



SSIC<sub>SIM</sub>

2019

BACKGROUND GUIDE

# GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG: THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS



Dear Delegates,

When I first thought of using Richard Wagner's *Ring Cycle* as the basis of a crisis committee, my immediate reaction was to think of an opera by a less problematic composer that could be used instead. Yet, despite the difficult legacy of its creator, the "Ring" has aged far better than many other theatrical works. It lacks the colonialist "exoticism" of Puccini's *Turandot* and *Madama Butterfly*, and its female characters are far stronger than Cosette in *Les Misérables*. The broad scope of the cycle's plot is also particularly well-suited to a crisis committee. This is not a simple tale of two star-crossed lovers, or a bunch of ridiculous aristocrats--it is a story of corruption, collapse, revolution and rebirth, in which the entire world is at stake. As director Francesca Zambello states, "the great themes of the *Ring*--nature, power and corruption--resound through [our] past and haunt our present."

My dilemma reflects a broader debate within the arts community of how to grapple with Wagner. Can an artist's work be separated from their beliefs? It is clear that Wagner did not think so. Deeply involved in politics and philosophy, he saw art as "the highest...form of human endeavour," and believed it would be central to a new, democratic society. The close relationship between Wagner's music and his philosophy makes it difficult to reconcile his musical legacy with his strongly held nationalist and anti-semitic beliefs. As deeply problematic as Wagner's ideology is, his work cannot be ignored; not only did he completely transform opera, he developed a design of theater that is still



used today, contributed to the expansion of the orchestra, and pushed the boundaries of music composition to the extent that some music theorists measure the birth of post-tonalism from his “Tristan” chord.

In presenting this crisis committee, my objective is not to overlook or justify Wagner's many wrongdoings. Rather, I have reached the conclusion that we must engage with his work from a critical standpoint, and reinterpret it in a way that resonates with our own contemporary understanding, which (one hopes) has evolved beyond the divisive and hateful philosophies that underlay late 19th Century German society. What better way to refute Wagner's nationalist malice than to reconstruct his work in a conference inspired by an organization that promotes international cooperation? Crisis committees by nature involve critical consideration of canonical and historical events, and allow participants to change these events and improve their outcomes. I cannot achieve this reinterpretation alone. I am deeply grateful to our crisis manager, Sam Parker, our moderator, Madeleine Milne, and our analysts, Zhenglin Liu and Karrie Chou, for all the enthusiasm and hard work they bring to this committee. I am also relying on each of you to engage with this content in a respectful and responsible way. I encourage you to challenge the boundaries of this canon, to produce not only a better outcome to the story, but also an improved interpretation of a deeply flawed work. Based on my four years' experience participating in the MUN community at UofT, as a delegate, secretariat



member, and staff member, I am confident that we can achieve this challenging goal together, and I am excited to see what you bring to the table.

Sincerely,

*Claire Latosinsky*

Director, *Götterdämmerung: Twilight of the Gods*



## ON ESTABLISHING FACT IN A FICTIONAL WORLD

All that we know for certain about the world of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* is contained in the four operas' "libretti," or scripts. Though they are incredibly detailed, they are written for dramatic purposes, and thus lack information that is not directly relevant to the story. However, as a product of Wagner's imagination, the world of the *Ring Cycle* can be traced to various interests of his. The most evident influence is that of Norse and Teutonic mythology. Wagner appears to have combined elements of three main thirteenth-century Norse and Teutonic texts to formulate the *Ring Cycle*. He intertwines tales of the "Wälzung" lineage of heroes from the Norse Epic, *Volsunga Saga* and South German courtly drama, *Nibelungenlied*, with the stories from the *Edda*, a compilation of Norse mythology recorded by Icelandic scholar Snorri Sturluson. Though not as obvious, there are several other influences at play in Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. Jesse Byock argues that Wagner, somewhat of a revolutionary himself, intended for the operas to be "a commentary on the industrial and political revolutions of the nineteenth century." Wagner was also strongly influenced by philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, who himself was interested in Buddhist and Hindu scriptures. Peter Bassett argues that the gradual erosion of Wotan's pride and power over the course of the operas represents Schopenhauer's "annihilation of the will," or what might be described in



Buddhism as “the renunciation of craving and desire which lies at the root of suffering.”

