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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Majestic Culmination: Das Rheingold at Stadttheater

Stadttheater Klagenfurt, 11.05.2025 [ENA]

The Stadttheater Klagenfurt's 2025 production of Richard Wagner's *Das Rheingold* stands as a resplendent finale to the theatre's ambitious four-year journey through the Ring cycle. Under the visionary direction of Aron Stiehl and the masterful baton of Nicholas Milton, this staging not only honors Wagner's monumental work but also reimagines it with contemporary resonance.

It is offering audiences an experience that is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally profound. In a bold and thought-provoking move, the Klagenfurt Ring cycle culminates with *Das Rheingold*, the prologue to Wagner's tetralogy. This reverse sequencing invites audiences to reflect on the cyclical nature of power, corruption, and redemption. By ending with the origin story, the production underscores the inevitability of the gods' downfall, prompting contemplation on the consequences of ambition and moral compromise.

Aron Stiehl's direction breathes new life into the mythic narrative, presenting a world where timeless themes intersect with modern sensibilities. The staging eschews traditional grandeur in favor of a minimalist aesthetic, allowing the characters' internal struggles and the opera's philosophical underpinnings to take center stage. This approach renders the tale of gods, dwarfs, and giants not as distant legends but as reflections of enduring human dilemmas.

Conductor Nicholas Milton leads the Kärntner Sinfonieorchester in a performance that captures the intricate textures and dynamic contrasts of Wagner's score. From the primordial E-flat rumblings that open the opera to the climactic ascent to Valhalla, the orchestra delivers with precision and passion. Milton's interpretation balances the monumental with the intimate, ensuring that each leitmotif and orchestral color enhances the unfolding drama.

The production boasts a stellar ensemble, each performer contributing to the opera's rich tapestry. Martin-Jan Nijhof's portrayal of Wotan exudes authority and inner conflict, capturing the god's moral ambiguity. Kai Kluge brings a nuanced intensity to Loge, Markus Marquardt embodies the character's transformation of Alberich from spurned suitor to malevolent power-seeker. Anke Vondung's Fricka and Elisabeth Dopheide's Freia provide compelling contrasts, highlighting the personal stakes amidst the cosmic conflict. Fritz Steincher is brilliant in the role of Mime.

Supporting roles are equally well-cast, with David Jagodic and Marian Pop as the giants Fasolt and Fafner,

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their performances underscoring the tragic consequences of greed and betrayal. Veronika Dünser's Erda delivers a haunting warning, her presence a poignant reminder of the natural order disrupted by divine ambition. The production's visual elements complement its thematic depth. The set design employs stark, abstract forms, creating a versatile space that shifts seamlessly between the depths of the Rhine and the heights of Valhalla. Costumes blend classical motifs with contemporary touches, reinforcing the opera's timeless relevance. The use of lighting and projections enhances the atmosphere, evoking the mystical and the monumental.

By concluding the Ring cycle with Das Rheingold, the Stadttheater Klagenfurt offers a unique perspective on Wagner's magnum opus. This choice emphasizes the cyclical nature of history and the enduring consequences of choices driven by power and desire. The production invites audiences to consider the possibility of breaking free from destructive patterns, posing questions that resonate beyond the opera house. The Stadttheater Klagenfurt's Das Rheingold is a testament to the power of visionary direction, cohesive ensemble performance, and musical excellence. It reaffirms the relevance of Wagner's work in contemporary discourse and showcases the theatre's commitment to innovative storytelling.

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