appropriated by Fafner when he transforms himself into a dragon.

**59. THE TOAD** 153/4/3 (4)

The bass line of this theme ($G\sharp-F-G\sharp$) is lifted from the final cadence of THE TARNHELM (R50; cf. 153/4/2, tenor voice). The two-note figure representing the toad's hopping was adumbrated at 152/2/2 ff.

**1.4 Scene 4****60. ALBERICH'S RAGE** 171/1/2 (2)

This idea has both a vocal and an orchestral form:

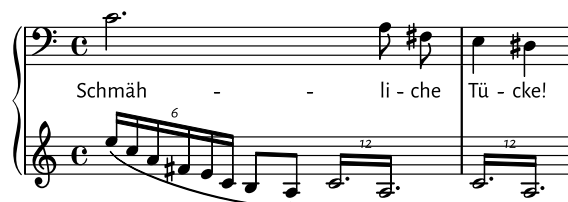
- (a) vocal form: Alberich ("*Schmähliche Tücke!*")

This is based on the descending melodic thirds of THE RING (R20, lower voice), culminating in the SERVITUDE (r48) semitone.

- (b) orchestral form: upper staff

This is basically a rhythmic diminution of the vocal form.

The theme expresses Alberich's rage over Wotan's theft of the Ring; it recurs during the confrontation in *Siegfried* Act II, Scene 1. Musically, its working-out on p. 171 forms a bridge between THE RING (R20) and THE CURSE (R63 and R67).



61. THE RENUNCIATION OF LOVE (third form) 173/4/7 (3), Alberich

This slow, minor-mode version of R40 now expresses Alberich's sense of *futility* (he has renounced love, but has nothing to show for it); it frequently recurs in connection with this sentiment.



62. RESENTMENT (definitive form) 174/4/3 (1)

This one-bar motive contains three elements:

- (a) an augmented, syncopated version of the rhythm of THE NIBELUNGS (R47).
- (b) a diminished triad drawn from THE RING (R20).
- (c) a thirty-second-note upbeat originating with the loosening of Alberich's bonds (cf. 174/2/7 ff.).

At 176/1/1 (5) this motive is stated thrice; then the diminished triad becomes augmented (m. 4) and minor (m. 5) to support a chromatically ascending melodic line. Thus, the motive is spun-out into a five-bar unit. The pulsating thirds (from THE RING [R20]) are played by low clarinets.

The theme expresses Alberich's urge to annihilate whatever stands in the way of his regaining the Ring.



63. THE CURSE (original form) 175/2/4 ff., Alberich

This vocal theme is appropriately derived from the four-note descent (in thirds) of THE RING (R20); it contains several parts:

(a) PART I: 175/2/4 (5) - ("Wie durch Fluch...Ring!")

This retrogrades the original four-note descent (the half-diminished seventh chord of F \sharp); the concluding C major triad ("dieser Ring!", then orchestra) superimposed over the F \sharp pedal becomes an important associative harmony (note the "evil" tritone).



(b) PART II: 175/4/2 (4) - ("Kein Froher...Glanz!")

This descent splits the original parallel thirds into two successive lines; first the fully diminished seventh chord, then the half-diminished one. This variant stems from ALBERICH'S RAGE (R60), and in *Götterdämmerung* becomes THE VOW OF ATONEMENT (G17c).



(c) PART III: 177/1/1 (3) - ("Dem Tode...Furcht")

This variant of PART I refers to the DEATH-DOOM of the Curse. Note the harmonies: parallel major triads (D \flat -D-E \flat) over a pedal C.



Henceforth, the key of B minor is associated with Alberich's Curse (a half-step above his characteristic b \flat). In *Die Walküre*, b is also a tonal symbol for the Valkyries, whom Wotan begets in a vain attempt to ward off the Curse.

64. FREIA'S SHAME 184/1/3 (1), Wotan

This variant (by intervallic diminution) of FREIA PART II (R46) really expresses the deep shame felt by all the gods as they view Freia's disgrace. Its piquant harmonization ($\flat 6-5$ appoggiatura over V 7) originated at 183/3/6.



65. ERDA/THE NORNS 193/1/2 (2), upper staff

The mysterious, all-knowing Earth Goddess Erda represents the eternal wisdom of Nature; the Norns share their mother's wisdom as well as her musical theme. Ultimately, Brünnhilde, Erda's daughter by Wotan, will inherit this wisdom.

Erda's theme is a minor-mode variant of NATURE (definitive form; R2a); her c \sharp tonality is the parallel minor of Wotan's D \flat . The theme itself seems to depict Erda rising from the depths.

At 193/1/2 ff., Erda's theme lacks the eighth-note figurations which originally represented THE LIFEFORCE IN NATURE (R2b); she symbolizes Natural wisdom itself, detached from any life-strivings. When she speaks of the Norns (193/3/1

ff.), these figurations return, suggesting their spinning; in *Götterdämmerung*, these figurations are inverted to produce THE NORNS' SPINNING (G1).

Thus far, the same basic theme has represented NATURE (R2) manifesting itself as water (THE RHINE [R3]), fire (LOGE [R37]), and now Earth.



66. THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS 194/2/1 (2), upper staff

This *inversion* of ERDA (R65) and NATURE (R2a) turns a melodic symbol of life and growth into one of death and decay. It suggests that the destruction of the gods will ultimately bring things full cycle back to Nature. Again, the Neapolitan (D = $bII/c\sharp$) expresses impending doom and dissolution.



67. THE CURSE (definitive form) 200/3/3 (4)

As Alberich's Curse claims its first victim, R63a assumes this definitive rhythmic shape and tone color (trombones).



68. THE SWIRLING MISTS 204/1/2 (1/4)

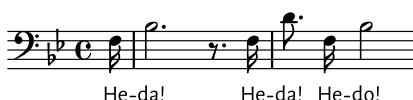
Refer to the orchestral score for the correct notation (overlapping half-measure groups) and scoring of these string figurations, which suggest the air currents and mists swirling about Donner. Essentially, this triadic figure is a final variant of NATURE (R2b), now representing THE LIFE-FORCE IN AIR (the fourth and final element). The sextuplets recall the rhythm of DONNER'S WRATH (R34).



69. DONNER'S POWER OVER THE STORM 204/1/2 (2), Donner

A rhythmic variant of notes 5–7 of the original NATURE (R1), this idea (B \flat major) also recalls the “Hoho!” cries from ALBERICH'S POWER OVER THE NIBELUNGS (R51a; b \flat minor). Wagner clearly shows that both Valhalla and Nibelheim are founded upon male aggression. Wotan will later absorb Donner's aggressive nature and bequeath it to the Valkyries, whose theme is remarkably similar to this one. Again, the $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{1}$ melodic progression symbolizes strength.

At 204/4/2 (2), the horns restate this theme in C major, as the heavens thunder back a response.



He-da! He-da! He-do!

70. THE RAINBOW 208/3/1 (4), lower staff

Notes 3–7 of NATURE (R1) are extended by one more triad degree (to $\hat{5}$), then reversed, suggesting the arched shape of a rainbow; the theme is sequenced upwards through the major triad, recalling the first appearance of R2. This idea represents Nature manifested in the element air; it is accompanied by a combination of R68 (symbolizing THE LIFE-FORCE IN AIR) and R14 (now representing the radiance of Valhalla rather than that of the Gold), but this can be seen only in the orchestral score.

The rainbow is a traditional symbol of hope, but in this case the hope is clearly illusory. Wagner suggests this by the key of G \flat , which 1.) enters as a deceptive resolution (B \flat : V–VI) and resolves as subdominant (D \flat : IV–I); 2.) is a tritone away from C major, the key of *true* light; and 3.) is enharmonically equivalent to the F \sharp of Loge’s deceptive fire. Also, the rainbow is created by Froh, who symbolizes misplaced youthful optimism.

The theme was adumbrated at 181/1/2 ff., as Froh sang Freia’s praises, and even before that at 178/5/6 ff., as the orchestra anticipated Freia’s return.



71. THE SWORD/WOTAN’S GREAT IDEA 213/1/3 (2), upper staff

This theme is derived from the original NATURE arpeggio (R1) by eliminating the first note and repeating the third an octave lower; the $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{1}$ “strength” motive and the descending octave are important components. Its C major tonality and its drive to the “optimistic” third scale degree (E) reveal this theme as a musical symbol of Wotan’s “great thought,” his plan to save the gods from the doom foretold by Erda; only later will the theme be associated with the Sword, a central component of that plan.

By restating ERDA (R65) on D \flat at 212/3/4 (2), Wagner clarifies the musical derivation and symbolic significance of THE SWORD. Its obvious relation to DONNER’S POWER OVER THE STORM (R69) reveals that Wotan’s “great plan” will, unfortunately, be founded upon male aggression.

In *Die Walküre*, both Sword and theme acquire an obvious sexual symbolism as well.



72. THE PURPOSE OF THE SWORD 213/1/5 (4), Wotan

This theme expresses Wotan’s plan to preserve Valhalla through the agency of the Sword. It contains two parts:

(a) PART I: mm. 1–2 (“*So grüss’ ich die Burg*”)

The descending vocal octave (“*So grüss*”) derives from THE SWORD (R71), the descending orchestral bass line (which recalls THE SPEAR [R35]) from VALHALLA PART V (R23e, bass line).

(b) PART II: mm. 3–4 (“*sicher vor Bang’ und Grau’n!*”)

The melodic motive formed by a falling fifth and two rising steps (here suggesting $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{1}$ – $\hat{2}$ – $\hat{3}$ in A minor) is frequently used by Wagner to suggest an *impediment*, a *thwarting* of one’s purpose. Throughout the cycle, this idea will be transformed into themes associated with people who stand in the way of the preservation of Valhalla (Fricka, the Gibichungs, etc.).



73. THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' LAMENT FOR THE GOLD (definitive form) 216/2/1 (16), Rhinedaughters

This theme begins (mm. 1–4) as a variant of R44; the opening vii^{ø7}–I progression is replaced by V⁷/III–I in A \flat , thus relating the key of the Gold (C = III/A \flat) to the sonority associated with the Rhinedaughters on their first appearance (A \flat $\frac{6}{4}$ chord). The initial four-bar unit is spun-out into a sixteen-measure period.

The second verse of their song (219/1/4 ff.) begins with the chord progression c \flat minor–G \flat major; in terms of the previous D \flat cadence, these chords function as iv/iv–IV. Note, however, that c \flat = b (the key of the Curse), and that G \flat is the key of the illusory Rainbow.

Rhein - gold! Rhein - gold! rei - nes Gold! wie lau-ter und hell

Rhein - gold! Rhein - gold! rei - nes Gold! wie lau-ter und hell

Rhein - gold! Rhein - gold! rei - nes Gold! wie lau - ter und

leuch-te-test hold__ du uns! Um dich, du kla-res, wir nun kla-gen:

leuch-te-test hold__ du uns! Um dich, du kla-res, wir nun kla-gen:

hell leuch - te-test du! Um dich, du kla-res, wir nun kla-gen:

gebt uns das Gold, gebt uns das Gold! O gebt und das rei - - - ne zu-rück!

gebt uns das Gold, gebt uns das Gold! O gebt und das rei - - - ne zu-rück!

gebt uns das Gold, gebt uns das Gold! O gebt uns das rei - - - ne zu-rück!

2 *Die Walküre*

Note: Themes which originated in *Das Rheingold* are not cited again, unless these themes are significantly transformed.

2.1 Act I

1. THE THUNDERSTORM 1/1/1 (2), lower staff

This theme synthesizes the pitches of THE SPEAR (R24; descending D minor scale beginning upon $\hat{6}$) with the contour of NATURE IN MOTION (rapid upward surge followed by slower descent; see R15, R21, R41, W23, and G38). It symbolizes the fact that Wotan has stirred up the storm which drives Siegmund to Hunding's hut.



2. LIGHTNING 4/2/4 (2)

This is a jagged, descending version of DONNER'S POWER OVER THE STORM (R69), which is itself recapitulated in its original form (3/2/4 ff.; note the identical pitch level—B \flat —as well as the reappearance of the ascending chromatic run and the timpani downbeat). Although Wotan has by now rejected Froh's misplaced youthful optimism, he has absorbed Donner's aggression and become a god of war.



3. SIEGMUND (original form) 5/4/5 (4)

On its first appearance, Siegmund's personal theme contains three components:

(a) SIEGMUND himself: mm. 1–2 (lower staff)

Clearly a transformation of THE THUNDERSTORM (W1), this idea derives ultimately from THE SPEAR (R35). Siegmund is not the free agent Wotan believes him to be; he is merely one more expression of Wotan's will to power.