In order to create a situation specific enough to allow for informed and constructive debate, this background guide will draw on Wagner’s source materials in addition to the libretti themselves, with particular attention to Norse and Teutonic mythology. Delegates are encouraged to use a similar scope of resources in their research, but are advised that, in cases where information from the background guide does not align with traditional mythology, the background guide should take precedence. This is particularly relevant to the powers allotted to certain characters. For example, although Odin/Woden of Norse and Teutonic mythology is the all-powerful ruler of the gods, Wotan of Wagner’s *Ring* holds considerably less definitive power, and the background guide sides with Wagner’s interpretation. Delegates are invited to contact their director if they have questions about how and to what extent they may apply an element of their research.

## **THE CHARACTERS OF WAGNER’S *RING CYCLE***

The characters of the *Ring Cycle* can be broadly divided into four different groups: gods and god-affiliated beings (Norns, Rhinemaidens, and Valkyrie), giants, nibelungs, and humans. Though each group inhabits a different area of the world, their relationships and interactions are complex. The characters represented by delegates in this committee are highlighted in **red text**.



## The Giants

Of all the beings on Earth, the giants have perhaps the longest history. According to Norse mythology, the first living creature was a giant named Ymir. The gods, who arrived later, killed all the giants with the exception of one frost giant, from whom all of today's giants are descended. Since this tumultuous beginning, the relationship between the giants and the gods has been turbulent. Although frequently at odds with one another, the two groups are inextricably entwined--in fact, several of the gods who reside in Walhal are the product of a relationship between a god and a giant. Currently, the giants are led by a pair of ambitious brothers, Fashold and Fafner, who wish to overcome the hegemony of the gods and reassert giants' power over the world. However, they are also willing to enter into business dealings with the gods, provided the contracts are clearly stated, and backed by the guarantee of Wotan's spear. Though the giants are not as clever as the gods, their incredible strength and excellent craftsmanship make them valuable trading partners. The gods and giants are also united by a mutual hatred of Alberich and the nibelungs.

## The Nibelungs

Residing in the caves beneath the mountains, the nibelungs are a people of cunning and intelligence rather than strength or force. They are excellent smiths and craftspeople, mining the mountains for metal to produce magical tools and weapons, as well as valuable treasures. They are also skilled in spells and potions,



which they often use to trick their enemies. Though the Nibelungs have historically been peaceful and mostly self-interested, they have recently been brought under the power of a king, Alberich, who seems to have ambitions of conquest. Though disliked by gods and giants alike, Alberich shares many traits with the god Wotan. Both are ambitious and somewhat greedy, with an insatiable desire for wealth and power.

### The Humans

The newest and least powerful of all beings, humans are largely the pawns of the gods and other beings. Though they can act independently, the outcomes of many of their actions are influenced by the gods. Their lives and deaths are determined by the Norns. The humans are aware of the existence of other beings. They worship the gods, making sacrificial offerings to them. Heroes among them have fought monsters and dragons, and many sailors have been lured to their deaths by the Rhinemaidens. Though most believe humans to be inconsequential, they are of special interest to several of the gods. Wotan, in particular, has created a lineage of heroes called the "Wälungs." Currently, the two Wälungs alive on Earth are twin children, Siegmund and Sieglinde, who were separated at birth. Though gods can take human form, to interact directly with humans on Earth, these interventions are limited, partially because Wotan believes in the free will of humans, and also because interventions in the human world create friction with his wife, Fricka, who believes that they endanger order





and justice. Fricka particularly resents the Wälsungs as evidence of Wotan's own marital disloyalty.

### The Gods

Currently the most powerful beings in the world, the gods are a group of unique personalities existing in a complex network of relationships. Initially, the gods were divided into two groups: Aesir, gods of battle, and Vanir, gods of fertility and wealth. Long ago, after defeating the Vanir in battle, the Aesir took several of the Vanir to live with them. This combination of Aesir and Vanir makes up the gods who currently inhabit the world. The nominal leader of the gods is Wotan, whose claim is based on the wisdom he gained from drinking from the Well of Mimir, as well as the power he draws from his spear. Though traditionally, the gods have looked to Wotan to determine which actions should be undertaken by them as a group, they can act without Wotan's consent, and indeed, against his advice. As the world order becomes less stable and decisions become more fraught, and the gods may be more willing to speak out against Wotan if they feel he is wrong.

