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Friedrich Overton

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LIF
KRO
NAN

A GROVE PLAY BY
KENNETH G. HOOK
MUSIC COMPOSED BY
ULDERICO MARCELLI

BOHEMIAN CLUB
SAN FRANCISCO:1937

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SAN FRANCISCO

TO
HENRY TAYLOR

FOREWORD

THE history of the early Kings of Norway is misty with legend, but so many historical facts are ignored in this play that it might be well to put down a brief outline, gleaned mainly from the "Heimskringla" of Snorre Sturlason.

A thousand years ago Harald Haarfagr—"Fair Hair"—united Norway under one head and made a kingdom of it, which it has continued to be ever since. He drove eight hundred families from the land by unceasing war on the *smaa-kongar*, chieftains of petty kingdoms, seizing the allodial lands of the bonders, or landholders, over which he appointed jarls, or earls, to collect taxes and govern.

His chief son, Eric Bloodax, succeeded him as head King, taking tribute from his lesser brothers with much savage quarreling. He and his wife Gunhild were driven from Norway by Harald's youngest son, Haakon.

The actual story of Haakon is more interesting than the play indicates. This shining youth was foster-son to Athelstane of England, bap-

tised and carefully educated. On his arrival in Norway, he was acknowledged at Thrandheim by the bonders, and defeated Eric with their help. He became a brilliant and successful King, regulating many things, and forming codes such as the Gule-law, which exists today, and is defended stoutly by the Norwegians. His laws helped make possible a democratic and enlightened people, and the Kings of Norway are still named after Haakon the Good.

His story would be a thrilling one for a more intimate stage, because in spite of his great deeds for Norway, he considered himself a failure, in that he was unable to change the religion of the folk. Pressure was even brought upon him to enter pagan rites, such as sprinkling the blood of slaughtered animals and eating the flesh. Dying from a battle-wound, his greatest sorrow was that he had departed from the Christian faith. His men offered to take his body to England for a Christian burial, but he answered, "I am not worthy of it." His friend Eyvind Skaldaspiller composed a great song in his memory, the "Haakon-armaal," in which he said:

Freed from his fetters,
against the world
the wolf Fenrir shall come,
before such another king
shall follow in his footsteps.
Friends die,
cattle perish,
desolated is the land;
since Haakon went
to heathen gods
people live in serfdom and bondage.

The religious motif has not been used because "Lifkronan," the living crown, symbolizes natural resources, the true riches of the land and sea. The theme is not a spiritual one except in its emphasis on the love of peace.

The play is intended to represent the fall of an Age; the change from the bloodthirsty Viking era to the peace-loving Norway of today. The two main characters, Eric and Haakon, typify, in the same order, the two periods. The main theme, the prophecy that Haakon's crown must be made of Norway's richest materials, is purely

imaginary. In a sense it returns to the earlier Grove Play form: Care is symbolized by gold-grubbing and Viking raids, in other words, Acquisition and War; the defeat of Care, by the physical and spiritual return of Haakon's eyesight.

I cannot forego a word of appreciation for Mr. Marcelli's magnificent music, expressing so much better than words can the stark splendor of that morning of the world. Without his help, without the invaluable direction of Edward Murphy, the grandeur of Ernest Weihe's sets, and the assistance of Professor Arthur Brodeur of the University of California and of many kindly and encouraging Bohemians, this tale of the Kings of Norway could never have been told in a redwood grove by the sea.

CHARACTERS

King of Norway:

HARALD HAARFAGR

EVERETT GLASS

His Sons:

HAAKON

JAMES P. BLAISDELL

ERIC BLOODAX

CAMERON PRUD'HOMME

Leaders of the Bonders:

SIGURD JARL

FREDERICK E. KEAST

HALVDAN

ARMAND GIRARD

IVAR

TEMPLETON CROCKER

BJÖRN

RAYMOND MARLOWE

GUNHILD, a captive

BENJ. A. PURRINGTON

AN OLD MAN

HARRY BUDD

A YOUTH

WYMAN B. GARTHWAITE

A FISHERMAN

WILLIAM B. HETFIELD

A THRALL

CHARLES P. PARTRIDGE

Vikings, Bonders, Skalds, Priests, Thralls
and Women.

THE TIME is the middle 10th Century.

lifkronan

THE SCENE IS THE THRESHOLD OF THE KING'S HOUSE AT THRANDEIM. LOWER STAGE LEFT REPRESENTS A BEACH, WITH ONE OR TWO SMALL BOATS HAULED UP. THE KING'S SEAT, A HIGH THRONE, IS AT LOWER STAGE RIGHT. GREAT STONE STEPS GO UP THE RAMP AND SWEEP AROUND AND OFF HIGH OVER UPPER STAGE RIGHT, LEADING TO THE KING'S HOUSE. THERE MAY BE A FEW CRUDE SEATS ON BOTH LEVELS. AT THE TOP OF THE HILLSIDE, STAGE LEFT, IS THE KING'S HOWE, OR BURIAL-PLACE, MADE OF SEVERAL HUGE STONES. THE SET REMAINS THE SAME THROUGHOUT THE PLAY.

Act one

scene: IT IS LATE AFTERNOON, STORMY AND OVERCAST. THE OLD MEN AND YOUTHS, THRALLS AND WOMEN ON STAGE HAVE AN AIR OF ANXIETY. MEN STAND AT VARIOUS POINTS ON THE HILLSIDE, LOOKING OUT STAGE LEFT. A GROUP OF WOMEN IS STITCHING THE EDGES OF A LARGE SAIL, WITH THE DESIGN OF A TALL TREE UPON IT, SPREAD OVER THE RAMP STEPS, LEFT. AN OLD MAN STOPS A YOUTH AS HE RUNS PAST.

OLD MAN: Has the dragon-ship been sighted
From the high hill?

YOUTH: Not yet, old father.

OLD MAN: The time grows long, and longer
Grow the women's sighs.
These storms blow cold
Around our hearts—
What care the furious waters
For a Viking? But may
The sightless wind and wave
Beat that great ship
To this accustomed haven!
Our old King is strong
Even in his last days,
But he could never bear the loss
Of both his sons.