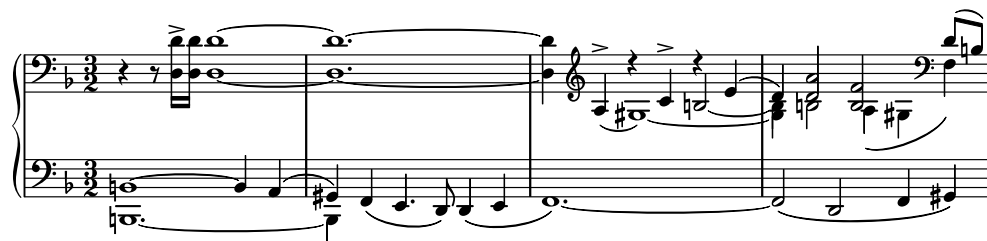
(b) SIEGMUND'S EXHAUSTION: mm. 3–4 (upper staff)

Beginning with a rhythmic variant of SERVITUDE (R48, here suggesting Siegmund's weary steps), this idea concludes by outlining a half-diminished seventh chord which, at this pitch level (B–D–F–A), will later be verticalized to form the MISFORTUNE chord (W8). The chord is already implicit in the pitch pattern of W3a, and originates in the descending thirds of THE RING (R20).

(c) JOY OF BATTLE fanfare (rhythmic pattern)

This rhythm suggests Siegmund's warlike nature; it later attaches itself to other characters. It derives from VALHALLA FANFARE (R23f), since Valhalla has now become a military stronghold where heroes like Siegmund go after death.

This thematic complex is saturated with the G \sharp diminished-seventh harmony of #2, as Siegmund materializes out of the storm. The ultimate resolution to D minor (6/4/2 ff.) associates Siegmund with this tonality, the key of his father's will.



4. **SIEGMUND (definitive form)** 7/2/1 (3)

The two rising steps which concluded the original version ([W3a](#)) are now replaced by two rising minor thirds (outlining a diminished triad). Siegmund now becomes associated with the 'cello timbre, his unharmonized unison line suggesting the fact that he is a lonely outcast.



5. **SIEGLINDE** 7/3/4 (1), upper staff

This is a complementary opposite to Siegmund's theme; his descending scale is mirrored by her ascending triad, his ascending thirds by her descending steps. It is almost always doubled by a second voice and stated twice. On its first appearance, it is already contrapuntally combined with [SIEGMUND \(W4\)](#).



6. **THE DRINK** 8/3/1 (8)

As Sieglinde offers Siegmund a drink, their combined themes are spun-out into this beautiful cantilena (the process actually begins at 8/1/6), symbolizing the intertwining of their fates. This moment represents Siegmund's spiritual rebirth; the drink is the Water of Life.



7. **LOVE (definitive form)** 9/2/3 (9)

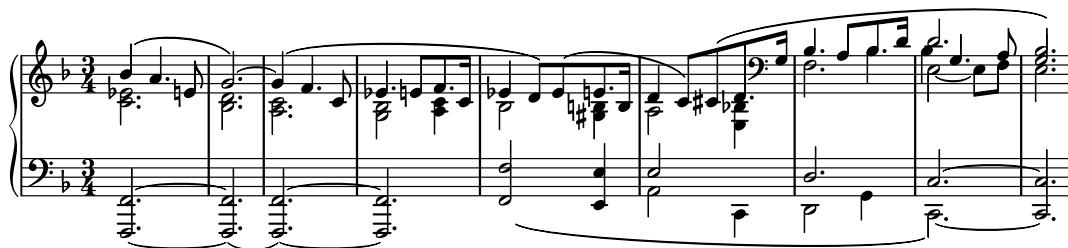
This expansive theme is evolved entirely out of [FREIA PART II \(R46\)](#). Its two components are later used separately:

(a) **LOVE in general:** mm. 1–2

Representing the compassionate aspect of love (as opposed to its sensual aspect), this theme is later transferred to Siegfried and Brünnhilde.

(b) VOLSUNG LOVE: m. 4 ff.

This variant of the last three notes of [W7a](#) is inextricably connected with Siegmund and Sieglinde, and never attaches itself to other lovers. Notice the ascending chromatic passing tone (a musical expression of desire), and the “sighing” appoggiaturas.

8. **MISFORTUNE chord** 14/1/3 (2)

This chord could be considered as the first inversion of a half-diminished seventh chord built upon B, but Wagner treats it more like a D minor triad with added major sixth. In any case, the chord was outlined by the very first appearance of SIEGMUND ([W3a](#)), and is a verticalization of THE RING ([R2o](#)). It refers to the trouble which hounds Siegmund wherever he goes.

9. **THE VOLSUNG'S BOND OF SYMPATHY** 15/1/3 (4), lower staff

Played in octaves by 'celli and basses, this theme begins to displace SIEGMUND ([W4](#)) as a bass line to SIEGLINDE ([W5](#)). It is derived from [W4](#) by thinning (omitting notes 2–5) and inversion; it first appears when the Volsungs realize they are partners in sorrow. In the next opera, it attaches itself to Siegfried, first expressing his sorrowful longing for his mother Sieglinde, then his sexual desire for Brünnhilde. Although usually labeled as the theme of THE VOLSUNGS' SORROW, I have followed Deryck Cooke's designation. Upon its initial appearance, it is spun-out into a 16-measure bar form (4+4+8 mm.).

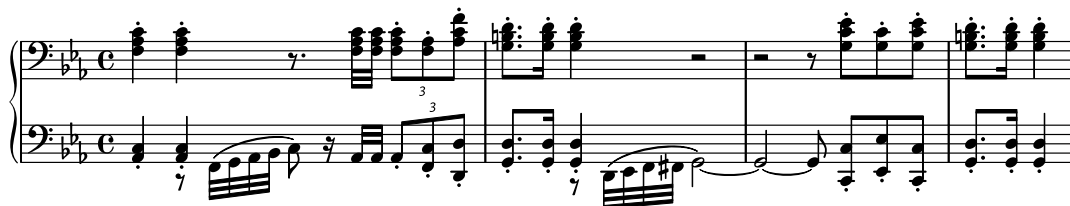
10. **HUNDING (embryonic form)** 16/1/1 (2)

The horns here bark out the characteristic rhythm and melodic shape of the theme, but its definitive harmony and instrumentation are lacking.



11. HUNDING (definitive form) 16/2/3 (4)

Notice the characteristic tuba sonority, C minor tonality, and elaborated Phrygian cadence (essentially iv^6-V). This theme is one of Wagner's masterpieces of characterization; within two measures, the whole gloomy, loveless, overbearing nature of the man is laid bare. The key of C minor continues to symbolize darkness; Hunding is the dark shadow which stands between Siegmund and Sieglinde.



12. HUNDING'S SUSPICIONS 16/3/3 (3)

This idea, which usually appears over a dominant pedal, accompanies the questioning look which Hunding gives Sieglinde.



13. HUNDING'S RIGHTS 17/2/4 (4)

The four-note descent in thirds which begins this idea is derived from the first four notes of THE RING (R20). "Hunding, if he is ignorant of the existence of the actual ring, is nevertheless a wielder of the kind of ruthless power it symbolizes" (Cooke).



14. "WOEFUL" chord 21/3/6 (1)

This $A\flat$ major first-inversion triad functions as bII or Neapolitan of C minor; it harmonizes Siegmund's designation of himself as "Wehwalt." Once again the Neapolitan harmony is associated with a negative, unhappy aspect of existence.



15. HUNTING 22/3/2 (2), Siegmund

Siegmund's vocal line is soon picked up by the horns as a fanfare; it refers to the hunting expeditions which Siegmund and his father "Wolfe" used to make. It derives from the NATURE arpeggiation (R1), as befits its rustic pictorialism.



16. REVENGE chord 28/3/4 (1)

This vertical pitch collections (F#–A–C–Eb) always refers to Hunding's lust for revenge, and is often combined with his characteristic rhythmic pattern. A first inversion diminished seventh chord, it initially appears as a deceptive resolution to a C minor cadence.



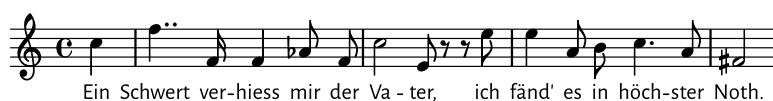
17. TEARS OF SORROW 30/1/1 (1), upper staff

This synthesis of SIEGMUND (W4; descending scale) and ANGUISH (R9) expressed the grief felt by the young woman whom Siegmund attempted to protect.



20. THE PURPOSE OF THE SWORD (Siegmond version) 37/4/2 (4), Siegmund

Appearing at the same pitch level as in Scene 4 of *Das Rheingold*, the theme is rhythmically varied. See [R72](#).



21. THE CALL TO WÄLSE 38/4/3 (6), Siegmund

This is a further variant of [W20](#); it contains three elements:

(a) mm. 1–2:

The descending octave is now isolated, and will reappear when Siegmund names the Sword “Nothung” (see [W28](#)).

(b) mm. 3–4

The melodic line “Wo ist dein Schwert” retrogrades the line “fänd' es in höch-” from [W20](#). As mentioned in the notes on *Das Rheingold*, the melodic progression $\hat{5}-\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ beginning with a falling fifth is often used by Wagner to express an impediment, a thwarting of one's purpose. Its retrograde $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}-\hat{5}$ (or, more frequently, $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}-\hat{6}$) often expresses the concept of a HEROIC DEED.

(c) mm. 5–6

These measures vary the line “-hiess mir der Vater” from [W20](#).



22. THE CRY OF VICTORY 44/1/3 (2), upper staff

The pitch progression is derived from THE VOLSUNG RACE PART I ([W19a](#); $\hat{5}-\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ now in major), while the rhythm derives from the JOY OF BATTLE fanfare ([W3c](#)). It first appears as a counterpoint to THE SWORD ([R71](#)).



23. NATURE IN MOTION (EARTH)

An extended variant of the idea which introduced Loge's narrative in Scene 2 of *Das Rheingold*, this theme now represents the Spring evening after the thunderstorm (cf. [W1](#)).



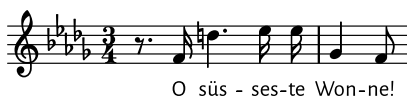
24. SIEGMUND'S SPRING SONG 53/3/1 (2), Siegmund

The opening arpeggiation ($\hat{5}-\hat{1}-\hat{3}$ in major) relates this aria-like melody to the NATURE family ([R1](#), [R2](#), etc.), although it always functions as a love theme.



25. DESIRE 61/3/1 (2), Siegmund

The salient feature of this motive is its chromatic appoggiatura, which resolves upwards by a minor second to the ninth of the chord (!). This chromatic detail originated in the chromatic passing tone of FREIA PART I ([R42](#)), the theme expressing sensual love. Its definitive form involves only the first 3 notes, as in the orchestral statement at 61/4/4. The rising minor second makes this idea almost a sort of complementary opposite to SERVITUDE ([R48](#)).



26. PRESENTIMENT 63/3/2 (2), Siegmund

The three-note motive upon which this idea is based is a variant of the first three notes of VALHALLA PART I ([R23a](#)). Siegmund unwittingly gives Sieglinde the clue which will lead to her discovery of his identity!



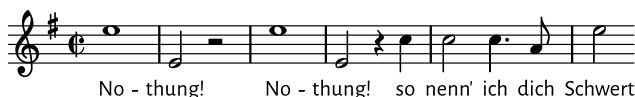
27. LOVE'S WEAVING 64/4/5 (4-note figure), upper staff

This derives from VOLSUNG LOVE ([W7b](#)). At 64/4/4, [W7b](#) is sounded at the pitches level G \sharp -A-E-G-F \sharp ; the last 4 pitches are then sequences in steady eighth-notes.



28. NOTHING 72/1/3 (6), Siegmund

This, of course, is a further transformation of THE PURPOSE OF THE SWORD ([R20](#)), via THE CALL TO WÄLSE ([W21](#)). The descending octave and the augmented triad harmony (72/1/5) will reappear in *Siegfried*.



2.2 Act II

29. RIDING rhythm 80/3/1 ()

This rhythm will later be associated with a specific pitch pattern to form the definitive RIDING motive. Here, it is derived from the rhythm of FREIA PART II: COMPASSIONATE LOVE ([R46](#)) in its fast, urgent form (cf. 78/1/3 ff.:).



30. THE VALKYRIES (original form) 80/6/2 (4), lower staff

This belongs to the family of themes representing heroic humanity, all derived from the last three notes of ERDA/THE NORNS (R65; the Valkyries are, of course, the daughters of Wotan by Erda, begotten in an attempt to ward off the doom which Erda prophesied). Its initial appearance outlines a C major triad, emphasizing its relationship to THE SWORD (R71), but its proper modality is minor (cf. 104/4/1 ff.).



31. WOTAN'S LUST FOR BATTLE 81/2/5 (2)

This rhythmic variant of THE SPEAR (R35) expresses Wotan's new status as a god of war and battle.