### **Wotan**

Wotan's position as "ruler of the gods" has been hard-won. Not only did he sacrifice an eye to gain the gift of wisdom, but the power of his spear is dependent on his faithfulness to any contracts and treaties he makes, giving him little room for dishonesty or mistakes. Somehow, Wotan has managed to



overcome this setback through “false promises and trickery,” working with the trickster-demigod Loge to seek out loopholes in agreements he has made. Because of this history, Wotan is not well-loved outside of his circle of fellow gods, and is generally viewed as untrustworthy. Despite all that he has achieved, Wotan has an “insatiable appetite for power and wealth;” he continues to dream of “war and arms, glory and might” rather than enjoying the fortress of Walhal that he has just built, and he seeks to further secure his legacy on earth. Wotan is able to interfere to protect any human warrior who wields his sword, “Nothung.” He also has two pet ravens.

### **Fricka**

As goddess of marriage and protector of faithful couples, Fricka has a strong sense of duty and tradition. Unlike her husband, Wotan, an unbridled optimist who frequently disregards convention, Fricka is a realist, who knows that everything comes at a cost. Though fiercely loyal to her family, and protective of her son, Balder, Fricka does not allow kinship to sway her principles. She is an advocate of the truth, even when it is unflattering, and her strong sense of morality has led her to clash with many people. She distrusts Loge, the trickster, and strongly discourages her husband from collaborating with him; she is also wary of the Rhine Maidens, due to the fatal tricks they play on human men. She is one of Wotan's most vocal critics whenever she senses he is acting immorally or unjustly.. Despite her strong will, Fricka ultimately seeks peace and harmony; she sees the creation of Walhal as an opportunity for the gods to put their



ambitions of war and conquest to rest, and instead enjoy the wealth that they have already created. Fricka is willing to act to defend justice, and to do so, she has the help of a golden whip, as well as a chariot drawn by rams.

### **Freia**

The goddess of youth, beauty and fertility, Freia is loved by all of the gods, not only for her kindness, but for her essential role in sustaining their immortality. Freia is the only god capable of cultivating the golden apples which the gods must eat each day, in order to preserve their youth; without her, the gods will quickly grow old and die. This has made Freia a target of the giants, who see her absence as key to the overthrow of the gods. Despite Freia's close relationship with the other gods, and particularly her brother, Froh, she also shares familial ties to some of the gods' enemies. Along with her brother Froh and father, Njord, Freia is a former Vanir god, and her mother was part-giant. Freia is very involved in the world of the humans. Along with the Valkyrie, she is responsible for selecting fallen warriors to guard Valhalla. She is also interested in the education of human children, rewarding and punishing their behavior to foster the heroes of the future. Besides her golden apples, Freia possesses a carriage drawn by cats.

### **Donner**

The god of thunder, Donner is the champion of the gods, frequently battling giants, and the protector of peasants, bringing rain to nurture their crops. Donner is combative; he can quickly become violent when angry, and



he can become angry quite easily. He is loyal to his brother, Wotan, but is a man of action, and grows impatient when decisions are delayed. Donner, along with Heimdall, is the gatekeeper to Wallhal. By summoning thunderstorms, he creates the rainbow bridge that provides the only access to the fortress. He possesses a magical hammer, which is not only used to create thunderstorms, but is also extremely effective in combating giants. He also drives a chariot drawn by goats.

### **Froh**

As the guardian of crops, Froh is concerned with the well-being of humans, working closely with Donner and Heimdall to ensure their survival. He is also highly protective of family, and particularly of his sister, Freia. Though less combative than Donner, Froh is proud, and will act to protect the honour of himself, his family and his friends. Froh looks to Wotan for guidance, but is willing to act against Wotan if he thinks it is in the best interest of the gods. Along with Freia, and their father, Njord, Froh is a former member of the Vanir clan of gods, and the son of a mother who was part-giantess.