LIFKRONAN

YOUTH: They will return.

OLD MAN: And when they do,
Note well the noble Haakon,
And the fierce strength of Eric
To swing the whistling sword.
You and these other bragging whelps
Will never whip yourselves
To that wild frenzy of the berserks,
Who tore their armor off
And fought like wolves.

YOUTH: Stop croaking lies, old crow.
Although King Harald has the lands
Our chieftain fathers
Fought so fiercely to withhold
We still can fight.

OLD MAN: Show us, then.

YOUTH: Come, wolfings, grasp the sword—
We'll show our berserk blood!

[HE STARTS A BERSERKER-DANCE. A FEW OTHERS JOIN HIM, GRADUALLY WORKING THEMSELVES UP INTO A WILD PANTOMIME OF WEAPON-SWINGING. AS THE DANCE ENDS, A FISHERMAN GESTURES FROM THE HILL.]

FISHERMAN: The dragon-ship!

ACT ONE

ALL: The ship! The dragon-ship is sighted!

[THERE IS GREAT EXCITEMENT. MOST OF THOSE ON THE HILLSIDE RUN DOWN TO THE LOWER STAGE.]

THRALL: The fisherfolk
With eyes like sea-eagles
Say the great ship cuts the wave
As straight and swift
As when she sailed.

OLD MAN: The gods are good!
The dragon-ship is safe.
At this hour
King Harald comes to the High Seat
To hold council with the jarls.
Tell him, thrall,
His two fine sons return.
That fierce old eagle
Can die at last
With proud gleaming eyes.
His eaglets have flown home.

[SIGURD ENTERS FROM THE KING'S HOUSE.]

SIGURD: The King.

[THERE IS INSTANT SILENCE. HARALD ENTERS, SUPPORTED BY IVAR AND HALVDAN, BJÖRN FOLLOWING. HARALD IS A

LIFKRONAN

MAGNIFICENT OLD PAGAN, HEROIC, FIERCE AND KINGLY IN SPITE OF THE WEAKNESS OF OLD AGE. OF THE FOUR JARLS, SIGURD, THE ELDEST, IS A MAN OF MIDDLE AGE, NOBLE, AND EXTREMELY LOYAL TO HARALD AND TO HAAKON. HALVDAN, A MAN OF GREAT COURAGE, IS CHIEF SPOKESMAN FOR THE BONDERS. IVAR IS THE JARL OF THE FISHERFOLK, AND BJÖRN, THE YOUNGEST, IS THE ARTIST, A WOODCARVER AND SINGER OF SONGS. THE PEOPLE SALUTE HARALD AS THE FOUR JARLS BRING HIM DOWN THE STEPS. THE THRALL MEETS THEM ON THE UPPER STAGE.]

THRALL: O mighty Harald,
On the distant sea
The ship that bears your sons
Gleams like a white bird!

HARALD: The dragon-ship is sighted?
Now my heart sings.
It does not come too late.

SIGURD: Too late?

HARALD: My strength drains away
As swiftly as the ebbtide, Sigurd.
This once I have no thought
For victory in battle

ACT ONE

Or whether the belly of the ship
Is swollen with battle-spoil.
Only that she brings to me
Two sons.

[HE MOUNTS THE HIGH SEAT.]

O folk of Thrandheim!
I have forged and shaped and worn
Great Norway's crown.
The hands that threatened it
My sword has bitten deep.
But death lifts from my head
That heavy golden crown
And leaves this white one.
I am dying.

[THERE IS A LOW MURMUR OF SORROW
FROM THE CROWD.]

SIGURD: We know, great Harald.

HARALD: I want no tears.
You should shout in anger
That a warrior-king
Has not died in battle—
That this King's blood
Will never stain the wild white mane
Of that swift horse
That bears the hero to Valhalla.



LIFKRONAN

HALVDAN: These are the folk of Thrandheim.
They are not heroes, nor their tears
heroic.

If you would stop their sorrow,
King of Norway,
Let the son that takes your crown
Restore the folk their lands.

[HARALD RISES IN FURY.]

HARALD: And I am King, by seizing lands
And subjugating chieftains!
Norway is one kingdom under one
king,
And lands and tribute
Go to my son each year.
He shall rule as I have ruled!
I am descended
From the great god Frey;
Let his wild vengeance
Rip the heart
From him who dares oppose
My last commands!

SIGURD: My King,
Halvdan speaks for the people.
We have not heard as yet
Your plans for Norway.

Act one

HARALD: Although I will not give up lands
My hand has moulded
To a nation's shape,
I give to you four jarls
The task of governing
These four domains of Norway,
And taking tribute for my son.
Sigurd;

[SIGURD STEPS FORWARD.]

To you I give the south
Over whose fields of grain
The wind runs like wave on wave
On the wide sea.

[SIGURD KNEELS.]

SIGURD: May I govern well, my King.

HARALD: Ivar;

[IVAR STEPS FORWARD.]

You shall be jarl, Ivar,
Over all the fisherfolk
Upon the western coasts.

[IVAR KNEELS.]

IVAR: The western coasts, great King.

HARALD: Halvdan;



LIFKRONAN

[HALVDAN STEPS FORWARD.]

O bold and rash defender of the folk,
Although I will not grant
That you return their freeholds,
You love the people
And will control them wisely.
You shall defend
The east of Norway,
With its mountain-sweep
Of orchards and of berry-lands.

[HALVDAN KNEELS.]

HALVDAN: I shall govern justly, Harald.

HARALD: And Björn;

[BJÖRN STEPS FORWARD.]

Woodcarver and singer of songs,
Your young strength
Must struggle with the north,
Its vast and frozen forests.

[BJÖRN KNEELS.]

BJÖRN: I receive it gladly, mighty King.

[A SONG IS HEARD FAINTLY, OFFSTAGE.]

HARALD: The song of victory
For my two sons!

Act one

Thralls, stand ready with the ropes
That beach the dragon-ship.
My sons are here.
The finer of the two
Shall be your King.
With you to help him, Sigurd,
Fiery Halvdan, Ivar and young Björn,
Great Norway shall not suffer!