32. THE WAY CRY OF THE VALKYRIES 82/2/1 (4), Brünnhilde

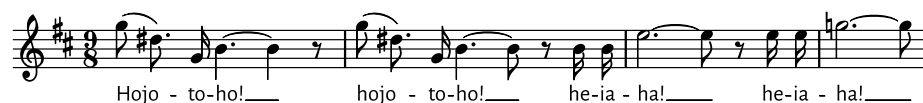
This vocal theme contains two components:

(a) mm. 1–2

The repeated cry “*Hojotoho!*” is derived from FREIA PART II: COMPASSIONATE LOVE (R46) by intervallic augmentation; this is made clear in the Prelude (cf. 78/1/3 ff.). Note the augmented triad (G–B–D \sharp).

(b) mm. 3–4

The repeated cry “*heiaha!*” superimposes the JOY OF BATTLE rhythm (W3c) upon the last three notes of ERDA/THE NORNS (R65; here, B–E–G).



33. THE VALKYRIES' PRIMAL ENERGY 82/2/3 (2), orchestral

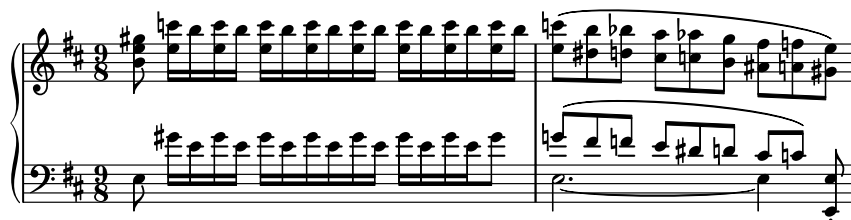
(a) trill figure: 82/2/3

This measure trill (b6–5 over a major triad) is strongly reminiscent of Loge's trills (see R37c).

(b) chromatically descending parallel $\frac{6}{4}$ triads: 82/2/4

This idea also derives from Loge's music (R37a2). Sometimes the idea is given a diatonic form (cf. 83/1/3 ff.).

Loge represented primary energy in an almost pure form; this energy now objectifies itself in the nine Valkyries.



34. FRICKA'S RAMS 83/5/3 (1)

The bleating of Fricka's rams is suggested by a parody of DESIRE (W25). Now, however, the final semitone *descends*, suggesting ANGUISH/SERVITUDE (R9 and R48).



35. FRICKA'S WRATH 86/1/5 (4)

This theme is based upon the source motive (5̂-1̂-2̂-3̂ beginning with falling fifth) which Wagner always uses to express some sort of impediment. It ultimately derives from THE PURPOSE OF THE SWORD (W20; "ich fand' es in hoch-"); from now on, this pitch pattern is associated with those who stand in the way of Wotan's preservation of Valhalla.

FRICKA'S WRATH was adumbrated at 81/3/6 (lower staff) when Wotan contemptuously consigned Hunding to Fricka; it appeared in intervallic diminution at 83/3/2 (spanning a third instead of a fifth) to depict the approach of Fricka's ram-drawn carriage.



36. FRICKA'S DIGNITY 86/2/5 (5)

This begins (mm. 1–3) as a variant of ERDA/THE NORNS (R65), and culminates in a reference (m. 3) to FRICKA'S WRATH (W35). The key of C minor refers to Hunding, who has called upon Fricka for vengeance.



37. FRICKA'S LAMENT 92/2/3 (3), Fricka

As Fricka complains about Wotan's extra-marital love affairs, her vocal line sequences the four-note LOVE (W7).



38. WOTAN'S FRUSTRATION (first form) 99/2/3 (4), upper staff

This twisted, warped version of THE SPEAR (R35; notes 1–6) represents THE FRUSTRATION OF WOTAN'S WILL. “The motive begins with a little turn, twisting moodily around the first note; and not only is the descending motion opposed by a rising one, but it is also hindered by being turned around on itself” (Cooke). In a broader sense, it musically depicts the Schopenhauerian Will (in its worst manifestation—human egoism) as self-conflicting and ultimately self-destructive.



39. THE VALKYRIES (definitive form) 104/4/1 (12), lower staff

In its definitive form, this theme comprises two phrases, each structured as a miniature bar form (1+1+2 mm, here followed by a two-measure extension). Its characteristic tonality is B minor, the key of the Curse. Phrase 1 moves harmonically from I to III (D), while Phrase 2 moves from III to V (F#); thus the entire theme arpeggiates the tonic triad (b–D–F#) = i–III–V. In retrospect, one realizes that the initial appearances of THE VALKYRIES (W30) involved only Phrase 2 (moving III–V of A minor).



40. WOTAN'S REVOLT 109/1/4 (3), upper staff

This furious rising gesture expresses Wotan's rebellion against the forces which conspire to frustrate his will. Appropriately, it inverts WOTAN'S FRUSTRATION (W38), which now rises unimpeded, without convolutions. It could also be considered as an inversion of the original SPEAR (R24). This idea usually leads directly into a statement of THE CURSE (R67).



41. REBELLION AGAINST DESTINY 109/1/4–110/2/5

This extended thematic complex (here appearing over a C pedal—V/f) combines WOTAN'S REVOLT (W40), THE CURSE (R67), THE POWER OF THE RING (R54; first two chords only), FRICKA'S WRATH (W35), and THE RENUNCIATION OF LOVE (third form; R61). It here expresses Wotan's rebellion against his destiny, but will appear twice more in the cycle (*Siegfried* Act III and *Götterdämmerung* Act I) to express Brünnhilde's rebellion against her destiny.

O hei - li-ge

Schmach!

O

schmäh - li-cher Harm!

Göt - ter-noth! Göt - ter-noth! End -

- lo - se Grimm! E - wi - ger Gram!

Der Trau - rig-ste bin ich von Al - len!

42. THE NEED OF THE GODS 120/4/1 (3), lower staff

This idea expresses Wotan's desperate need for a free hero who will do what he cannot: kill Fafner and regain the Ring before it again falls into Alberich's hands. It is a composite theme, linking together ERDA/THE NORNS (R65), THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS (R66), and WOTAN'S FRUSTRATION (W38); its contour follows that of THE TREATY WITH THE GIANTS (R29; reprised at 119/5/2 ff.). Erda once warned Wotan of his downfall, but his attempts to avoid it by creating a free hero have been frustrated.

The definitive statement of this theme in G minor (120/4/1 ff.) provides the model for the opening of *Siegfried* Act III.



43. WOTAN'S BLESSING UPON THE NIBELUNG'S SON 129/4/1 (5)

This theme is basically a harmonic distortion of VALHALLA PART I (R23a), preceded by an anacrusis based upon the VALHALLA FANFARE (R23f), and followed by a baleful statement of the GOLD theme in minor. It expresses Wotan's total disgust as he wills his world to Hagen.

The theme first appears at 128/3/4 ff. minus the anacrusis; it is repeated at 130/1/4 ff. Each successive statement is a semitone higher than the preceding (a good example of "expressive tonality").

The half-diminished seventh chord harmony which now undermines the VALHALLA (R23) theme stems from THE RING (R20), since it is essentially the Ring which threatens Valhalla. The very foundations of Wotan's world are now imperiled.



44. WOTAN'S ANGER 134/2/2 ff.

Wotan's wrathful fury is expressed by two themes:

- (a) i. 134/2/2 (4), original form

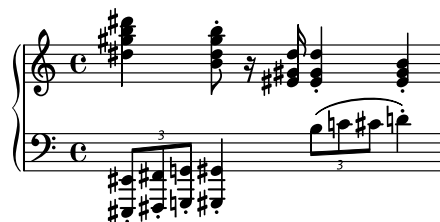


ii. 136/1/2 (9), definitive form



This idea is a rhythmic variant of the first two chords of *THE POWER OF THE RING* (R54; a harmonization of the *SERVITUDE* [R48] semitone by a diminished seventh chord and a major triad).

(b) 136/4/2 (1)



This idea is based upon the first two chords of *WOTAN'S BLESSING UPON THE NIBELUNG'S SON* (W43).

45. PURSUIT 148/1/1 ff.

Several ideas are associated with Hunding's pursuit of Siegmund and Sieglinde:

(a) 148/1/1 (1)



A distorted version of *THUNDERSTORM* (W1) is combined with the syncopated *NEIDINGS' HORN CALL* (W18) and harmonized by the *REVENGE* chord (W16).

(b) 148/3/1 (1)



See the orchestral score for the continuation of this one-bar idea, whose descending scale followed by a rising third indicates its derivation from SIEGMUND (W4). It is here played in two-part canonic imitation.

The ultimate derivation of both a.1 and a.2 from THE SPEAR (R35) suggests that Siegmund owes his troubles to Wotan himself (“*Das wüthende Heer*,” Siegmund’s expression for his pursuers, might be translated as “the host of Wotan”).

- (c) i. 150/1/2 (2) – upper staff



- ii. 150/3/3 (2) – lower staff



These are both distorted version of THE NEED OF THE GODS (W42), the first derived by free inversion. Again, Wagner suggests that Siegmund’s pursuers represent Wotan’s power-dominated society.

- (d) 149/1/1 (repeated chord with grace notes)

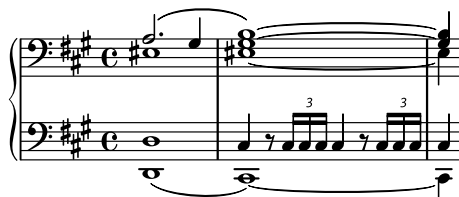


Wagner depicts the barking of Hunding’s dogs by preceding the REVENGE chord (W16) with a grace note.

46. FATE 152/4/1 (2)

This brief, enigmatic theme combines an archetypal “questioning” melodic line (A–G♯–B; cf. Beethoven’s “*muss es sein?*” in the finale to op. 135) with a revolutionary new harmonization: D minor triad—V⁷/f♯. Wagner thereby links Siegmund’s key (d) with that which will henceforth represent death (f♯). Later, he reharmonizes the melodic line with a French augmented sixth chord followed by an E major triad (cf. 151/2 ff.) thus forecasting the manner in which the opera will end (in E major, the key of Brünnhilde’s compassionate love).

This idea represents Fate brooding over the drama. It is sometimes called the QUESTION OF FATE (*SCHICKSALSFRAGE*), which is appropriate in that it dominates the ritual catechism between Siegmund and Brünnhilde.



47. THE IMMINENCE OF DEATH 152/4/2 ()

This kettledrum figure is a more solemn version of the VALHALLA FANFARE (R23f).





52. **THE SWORD GUARDIAN (embryonic form)** 168/2/4 (2), lower staff

Beginning as a C minor statement of the SWORD theme, the idea culminates in a melodic pattern (3̂–2̂–1̂–6̂; here, E♭–D–C–A♭) associated by Wagner with the concept of a heroic deed. This theme is the embryonic (!) form of SIEGFRIED (W57), and first appears when the unborn Siegfried is threatened by the Sword.



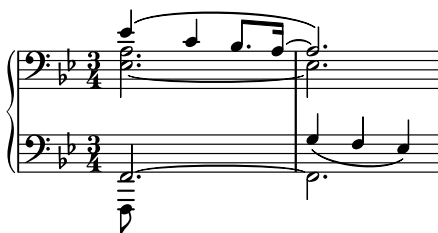
53. **BRÜNNHILDE'S EXULTATION (THE ANNUNCIATION OF DEATH variant)** 168/4/3 (3) and 169/2/3 (3)

A rhythmic double-diminution of THE ANNUNCIATION OF DEATH (W48) is extended by sequences of FATE (W46). It expresses Brünnhilde's passionate excitement as she decides to help Siegmund.



54. **SLUMBER (embryonic form)** 173/2/3 (2)

This derives from the descending scale of SIEGMUND (W4), as it appeared in expanded form in THE DRINK (W6). Played by muted strings, it now refers to the sleeping Sieglinde, but will later, in its definitive pentatonic form, attach itself inextricably to Brünnhilde. Sieglinde's sleep is a symbolic death, from which she will be reborn when she learns of Siegfried.



55. **SIEGLINDE'S DREAM** 175/4/1 (4), upper staff

Wagner once jokingly remarked that this theme, a descending chain of triads (C \flat –f–e \flat –c $^\circ$) was stolen from the opening of Liszt's *Faust* Symphony. "Very good," replied Liszt; "now at least the public will hear it." In reality, the theme derives from the last three notes of SIEGMUND (W4), the two rising thirds. It thus complements SLUMBER (embryonic form; W54).



2.3 Act III

56. RIDING (definitive form) 184/2/2 (1), lower staff

This two-beat figure initially represents the Valkyries galloping through the sky on their steeds; it later accompanies Wotan when he rides his eight-legged horse Sleipnir. The rhythm derives from THE VALKYRIES (W39), the pitches from the NATURE (R1) arpeggiation.