### **Tyr**

The god of treaties and justice, and the guardian of oaths, Tyr is a strong advocate of acting in accordance with established laws. This does not necessarily mean that Tyr is an arbiter of peace; in fact, he is quite skilled in working within the rules, and exploiting existing loopholes to achieve political objectives. Though this skill makes him a valuable ally to Wotan, it puts him at



odds with Loge, who prefers to work outside of the law, and undermine established order. In fact, Tyr and Loge share a mutual disdain for one another, stemming from Tyr's role in locking up Loge's son, the wolf Fenrir. This action cost Tyr his right hand, which was bitten off by Fenrir. When Tyr feels that war is justified, he is a strong warrior and valuable ally. Though he has always been loyal to the gods, even in fighting against the giants, Tyr has giant ancestry: his father was a giant, and it is uncertain whether his mother was a goddess or a giant.

### **Balder**

The son of Fricka and Wotan, Balder diverges from both his parents in temperament. He is wise, eloquent, and above all, merciful, even when he has just cause not to be. Balder is also the most physically attractive of the gods; Skadi the giantess once wanted to marry Balder, but accidentally married Njord, the sea-god, instead. Balder's kindness and beauty have made him "beloved by all," except for Loge, who is incredibly jealous of Balder's popularity. However, it would be difficult for any enemy of Balder to defeat him, as Fricka has protected her son by making all of creation swear an oath not to harm him, so that no weapon has thus far been able to do any damage to him. Balder's primary concern is the welfare of human beings. He is married to a human woman, named Nanna, and their son, Forseti, is the arbiter of disputes among men.



## Heimdall

Heimdall is the “guardian of the gods.” He is responsible for watching over the rainbow bridge to Walhal, and ensuring that only those permitted by the gods may enter. To assist him in this endeavour, Heimdall has enhanced senses: he can see one hundred leagues away, in day and night; he can hear the grass growing and the wool on sheep. Although he will fight to defend his home, Heimdall prefers peace and relaxation. He also loves gold: his teeth are golden, and his horse, Gulltopp, is named for its golden mane. Heimdall is the son of Wotan, and of nine giantess mothers. He himself is the father of the first human beings. Heimdall cares very much about his human kin: he was responsible for teaching the art of reading and writing runes. It follows that Heimdall is loved and worshipped among human beings.

## Skadi

Skadi is a giantess, and the story of her adoption into the circle of the gods is an interesting one. Her father, the giant Thiazi, was murdered by the gods after he kidnapped a goddess, and Skadi went to avenge him. The gods compromised by offering her the opportunity to pick any one of them as a husband, based on the appearance of their feet. Skadi chose the most attractive feet, thinking they belonged to Balder, but in fact they belonged to Njord, the old sea-god. Skadi and Njord have since shared a somewhat unhappy relationship, dividing their time between Njord's home in the sea, and Skadi's home in the mountains. Skadi is restless; she misses her home in the



mountains, and she is tired of life with Njord, much preferring to spend time with Wotan. She also has a close and complex relationship with Loge, alternately joking and arguing with him. Skadi is a strong warrior, who loves to hunt, and is highly proficient in snowshoeing.

### **Njord**

Njord is the god of the sea and its riches. He is one of the Vanir gods, and before being traded to the Aesir as a hostage, he had a Vanir wife, with whom he had two children: Freia and Froh. Njord is passive, and prefers peace to war. Though he does not generally concern himself with the politics of the gods, he is attached to his home, the sea, and will act to defend it. Njord's resources and abilities could also make him a valuable ally. In addition to controlling the sea and everything in it, he is very wealthy, and has been known to lend his wealth to others. He is also able to quell wind and fire, and so can act as a mediating force between Donner and Loge, and the other gods.

### **Erda**

Though she is the goddess of the Earth, Erda does not reside with the rest of the gods, and her interactions with them, and with any other beings, are minimal. Erda is trapped within the depths of the world, and rarely emerges from her deep sleep. As the "all-knowing one," and "wisdom's guardian," she can see "all that e'er was," "how all things are," and "how all things will be." However, she very rarely communicates it directly to the gods, and almost never



intervenes. Her primary communication is through her daughters, the Norns. She has occasionally communicated with Wotan, and the Valkyrie are their children.