[THE SONG GROWS GRADUALLY LOUDER AS HE SPEAKS. ROPES ARE THROWN OFF-STAGE, AND THE PROW OF A GREAT VIKING SHIP IS HAULED ON, FILLED WITH SINGING MEN. THE VIKING WARRIORS ARE SITTING AND STANDING IN LINES, THEIR PAINTED CIRCULAR SHIELDS FORMING A DOUBLE ROW ALONG THE SIDE OF THE BOAT. AS IT STOPS, THE MEN DESCEND, AND FINISH THEIR SONG SALUTING HARALD WITH THEIR SWORDS HELD HIGH. HAAKON AND ERIC REMAIN ON THE PROW OF THE BOAT DURING THE SONG.]

THE SONG OF VICTORY

Ho, ho! hola! The god of war
Smells the smoking blood below,
Ho, ho! hola! The great god Thor
Drinks the blood of Viking foe.

LIFKRONAN

The god of war in howling lust
Stands upon the hills of slain
And shouts to see the earth's torn crust.
Bleeding with his dreadful gain.

CHORUS: Ho, Vikings, ho!
The fallen foe
Is heaped in bloody row on row,
Cut down with axe and sword and bow.
Ho, Vikings, ho!
Ho, Vikings, ho!

Ho, ho! hola! The sword's wild shriek
Dies within the trembling sky,
Ho, ho! hola! The raven's beak
Plucks the corpse's shining eye,
The dragon-ship is glut with spoil,
Blood is washed from ruddy sword,
And swiftly home to Viking soil
Sweeps the shouting battle-horde.

CHORUS: Ho, Vikings, ho! Etc.

[AS THE SONG ENDS, HAAKON AND ERIC
DESCEND AND CROSS TO THE HIGH SEAT,
SALUTING THEIR FATHER.]

HARALD: My eagle-sons!
The sky has opened
And the sun itself swings down

Act one

To hail your safe return.
How swift this old heart beats
To see my fledglings
Grown to shining birds of prey.
The song of victory tells me
You have not flown back
With empty claws.
Haakon, fine and upright son,
How fared the raid?

HAAKON: The men were staunch
And fiery in battle.
We filled the dragon-ship
With loot and captives
At not too murderous a cost.
For myself, these are as nothing
To the fierce joy in our return
To this sweet land,
And to my noble father.

HARALD: My happiness in that return
Is greater still,
Greater than you know.
And Eric, swinger of the sword,
What of you, my son?

ERIC: This arm has split
A hundred heads,



LIFKRONAN

And hurled the mighty axe
Against a town, and killed it.
The lands trembled
With the thunder of our shouts
And the sword's lightning struck.
I would have killed our captives
And fought again, to fill the ship
With loot and nothing else,
But Haakon was too tender.

HARALD: Two sons—two kings!
The thinker and the warrior,
One noble, and the other fierce.
Which of the two
Should rule great Norway?

[GUNHILD, LED BY A VIKING, APPEARS ON THE PROW OF THE BOAT. THE GUARD MOTIONS HER DOWN, AND SHE SLOWLY DESCENDS. SHE IS A PROUD, WARRIOR-LIKE WOMAN WHOSE DARK BEAUTY IS IN STRONG CONTRAST TO THE BLOND VIKINGS.]

Who is the dark woman?

HAAKON: A warrior-maid, my father.
Her beauty stung and blinded me
More than this blow she struck.

Act one

[HE INDICATES A BATTLE-WOUND SLANTING DOWN AND ACROSS HIS FOREHEAD.]

We fought her kinsmen on the field,
And they were falling back
When she came forth
With sword in hand,
As fierce as any she-wolf.
I stopped astonished
At her courage,
Whereupon she struck my brow
And made this wound,
Before I pinioned her proud arms.
The harshness of the pain
That lies behind my eyes
Is less than the sweet sickness
She lays upon my heart.
Her name is Gunhild,
And she becomes my wife.

HARALD: A Viking-maid,
With all the attributes
Of fierceness and of valor!
My choice is made,
For together you will breed
A race of kings—
The High Kings of Norway!
Haakon,

LIFKRONAN

Before this day's sun
Dips shining arms
Beneath the cold wave
You must consider
That when you take this maid,
She will be Norway's queen.

HAAKON: Queen!

HARALD: I, Harald, King of Norway, die.
And Haakon, noble son,
Will take my place
Upon the High Seat of Norway.

[ERIC WALKS TO STAGE LEFT, SULLEN AND
BROODING.]

HAAKON: My father dies?
Woeful are the waves
That brought us home
To this black news!

[HE STUMBLES FORWARD AND KNEELS
BEFORE THE HIGH SEAT.]

HARALD: Support me, jarls.

[THE JARLS LIFT HIM UP.]

Listen well, my son.
I have made this land
A mighty nation, unified.

ACT ONE

I have given
To the strong obedient jarls
The task of governing
Its four domains.
And from those four,
The southern and the western parts,
The eastern and the northern,
You must form
The crown of Norway.
If you would rule securely,
Build your crown
Of gold from Sigurd's southlands,
Silver from the western coasts,
And jewels from the east,
Wrought into the perfect shape
By Björn's craftsmen of the north.
Until this crown is made
The King of Norway is not King.
So, Haakon,
Swear by the gods
You will fulfill this charge.

[HAAKON RISES.]

HAAKON: By high and holy Odin, redbeard Thor,
And Frey from whom I sprang,
I swear.



LIFKRONAN

HARALD: And Eric—fierce and violent—
Where is my other son?
His mighty strength must stand
At Haakon's back—must stand—

[HE FALLS BACK INTO THE JARLS' ARMS.]

SIGURD: O folk of Norway!
He is dead.

[THE PEOPLE SINK TO THEIR KNEES.
THERE IS A MOMENT OF SILENCE.]

