

Richard Wagner

Ride Of The Valkyries



This month **Bridget Mermikides** adapts a legendary piece from full orchestra to a mere six strings and two hands. Prepare to battle mythical beasts and demons to gain entry to Valhalla!

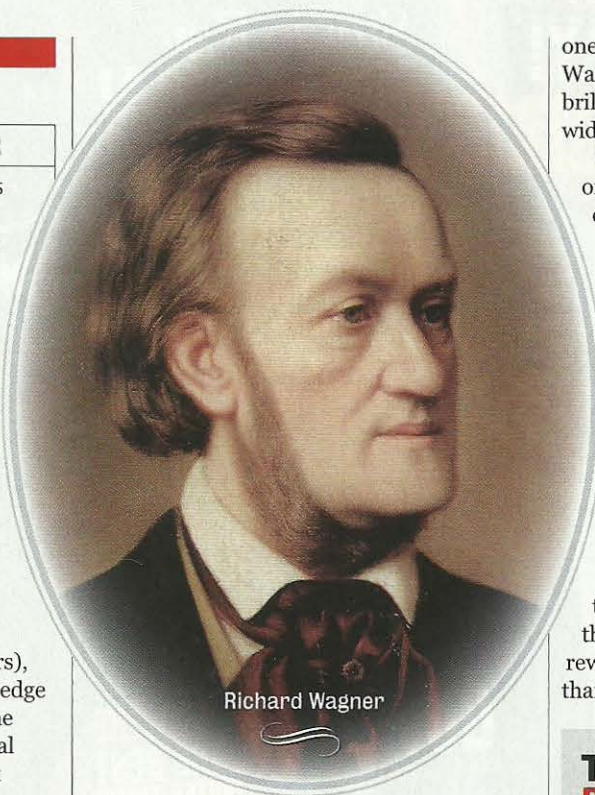
ABILITY RATING

● ● ● ● ● Advanced

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: C	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hammer-ons and trills
TEMPO: 58 bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plucking hand facility
CD: Tracks 9-10	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of octaves

THIS MONTH I'VE arranged a very popular piece of music from the 19th Century opera repertoire. The Ride Of The Valkyries – as it has now come to be known – is actually a small extract from Richard Wagner's masterpiece *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring Cycle), an epic four-part opera which took over 26 years to write and lasts over 15 hours. This gargantuan work (usually performed over four consecutive evenings) is rich in complexly interacting musical themes (representing each of the main characters), dramatic orchestrations and the cutting edge of stage production of the time. It tells the story of gods, human heroes and mythical creatures in a battle for a magic ring that endows the owner power over the whole world. If this sounds familiar then you'll start to appreciate the huge influence and vision that Richard Wagner (1813-1883) has had on today's popular culture from film scoring, orchestration and theatrical production.

“Wagner's orchestrations were extremely dense, so condensing this piece down to six strings and two hands involved some editing!”




Richard Wagner

Wagner was an expert in the use of 'leitmotif', a musical theme or chord progression which represents a character, object or emotion, and *The Ride Of The Valkyries* (which was written in 1854) opens Act III of the second opera of the cycle uses an incredibly powerful, infectious and memorable theme (which Wagner called *Walkürenritt*). The Valkyries are female figures in Norse mythology who decide who lives and dies in battle, and who choose among the dead who will be taken to Valhalla (a majestic afterworld located in Asgard itself

one of the nine worlds of Norse cosmology). Wagner's theme depicting these creatures is brilliantly crafted and instantly accessible to a wide audience.

Wagner favoured large ensembles and his orchestrations were extremely dense, so condensing this on to six strings and two hands will obviously involve some editing. However Wagner's theme is so powerful that it makes this solo arrangement work, and I have strived to capture much of the brilliantly twisted harmonic shifts and orchestral ideas. The original key is Bm, but I've transposed this down to Am to make it more idiomatic on the guitar.

The theme is in a 9/8 metre – three groups of three quavers – which gives a forward driving motion to the piece, and you'll want to spend some time getting the notes under your fingers to maintain this rhythm. As ever, patient practice will be rewarded, but I'm sure you can nail it quicker than it took to write the opera. 