### **Loge**

A demigod rather than a god, Loge is an outsider. He is a trickster, and is not loyal to any specific group, driven instead by whim and personal ambition. He alternately helps and tricks the gods, and has also worked with others, including the nibelungs. Loge suspects that the era of the gods is coming to an end, but is willing to cooperate with them as long as they remain powerful. Because of his unreliability, Loge is not well liked among the gods except Wotan, who frequently enlists him in negotiating with giants and nibelungs. Most recently, he was responsible for designing the treaty between the giants and the gods to build Walhal, and now Wotan expects him to find a way out of it. Though not as powerful as the gods, Loge is highly intelligent, and can nimbly navigate through the physical world, as well as between its people, making him a valuable ally. Loge is also a shapeshifter, and as the demigod of fire, frequently transforms into flames.

### **The Valkyrie**

The Valkyrie are the eight female children of Wotan and Erda, created in an attempt to protect the gods from the end of the world. They are warrior maidens, responsible for sparking conflicts between humans, and bringing the souls of fallen heroes to defend Wallhal and protect the gods. The Valkyrie are loyal to Wotan, and he generally trusts their advice, particularly as it pertains to





the human world. Though they can interact directly with humans, they do not generally do so without Wotan's permission. As children of Erda, the Valkyrie are perhaps more virtuous than their father—they are compassionate and noble, willing to sacrifice themselves for the greater good. They are not universally loved, however: Fricka resents them as the product of one of Wotan's extramarital affairs, and she is suspicious of their allegiance to Wotan above all the other gods.

### **Brünnhilde**

Leader among the Valkyrie, Brünnhilde is Wotan's favourite, and his most trusted adviser. However, she is also the most independent, and is willing to defend her principles, perhaps even to the point of disobeying her father. Above all else, Brünnhilde values love, a trait for which she holds humans in high esteem. Brünnhilde is also particularly fond of her horse, Granë, which she can ride through the sky, on earth, and even through fire.

### **Waltraute**

A younger sister of Brünnhilde, Waltraute values loyalty over love. Among all the Valkyrie, it is she who has the strongest sense of duty to Wotan. This sense of duty can come into conflict with her desire to act in Wotan's best interest, particularly when Wotan's decisions put himself at risk. Although Waltraute envies Brünnhilde's position as Wotan's favourite, she would not dare to defy her sister as long as Brünnhilde has Wotan's support.

### **The Norns**



The three norns, **Urðr**, **Verðandi** and **Skuld**, are the daughters of Erda, and were born before the world began. The spinners of fate, they know all that has come before, and receive information of what is to come. The norns have a close connection to the earth; they are Erda's primary messengers to the gods, and, because they reside at the base of the Weltesche, they are closely attuned to its health. As caretakers of the Weltesche, the norns resent that Wotan has risked the life of the tree to create his spear. It is unclear how the death of the Weltesche might affect the norns: at the very least, it would displace them from their home; at worst, it might destroy them. The norns are represented in this committee by Skuld. Skuld is particularly concerned with the security of the future—not only as it relates to the norns, gods, and humans, but also the future of the world itself.

### **The Rhine Maidens**

Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde are the daughters of the Rhine river. They reside at the bottom of the Rhine, where they are the caretakers of the river and its inhabitants. They are playful tricksters, but also deadly, luring human men to their deaths with their beauty. Their primary duty is to guard the rheingold that lies at the bottom of the river. The gold is entirely harmless in its raw form, but, if stolen and crafted into a ring, it could pose a serious threat to the world order. It follows that the Rhine maidens are not particularly trusting of others. They have particular disdain for beings who do not dwell in the water. Their friendship, however, is valuable, as the Rhine is a major travel route and a