HAAKON: Do not weep, my people.
I have no tears.
There are not tears enough among us
To weep him honorably—
No, not in all Norway.
Great Harald has charged me
To be your King.
He has spoken prophecy.
I swear to you,
And to this noble corpse,
I will not rest,
Nor wed a queen, nor fight,
Until I have fulfilled his words.
Vikings,
Take this proud heroic body
To the King's House,

Act one

To be prepared for burial
Within the high and quiet stones.

[THE VIKINGS BEAR HARALD'S BODY UP TO THE KING'S HOUSE, FOLLOWED BY HAAKON AND THE JARLS. ERIC AND GUNHILD ARE LEFT ALONE. THE STAGE IS PRACTICALLY DARK, ONLY THE RAYS OF THE SETTING SUN ILLUMINATING ERIC AS HE SITS BEFORE THE SHIP, STARING OUT TO SEA. GUNHILD GLIDES OVER TO HIM AND LAYS HER HAND ON HIS SHOULDER.]

GUNHILD: You are silent, Eric Bloodax,
Not with sorrow for a King's death,
But with an aching hatred.
I have watched your cold blue eyes
Grow dark with hatred
For the noble Haakon.

ERIC: How can I hate my brother?

GUNHILD: I am to become his wife,
And yet I hate him.
His nature gleams too brightly,
Like an unstained sword.
Your violence, great Eric,
Is like the red blood
Upon a Viking's axe.
Do not look at the sea, Eric.



LIFKRONAN

Look in my long dark eyes
That shall behold
Your strong arms
Wielding Norway's sword.
Look in my eyes
That see you
On the High Seat of Norway!

ERIC: The High Seat?

GUNHILD: Yes, Eric Bloodax—
Haakon has been made King,
But you are the stronger
Of King Harald's sons!
Norway is a land
Of blood and might.
She must be ruled by hands
That hold a Viking's sword.
Eric,
The High Seat should be yours.

[ERIC SPRINGS TO HIS FEET AND DRAWS
HIS SWORD.]

ERIC: Yes, by the beard of Odin,
And I shall take it!

GUNHILD: Not by strength alone, Viking.
Dark cunning and guile

ACT ONE

Must lie beneath your strength
Just as this proud dark body
Would lie beneath your mighty one.

ERIC: I have no guile.
I cannot twist this tongue
With cunning speech—
But by the gods,
This arm can twist a sword
To cut a man in half!

GUNHILD: Look in my eyes, fierce Eric.
Guile is there for both.
Come. The rites have started.

[SHE JOINS THE FUNERAL PROCESSION WHICH ENTERS FROM THE KING'S HOUSE, BUT ERIC REMAINS ON THE LOWER STAGE, THE LIGHTS GRADUALLY FADING OUT ON HIM. THE MUSIC IS A MAJESTIC DIRGE, PERHAPS USING THE SAME THEME AS THAT OF THE BATTLESONG EARLIER IN THE ACT, TO INDICATE THE GRANDEUR OF A HERO'S DEATH. THE ENTIRE COMPANY FILES SLOWLY UP THE HILL, FOLLOWING THE COVERED BODY TO THE KING'S HOWE. THE STAGE IS VERY DARK, WITH ONLY A FAINT LIGHT ON THE BURIAL-STONES AT THE TOP OF THE HILL. FLARING TORCHES

 **LIFKRONAN**

ARE CARRIED BY THE ENTIRE PROCES-
SION, HELD HIGH AS IT WINDS SLOWLY UP
THE PATH. THE MUSIC IS SUSTAINED
UNTIL THE LAST TORCH DISAPPEARS BE-
HIND THE GREAT STONES.]

ACT TWO

scene: IT IS THE STRANGE TWILIGHT OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN. HAAKON, MOODILY THINKING, IS SEATED ON THE HIGH SEAT, HIS HAND ACROSS HIS EYES. SIGURD, HALVDAN AND BJÖRN ENTER, LOWER STAGE RIGHT.

SIGURD: Great Haakon!

HAAKON: Who is there?

SIGURD: Sigurd, my King,
Halvdan and young Björn.
Can your eyes not see
The face of him
Who held you in his arms
Before those eyes
Had seen an hour's sun?

HAAKON: My eyes are dim tonight, Sigurd.
The long twilight
Of the midnight sun
Seems dark and strange.
This weary waiting
For the gold and silver,
Jewels and carving for the crown
Has brought a dull pain
As if against my eyes
There pressed a heavy weight
That will not lift

LIFKRONAN

Until the crown of Norway
Rests above them.

SIGURD: For that crown,
The bonders wash the rivers
For gold, and dig
For silver and stones,
And they have carved
Many designs.

HAAKON: I think not good ones, Sigurd.
The metal and the jewels
Shine dully in my eyes
As if they were half-blind.

HALVDAN: It is a blindness of your spirit!
Restore the farmerfolk their lands
And your great crown
Will shine, high and secure
As Norway's icy peaks.

[HAAKON RISES STERNLY.]

HAAKON: Restore the folk their lands,
And break my father's dying word?
You speak unwisely, Halvdan.
Leave me, and with Sigurd
Find Gunhild,
Who through these long gray months

ACT TWO

Waits to become my queen
As I wait for the crown.
Bid her come to me.

[HALVDAN AND SIGURD LEAVE.]

Björn, sweet friend,
I have a great foreboding.
Give me your young strength.

BJÖRN: My strength and life, Haakon,
These are little gifts
To show the love
I bear my King.

HAAKON: They are gifts
That stand like shields
Between me and sorrow.
The young fire of your love
Is hot and comforting
In the long coldness
Of these days.
I would a like warmth
Glowed within the breast
Of a dark maid.
Björn, when Gunhild comes,
Go to the skalds,
And be prepared to sing with them
Your sweetest song.

LIFKRONAN

[GUNHILD ENTERS ON THE UPPER STAGE,
AND SEEING THEM, HALTS.]

BJÖRN: The captive Gunhild, my King.

HAAKON: Take me to her side, beloved Björn,
And go.

[BJÖRN LEADS HIM UP THE RAMP STEPS
TO GUNHILD AND LEAVES.]

Gunhild, proud and silent,
Before my father died
He uttered prophecy
And swore me to fulfill it.
Upon his death I swore again,
That time to forego
Taking you as queen
Until the great prophetic crown
Was made. The long months
Of the midnight sun are here,
And I am weary of the waiting.
Give me your hand, Gunhild,
Your dark hand.