57. SIEGFRIED 226/3/3 (7), lower staff

As mentioned, this idea derives from the first appearance of THE SWORD GUARDIAN (W52). Its characteristic tonality is C minor, which becomes Wagner's tonal symbol for tragic heroism. The first half of the phrase, which combines the last three notes of ERDA/THE NORNS (R65; $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{4}$ – $\hat{3}$ in minor) with HEROIC DEED (W21b; $\hat{3}$ – $\hat{2}$ – $\hat{1}$ – $\hat{6}$ in minor) is rarely altered on subsequent appearances; however, the concluding portion is often varied, depending upon Wagner's tonal/harmonic demands. Sometimes this antecedent-like phrase is elided with a consequent (cf. 226/4/3 ff.), resulting in a period structure.



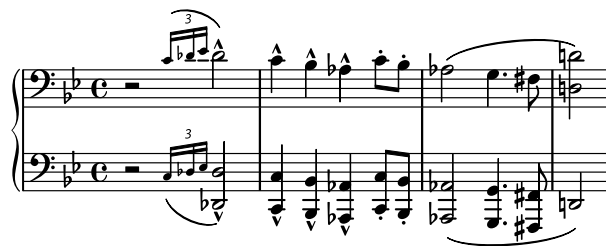
58. THE GLORIFICATION OF BRÜNNHILDE 228/1/5 (7), Sieglinde

This is usually known as the REDEMPTION OF LOVE theme, but Wagner called it THE GLORIFICATION OF BRÜNNHILDE. It seems to derive from the second half of BRÜNNHILDE'S GROWING COMPASSION (W51b), which itself keeps reappearing (cf. 228/4/5 ff., etc.). Its falling seventh ("Wunder") relates it to those themes which express the inspiring power of women. This theme will not be heard again until the very end of the cycle, at which point it will express Brünnhilde's ultimate glorification and her transcendence of the material world.



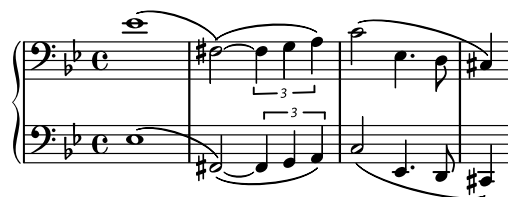
59. WOTAN'S FRUSTRATION (second form) 243/3/4 (4)

A forceful rhythmic variant of W38 is terminated by HEROIC DEED (W21b; here, A \flat –G–F \sharp –D); played by the brass, this latter idea always wrenches the tonality a half-step higher. Wotan's frustration is mixed with rage and bewilderment at Brünnhilde's betrayal.



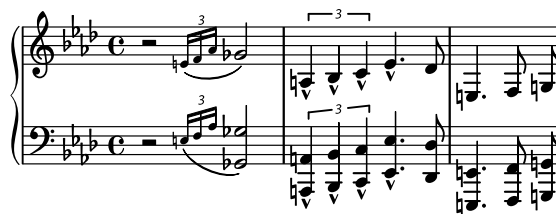
60. PUNISHMENT (embryonic form) 245/4/3 (4)

The first four notes of this idea (Eb–F#–G–A) represent a distortion of THE PURPOSE OF THE SWORD ([W20](#)); they also retrograde HEROIC DEED ([W21b](#)). Wotan prepares to pronounce Brünnhilde's sentence of punishment.



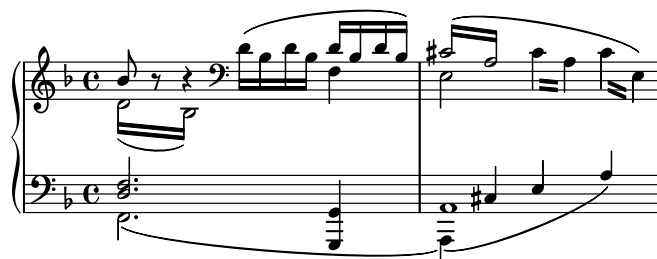
61. PUNISHMENT (definitive form) 246/4/2 (3)

This idea links two statements of the distorted four-note PURPOSE OF THE SWORD idea (see [W20](#) and [W60](#)), the second a perfect fourth lower. Remember that this particular four-note idea (a falling interval followed by a stepwise ascent) always expresses the idea of an obstacle, an impediment. Wotan here prepares to impose a ban on love itself.



62. THE BAN 252/3/4 (2)

This Bb $\frac{6}{4}$ –A major $\frac{5}{3}$ chord progression (with passing G in bass) harmonizes the SERVITUDE semitone (Bb–A; [R48](#)) and sounds like a variant of THE POWER OF THE RING ([R54](#)). It later initiates MAGIC SLEEP ([W68](#)), but is also used independently to represent Brünnhilde's banishment.



63. THE VALKYRIES' PLEA (ANNUNCIATION OF DEATH variant) 253/2/4 (2), Schwertleite

Yet another rhythmic variant of THE ANNUNCIATION OF DEATH ([W48](#)) expresses the Valkyries' plea on behalf of their sister.



64. BRÜNNHILDE'S REPROACH 265/4/1 (7), Brünnhilde

This theme has two sources: on the one hand, it consists of sequential repetitions of **HEROIC DEED** ([W21b](#)) its rising interval augmented); on the other, it contradicts the downward pull of **THE SPEAR** ([R35](#)) by wide upward leaps. Wotan's daughter attempts to justify her transgression.



65. WOTAN'S HIDDEN LOVE (original form) 269/1/2 (1), upper staff

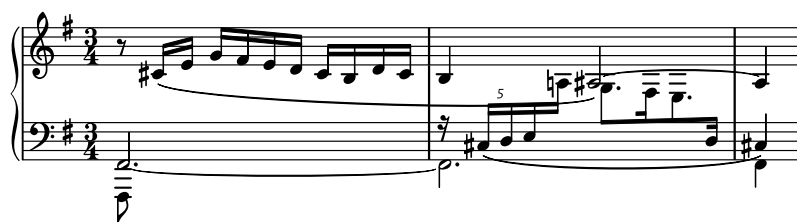
A logical outgrowth of the previous sequences on **WOTAN'S FRUSTRATION** ([W38](#) and [W59](#)), this idea also derives from the four-note **LOVE** motive ([W7a](#)). Here it expresses Wotan's love for the Volsungs, which he has been forced to conceal; later it will recur as an accompanimental figure when he bids farewell to Brünnhilde.



66. WOTAN'S INNER STRIFE 269/4/5 (2)

Both of the following accompanimental figures derive ultimately from **THE SPEAR** ([R35](#)), and express Wotan's inner conflict:

- (a) Top voice, starting at 269/4/5: a variant of **WOTAN'S FRUSTRATION** ([W38](#) and [W59](#)).
- (b) Middle voice, starting at 270/1/1: a variant of **THUNDERSTORM** ([W1](#)).



67. BRÜNNHILDE'S COMPASSIONATE LOVE 274/1/1 (2), upper staff

This major mode variant of **BRÜNNHILDE'S REPROACH** ([W64](#)) counteracts the downward scale of **THE SPEAR** ([R35](#)) with an upward leaping seventh. The rhythm derives from **VOLSUNG LOVE** ([W7b](#)), since Siegmund's love for Sieglinde inspired this feeling in the Valkyrie. The theme expresses that which Brünnhilde is opposing to Wotan's power-dominated world: compassionate love.



68. MAGIC SLEEP 284/4/5 (4)

Beginning with the chords of THE BAN (W62), this theme opposes two different gestures:

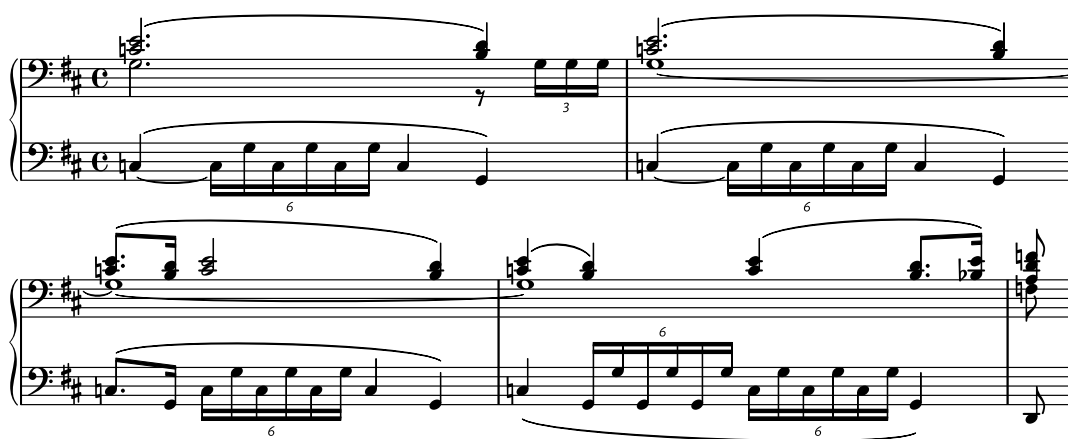
- (a) a chromatic descent in the top voice (a slowed-down version of the LOGE[(R37) descent)
- (b) a triadic ascent in the bass (an altered form of the NATURE [R1] arpeggio)

The upper line expresses death and dissolution, while the lower line expresses growth and new life. The theme is thus a musical metaphor for symbolic death and rebirth; it suggests the fact that Brünnhilde will symbolically die as a Valkyrie and be reborn as a mortal woman. The tonally ambiguous chromaticism suggests the idea of drifting into sleep.

In its definitive version, the initial C major⁶₄ chord is replaced by an A^b major triad (cf. 297/4/5 ff.). In the opera *Siegfried*, this theme is associated with Erda's slumbers.

**69. PEACE** 285/1/4 (4)

Derived from the oscillating chords and fanfare of VALHALLA (R23), this idea depicts the peaceful rest into which Brünnhilde will soon be plunged. It returns at the end of the cycle to represent Wotan's final rest.

**70. SLUMBER (intermediate form)** 285/4/4 (1), upper staff (highest voice)

Although this theme first appears in minor at a fast tempo, its definitive form is moderately slow, in the major mode. As will be recalled, the embryonic form of this theme appeared in association with the sleeping Sieglinde (W54), but the idea is now associated with the Valkyrie.

**71. WOTAN'S HIDDEN LOVE (definitive form)** 290/2/2 (1), upper staff

As Wotan finally avows his love for Brünnhilde, this figuration appears in its proper tempo.



72. SLUMBER (definitive form) 295/1/2 (1)

This theme burst forth in its proper tempo, modality, and tonality (E major) at the moment when, traditionally, Wotan embraces his daughter; the two are finally reconciled, moments before they must part forever. The pentatonicism places this theme in the VOICES OF NATURE family (cf. [R4](#)). “Brünnhilde, in her magic sleep, may not be a voice of nature but she is a latent, inspiring force of nature” (Cooke). The Valkyrie has returned to the womb of Nature, from which she will later be reborn as a loving, compassionate woman.



73. WOTAN'S LOVE FOR BRÜNNHILDE 296/4/2 (4), Wotan

Basically an elaboration of LOVE ([W7a](#); here, C#–B–F#–G#), this idea begins with a “yearning” chromatic rise which has its ultimate origin in FREIA PART I: SENSUAL LOVE ([W42](#)). Often labeled the “PARTING KISS” theme, the idea does sometimes recur to refer explicitly to this parting.



3 *Siegfried*

Note: Themes which originated in *Das Rheingold* or *Die Walküre* are not cited again, unless these themes are significantly transformed.

3.1 Act I

1. **SCHEMING (definitive form)** 1/1/4 (3), upper staff

Now presented in its definitive tone color (bassoons) and melodic shape (falling seventh), this brief idea henceforth attaches itself to Mime.



2. **THE RISING HORDE (new form)** 1/3/1 (4), upper staff

Played in rhythmic augmentation by solo contrabass tuba, the theme now conjures up the image of Fafner sitting upon the horde. This new version shows the close relationship between THE RISING HORDE (R56) and THE DRAGON (R58).



3. **SERVITUDE (Mime version)** 2/3/4 (1), upper staff

Preceded by a nervous turn figure, this "limping" version of the SERVITUDE/ANGUISH (R48) semitone is associated with Mime, suggesting that he too has fallen under the evil spell of the Ring.



4. **THE DRAGON (definitive version)** 7/2/6 (4), lower staff

(a) PART I: 7/2/6 (4)

This four-note motive from *Das Rheingold* Scene 3 is sequenced a step higher at 7/3/4 (4).



(b) PART II: 7/3/10 (7)

This new seven-note cadential descent will later form the bass line of FEAR (S29).

Since Mime is terrified of the dragon, and Siegfried is supposed to learn fear from him, this theme is sometimes equated with fear itself.



5. **THE DRAGON (second version)** 7/4/10 (4), lower staff

This variation of [S4a](#) is also sequenced a step higher (8/1/4 ff.); in Act II, a new conclusion will be added. As with THE RISING HORDE (new form; [S2](#)), the solo tuba personifies Fafner the dragon.



6. **MIME'S LAMENT (embryonic form)** 9/1/2 (5), Mime

This descending line derives from the RENUNCIATION OF LOVE theme (second form; [R40](#)); it expresses Mime's despair and sense of futility. Note the use of the Neapolitan.



