

DER RING DES HOWARD SHORE

A Comparison of the Music of *The Lord of the Rings* and Richard Wagner's *Ring Cycle*

Joel Livsey
School of Music
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Jamie Weaver

J.R.R. Tolkien's epic fantasy trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* is known for its similarity to nineteenth century composer Richard Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, an epic series of four operas based on Norse mythology. Naturally, Howard Shore's score for the film version of Tolkien's books contains noticeable parallels to Wagner's music. Both composers use unusual instrumentation and communicate the story through leitmotifs. The goal of this research is to demonstrate these similarities in order to gain a greater appreciation for both great epics.



<http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2013/04/02/live-from-the-met-das-rheingold>



<http://lotr.wikia.com/wiki/Sauron>

Instrumentation

Both Wagner and Shore make use of expanded instrumentation in their orchestras. They include unusual percussion, as well folk and non-European instruments in order to create soundscapes which illustrate the fantasy worlds and ancient cultures they accompany.

Leitmotifs

Musical themes which symbolize a person, thing, or idea. These themes often blend together and juxtapose against one another to unconsciously communicate subtle parts of the story which dialogue alone cannot convey. This musical technique is widely used in film. Howard Shore uses it on a massive, Wagnerian scale; utilizing over fifty leitmotifs throughout the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. The accompanying video presentation illustrates several examples in both the films and operas.



<http://www.baltimorerecords.org/hardangerfiddles.html>
Copyright 2010 D. Glenn Arthur, Jr.

In *The Two Towers*, Howard Shore uses the Hardanger fiddle, a Norwegian folk instrument, to introduce the kingdom of Rohan, a nation of hardy farmers and horsemen.



<http://www.travelphotoadventures.com/category/hobbiton/>



<http://vi3x.deviantart.com/art/One-Ring-v3-53651274>

There are leitmotifs for almost anything: people, places, and even rings have specific musical themes.

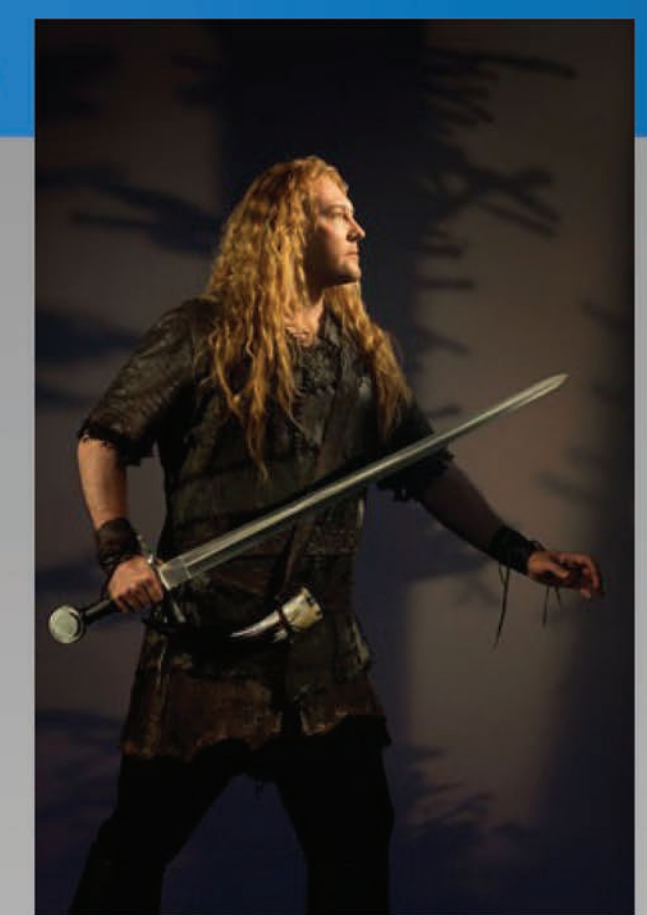


<http://kriegerscience.wordpress.com/2012/06/25/horns/>

Wagner uses steerhorns to illustrate the character Hagen summoning his soldiers.



<http://www.npr.org/blogs/deceptivecadence/2013/05/20/185532142/the-visitor-s-guide-to-wagner-5-unforgettable-moments>



http://www.potsdam.edu/new_sandevents/102011siegfried.cfm

For example: what music do you hear when you see this character from *Star Wars*?



<http://reggiestake.com/2012/06/14/darth-vader-images/>

Several examples of Wagner and Shore's creative instrumentation are presented in the accompanying video.



<http://sikhsaaj.blogspot.com/2010/07/sarangi-one-hundred-colours-of-soul.html>



<http://www.amazingalhorn.com/images/wideBergun4.jpg>