

Broadcasts over the years have led to informal distribution and to semi-commercial release on tape, LP and CD by individuals and ever-changing companies. In order to collect those ephemera into a coherent image, we present here a selection of those treasures from the archives, focussing on the decade 1968-78 with checkpoints both earlier and later to provide a context represent in the listing of the conductors and the most important singers of the postwar productions. It reflects the development of recording technique as well as of musical interpretation and of singing and documents the unique acoustic conditions of the Festspielhaus with its covered pit.

The great shift in focus of Wagnerian performance came with the National Socialist era in Germany. Most of the greatest pre-war conductors and singers had left the tyranny - some by choice, many by force. The appeal of Bayreuth had greatly diminished by the time of its reopening, though great conductors and artists returned in the early 1950's to celebrate the music in its original home. Gradually over the ensuing years, such singers as Windgassen, Hopf, Vinay, Hotter, Greindl, Weber, Frick, Varnay, Mödl, Uhde and Nilsson gave way. A new generation emerged at Bayreuth in the sixties: Thomas to King, Adam to Stewart, Crass to Ridderbusch, Silja to Harper and Dvorakova to Martin. This brought in some sense a reduction of idiomatic German pronunciation and interpretation. In the seventies and eighties, Bayreuth heard the voices of Kollo, Cox, Schunk, Estes, McIntyre; Ligendza, Jones and Bode. We could say: slim voices in slim bodies.

Today we can still be happy to have Jerusalem and Meier, Wagenführer and Diener or Studer and Silvasti. The lower voices are well represented by Titus, Weikl, Hölle, Sotin and Salminen. Some of the best Wagner singers of this period are missing here, however. It seems that the Bayreuth Festival has lost at least some of its leading position in the world of Wagner production, which was undisputed in the fifties and sixties.

Audio Encyclopedia

Opera from Bayreuth

Der fliegende Holländer

1976 Davies Estes, Salminen, Balslev, Schunk, Schlemm, Araiza

Tannhäuser

1972 Leinsdorf Beresford, Jones, Sotin, Weikl

Lohengrin

1968 Erede King, Harper, McIntyre, Dvorakova, Ridderbusch

Das Rheingold

1976 Boulez McIntyre, Randova, Zednik, Yakar, Wenkel, Kélémen

Die Walküre

1976 Boulez McIntyre, Jones, Hofmann, Bode, Salminen, Randova

Siegfried

1952 Keilberth Aldenhoff, Varnay, Hotter, Kuen, Neidlinger, Böhme

1976 Boulez Kollo, Jones, McIntyre, Zednik, Kélémen, Rundgren

Götterdämmerung

1976 Boulez Jones, Thomas, Arvidsson, Ridderbusch, Kélémen

1976 Boulez Knie, Thomas, Arvidsson, Rundgren, Kélémen

Tristan und Isolde

1970 Böhm Windgassen, Nilsson, Hoffman, Neidlinger, Talvela

1999 Barenboim Jerusalem, Meier, Braun, Struckmann, Hölle

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg

1960 Knappertsbusch Greindl, Windgassen, Grümmer, Adam, Schärtel, Stolze

Parsifal

1971 Jochum Konya, Crass, Martin, Stewart, Nienstedt, Ridderbusch

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