7. **THE BEAR** 11/1/1 (1/2), lower staff

See the orchestral score for the correct notation of this chromatic rumbling figure (double-basses), a crabbed version of the theme which in *Das Rheingold* represented THE LIFE-FORCE IN NATURE ([R2b](#)).




8. **SIEGFRIED'S HORN CALL (original form)** 11/1/3 (3), upper staff

This important idea is first played by strings (G major) in an extended form, spun-out into a rounded bar structure (3+3+7 mm.). See [S9](#) for its definitive form.



9. **SIEGFRIED'S HORN CALL (definitive form)** 14/3/3 (3), upper staff

Now played in its characteristic form and instrumentation (French horn), this idea contains three elements:

- (a) The initial D–A–F# arpeggiation combines the pitches of NATURE ([R1](#) and [R2](#)) with the rhythm () of THE WAR CRY OF THE VALKYRIES ([W32](#)). It thus combines the purity and innocence of Nature with the energy of youth, and is later used to accompany Siegfried's filing of the sword.
- (b) The rising three-note figure D–E–F# suggests Siegfried's aspirations (cf. THE RISING HORDE [[W56](#) and [S2](#)] and VALHALLA PART II [[R23b](#)]).
- (c) HEROIC DEED ([W21b](#); G–F#–E–A) in major (cf. SIEGFRIED [[W37](#)]).

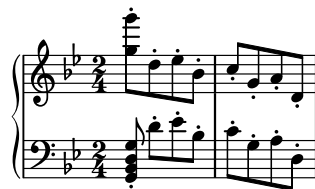
Later in the drama, this theme will settle upon F major as its characteristic tonality.



10. **SIEGFRIED'S ANGER** 16/1/5 ff.

This theme comprises five elements:

- (a) 16/1/5 (2): interlocking descending perfect fourths.



- (b) 16/2/8 (2): a descending diatonic scale in parallel sixths.



- (c) 16/3/2 (2): a trill figure in parallel sixths.



- (d) 17/3/6 (2): an ascending diatonic scale in parallel sixths (the inversion of S10b).



- (e) 17/4/2 (9): an ascending chromatic scale in parallel augmented triads.



Parts S10a–S10d are diatonic reshapings of Loge's music; thus, Siegfried is a male embodiment of primal energy. If, as previously suggested, Loge's fire represents the Schopenhauerian Will in its universal form, then Brünnhilde and Siegfried represent different embodiments of this Will in the phenomenal world. Part S10e recalls the Valkyries through its augmented triads.

11. THE NIBELUNGS (Mime version) 19/1/5 (1), upper staff

This rhythmic reshaping of THE NIBELUNGS (R47) refers specifically to Mime; it later accompanies his self-pitying “Starling Song.”



12. MIME'S CAJOLING (SCHEMING) variant 19/3/2 (2), upper staff, top voice

An incidental variant of SCHEMING (S1; note the outline of the descending seventh), this idea accompanies Mime as he exhorts Siegfried to be grateful to him.



13. MIME'S LAMENT (definitive form) 20/4/7 (4), upper staff, top voice

A definitive version of S6, this four-measure idea is immediately spun out into an eight-bar chromatic variant. Note again the use of the Neapolitan in the cadence. Like S6, it ultimately derives from THE RENUNCIATION OF LOVE variant.



14. MIME'S SELF-PITY 21/3/1 (2), Mime

This descending tetrachord originated in Mime's solo in *Das Rheingold* Scene 3 (cf. *Das Rheingold* 124/2/7 ff.: “Sorglose Schmiede”). Mime's whining is suggested by the grace-notes. This four-note melodic cell forms the basis of Mime's entire “Starling Song.”



15. SIEGFRIED'S LOATHING FOR MIME 24/3/1 (4), Siegfried

This idea is based upon the harmony (d: iv⁷–V) of THE RENUNCIATION OF LOVE (second version; R40); it is fitting that this idea serves as the musical score for the lack of love between Siegfried and Mime.



16. LOVE IN NATURE 27/3/1 (4)

This theme expresses the innate, natural longing for love and companionship felt by all living things. The ascending chromatic passing tone derives ultimately from FREIA PART I: SENSUAL LOVE (R42). Note that when LOVE IN NATURE is restated at 29/3/1 ff., it passes directly into the basic LOVE motive (R8) (equivalent to FREIA PART II [R46]); cf. 29/3/4 ff.



17. THE BIRDS 30/2/5 (1), upper staff

This is a lyrical transformation of SIEGFRIED'S ANGER ([S10a](#)), a transformation which began at 26/4/8 ff.; note the pentatonicism (D–E–F \sharp –A–B). Wagner here underscores Siegfried's closeness to Nature; he has not yet really emerged from the womb of Nature because he is still unaware of his own identity. The theme will return in Act II, during the psychologically crucial "Forest Murmurs" scene.



18. SIEGFRIED'S REFLECTION IN THE BROOK 32/4/5 (8)

This theme contains 2 components:

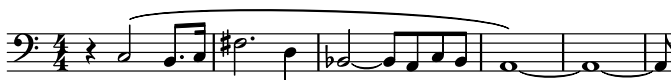
- (a) An ascending melodic line (inner voice) based upon NATURE ([R1](#)).
- (b) A I–IV–I harmonic oscillation, a simple "pastoral" effect.

E \flat is the basic NATURE key; the A \flat chords recall the Rheindaughters' original A \flat harmony. The theme is then restated a half-step lower (33/1/6 ff.) in D major, the key of Siegfried's achievement.



19. THE VOLSUNGS' BOND OF SYMPATHY (Siegfried version) 37/4/1 (4), lower staff

Note the new augmented triad, tonal ambiguity, concluding turn figure, and bass clarinet scoring of [W9](#). The theme once associated with the Volsung twins now expresses the grief which Siegfried feels for Sieglinde, the mother he never knew.



20. THE SWORD GUARDIAN (definitive form) 44/1/5 (6), upper staff

This synthesis of THE SWORD ([R71](#)) with SIEGFRIED'S HORN CALL ([S9](#)) expresses the fact that Siegfried has inherited the sword Nothung. It appeared in embryonic form as [W52](#).



21. SIEGFRIED'S WANDERLUST 46/2/3 ff., Siegfried

Siegfried's joyous song alternates ascending and descending *diatonic* scales, as opposed to Loge's ascending and descending *chromatic* scales; the youth wishes to leave the forest (leave his "natural state") and go forth into the world. His song contains several elements:

(a) 46/2/3 (2) - "Aus dem Wald...zieh'n"

The ascending B \flat –C–D cell ($\hat{1}$ – $\hat{2}$ – $\hat{3}$ in major) stems from notes 4–6 of SIEGFRIED'S HORN CALL (S9), and express the youth's aspirations.



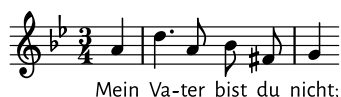
(b) 46/2/5 (2) - "nimmer...zurück!"

These two measures expand the last four notes of SIEGFRIED'S HORN CALL (S9), and derive ultimately from HEROIC DEED (W21b).



(c) 46/3/5 (2) - "Mein Vater...nicht"

This derives from SIEGFRIED'S ANGER (S10). Cf. the orchestral accompaniment.



(d) 47/1/5 (1) - "flieg' ich von hier"

This descending tetrachord has three sources: S21b, SIEGFRIED'S ANGER (S10b), and MIME'S SELF-PITY (S14). The third of these is probably the most important; seen in this light, Mime's "Starling Song" is an anticipatory parody of Siegfried's "Wanderlust Song."



22. THE WANDERER 50/3/1 ff.

Several ideas are associated with Wotan in his new capacity as the Wanderer.

(a) 50/3/1 (2)

This two-bar chord progression becomes the Wanderer's personal motive. It could be analyzed as II⁶–IV⁶–bII⁶–V–(I⁶) in A, then sequenced a major second lower. It is derived from MAGIC SLEEP (W68), which itself stemmed from LOGE (R37); Wotan has himself been transformed in the Magic Fire, and symbolically reborn as the philosophical Wanderer. The incorporation of the Neapolitan suggests Wotan's acceptance of his inevitable downfall.



(b) 50/3/5 (2)

The rising line doubled in parallel tenths derives from VALHALLA PART II (R23b; $\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ in major), and symbolizes the Wanderer's new *noble* aspirations (as opposed to Wotan's old ignoble ones). Note the relationship to THE RISING HORDE (Mime's version; S2).

(c) The $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$ rhythm derives from the VALHALLA fanfare (R23f; $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

(d) 52/1/3 (2)

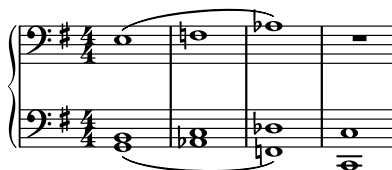
The rising arpeggio G–C–E recalls NATURE (R1), and suggests that Wotan is now closer to Nature. However, along with the prevailing C major tonality, it also recalls THE SWORD (R71).

23. **THE CHALLENGE** 55/4/2 (8), upper staff

This rising C minor scale harmonized in parallel thirds may be considered either a rhythmically augmented inversion of THE SPEAR (R35) or an extension of THE WANDERER (S23b); it often terminates in a "Wanderer" cadence ($\flat\text{II}-\text{V}-\text{i}$). It accompanies Wotan's challenge to Mime ("Mein Kopfst dein...").

24. **MIME'S QUESTION** 57/3/2 (4)

Mime's riddle terminates with this series of first-inversion triads ending on a half cadence (here, $e^6-f^6-D\flat^6-C$).

25. **THE WORLD-ASH TREE** 62/2/5 (2)

This rhythmic variant of NATURE (definitive version; R2) is associated with Yggdrasil, the World-Ash where the Norns used to spin and guard the Well of Wisdom. When played in the minor mode, it resembles ERDA/THE NORNS (R65; cf. 62/3/2 ff.), and it will dominate the Norns scene in the Prologue to *Götterdämmerung*. The theme was hinted at in *Das Rheingold* Scene 4 (cf. 212/3/4), where it was clearly heard as a variant of ERDA/THE NORNS.



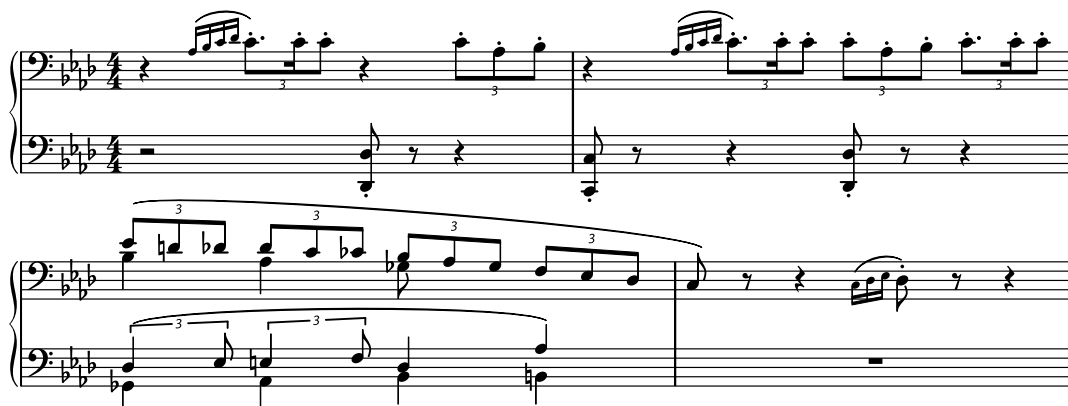
26. THE POWER OF THE GODS 62/4/5 (2), lower staff

This idea, which might also be called THE POWER OF WOTAN, is basically an inversion of THE SPEAR (R35), coupled with an insistent dotted rhythm; it begins with the ascending perfect fourth expressing strength. Here, the theme is framed by THE SPEAR, and accompanied by pulsating chords; the resultant up-down motion suggests that Wotan is entangled in the treaties in which his power resides (cf. Fasolt's solo "Was du bist..." from *Das Rheingold*, Scene 2, beginning at 71/2/5 ff.). In *Götterdämmerung*, this idea will be combined with the VALHALLA fanfare (R23f) to form FUNERAL PYRE (C4).



27. MIME'S NERVOUSNESS 66/2/1 (4)

Mime's nervousness before the Wanderer is expressed by this combination of THE NIBELUNGS (R47) with a descending, syncopated chromatic scale (suggesting a parody of THE SPEAR [R35]).



28. THE RIDDLE 67/2/4 (3), lower staff

This descending, monophonic version of THE RING (R20) accompanies two of Wotan's questions. Previously, it had accompanied each of Mime's riddles (e.g., 57/2/3, lower staff). However, whereas Mime's version outlined a half-diminished seventh chord, the Wanderer's outlines a major-minor seventh.



