

TV's 'The Ring' of major importance

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Richard Wagner's masterpiece, the four part opera, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, is one of the greatest creative works of western culture. The televising of *The Ring*, in a performance taped at Bayreuth in 1979 and 1980, is an event of major importance for mass culture. Never before has Wagner's gigantic conception been televised in its entirety in this country; never before have the television cameras filmed the entire *Ring* on the grounds of Wagner's hallowed *Festspielhaus* at Bayreuth.

Over fourteen hours of opera are to be broadcast by KTWU, Channel 11,

in weekly segments starting on Monday, January 17, at 8 p.m.

The first program will consist of a documentary on the making of the series, *A Ring for Television*.

It is not so many years since the *Ring* was first recorded for the gramophone. It was during the late 1950's and 60's that Decca records (London) recorded the four operas in their entirety under the direction of conductor Georg Solti. The issuing of the records of the final opera, *Götterdämmerung* was marked by an outstanding BBC television documentary on the making of that opera, a documentary that featured

Birgit Nilsson resplendant in full cry, and the great German bass, Gottlob Frick, stunning in his portrayal of Hagen.

Monday's documentary will be followed by the broadcasts of the operas themselves on successive Monday evenings, starting with *Das Rheingold* on January 24.

The production will be the controversial collaboration between conductor Pierre Boulez and producer Patrice Chereau which was commissioned for the Bayreuth centennial in 1976, in which the Wagner's mythological saga was interpreted in modern, anti-capitalist terms.

The production was greeted with prolonged booing at Bayreuth by an audience who felt it to be both an affront to the memory of the composer and an example of the excesses of contemporary opera staging.

This production has also been released recently as a series of LP recordings.

There was a time not so long ago when television networks would think several times before broadcasting one note of opera. The televising and broadcasting of the complete *Ring* cycle is not only an unprecedented event, but a landmark in the history of both opera and of television.

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