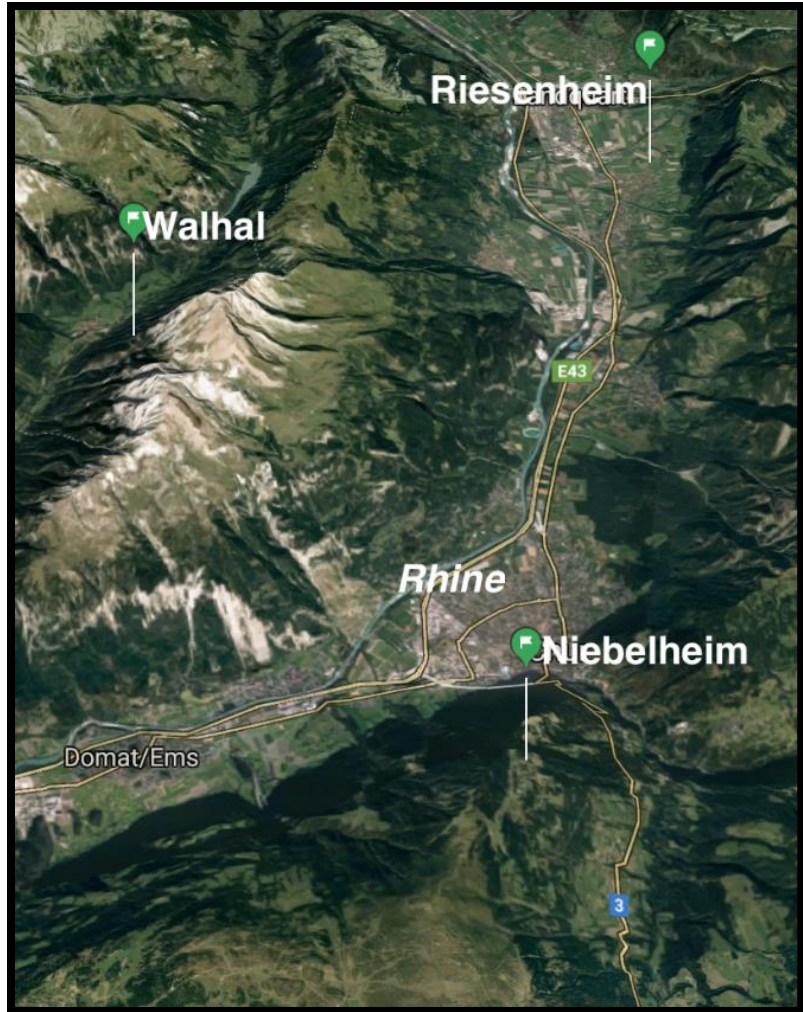
gateway to the mountain caves of the Nibelungs. The Rhine maidens are represented in this committee by Flosshilde, the most serious of the three.

## **SETTING: TIME AND PLACE**

The temporal and geographical setting of the *Ring Cycle* is rather vague. By extrapolating from clues left in the libretti, we will establish a more specific context for the events of the committee. The mythical world of the *Ring* is geographically centred around an undisclosed location on the Rhine river, which includes mountains and forests. For our purposes, we will assume the location is in the region of the modern-day Swiss city of Chur. Walhal, the newly-built palace where the gods reside, does not exist in Asgard, as is the case in Norse mythology, but rather in the sky above the highest peak of a mountain, which we will assume is the mountain now called Calanda. On the opposite side of the Rhine to Valhalla, within the depths of the mountain now known as Brambrüesch, are the mines of Nibelheim, the Kingdom of the Nibelungs, a mythical people ruled by King Alberich. Between the sky, which belongs to the gods, and the underground, belonging to the Nibelungs, the giants dominate the land from their seat at Riesenheim, located to the north. The land is also home to a relatively powerless species--that of humankind. In the valley, the Rhine river houses the daughters of the Rhine and the Rheingold which they guard.



Though Wagner's temporal setting is also quite vague, his use of Teutonic and Norse mythology indicates an era prior to the spread of Christianity throughout Europe. For our purposes, we will settle on the beginning of the 4th Century, which just predates the spread of Christianity to Germanic peoples. Delegates



should recall that, as the committee takes place in a mythical version of this world, its events will not correspond to historical ones of that era. However, it may be assumed that the humans inhabiting this world possess similar technology and social structures to those of real-life Norse and Germanic peoples of this era.