29. FEAR 76/4/5 (4)

The bass line of this seven-chord progression is THE DRAGON: PART II ([S4b](#)), the last phrase of the DRAGON theme. The third and fourth chords are THE POWER OF THE RING ([R54](#)) played backwards. The progression might be analyzed as C: VI–iv⁶–bII/iv–vii^{o6}/iv–ii^{o6}–V⁷–I; it is followed by a iv–V⁷–[I] cadence. Sometimes this idea refers to “he who knows not fear,” sometimes to the concept of fear itself.



30. LOGE/MAGIC FIRE (FEAR) variants

Beginning at this point, LOGE/MAGIC FIRE ([R37/R38](#)) return but now harmonized with parallel augmented triads rather than parallel major first-inversion triads. This has two important ramifications:

- The augmented triad, the fire themes, and fire itself all become associated with fear. Only a fearless hero may pass through Loge's fire to Brünnhilde's rock; there Siegfried will apparently “learn fear,” although what he will actually experience is sexual desire. Thus fire, sexual passion, and fear become symbolically linked for the first time.
- The augmented triad recalls THE WAR-CRY OF THE VALKYRIES ([W32](#); “*Hojotoho!*”), and will saturate the harmonic texture of the Forging Scene. This shows the relationship between Loge's fire (primal energy) and the energy of both Siegfried and Brünnhilde. Again, if Loge represents the Schopenhauerian Will in its universal form, then the energy and sexual passion of Siegfried and Brünnhilde represent different manifestations of it in the phenomenal world. At the end of the cycle, both lovers will be consumed by Loge's primal fire.

MAGIC SLEEP ([W68](#)) and SLUMBER ([W72](#)) also are affected by the augmented triad (cf. 90/1/2 ff. And 90/3/2 ff.); thus they too may be used to express the notion of fear.



31. FILING 98/3/6 (1/2), upper staff

The first three notes of SIEGFRIED'S HORN CALL ([S9](#)) now outline an augmented rather than a major triad. *Literally*, this idea depicts Siegfried filing the sword; *symbolically*, it depicts his energy and will-to-life expressed in overt physical action.



32. NOTHING (Siegfried version) 107/1/2 (4), Siegfried

Siegfried re-baptizes the sword with this variant of [W28](#). Whereas Siegmund merely accepted the sword as a gift, Siegfried makes it his own by investing his energy in it. The descending octave is now harmonized by an augmented triad, and the sword's former key of C is now replaced by Siegfried's achievement-key, D (first minor, later major).



35. HAMMERING 119/4/3 (1)

This one-bar motive reworks the theme of SIEGFRIED'S ANGER ([S10a](#)); it represents the more constructive effort into which he has channeled his boundless energy. It usually begins with a half-diminished \flat_5 chord, containing the same pitches as Siegmund's MISFORTUNE chord ([W8](#)).



3.2 Act II

36. FAFNER AS DRAGON 136/1/3 (2), lower staff

The $\hat{1}-\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ figure from THE GIANTS ([R27](#)) has been altered to $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{5}-\hat{1}$, suggesting Fafner's descent into the kingdom of the beast. The resultant tritone (an archetypal musical symbol for evil) is sometimes rhythmically augmented and played legato; cf. 137/3/2 ff. (lower staff).



37. THE DRAGON (new conclusion) 136/4/1 (11), lower staff

After THE DRAGON (second version, [S5](#)) has been stated (136/2/1 ff.) and sequenced as usual (136/3/1 ff.), this new conclusion appears; note the emphasis upon the tritone at 136/4/4 ff. As before, the solo contrabass tuba personifies Fafner the dragon.



38. SIEGFRIED'S INDEPENDENCE

Clearly based upon SIEGFRIED'S WANDERLUST ([S21d](#)), this theme typifies Siegfried as the free agent for whom Wotan has so desperately longed. It was first heard at 151/4/4 ff. ("er steh oder fall," etc.).



39. FOREST MURMURS (embryonic forms)

(a) 168/3/2 ff.

As Mime mentions the spring where he will lie down, strings begin this quiet eighth-note figuration.



(b) 171/1/5 ff.

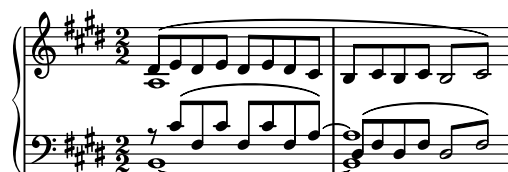
The figuration now outlines NATURE (definitive form, R2) in D minor.



These figurations were originally hinted at in *Die Walküre* Act III, when Siegrune described the forest which stretched to the East (233/4/1 ff.).

40. FOREST MURMURS (intermediate form) 172/2/1 ff.

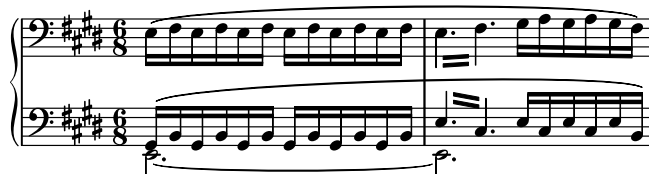
The eighth-note figurations are now developed without regard to NATURE (R2), in the definitive key of E major.



41. FOREST MURMURS (definitive form) 173/4/1 ff.

By increasing the speed of the oscillations in $\frac{6}{8}$ meter, Wagner evolves the definitive, shimmering form of this idea; it often serves as a “rustling” background to other themes.

Siegfried now passes through a series of Buddhistic-like trances, during each of which he achieves a deeper level of self-awareness. Like Brünnhilde, he returns to the womb of Nature, from which he will be reborn. Note that the key (E major) is the same as that of Brünnhilde’s slumber.



42. THE FOREST BIRD

Belonging to the pentatonic VOICES OF NATURE family (see R4), this theme contains several parts, each having the character of a bird-call:

(a) 176/4/2 (5) – upper staff

Begun by oboe (repeated notes) and completed by flute (interlocked perfect 4ths) this is a transformation of SIEGFRIED'S ANGER (S10a) via THE BIRDS (S17).



(b) 177/2/1 (4)

Played by clarinet, this idea begins with the last three notes of NATURE (R1 and R2, $\hat{5}-\hat{1}-\hat{3}$ in major), and continues with syncopated, sustained repeated notes.



(c) 177/5/2 (9)

The most important of the FOREST BIRD calls is extremely similar to THE RHINEDAUGHTERS (R4). “The Wood-bird is evidently first cousin to the Rhinemaidens” (Cooke). The first phrase is stated and repeated by oboe, the second by clarinet.

**43. THE DYING FAFNER 190/4/1 (1)**

This composite idea combines:

(a) RESENTMENT (R62)

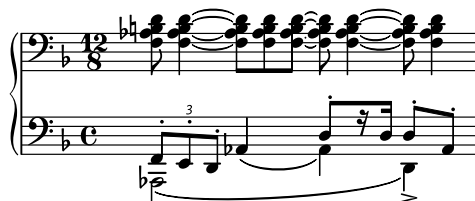
The syncopated chords suggest the labored breathing of the mortally wounded dragon.

(b) SIEGFRIED'S HORN CALL (S9)

Played by bassoon, the last four notes of the original horn call now end in the “dragon” tritone.

(c) FAFNER AS DRAGON (S36)

This timpani idea may now represent the beating of Fafner's heart.

**44. MIME'S FURY 204/1/5 (2)**

This figure expresses the dwarf's rage at Alberich's rejection of his proposal to share the booty.



45. MIME'S DISSEMBLING 210/2/3 (7)

Played by the violas, this theme begins with the SCHEMING (S1) descending seventh, then continues with a dotted rhythmic figure whose pitch content possibly derives from THE NIBELUNGS (W47). The theme is a small bar form (2+2+3 mm.).



46. THE BOOTY 213/2/1 (4), upper staff

Often listed in the "thematic catalogues" as a separate theme, this idea really seems to be merely an extension of the last part of MIME'S DISSEMBLING (S45). However, its melodic shape and pitch level do forecast GUNTHER (C10).



47. SIEGFRIED'S DESIRE FOR LOVE (two versions)

(a) 228/3/3 (1)

This idea is characterized by its initial ascending leap (usually a seventh) and its subsequent descent.



(b) 231/2/1 (1)

In its more impassioned form, the initial ascending seventh is replaced by a descending second, and the figure ends with an appoggiatura.



In general, this reiterated idea expresses Siegfried's growing desire for female companionship.

48. THE FLIGHT OF THE FOREST BIRD 236/3/4 (1/4)

This two-note figure (descending major second) depicts the fluttering of the bird as it leads Siegfried to Brünnhilde's rock.



3.3 Act III

49. THE WANDERER'S AWAKENING CALL 242/3/2 (2)

The call with which the Wanderer awakens Erda is a rhythmically forceful statement of LOVE ([W7](#)).



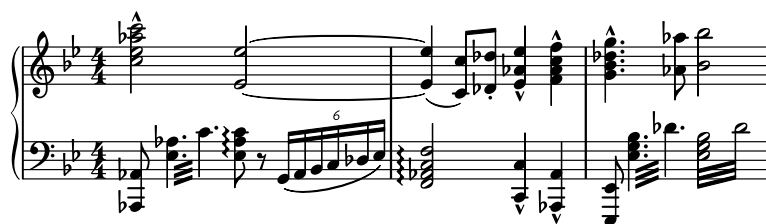
50. THE RENUNCIATION OF LOVE (fourth form) 252/3/4 (3), Wanderer

This major mode variant of Theme [R40](#) and [R61](#) is now characterized by parallel thirds and a trill. It is used in Act III, Scene 3 as a love-theme for Siegfried and Brünnhilde, referring in a positive sense to that which humans give up when they renounce love. The name of the theme and the sense in which Wagner now uses it are therefore in direct contradiction to one another, illustrating the futility of attempting to fix the meaning of an associative theme with a single simplistic title.



51. WORLD INHERITANCE 257/3/3 (3)

Beginning with a forceful descending sixth, this theme continues with an inversion of THE SPEAR ([W35](#)); the original *descending* D minor scale becomes an *ascending* A \flat major scale. This represents Wotan's ultimate denial of the Will to Power, as he declares his intention to abdicate in favor of his grandson Siegfried. Note that the surrounding tonal context is that of G minor; the music now leaps into the key of the Neapolitan, as Wotan embraces the notion of his own self-annihilation.



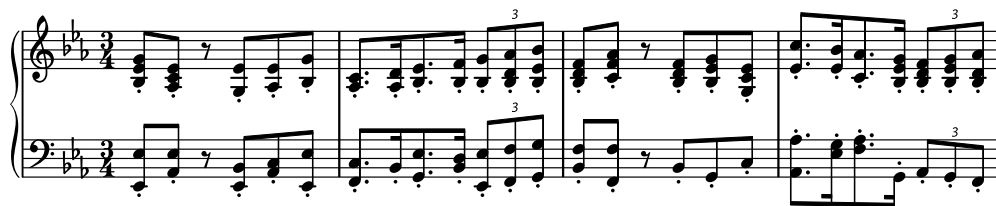
52. SIEGFRIED'S RESPONSE TO THE WANDERER 263/1/1 (3), Siegfried

This vocal line occurs several times as Siegfried responds to the Wanderer's queries.



53. PARENTAL PRIDE 266/1/3 (4)

This rather amiable rhythmic variant of VALHALLA PART I ([R23a](#)) expresses Wotan's pleasure at beholding his grandson Siegfried.



54. LOVE'S CONFUSION (THE VOLSUNGS' BOND OF SYMPATHY variant) 292/1/1 (2)

As Siegfried observes the sleeping Brünnhilde, he experiences sexual desire for the first time; however, he mistakes these feelings for fear. His confusion over these strange new sensations is expressed by this variant of [S19](#), which originally was associated with his feelings for his mother Sieglinde. His emotional attachment to his mother is now transferred to his future wife.

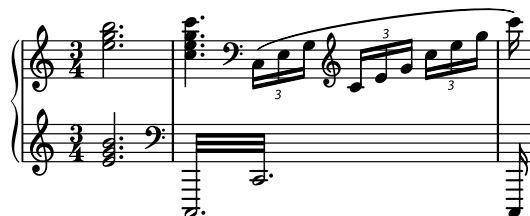


55. BRÜNNHILDE'S AWAKENING 296/4/1 ff.

This theme has two separable components:

(a) 296/4/1 (2)

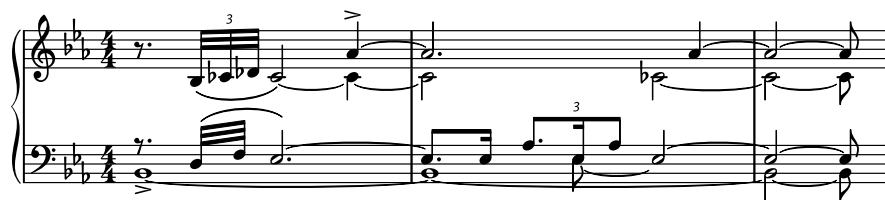
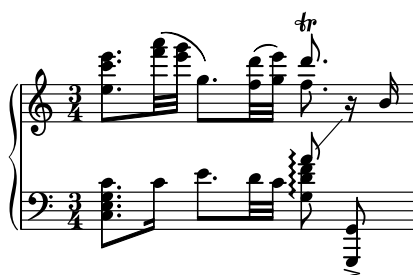
The two-chord progression e minor–C major stems from the MAGIC source theme of [THE GOLD'S MAGICAL LIGHT \(R13\)](#); Brünnhilde has been transformed in Loge's fire from a Valkyrie warrior into a loving, compassionate mortal woman.