[WITHOUT TURNING HER HEAD, SHE
SULLENLY HOLDS HER HAND OUT TOWARD
HIM. HE GROPEs BLINDLY FOR IT.]

Your hand—your hand, Gunhild!

ACT TWO

[SHE SLOWLY TURNS AND STARES AT HIM. SUDDENLY PASSING HER HAND BEFORE HIS EYES, SHE REALIZES THAT HE IS GOING BLIND.]

GUNHILD: You cannot see my hand?

HAAKON: The battle-wound you dealt
Is slowly blinding me, Gunhild.
And now I need your eyes,
The strength within your long eyes,
To find my crown.

[SHE WALKS TO THE EDGE OF THE UPPER STAGE, AND HOLDS HER HANDS ABOVE HER HEAD IN A GESTURE OF TRIUMPH.]

GUNHILD: O great and noble Haakon—
My eyes will find it for you,
And these my hands
Will hold your crown!

HAAKON: As now they hold my heart.
Ho, Björn, Björn!
Ho, singers of Thrandheim!
Bring the sweet harps
And sing of love,
That lifts the darkness
From my eyes
As the flaming northern lights
Lift the black night.



LIFKRONAN

[BJÖRN AND THE SKALDS ENTER LOWER
STAGE RIGHT, GROUP THEMSELVES ON
THE RAMP STEPS, AND SING.]

THE BALLAD OF THE SKALDS

Wintry the dark
Of the long Norse sun,
And the wind runs cold,
And the great trees sigh.
Bright is the arc
Of the north light spun
With a thread of gold
In a sable sky.
Lonely and stark,
With a crown unwon,
With a love untold,
Will a King's heart die?

CHORUS: The High King's love
Lifts like a tree
With splendor crowned,
From the icedark ground
The High King's heart
Sings like the sea
In endless sound.
Like the wide sea round,
Boundless, unbound,
The High King's love.

ACT TWO

Warm is the love
Of a Norseland King,
And the wind blows sweet,
And the great trees sway.
Swift is his love
As a silver wing,
As a wing's white beat
Over windy spray.
Love to his love
Will a dark maid bring,
And a proud heart meet,
And a great love stay.

CHORUS: The High King's love, etc.

HAAKON: The skalds have opened
The doors of their mouths
And out have thronged
The sweet words
I hold silent in my heart.
Gunhild,
Be at the High Seat
When the four jarls bring
The gold and silver, and the jewels.
I need your eyes.

[HAAKON AND THE SKALDS LEAVE. GUNHILD RUNS OUT LOWER STAGE RIGHT,

LIFKRONAN

PAST BJÖRN. HE SINGS THE SAME SONG,
BUT IN A MORE SOMBRE KEY.]

BJÖRN: Cold is this maid,
She is cut in rock,
She is cut in stone,
Not in living wood.
Dark is this maid,
She will love unlock,
She will seek his throne,
She will scorn his good.
Proud is this maid,
She will bring him mock,
She will make him moan
As no King should.

[HE WALKS SLOWLY UP THE STEPS AND
OUT, WHILE THE ORCHESTRA PLAYS THE
MELODY OF THE CHORUS. ERIC AND GUN-
HILD ENTER.]

GUNHILD: Come, Eric;
I have grim news
That consummates our plans.
Ours is the High Seat,
Norway is ours!

ERIC: Norway!

GUNHILD: Just now,
A whining lovesick King

ACT TWO

Was groping for my hand—
Haakon goes blind!

ERIC: Blind?—blind!
By the great gods,
Where are my men?
A blind King cannot hold
The High Seat of Norway!

GUNHILD: Wait, Eric.
We must be soft and stealthy,
And trick the noble Haakon
To admit his blindness
Before all the folk.
Then let your men be ready.
Here are the four great jarls.
I will drop poison in their ears.

[THE JARLS ENTER.]

SIGURD: Eric and Gunhild;
We have come to find the King.

GUNHILD: He has been impatient
For your coming.
Eager to see
The materials you bring
To form his crown.

HALVDAN: May he find them worthy.



LIFKRONAN

GUNHILD: Is Haakon still unsatisfied?

IVAR: Our men work grimly
To obtain the gold and silver
And the jewels, and carve designs,
But cannot please the King.

HALVDAN: The folk are made unhappy
By Haakon's discontent.

GUNHILD: Strange that he cannot see
The shining beauty
Of your tribute.

SIGURD: Dark woman,
Your great King seeks
The absolute fulfillment
Of his father's prophecy.
Only the finest gold and silver
May be used, the finest stones
And most immortal carving.
He gropes for these.

GUNHILD: A groping King
On the High Seat of Norway?

SIGURD: Silence!
This is the hour
When Haakon comes
To judge our offerings.
I go to meet him.

ACT TWO

[HE LEAVES.]

BJÖRN: The great Haakon
Has great gentleness.
Norway has seen too much
Of fierce and angry blood.

GUNHILD: Gentleness!
Then the sword of Norway
Is a cracked birch twig
Held within
A blind babe's fist!

BJÖRN: The King's fist holds
A sword that strikes,
And striking, would lay bare
The cold heart of a snake!

HALVDAN: Haakon comes.

[HAAKON, WITH SIGURD AT HIS SIDE,
ENTERS FROM THE KING'S HOUSE.]

HAAKON: Gunhild, lead me to the High Seat,
While the four jarls bring
Gold from Sigurd's southlands,
Silver from the western coasts,
Jewels from the east,
And fine carving from the north.

