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Eric Owens, seen above as Alberich at the Metropolitan Opera, makes his role debut as Wotan in Lyric's all new production.

PHOTO: Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera

A new *Ring* begins!

Sir Andrew Davis conducts

DAS RHEINGOLD

Saturday, October 1, at 6pm, to open Lyric's 62nd season

Six performances through October 22

CHICAGO – Lyric Opera of Chicago launches its new season with a new production of Wagner's ***Das Rheingold***, the first opera of the epic four-part ***Ring*** cycle, conducted by **Sir Andrew Davis** and directed by **David Pountney**. ***Das Rheingold*** opens on Saturday, October 1, with six performances through October 22 at Lyric's Civic Opera House, 20 N. Wacker Drive, Chicago. Tickets start at \$34 and are available now at lyricopera.org/Rheingold or at 312-827-5600.

This marks the first time Lyric has opened a season with a work by Richard Wagner, notes **Anthony Freud**, the company's general director.

The story:

The Nibelung dwarf Alberich (**Samuel Youn**/American debut) steals the gold

belonging to the Rhinemaidens (**Diana Newman**, **Annie Rosen**, **Lindsay Ammann**/Lyric debut) after they scorn his amorous advances. Forging a ring from the magical metal, he becomes all-powerful, enslaving his brother Mime (**Rodell Rosel**) and the rest of the Nibelungs. **Eric Owens** portrays Wotan, the chief god, who learns of the ring's power and travels to Nibelheim with Loge (**Stefan Margita**), the demigod of fire. Wotan tricks and captures Alberich, steals the ring (and the rest of the Rhinegold), and is cursed by Alberich. The earth-goddess Erda (**Okka von der Damerau**, Lyric debut) warns Wotan of dire consequences. Urged by his wife Fricka (**Tanja Ariane Baumgartner**/American debut), Wotan pays the giants Fasolt (**Wilhelm Schwinghammer**/Lyric debut) and Fafner (**Tobias Kehrer**/Lyric debut) with the ring and the rest of the stolen gold for having built Valhalla, the gods' new fortress, and also as ransom for Fricka's sister Freia (**Laura Wilde**), whom they hold hostage. Without Freia's golden apples, Wotan, Fricka, Donner (**Zachary Nelson**/Lyric debut), and Froh (**Jesse Donner**) have grown weak. Fulfilling Alberich's curse, Fafner kills Fasolt and keeps the ring. The gods enter Valhalla with no clue what's to come in the next installments of the four-part **Ring** cycle (which inspired Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy).

Sir Andrew Davis, Lyric's music director, conducts the new production directed by **David Pountney**. The late **Johan Engels** was the original set designer. **Robert Innes Hopkins** is set designer, **Marie-Jeanne Lecca** is costume designer, **Fabrice Kebour** is lighting designer, and **Denni Sayers** is choreographer. *The Passenger*, the riveting production seen at Lyric in 2014-15, was the previous collaboration by Davis, Pountney, Engels, Lecca, and Kebour.

Over the course of four seasons Lyric will tell the full story of the **Ring**, with one new production each season through 2020: **Die Walküre** in 2017-18, **Siegfried** in 2018-19, and **Götterdämmerung** in 2019-20. Following the regular season in the spring of 2020, the full **Ring** cycle will be presented three times over the course of three weeks – a phenomenal undertaking that attracts audiences from around the world.

"From every point of view, a new **Ring** is the most massive challenge that any opera company can undertake," says Freud, who worked on his first **Ring** at Welsh National Opera before he became general director there, and planned a **Ring** while general director at Houston Grand Opera, which began after he left for Lyric.

"We're lucky to have the right team to lead Lyric's new **Ring** – **Sir Andrew Davis** on the podium and **David Pountney** as director," Freud continues. "In 2014, we were all deeply saddened by the death of set designer **Johan Engels**, but his work had been virtually completed, and (as we know he would have wished) we are going forward with his designs for the entire cycle. **Das Rheingold**, technically the most formidable of all four **Ring** operas, brings together a cast made up of familiar and unfamiliar singers, all of whom we can expect to approach Lyric's **Ring** with extraordinary artistry and wholehearted commitment."

“As the opera that introduces us to several of the *Ring*’s central characters and to many crucial elements of Wagner’s style, *Das Rheingold* is an exhilarating entrance into the cycle,” says Davis. “I’m looking forward to returning to this music, which I haven’t conducted since Lyric’s previous *Ring* cycle in 2005. As with all the greatest works of art, the *Ring* will always offer us food for thought. Its insights into virtually every aspect of human existence never cease to fascinate me, and I’m thrilled by the beauty and eloquence Wagner gives us on every page of these extraordinary operas.”

Performance dates for *Das Rheingold* are Oct. 1 (6pm, opening night of the season), Oct. 5, 13, and 22 at 7:30pm; and Oct. 9 and 16 at 2pm. For tickets and information call (312) 827-5600 or go to lyricopera.org.

The opening-night performance of *Das Rheingold* can be heard live locally on **98.7WFMT** and globally on wfmt.com, beginning at 5:45pm. Listeners will have access to line-by-line translations in real time online at lyricoperalive.org.

About Lyric Opera of Chicago

Lyric Opera of Chicago’s mission is to express and promote the life-changing, transformational, revelatory power of great opera. Lyric exists to provide a broad, deep, and relevant cultural service to Chicago and the nation, and to advance the development of the art form.

Founded in 1954, Lyric is dedicated to producing and performing consistently thrilling, entertaining, and thought-provoking opera with a balanced repertoire of core classics, lesser-known masterpieces, and new works; to creating an innovative and wide-ranging program of community engagement and educational activities; and to developing exceptional emerging operatic talent.

Under the leadership of general director Anthony Freud, music director Sir Andrew Davis, and creative consultant Renée Fleming, Lyric strives to become The Great North American Opera Company for the 21st century: a globally significant arts organization embodying the core values of excellence, relevance, and fiscal responsibility.

To learn more about Lyric’s new season, go to lyricopera.org. You can also join the conversation with @LyricOpera on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. #Lyric1617 #LongLivePassion

The *Ring* cycle is a coproduction by Lyric Opera of Chicago and Teatro Real, Madrid. Lead sponsor: an **Anonymous Donor**. Production sponsors: **Mr. & Mrs. Dietrich M. Gross**, **Gamma Fisher Foundation of Marshalltown, Iowa**, and **Ada and Whitney Addington**.

Lyric’s new production of *Das Rheingold* is generously made possible by **Marlys A. Beider**, **Liz Stiffel**, **Helen and Sam Zell**, **Abbott Fund**, and **Bulley & Andrews**.

The Opening-Night Gala performance of *Das Rheingold* is sponsored by **Aon**. The Opera Ball at the Hilton Chicago is sponsored by **ITW** and **Northern Trust**. For information and Opera Ball reservations please call the Lyric Opera Women’s Board: 312-827-5682.

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