(b) 297/1/2 (8)

This segment rises to a climax, then subsides in a pattern of parallel thirds which vaguely recalls [THE RING \(R20\)](#).







60. THE WORLD'S TREASURE 319/3/1 (5), Brünnhilde

Unlike its companion **THE IMMORTAL BELOVED** (S59), this theme does reappear in *Götterdämmerung*, where it also generates the theme of **HEROIC LOVE** (C8). Note the initial augmented triad.



61. LOVE'S RESOLUTION (DECISION TO LOVE) 333/4/1 (4), upper staff

Played by the horns, this majestic theme is a broad version of **SIEGFRIED'S ANGER** (S10a); the thematic transformation indicates that through his love for Brünnhilde, Siegfried has finally reached maturity. At the conclusion of the opera, the two stand forth on the mountaintop as the representatives of a new social order, a world based upon love rather than power.



4 Götterdämmerung

Note: Themes which originated in *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, or *Siegfried* are not cited again, unless these themes are significantly transformed. No attempt has been made to account for every thematic variant; only the most significant ones are listed.

4.1 Vorspiel

1. THE NORNS' SPINNING 2/1/2 ff., upper staff

An inversion of the rising arpeggiations which in *Das Rheingold* represented THE LIFE-FORCE IN NATURE ([R2b](#)), these descending figurations suggest the Norns spinning the rope of fate.



2. "SPINNING" chords 3/1/4 (1)

This chord progression alternates a major triad with an augmented triad a fourth lower; it may thus be analyzed as I-V⁺⁵. First associated with the Norns, it later reappears in other contexts to suggest the idea of an underlying, inescapable destiny.



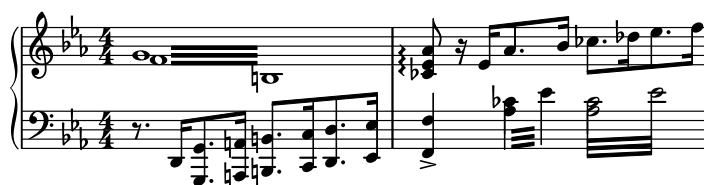
3. THE WORLD-ASH TREE (second theme) 3/4/3 (2), First Norn

The World-Ash tree Yggdrasil has already been associated with a flowing variant of ERDA/THE NORNS ([R65](#); cf. 2/3/1 ff.) which first appeared in Act I, Scene 2 of *Siegfried*. Now it is also associated with this variant of THE RING/VALHALLA TRANSFORMATION ([R22](#)).



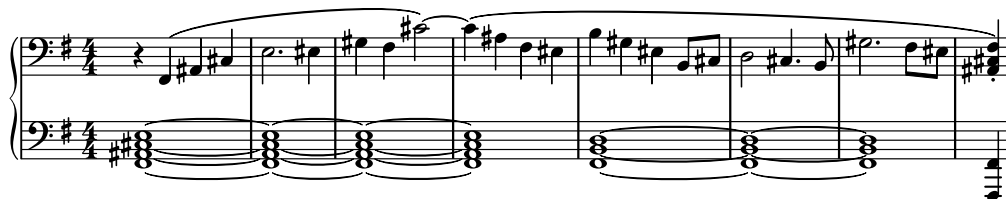
4. THE FUNERAL PYRE (original form) 9/3/1 (2)

This two-bar idea features imitation between lower and upper voices based upon THE POWER OF THE GODS ([S26](#)); m. 1 is harmonized by a major-minor seventh chord, m. 2 by a half-diminished seventh chord. The idea is usually sequenced upwards by minor thirds. It refers to the wall of boughs which encircle Valhalla, awaiting the torch; in Act III, it will also refer to the funeral pyre Brünnhilde orders built for Siegfried. In its definitive form, it will include the VALHALLA FANFARE ([R23f](#)).



5. **DAWN** 19/2/2 (7)

This rising and falling 'cello line derives from RAINBOW (R70, thus ultimately from NATURE [R1 and R2]).



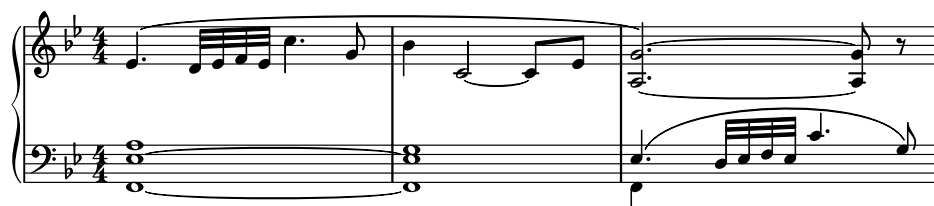
6. **SIEGFRIED THE HERO** 19/4/7 (3)

This more majestic form of SIEGFRIED'S HORN CALL (S9) represents "Siegfried's new stature as the active hero inspired by the love of Brünnhilde" (Cooke). It appears in its definitive E \flat major at 21/1/1; after the Prologue, it does not reappear until the Act III Funeral March.



7. **BRÜNNHILDE AS MORTAL WOMAN** 20/1/2 (3)

This theme, usually played by clarinet, is associated with Brünnhilde in her new capacity as a loving, compassionate mortal woman. It is characterized by the "turn" figure and the falling seventh, thus placing it in the category of themes which express the inspiring power of women.



8. **HEROIC LOVE** 22/1/1 (2), upper staff

This exultant theme is derived from THE WORLD'S TREASURE (S60), which first appeared in Act III of *Siegfried*.



4.2 Act I

9. **HAGEN (original form)** 45/1/2 (1), upper staff

The evil Hagen is characterized by this trochaic rhythm (♩), perhaps inspired by his two-syllable name ("Ha-gen!"); this rhythm is always associated with a falling interval. In its definitive form, this falling interval is the sinister diminished fifth.



10. **GUNTHER** 45/1/6 (3)

The $\hat{5}-\hat{1}-\hat{3}$ arpeggiation in m. 2 relates Gunther's theme "unmistakably, if less than magnificently, to the same heroic family as those associated with the Valkyries and the Volsungs" (Cooke). The dotted rhythm and melodic contour of m. 1 also relate this theme to that of **THE BOOTY** (S46), which is reprised at 45/3/6 ff. The theme wonderfully expresses the empty pretensions of this weak, ineffectual ruler, who is, however, not an evil man.



11. **GUTRUNE'S INNOCENCE** 49/4/1 (2 1/2), upper staff

Played by the oboe, this idea begins by retrograding the $\hat{5}-\hat{1}-\hat{3}$ arpeggio of **GUNTHER** (S10), then rises linearly. As he did in *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, Wagner here uses upper woodwind sonorities to express a young woman's innocence and purity of soul. As a foredoomed heroine, Gutrune is one of the most pathetic characters in the *Ring*.



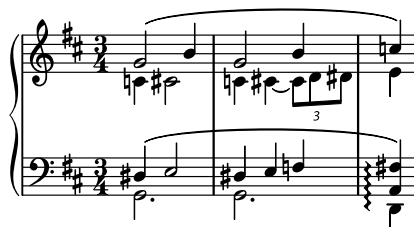
12. **SEDUCTION** 53/2/5 (2), upper staff

Hagen plans to seduce Siegfried away from Brünnhilde into a marriage with Gutrune. The theme associated with this seduction is based upon the source theme which Wagner always uses to express an impediment or obstacle: a downward leap followed by two rising steps (cf. the ideas generated from **THE PURPOSE OF THE SWORD** [R72]). Here the downward leap is not the customary fifth, but a seventh, the interval associated with women, since Gutrune is to be the agent of seduction. Hagen later presents this theme vocally (54/1/2 ff.: "*Gedenk des Trankes*").



13. **THE MAGIC POTION** 55/2/1 (2)

Derived from **THE TARNHELM** (R50), this tonally elusive idea suggests the forgetfulness which lies in the potion. It is important to realize that the drink is not a love potion. It makes Siegfried forget Brünnhilde, but he falls in love with Gutrune all by himself. On the symbolic level, this represents Siegfried's ultimate corruption by society.



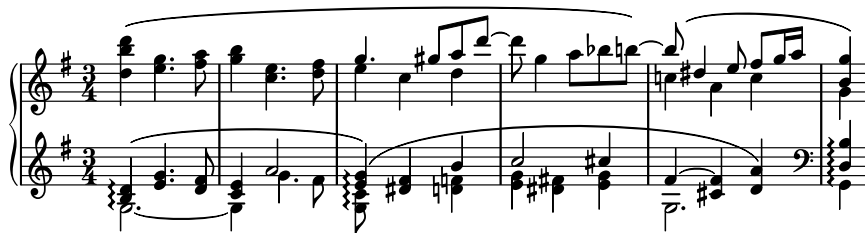
14. **FRIENDSHIP** 63/4/4 (5) and 64/4/1 (4)

This theme is characterized by the insistent downward leap of a fifth on the trochaic Hagen rhythm ($\text{♩} \text{♩}$). Hagen, of course, stands behind the illusory friendship of Siegfried and Gunther; thus the theme is associated with B♭ major, the major-mode variant of Alberich and Hagen's b♭ minor.



15. **GUTRUNE** 68/2/5 (5)

Gutrune's theme is closely related to SEDUCTION (G12), although the falling seventh is replaced by the falling fifth (under the influence of FRIENDSHIP [G14]). Gutrune is the half-unwitting agent of Hagen's plan to seduce Siegfried away from Brünnhilde. Again, Gutrune is associated with high winds, and now also with the key of G major.



16. **HAGEN (definitive form)** 76/3/1 (1), lower staff

As Hagen holds out the horn for Siegfried and Gunther to swear upon, his two-note motive (G9) now becomes a downward-leaping diminished fifth (here, C♭ to C).



17. BLOOD-BROTHERHOOD

The Oath of Blood-Brotherhood contains four important parts, each of which may recur separately:

- (a) 76/3/7 (5), Siegfried ("Blühenden Lebens...Trank")



- (b) 77/1/2 (3), Siegfried ("Treue...Freund!")



- (c) 77/3/5 (3), Gunther ("Bricht...Bund")



This third segment is the VOW OF ATONEMENT. It was originally heard as part of THE CURSE (R63b). It stems ultimately from THE RING (R20).

- (d) 78/1/2 (3), Siegfried and Gunther ("Tropfen...tranken")



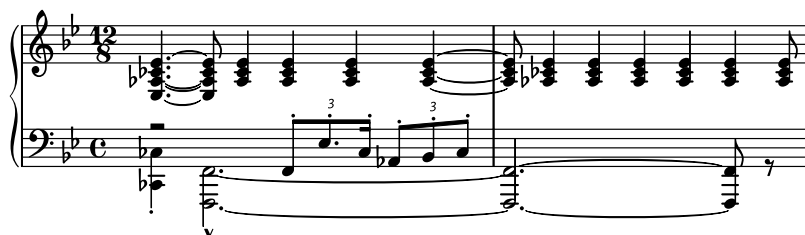
A variant of C17b, this segment is characterized by the initial $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$ rhythm.

18. HAGEN'S WATCH 84/2/1 (2)

This thematic complex contains three familiar elements:

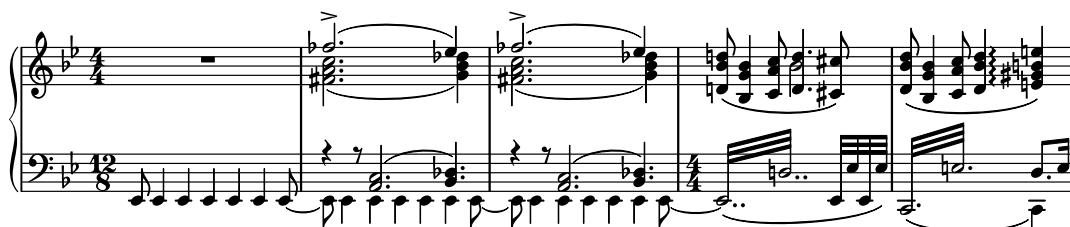
- (a) The pulsating, syncopated RESENTMENT (R62) chords.
- (b) The HAGEN (G16) tritone.
- (c) A distorted version of SIEGFRIED'S HORN CALL (S9).

All three elements are enveloped by the half-diminished seventh chord, a sonority which begins to pervade the harmonic texture of *Götterdämmerung*.



