

THE VALKYRIE

By Richard Wagner

Virginia Opera Company

Harrison Opera House

Feb. 5, 9, 11, 13

For tickets call: 1-866-OPERA .VA

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

The consistently creative Lillian Groagg with an overall band of fine singers, directors, musicians and designers have come up with a production that cherishes the greatness and majesty of the Wagner music. The critic Milton Cross years ago felt that the poetry and action of the drama were serviceable, but little more than that. Too often the long monologues are repetitious to the point of boredom. Historian and Critic, David Ewen, points out that it is in the music that we are confronted with the overpowering magic of the Ring of which The Valkyrie is an "installment." Ewen also notes that each of the great climaxes in the Ring comes from using the material from the other dramas again and again.

Since this is an abridged version of The Valkyrie with various cuts along the way, the reusing of these themes is obviously not possible since they no longer exist. It's like trying to cut a play by Eugene O'Neill. The inevitable, unavoidable cumulative paths of suffering and anguish are diminished with every stroke of the blue pencil. It occurs to me that the editing of the score may be a reason for the lack of dynamics, flow and variety that prevailed in many scenes. Transitions were not always smooth. If this were a non-musical effort, one might describe the scenes as "talky" even though they are well sung and most certainly masterfully supported by the 51 piece orchestra under the baton of the commanding Joseph Rescigno.

A great deal of credit for this wonderfully theatrical place for the sturm und drang of this Valkyrie must be given to Kendall Smith who bewitches us time and time again with lighting arouses our imaginations of mythological Germany and the beautiful lyricism of the Wagnerian score.

The house lights dim, we have a bit of sturm and tenor Erik Nelson Werner as Siegmund and soprano Melissa Citro, Sieglinde appear and quickly prove that we are in secure musical hands for the demands of Wagner. And then, Kelly Cae Hogan reassures us that Brunnhilde is well provided for. While somewhat delicate, you sense that she is hot and tough and not somebody you'd mess around with. Powerful bass baritone James Johnson is a Wotan you believe and he becomes a stellar presence in Act II. The well rounded cast includes Nina Lorcini as a regal Fricka and Todd Robinson is an imposing, pensive Hunding

The resolution of the incestuous entanglement between Siegmund and Sieglinde is stunningly realized in a aura of spiritual beauty on a lovely spring night. Brunnhilde's punishment is equally poignant and moving as she is put in her crypt of fire.

By the way, we didn't really need the sweet little lass giving out candy or the clown in the lobby, but the two young men opening the doors on a cold windy night were truly splendid.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.