

*Der Ring des Nibelungen (The Ring)* by Richard Wagner is a cycle of four operas, almost 16 hours long, which can only be performed at Opera Houses with major resources. It is a complex tale in which human, gods and giants play the lead roles in enchanted helmets and magic swords. The idea came to Wagner in the mid-1800s, a turbulent period in European history both politically and economically. Power changed hands with the growth of industrialism. Old hierarchies and systems were questioned and Wagner was one revolutionary who called for change. In *The Ring*, Wagner tells the story of his own time, but chose to portray it in a world of fairytales and myths. One of the key motifs (and motives) of *The Ring* revolves around Rhine gold, from which a ring was fashioned, one which grants the owner domination over the world. Naturally, numerous battles broke out over the ring as such power was desired by many. Fighting leads to death and destruction, and balance is only restored at the very end, once the ring is returned to the Rhine Maidens. The underlying message is that 'Anyone who steals from nature is punished' – one that can easily be applied to our world today, with the knowledge that the earth's resources are limited. Moreover, in Wagner's world, there is a fight between the old and the new – between the father Wotan and his daughter Brünhilde – in which she comes out the winner. Wagner raises the issue of power and responsibility – as an individual – as a man or woman.

While *All Is Divine* is inspired by Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk, no prior knowledge of the original work is required to enjoy the performance. The myths and tales speak for themselves. *All Is Divine* alludes to our own divinity, our own role in a complex world. How much of an impact can I have? What is my responsibility? How do I choose between money and love? There is also a clear theme of universal siblinghood running through Wagner's work, the forbidden love of the twins Siegmund and Sieglinde, Valkyries who fight side by side, Norns who predict the future, Rhine Maidens who toy with men, and giants who fight to win the love of the fight to win love goddess Freya. Being siblings and part of a family is wonderful and frustrating at the same time. Something Wagner is well aware of. And the fights that take place at the heart of the nuclear family often resemble life in the big world. That is also where our performance ends up – about our own role in big picture. Whims and fantasy are given free reign. And All Is Divine!

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