#### The "Weltesche:" The World-Ash-Tree

Though rarely mentioned in Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, the Weltesche, or "World-Ash-Tree," plays a vital role in the world of the opera. The Weltesche is



modelled on Yggdrasill of Norse mythology. Commonly recognized as the “cosmic tree” and the “symbol of universality,” Yggdrasill encompasses nine different worlds in its roots. Although Wagner has condensed this complex system of worlds into one world of different kingdoms, the fate of this world is entwined in the fate of the Weltesche, just as the fate of the Norse universe relies on Yggdrasill. At the base of the Weltesche lies Mimir's Stream, which is the source of wisdom. It is here where the three Norns--roughly equivalent to the Greek fates--weave all that has been, all that is known, and all that will be. Long ago, Wotan sacrificed one of his eyes to drink from this stream, granting him the wisdom of the world. This wisdom, combined with the power of Wotan's spear, enables him to lead the gods. This power has come at a price, however: since Wotan cut his spear from the Weltesche, the Norns have noticed that the tree is slowly dying, and Mimir's stream is dwindling. Given the Weltesche's vital role in upholding the world's current structure, its destruction would have enormous ramifications on the world as we know it.

### Magical Objects

Norse mythology places a particular emphasis on the power of objects. Many real-life objects of the Norse peoples, such as swords, were inscribed with the object's history, and mythical objects inscribed with runes were believed to have magical powers. In the *Ring Cycle*, Wagner adapted some traditional mythological objects, such as the Nibelung's ring and Nothung, and invented his own, such as the Tarnhelm. We will continue this tradition by including the



following objects as elements of our crisis. Please note that, while this list includes all objects existing at the beginning of the committee, these objects could be transferred, transformed or destroyed over the course of the committee, and new objects could be added as the committee progresses.

### Wotan's Spear

Hewn from the Weltesche's branches by Wotan, the spear has never failed in battle. Whoever possesses the spear is the ruler of the world. However, the spear derives its power through treaties and contracts written on its shaft, and so the person "who by bargains [is] made lord, to [their] bargains eke [is] a slave." If the possessor of the spear breaks an agreement they have made, without the consent of the other parties involved in that agreement, then the spear breaks, and with it, the power of the gods over other beings.

### The Rheingold

The rheingold is the property of the Rhine and his daughters, the Rhine maidens. In its raw form, the gold is harmless, and only a person who renounces love could forge it into something else. However, if forged into a magic ring, it would grant its wearer not only limitless wealth, but also power on a scale equal to that contained in Wotan's spear. Such power, if placed in the wrong hands, could be used to overthrow the gods.

### The Tarnhelm

This helmet was crafted by Mime, the brother of Alberich, King of the Nibelungs. It is currently in the possession of Alberich. The wearer of the helmet



has the power to shapeshift, as well as to be instantly transported anywhere on earth.

### Nothung

This sword was planted on Earth by Wotan, who stuck it into the base of an ash tree growing outside of the house of a human man named Hunding. The sword can only be pulled out of the tree and wielded by a human who has no fear. Its magic power is backed by Wotan, and thus the person who wields the sword can only be defeated by Wotan's spear.

### Leitmotifs

In writing operas, Wagner sought to create a "gesamtkunstwerk," a union of music, drama, literature and visual art, reflecting one another, rather than just coexisting on a stage. To this end, Wagner developed "leitmotifs:" recurring melodies that represent a specific character, place, object or idea within the opera. These melodies can signal the physical appearance of what they represent before it arrives, in a form of foreshadowing. Leitmotifs are one of Wagner's most significant contributions to the artistic world, and continue to be used today, particularly in films, such as the "Lord of the Rings," "Star Wars," and "Harry Potter." In homage to this important development, we will be including several of the leitmotifs from the *Ring Cycle* in our crisis. Prior to a major crisis update, we will play recordings of relevant leitmotifs to foreshadow what characters, objects or places may be involved in the update. We have included all of the leitmotifs we will be using in the table below. Delegates are not



expected to memorize all these melodies, but being familiar with them might allow you to guess the content of crisis updates before they're officially delivered.

