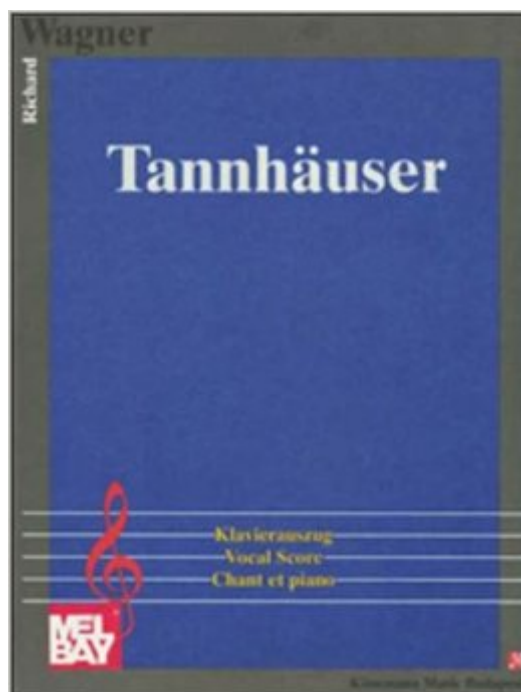


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Tannhäuser



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Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I first bought this Tannhauser in my third year of college. It's still overall very good and well worth the low price. Someone, most likely unaware of this reissue, is selling the original Phillips pressing for a laughable amount. One distinct plus is its documentation of Anja Silja's voice in peak condition before it's premature downfall. Too bad she chose to sing those heavy roles so early on. Amazingly she's still singing low voice character parts, but never lost that wobble that she acquired in the late 1960's. I saw her as Clytemnestra several years back and despite the condition of the voice, she dominated the stages with a gripping magnetism I've rarely experienced whenever she was on stage. It was a chilling portrayal. The act II duet between Elizabeth and Tannhauser contains the usual stage cut (that deprives Wolfram of his touching and moving line) and though, after the Paris bacchanal, it reverts to the Dresden version, Tannhauser is given the usual solo at at "Zum Heil..." thereby depriving the listener of the beautiful ensemble writing that should surround it. Solti, Barenboim, Haitink are the only recordings that come to mind that cut neither. The Gerdes

recording, gives T. the solo, but doesn't cut the duet; the Sawallisch Bayreuth recording with de los Angeles in the cast does the reverse as does the Sinopoli DGG recording. I should mention that the Gerdes recording is often ignored, but is one of the best Tannhauser's ever recorded. Nilsson does an outstanding job at both roles. Another little known and surprisingly GREAT and complete recording (except for the "Zum Heil" solo is the 1936 recording with Carl Leonhardt. Despite the age, the sound is excellent and the ensembles are balanced better than on most modern recordings.

In anticipation of the new Tannhauser recording coming out in January 2013, I decided to add to my collection. I will echo the best comments made by other reviewers about the Sinopoli recording. Domingo's performance of the title role provides the most satisfying traversal on record simply because his voice is both beautiful and powerful as it runs the role's range of introspection, renunciation, torture, and regression. However, I am not a German speaker and I have been told and I have read that Domingo's command of the language is distracting. Yet many make allowances given the beauty, power, and commitment in the voice, especially at that point in his long career. Cheryl Studer's purity of tone and range capture Elizabeth perfectly and Agnes Baltsa brings the requisite dynamics and seductiveness to her passages with Tannhauser. Therefore to a non-native German, this digital recording is probably the best-sounding all around. As much as I like Windgassen, he simply does not sound his best in the Sawallisch recording--which is too bad. Of course, he never was a Heldentenor but for the most part Windgassen always sang within his limits, bringing intelligence, musicality, and beauty to passages other Wagner singers gloss over or bark through. In his prime, he really did have the ability to remind us that Wagner wanted his music sung beautifully. Just listen to his Act 3 of Tristan under Bohm (and it's a live recording). The same cannot be said for Rene Kollo in the Solti (or in any Wagner role I've heard him in), although that recording rivals the Sinopoli with the added advantage of having a German speaker in the title role. Initially, Rene Kollo was one of my favorites, but as I have listened to more Wagner tenors, my appreciation of his rather thin voice has diminished quite a bit.

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