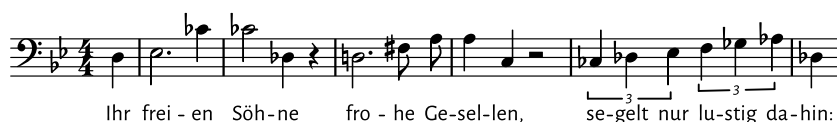
19. THE POWER OF THE RING (Hagen version) 84/4/1 (4)

This theme has been reharmonized, so that it begins with the dissonance (a diminished-minor ninth chord) which underlies THE RING (R20). This chord begins to eat its way more and more into the harmonic fabric of the music, creating an atmosphere of progressive dissolution. Here, the upper four notes resolve as multiple appoggiaturas to a major-minor seventh chord on Eb.



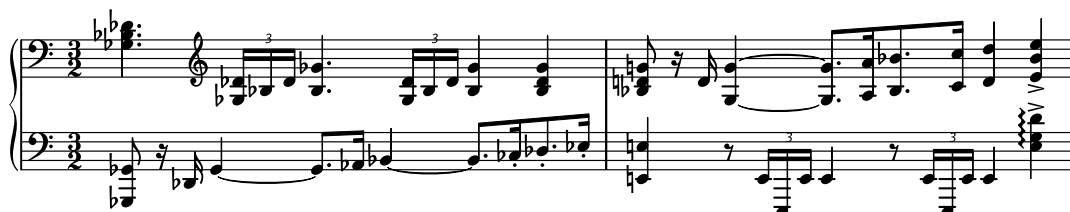
20. HAGEN'S CONTEMPT 86/3/3 (6), Hagen

In this vocal phrase, Hagen expresses his contempt for Siegfried and Gunther who, though they think themselves free, are actually pawns in Hagen's plot to gain the ring.



21. THE FUNERAL PYRE (definitive form) 102/1/1 (2)

This idea (see C4) now incorporates the VALHALLA FANFARE (R23f), which has become associated with THE IMMINENCE OF DEATH (W47). Waltraute now repeats the Norn's description of the pile of wood surrounding Valhalla.



22. WOTAN'S FRUSTRATION (new form) 106/1/2 (4), upper staff

Wotan's sense of frustration disappeared in *Siegfried*, but it returns in *Götterdämmerung* and grows more acute; this is expressed by a new leaping and falling form of WOTAN'S FRUSTRATION (W38 and W59). Humiliated by Siegfried, Wotan now realizes that the ring must be restored to the Rhine; only then may Valhalla go up in flames and the anguish of the gods be ended.



23. HONOR 127/2/3 (3)

As Siegfried draws his sword Nothung to lay it between himself and Brünnhilde, thus keeping faith with Gunther, the downward leaping NOTHUNG octave (W28) is combined with the HAGEN rhythm (cf. C9 and C16).



4.3 Act II

24. HAGEN'S LOVELESSNESS 129/5/1 (4), lower staff

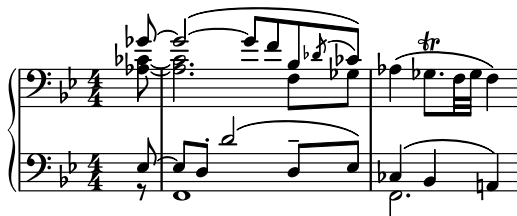
This descending line expresses Hagen's sense of his own lovelessness, as is clear when he later (132/3/4 ff.) sings it to the words "*Gab mir die Mutter Muth*," etc. It derives ultimately from THE RENUNCIATION OF LOVE (first version, [W18](#); note the basic $\hat{5}-\flat\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ outline), indicated that Hagen's loveless nature is itself a product of Alberich's original act. In his own way, even Hagen is a victim.



25. MURDER 135/3/3 (1 1/2)

This savage theme takes as its starting point the diminished-minor ninth chord underlying THE RING ([R20](#); here, F–Ab–Cb–Ebb–Gb).

The continuation of this theme into a variant of LOGE ([R37](#)) is dramatically inexplicable; the fire imagery is beginning to burn its way into the score, even when the text does not call for it.



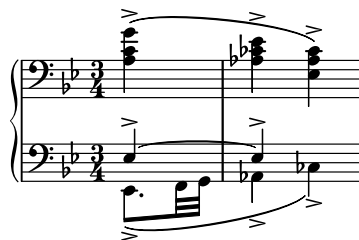
26. HAGEN'S DAWN 141/1/3 (9)

Begun by the bass clarinet, this theme's "arpeggio-shape proclaims it an offshoot of the NATURE family" (Cooke; [R2](#), [R2](#), [R4](#), etc.). However, the augmented triad (D–Bb–Gb) disturbs the diatonic equilibrium. Later taken up in canon, this theme "is developed forcibly by the horns, and its main figure eventually assumes a rather brutal character, much more in keeping with the personality of Hagen than with the simple natural phenomenon of dawn. The day that is dawning is going to be Hagen's day" (Cooke).



27. HAGEN'S MERRIMENT (original form) 141/5/6 (1)

This is a forceful, harmonized form of the augmented triad from HAGEN'S DAWN (C26). Note that the augmented triad has also been associated in various ways with Brünnhilde and Siegfried, always suggesting great energy.



28. HAGEN'S MERRIMENT (second form) 150/3/4 (2), lower staff

The augmented triad is now expanded into a three-note figure which first falls a diminished fifth (see HAGEN [C16]), then rises a minor seventh.



29. HAGEN'S RALLYING CRY (=SERVITUDE) 150/4/5 (2), Hagen

This vocal presentation of SERVITUDE (R48) suggests that Hagen too is now enslaved to the ring. Note the F \sharp -C harmonic tritone (cf. C16).



30. THE GIBICHUNGS' HORN CALL 151/2/4 (2)

This is derived from the beginning of GUTRUNE (C15); the vassals are, after all, being summoned to her wedding festivities. The harmonic combination of a C major triad and an F \sharp pedal recalls THE CURSE (R67).


Note that this horn call, with its downward leaping fifth, is almost an exact antithesis of SIEGFRIED'S HORN CALL (S9), with its upward-leaping fifth. F \sharp -C harmonic tritone.

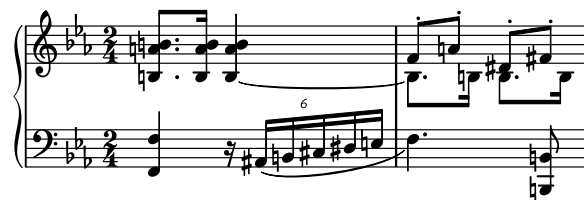


31. THE VASSALS

- (a) 153/1/1 (3): The energetic figure representing the Gibichung vassals recalls HAMMERING (S35) from Act I, Scene 3 of the previous drama. In both cases, tremendous energy and vitality are suggested.



- (b) 154/2/3 (2): The repeated-note figure on the dotted rhythm  recalls the themes associated with THE GIANTS (R27) and with HUNDING (W11) See orchestral score for correct rendition.



- (c) 155/3/4 (2): Vassals ("Welche Noth ist da? Welcher Feind ist nah?")

This descending scalar line recalls THE SPEAR (R35). Negative images of power are again being evoked.



32. THE VASSALS' SONG 167/3/3 (8), Vassals

The vassals sing Hagen's praises in a variant of HAGEN'S DAWN (G26); by now, it clearly is Hagen's day. The use of C major for this purpose produces an effect of chilling irony.



33. THE BRIDAL PROCESSION 175/3/5 (2)

Gunther ceremoniously leads Brünnhilde before the vassals to a variant of his own theme (G10). However, the key of Bb indicates that Hagen is behind this marital union.



34. BRÜNNHILDE'S LUST FOR REVENGE (variant of FRUSTRATION theme) 180/2/3 (5)

The new form of WOTAN'S FRUSTRATION (W38, W59, and G22), first heard during Waltraute's narrative, now undergoes its final transformation, in which a chromatic descent is interrupted by leaping seventh. The theme now attaches definitively to Brünnhilde, expressing her desire to avenge the injuries she has suffered. Wotan's sense of frustration has been transferred to his daughter, and converted into a lust for vengeance.

The theme was heard in an almost definitive form when Siegfried appeared on Brünnhilde's rock in Gunther's form (122/1/2 ff.).



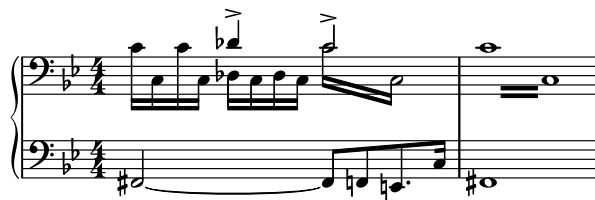
35. **THE OATH** 199/2/4 (8), Siegfried

This vocal theme contains a great conflict between upward-leaping fifths (cf. SIEGFRIED'S HORN CALL [S9]) and downward-leaping fifths (cf. GUTRUNE [G15] and GIBICHUNGS' HORN CALL [G30]).



36. **THE REVENGE-PACT** 211/4/3 (2)

This combination of HAGEN'S RALLING CRY (upper staff; G29) and BRÜNNHILDE'S LUST FOR REVENGE (lower staff; G34) symbolizes the unholy partnership into which the two enter in order to destroy Siegfried. The F \sharp -C tritone relates to both HAGEN (G16) and THE CURSE (R67). The idea has appeared earlier (189/1/2 ff. And 198/2/1 ff.) but it now assumes its definitive form.



4.4 Act III

37. **THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' NEW SONG** 233/3/2 ff.

The Rhinedaughters continue to lament the loss of their gold in a new song, which contains several separable components:

(a) 233/3/2 (6)

This idea begins on an F major tonic triad with the added sixth D; the D ultimately resolves to the fifth C, like a reminiscence of the sisters original cry of "*Rheingold!*" Note also the "Fauxbourdon-like" parallel first-inversion triads.

(b) 233/5/2 (4)

This chromatic ornamentation of the melodic descent from G to C (all over the dominant harmony) contrasts with the diatonicism of [C37a](#).

Both a and b reappear as a vocal refrain at 237/1 ff.

(c) 234/4/3 (4): Rheindaughters ("Frau Sonne...Strahlen")

This vocal phrase is constructed from elements of [C37a](#). It is extended into a 24-measure song.

Frau Son - ne sen - det lich-te Strah - len;

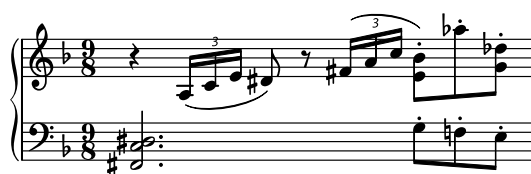
38. NATURE IN MOTION (WATER; second form) 239/2/1 (2)

The figuration representing NATURE IN MOTION (a rapid upward surge followed by a longer descent; see [R15](#), [R21](#), [R41](#), and [W23](#)) originally suggested water currents swirling around the Rheindaughters. After being varied to represent other elements (air currents, the earth), it once again represents water. Things are beginning to come full cycle.



39. THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' TEASING 242/3/1 (1)

The sisters' banter with Siegfried will be accompanied by this playful figure.



40. THE RHINEDAUGHTERS' WARNING 254/1/3 (8), Rhinedaughters

This idea derives from Hagen's version of THE POWER OF THE RING ([C19](#)); it begins with THE RING dissonance ([R20](#)). The sisters warn Siegfried of his death, which will, of course, be brought about by Hagen in an effort to gain the ring.



41. SIEGFRIED'S DEATH 301/4/1 (1)

The opening rhythm is based upon that of SIEGFRIED THE HERO ([C6](#)), which itself reappears at the climax of the Funeral March (304/1/2 ff.). The following scalar passage (strings) is an expansion of DEATH ([W49](#)).

The C minor tonality is that which Wagner associates with tragic heroism, the renunciation of love, and darkness. The final member of the Volsung race has fulfilled his tragic destiny.



42. GUTRUNE'S SHRIEK 309/4/3 ff.

This figure, expressing Gutrune's outburst of anguish, is remarkably similar to that which Wagner uses to express Kundry's shriek in *Parsifal*. The opening dissonance (an eleventh chord on C) is created by adding a major third below THE RING dissonance ([R20](#)); that is, adding C below the diminished-minor ninth chord E-G-B \flat -D \flat -F. Upon its reappearance at 311/1/2 ff., the figurations are extended as Gutrune cries out her anguish.



43. THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS (new form) 314/4/1 (4)

As Brünnhilde reappears to enact the deed which will finally bring about the destruction of the gods, this theme reappears in a rhythmically varied form.



44. WOTAN'S FINAL REST 326/2/7 (7)

The combination of several familiar themes (adumbrated by Waltraute at 105/4/3 ff.) "looks back over Wotan's whole stormy existence, and indicates that it has now, at last, been brought to a peaceful and noble conclusion" (Cooke).