<b>Object/Character/Location</b>	<b>Link to Recording with Sheet Music</b>
Giants	<a href="https://youtu.be/jqbXQsOW2BA">https://youtu.be/jqbXQsOW2BA</a>
Rhinemaids	<a href="https://youtu.be/8K0b6tXaJ0E">https://youtu.be/8K0b6tXaJ0E</a>
Alberich	<a href="https://youtu.be/lgilMP2ZCVs">https://youtu.be/lgilMP2ZCVs</a>
Rheingold	<a href="https://youtu.be/7o1n81V5wcw">https://youtu.be/7o1n81V5wcw</a>
The Ring	<a href="https://youtu.be/cZpYG6l6s4A">https://youtu.be/cZpYG6l6s4A</a>
Walhall	<a href="https://youtu.be/Man7MwIHYSw">https://youtu.be/Man7MwIHYSw</a>
Wotan's Spear	<a href="https://youtu.be/yvXDyBeaP-4">https://youtu.be/yvXDyBeaP-4</a>
Freia	<a href="https://youtu.be/c8Jw6iDxSCo">https://youtu.be/c8Jw6iDxSCo</a>
Golden Apples	<a href="https://youtu.be/thlUChT9oqQ">https://youtu.be/thlUChT9oqQ</a>
Froh	<a href="https://youtu.be/qamrRow9_MQ">https://youtu.be/qamrRow9_MQ</a>
Loge	<a href="https://youtu.be/OZG70F2ob_k">https://youtu.be/OZG70F2ob_k</a>
Tarnhelm	<a href="https://youtu.be/N82zEAbWyT4">https://youtu.be/N82zEAbWyT4</a>
Dragon	<a href="https://youtu.be/iewb5VnH-80">https://youtu.be/iewb5VnH-80</a>
Erda	<a href="https://youtu.be/BqLevNjmin0">https://youtu.be/BqLevNjmin0</a>
Donner	<a href="https://youtu.be/YS7Sf-Hf5lg">https://youtu.be/YS7Sf-Hf5lg</a>
Nothung	<a href="https://youtu.be/TvQ1bmmtBro">https://youtu.be/TvQ1bmmtBro</a>





Valkyrie (The most famous)	<a href="https://youtu.be/qSVv1uk57Jo">https://youtu.be/qSVv1uk57Jo</a>
Fricka	<a href="https://youtu.be/sns84sy2UrA">https://youtu.be/sns84sy2UrA</a>
Wotan	<a href="https://youtu.be/_QULbTfHye0">https://youtu.be/_QULbTfHye0</a>
Weltesche	<a href="https://youtu.be/d3D0cyinTnA">https://youtu.be/d3D0cyinTnA</a>
Norns	<a href="https://youtu.be/f4IML8RghKg">https://youtu.be/f4IML8RghKg</a>

## THE CURRENT SITUATION

Working closely with Loge, Wotan has made a deal with the giant rulers Fasold and Fafner: in exchange for building Walhal, the luxurious palace for the gods envisioned by Wotan and Fricka, the two giants will receive the goddess Freia, and with her, the golden apples that are key to the gods' immortality. In addition to her strategic value, Freia is the close sister of Froh, who will not stand to see her bartered away in such an undignified manner to giants, the enemies of the gods. Thus, the gods have both practical and personal reasons to avoid giving up Freia. However, failure to uphold the agreement made with the giants will destroy Wotan's spear, which is the source of his authority and the gods' power over the world. To preserve the spear, the agreement would have to be altered with the agreement of the giants. Without any peaceful solutions in sight, more aggressive gods are seeking immediate action against the giants to rescue Freia. The gods' first task in this crisis is to work towards a solution that maintains their hegemony, either through war or peace.



## LONG-TERM ISSUES TO CONSIDER

**1. The relationship of the gods to other beings, including giants, nibelungs**

**and humans:** Does your character seek to maintain the gods' power over these other beings, or to subvert this hierarchy? What alliances, or influence, if any, could your character draw on to achieve these objectives?

**2. The position of your character in relation to other gods:** How can you

utilize your relationships with other characters to achieve your objectives? Do you seek to change or improve your position? Do you benefit from a cohesive community among the gods, or from internal conflict?

**3. The creation and possession of powerful objects:** To what objects does

your character have access and how could they be used to your advantage? What objects could you possibly create or modify to suit your needs? How can you prevent powerful objects from getting into the wrong hands, and whose hands are the wrong hands?

**4. The health of the Weltesche and the fate of the world:** How could your

actions affect the health of the Weltesche? Do you seek to protect the Weltesche and the world as it currently exists, or will you plan a means of surviving or even benefitting from potential effects of the Weltesche's death?



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