TECHNIQUE FOCUS

POSTURE

Classical guitar playing requires that the guitar be held in a raised position by placing the guitar on the left leg (for right handed players) and that the leg be raised with the use of a footrest or footstool. Many players find that when practising for long hours this asymmetry can cause lower back and pelvis discomfort. There are alternative and more ergonomic solutions on the market including the Dynarette guitar cushion, the Efel Rest and Ergoplay – enabling both feet to remain flat on the floor and therefore no pelvic tilting. All are worth trying out for comfortable posture and therefore longer hours of practice!



TRACK RECORD The London Philharmonic Orchestra's *The 50 Greatest Pieces of Classical Music* (2009 XS Music Group) boasts a masterful orchestral rendition here reduced from its original length of about eight to five minutes to work better in the absence of stage action. Hans Zimmer's brilliant medley for the *Rango* soundtrack adapts the Valkyrie theme alongside 'Wild West' instrumentation.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 10

Box 1-51 Being in 9/8, this piece has a feel of three dotted crotchet beats in a bar. The initial (almost) two bars rest in the score is to account for the count-in arpeggios on the CD, which set up the tempo and pulse. The first runs are plucked with the thumb and slurred with the fretting hand as indicated and emulate the arpeggiated runs. At bar 5 the descending arpeggios have some plucking hand

fingering indicated: p a m i – repeating the 'a' finger may seem odd here but the idea is that the first 'a' finger is played rest stroke so it lands instantly on the second string and then the three fingers (a m i) play free stroke giving a fluent and even sounding arpeggio. If you have never tried this technique before it may feel clumsy so do it slowly until it feels secure then gradually speed up.

Allegro

♩ = 70 N.C.

1

5

Am

marcato

9

C G C

13

B

17

E

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 10

[Bars 1-21] The main theme starting on the up beat into bar 7 is played 'marcato' meaning 'marked' and should be played quite forcefully and accented. I played this main theme with the thumb to start with then introduced the first and second fingers to help with the articulation of the dotted rhythm. There is suggested indication of this under the tab at various points throughout the next twelve bars or so. The main objective is to find plucking hand fingering

that produces a crisp sounding and tight rhythm so that the spirit of this music is effectively captured. The up beat E note into bar 21 uses the third finger of the fretting hand which is then used again for the F note at the bottom of the Dm/F chord in the next bar. Using the same finger like this means you can 'slide' into the chord neatly without any gap between the up beat note and the downbeat chord. More plucking hand fingering is given here for the following few beats.

Chords: Dm/F, Am, Dm/F, Am, F, B \flat , E, Am

21 a m i p a m i p p i a m

Chords: Dm/F, Am, Dm/F, Am, Dm/F, Bdim, E

25

Chords: A, Am, C

29

Chords: G, C, G, C, C/E

33

Chords: Em, B, Eaug, Faug/A

37

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 10

[Bar 24-43] In bar 24 I played the first bass note rest stroke style followed by a free stroke thumb on the second note to give emphasis on the downbeat. This rest stroke followed by free stroke is the same kind of technique as the descending arpeggios in bar 5 but this time with the thumb ascending; it re-

occurs in bar 29. On the last quaver beat of bar 42 use a barre across all six strings in preparation for the Eb/G chord on bar 43. On the second beat Bb chord of this bar switch to a four-string barre and then on the last two semi-quavers back to a six-string barre. It's the same for the next bar.

41

[illegible]

47

Faug/A

B \flat

B \flat /F

E
B
G
D
A
E

1 2 2 6 6 3 0 3 6 7 6 3 1 2 2 6 6 3 0 3 6 7 6 3 1 3 3 3 3 3 6 5 6

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel. It includes a guitar part and a piano part. The guitar part is written in standard notation with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The piano part is written in standard notation with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 1 through 6, and the second system covers measures 7 through 12. The guitar part features a prominent arpeggiated pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The piano part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The score is presented in a clear, professional layout with a white background and black notation.