[THE FOUR JARLS LEAVE. GUNHILD GUIDES
HAAKON TO THE HIGH SEAT, BUT MOVES



LIFKRONAN

AWAY DURING THE FOLLOWING SCENE. THE CHANT OF THE BONDERS IS HEARD, AND SIGURD AND HIS MEN ENTER, TWO OF HIS FOLLOWERS CARRYING A BASKET OF GOLD ORE. THEY GROUP THEMSELVES ON LOWER STAGE RIGHT, AND IVAR AND HIS WORKERS ENTER, THIS TIME WITH A SACK OF SILVER ORE. HALVDAN AND HIS GROUP FOLLOW, CARRYING A TRAY OF STONES, AND FINALLY BJÖRN AND HIS MEN WITH A CARVED WOODEN CROWN. AS THE FIRST GROUP ENTERS, IT SINGS ITS THEME, JOINED LATER BY THE SECOND, THEN THE THIRD AND FINALLY THE FOURTH, UNTIL THE ENTIRE COMPANY IS SINGING THE CHORUS IN UNISON.]

CHANT OF THE BONDERS

We are the folk
Of the south,
And the bright gold glows
Within our hands.
We are the folk
Of the southern lands,
Where the sweet grain grows
In golden rows,
We are the folk
Of the south.

ACT TWO

(Accompanying the second verse.)

CHORUS: We are the folk
Of Norway's bright strand,
Of sea,
Of land,
We are the folk.

We are the folk
Of the west,
And the silver shines
Within our hands.
We are the folk
Of the western lands,
Where the fisher twines
His silver lines,
We are the folk
Of the west.

CHORUS: We are the folk, etc.

We are the folk
Of the east,
And the cold stones blaze
Within our hands.
We are the folk
Of the eastern lands,
Where the orchards raise
Their leafy sprays,



LIFKRONAN

We are the folk
Of the east.

CHORUS: We are the folk, etc.

We are the folk
Of the north,
And the crown's design
Is in our hands.
We are the folk
Of the northern lands,
Where the sky's bleak line
Is high with pine,
We are the folk
Of the north.

CHORUS: We are the folk, etc.

HAAKON: Sigurd;
Bring me the ore.

[HE EXAMINES IT BLINDLY.]

This is not gold—
There is no gold
Within this ore.
Ivar;
Your silver.

[AGAIN, BLINDLY.]

ACT TWO

I see no silver here,
This is all lead.
Halvdan;
The jewels.

[AS BEFORE.]

These stones are dull
And badly cut—
Throw them away.
Björn;
The carving for the crown.

[AS BEFORE.]

What workmanship is this?
Have all your carvers
Lost their skill?

[DURING THIS SCENE, GUNHILD HAS PICKED UP A REDWOOD SPRAY, AND BENDING IT TO FORM A CIRCLE, SHE STEPS FORWARD IN FRONT OF HAAKON, HOLDING IT BEFORE HIM.]

GUNHILD: Look, Haakon!
I have made this crown
In secret, secretly,
Of Sigurd's gold
And Ivar's silver—
Of gleaming gold and silver

LIFKRONAN

And shining stones
Wrought together
By the cunning craftsmen
Of the north.
See, Haakon—
This is your crown!

[HAAKON STARES BLINDLY AT IT AS SHE SPEAKS, THEN SUDDENLY RISES AND STRETCHES HIS HAND OUT TOWARD IT.]

HAAKON: Yes—that is Norway's crown—

[GUNHILD LETS IT SNAP OUT INTO A MERE BRANCH OF FOLIAGE.]

GUNHILD: O folk of Norway!
Your King is blind!

ALL: Blind! The King is blind!

ERIC: Ho, jarls and bonders,
A blind King cannot rule us,
Throw him from the High Seat!

[HAAKON'S VIKINGS DRAW THEIR SWORDS, BUT HE STOPS THEM WITH A GESTURE.]

HAAKON: Stop, Vikings,
I want no bloodshed
To dim these eyes still more.
The King of Norway

ACT TWO

Needs an eagle's sight
To foresee treachery.
O folk of Thrandheim!
I have not spoken
Of this weakness
Perhaps because I felt
That when I found my crown
Its shining light
Would drive the darkness
From my eyes.
I could still hope
That the love I bear
For you, and for my country
Would make me even now
A worthy King.
I need not eyes
To see a King's high duty
To his people.

[THE CROWD IS SILENT.]

ERIC: Haakon goes blind!
And I, Eric Bloodax,
Should be your King!

HAAKON: The folk are silent . . .
Take the High Seat, my brother,
And do not stain it
With the people's blood.



LIFKRONAN

[HE COMES DOWN, AND ERIC MOUNTS THE
HIGH SEAT IN HIS PLACE.]

ERIC: I am King of Norway!
Ho, Vikings,
Take this blind man
And hang him
From the highest tree
In Throndheim!

HAAKON: Is this my brother?

SIGURD: No, Eric.
His blindness is enough.
It does not merit death, or shame.

GUNHILD: Let Haakon and his guard
Wander the land
Searching for his foolish crown.

HAAKON: Gunhild—

[SHE GOES TO ERIC'S SIDE.]

Was this my love,
That some dark evil
Wrought so darkly fair?
Why, then my love was nothing—
A stealthy crawling shadow
Stirring the dried leaves.
What of my high hopes

ACT TWO

For a crown, then,
And for a race of Kings?
These were nothing, too,
But the hissing
Of a forked tongue.
Björn, give me your arm.
Were my eyes torn
From out their sockets
It would be a lesser thing
Than by a dark maid
To be gouged of love.

GUNHILD: Go, blind man,
Find your crown.

HAAKON: Although your mind
Is subtle as a snake,
Gunhild,
You have spoken well.
I shall wander the land
And seek the crown.
And my father's prophecy
Will be fulfilled.
Then, by the grim gods,
You shall suffer
For this treachery.
Come, Vikings;
We have lost

LIFKRONAN

The throne of Norway—
Let us find her crown!

[HE IS LED OUT BY HIS VIKINGS.]

ERIC: I am High King of Norway!
Bring the priests; bring sacrifice
And bring the mead horn.
This night I take as wife
Proud Gunhild.

GUNHILD: Queen Gunhild!

[GUNHILD WALKS TO THE UPPER STAGE, WHERE A LONG VEIL AND CIRCLET ARE PLACED ON HER HEAD. ON THE LOWER, A CEREMONIAL WEDDING CUP IS CARRIED IN BY PAGAN PRIESTS, WHO PERFORM A RITUALISTIC DANCE. IT ENDS AS THEY PRESENT THE CUP TO ERIC, WHO HAS BEEN DRINKING HEAVILY. HE CARRIES IT TO THE UPPER STAGE AND GIVES IT TO GUNHILD, WHO DRINKS AND HOLDS IT OUT TO HIM. PLACING HIS HANDS OVER HERS, HE ALSO DRINKS, AND TOGETHER THEY PASS IT BACK TO A PRIEST, WHO RECEIVES IT SOLEMNLY. ERIC AND GUNHILD WALK UP THE STEPS TO THE KING'S HOUSE. THE HARSH AND BLARING WEDDING MUSIC WHICH HAS ACCOMPANIED THE ENTIRE SCENE ENDS AS THEY REACH THE TOP OF THE STEPS.]

Act three

scene: IT IS NIGHT. PREPARATIONS FOR A VIKING-RAID ARE GOING ON, WARRIORS POLISHING THEIR WEAPONS AND THRALLS CARRYING PROVISIONS TO THE DRAGON-SHIP. THE SAME GROUP OF WOMEN IS WORKING ON A SAIL, BUT THE DESIGN ON IT IS NOW THAT OF A BLOODY AXE. ERIC IS ON STAGE.

ERIC: Is the dragon-ship made ready?

THRALL: Yes, mighty Eric.

ERIC: We sail with the rising sun.
The jarls arrive this night
With warriors for the raid.

[GUNHILD ENTERS.]

Ho, Gunhild.
Thralls and women!
Attend the King's House
For a mighty feast.

[THE LOWER STAGE IS CLEARED, LEAVING ERIC AND GUNHILD ALONE.]

We sail at sunrise, Gunhild.
I have awaited long
The coming of the jarls.
Each year they press their lips
And whine about neglected crops
When I demand the men.



LIFKRONAN

GUNHILD: The scornful Björn is here.
Show him your power.
Demand a song
In the King's honor.

ERIC: Ho, thralls! Fetch the bonders
And their women from the House.
Björn is with them.
I hate this proud and pretty jarl,
He sings too much, and carves
Wood instead of flesh.

[BJÖRN AND THE OTHERS ENTER.]

Young Björn, give us a song
Less womanish than when you sing
So sweetly at your work.
A song in the King's honor,
That tells of mighty Eric
And his bloody axe.

[BJÖRN SINGS.]

THE NORSE KINGS

Great was a King who loved the folk,
Blind with a woman's savage stroke,
Lost was his throne and no man spoke,
Great are the Norse Kings.

Act three

CHORUS: Great are the Norse Kings,
But the King who walks
In his country's peace,
In the sweet release
From bloody things,
Has wings.

Norway is drowned in blood and tears,
Sickened with sudden raids and fears,
Deaf with the clash of battle-spears,
Great are the Norse Kings.

CHORUS: Great are the Norse Kings, etc.

GUNHILD: He mocks you, Eric.

[BJÖRN SINGS.]

Strong is the hate the folk possess,
Seek they the King whose gentleness
Swept from the land war's grim
distress,
Great are the Norse Kings—

[ERIC CRASHES HIS DRINKING-HORN TO
THE GROUND.]

ERIC: Stop! What is this song,
You treacherous whelp?

BJÖRN: I sing of a great King.
A King called blind,



LIFKRONAN

But in whose eyes
The light of kindness
Burns undimmed
By bloodiness and hate.
I sing of Haakon, Eric!

ERIC: Seize him, Vikings!
Those lungs shall never sing again.
The eagle-death!
Let the raw eagle
Be carved upon his back,
Plunge hands
In the gaping flesh
And feed the ravens
With his lungs!

[BJÖRN IS PULLED TO CENTER STAGE,
FACING THE AUDIENCE, AND STRIPPED
TO THE WAIST. A VIKING DRAWS A SHORT
SWORD.]

BJÖRN: I have no fear.
My death is a small affair.
But death breeds death,
And by it you destroy yourselves,
For these beloved trees
Will stand forever
Pointing to the gods your shame.
And may such butchery

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Act three

Expose fierce Eric and proud Gunhild
To all the folk of Norway!

[HE IS KILLED, AND HIS LUNGS PULLED
OUT. THE CROWD IS HORRIFIED AND RE-
PELLED.]

OLD MAN: Bloodguilty Eric!

ERIC: Who spoke?

Let those who dare
Defend this wretch
Remember there are trees enough
To hang them all!
Vikings, take this corpse
And fling it in the wide sea.
Come, Gunhild;
The other jarls
Will be here soon.
Let us empty a horn of mead
To the grim hope
That they may follow
This their brother.

[HE AND GUNHILD LEAVE. THE VIKINGS
START TO CARRY BJÖRN'S BODY OFFSTAGE,
WHEN HAAKON AND HIS GUARDS ENTER.
THEY ARE CLOTHED IN RAGGED CLOAKS
OVER THEIR ARMOR.]



LIFKRONAN

HAAKON: Folk of Thrandheim,
I seek the King of Norway.

OLD MAN: Save us, Haakon!
Norway strangles
In the harsh grip
Of Eric's hands!

HAAKON: I have heard this.
But I come to Eric
Bringing Lifkronan,
The crown that gives great Norway
Strength and fruitfulness
And peace.

OLD MAN: Peace! Can there be peace
When blood breaks on Norway
As breaks the high foam
On her cliffs?
Great Haakon,
Look at the burden
The King's Vikings carry,
The red burden!

[HAAKON CROSSES TO THE CORPSE.]

HAAKON: Björn!
The greedy gods
Have robbed me
Of a country, and a woman.

Act three

But they are not dead,
They are not mangled
Like this boy . . .
O honored friend,
Dearer than eyesight—
These eyes were only dim before,
But now they must go blind
With bitter sorrow!
O sweet singer and strong friend!
Why must war and senseless slaughter
Kill the young men?
Young men are meant
To live and work and love.
The eagle-death is carved
Upon his strong young back—
What dreadful eagle dyed its claws
With the red blood
Of this shining bird, that soared
In silver flights of song
Among these trees?
How ugly is this work!
The young Björn carved immortally
And with a kinder art
Than the grim hand
That hacked to such cruel purpose.
Who did this thing?