53

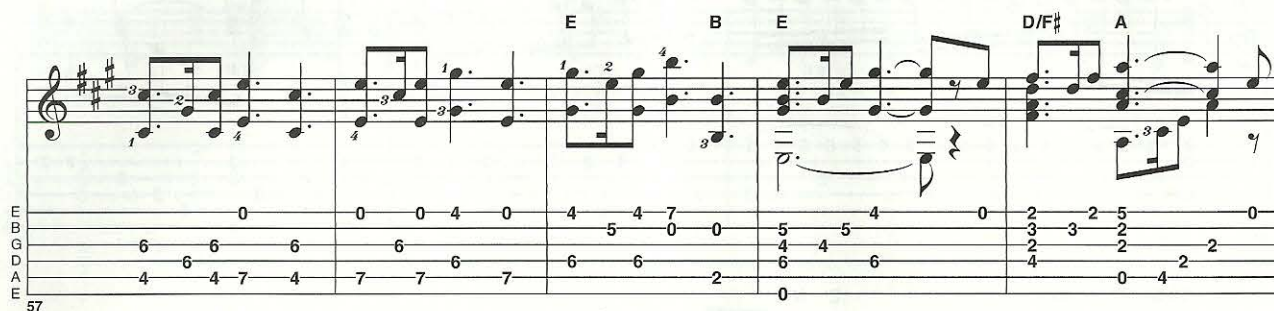
PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 10

[Bar 49 to end] Bars 49 and 50 need a 1st fret barre on beat 1 and a third string barre on beat 2. From bar 53 to bar 59 there is specific fingering for the fretting hand, which is intended to give the easiest solution for ease of performance and

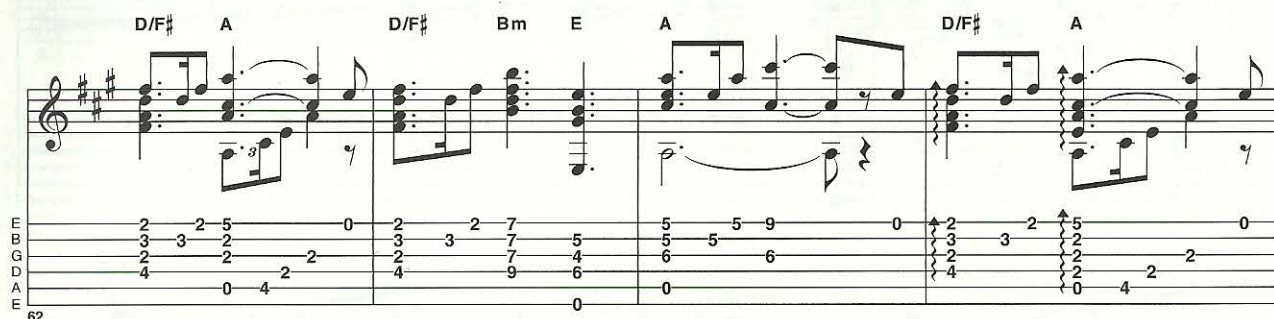
which I've marked in the music. A 2nd fret barre is needed from bar 61 and watch out for the slightly tricky octaves at the end - hold the fingers as though they are locked in position, making minor adjustments for differing fret widths.

57



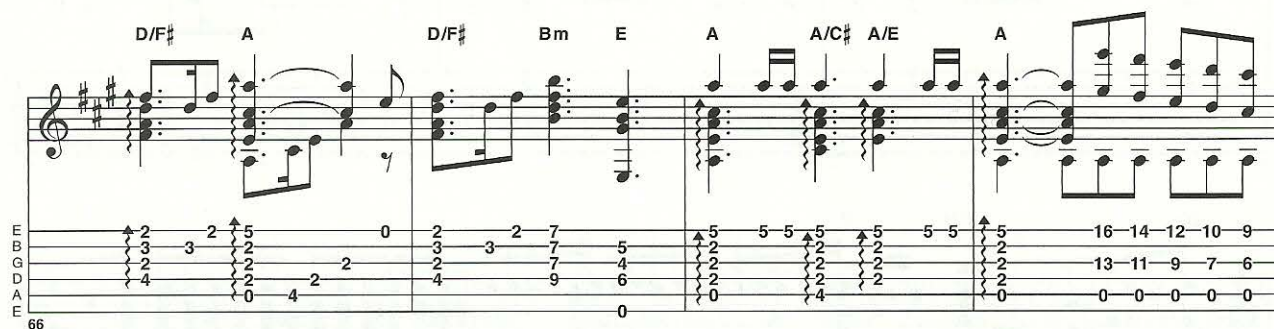
Chords: E, B, E, D/F#, A

62



Chords: D/F#, A, D/F#, Bm, E, A, D/F#, A

66



Chords: D/F#, A, D/F#, Bm, E, A, A/C#, A/E, A

70