LIFKRONAN

OLD MAN: It was the King, your brother.

HAAKON: He is not my brother.
He is the spawn of evil.
Vikings, bring this tortured body
And we shall hold it up
Before the folk of Thrandheim.
When the jarls have come
And talked with Eric,
Inform them secretly
That I am here.

[HE AND HIS VIKINGS CARRY BJÖRN OFF.
A HORN SOUNDS FROM THE TOP OF THE
HILLSIDE, AND THE THRALL RUNS UP THE
STEPS TO THE KING'S HOUSE. ERIC AND
GUNHILD ENTER.]

ERIC: The jarls are here.

[SIGURD, WITH HIS WARRIORS IN FULL
ARMOR, ENTERS AT THE TOP OF THE HILL.]

SIGURD: Hail, Eric!

[THEY MARCH DOWN TO WARRIORLIKE
MUSIC. IVAR ENTERS, SALUTES ERIC WITH
HIS SWORD, AND HE AND HIS MEN COME
DOWN. HALVDAN FOLLOWS SIMILARLY. AS
THEY ARRIVE ON THE LOWER STAGE, ERIC
MOUNTS THE HIGH SEAT, AND THE MUSIC
STOPS.]

ACT THREE

ERIC: You have come late.
Are these the men?
The tribute that you sent
Was scarce enough
For one raid, much less many.

SIGURD: Eric, the folk are weary
Of your raids.
The land lies idle
And the cattle starve.
Give up this bloodiness
And let the young men
Return to the land.

GUNHILD: Our Viking-raids
Have made the High Seat of Norway
Rich, and most powerful
In the northern world.
Shall we then turn swineherds?

ERIC: Go to your crops and herds, jarls.
We are Vikings here.

IVAR: The wealth of Norway
Lies in her lands and sea.
Why, if you have become so rich
From raiding overseas,
Do you make the farmer
And the fisherfolk



LIFKRONAN

Pay tribute for your raids?

HALVDAN: Your rule has been a curse, Eric.
The land is naked and bloodweary,
And the folk are restless—
Your name is bitter on their tongues.
They will revolt against you
And your savage queen
And by the people's god
We jarls will lead them!

ERIC: You spit this in my face?
By the red beard of that same god,
Leave Norway, leave this land,
Or else I'll have you
Hacked in bloody chunks
To feed the crows!

SIGURD: Come, jarls;
This monster is no King.

[THE THREE JARLS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS
LEAVE.]

GUNHILD: Eric, this is a hasty thing
That you have done,
And I have fear.
The jarls are powerful
And can sway the folk.

ERIC: You are overcrafty, Gunhild.

Act three

This was the time
To swing the axe,
Not the sly tongue.
Come, wife; the jarls are through,
Their day is over.
Let us make this night
A night of roaring jest,
A drunken night, for I am King
Of Norway, and the jarls are done!

[HE AND GUNHILD WALK UP THE STEPS INTO THE HOUSE. THEIR FOLLOWERS CARRY THE LIGHTS WITH THEM, AND THE STAGE IS LEFT EMPTY AND DIM. A LOW, RHYTHMICAL BEAT IS HEARD, WHICH, DURING THE FOLLOWING SCENE, SWELLS ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLY INTO THE CHANT OF THE BONDERS. A SINGLE DARK FIGURE STEALS ON, DARTS ABOUT TO SEE THAT THE STAGE IS EMPTY, AND MOTIONS OFF-STAGE. FROM THE HILLSIDE, FROM UPPER STAGE LEFT AND LOWER STAGE RIGHT, MORE FIGURES STEAL ON UNTIL BOTH LEVELS ARE FILLED WITH PEOPLE, SOME OF WHOM CARRY TORCHES. THE CHANT INCREASES IN VOLUME, AND AS THE TORCHES LIGHT UP THE STAGE, THE BONDERS BREAK INTO THE SONG OF REVOLT. A WILD AND FIERY DANCE TAKES PLACE ON BOTH LEVELS, WHICH REACHES A CLIMAX OF FIERCE YELLS AND MUSIC.]

 LIFKRONAN

THE SONG OF REVOLT

Dark is the blood
On Norseland shields,
Cruel the axe
The High King wields,
The land is filled
With war's hot breath.
Blood begets blood,
Death begets death.

The bonders bring
A hated King
Death—
Death!
We spill the flood
Of evil blood,
Death—
Death!
Death to the King
And bloody woe,
Death we bring
To Norway's foe,
Death and blood,
Blood and death,
Death—
Death!

Act three

HALVDAN: Ho, Eric, bloody King,
Come forth and meet our swords!

[ERIC AND HIS GUARDS POUR FROM THE KING'S HOUSE.]

ERIC: Fools! I am Eric,
The High King!
Come, Vikings, cut them down!
This is the mighty arm
Of Norway!
Ho, there! Die, fools—
I am the King!

[HE IS KILLED. DURING THE STRUGGLE GUNHILD IS DRAGGED DOWN THE STEPS BY THE BONDERS AND HELD GRIMLY AT LOWER STAGE RIGHT. THE TURMOIL IS INTERRUPTED BY THE APPEARANCE OF HAAKON AND HIS VIKINGS ON THE HILLSIDE JUST ABOVE THE UPPER STAGE. AS HE SPEAKS, THOSE ON THE UPPER STAGE MOVE DOWN ON THE RAMP STEPS.]

HAAKON: Stop, folk of Norway!
This is enough of bloodshed.

[HE AND HIS VIKING-GUARD DESCEND TO THE UPPER LEVEL. ERIC'S BODY IS SPRAWLED ACROSS THE RAMP STEPS, AND HAAKON GOES DOWN TO IT.]



LIFKRONAN

O fierce and foolish Eric!
Your eyes are closed
Blinder than mine ever were.
And blind in life,
For they could never see
The inevitable end
Of him who deals in war
And savage cruelty!

[HE GOES TO THE UPPER STAGE.]

And now, O mighty folk
And my beloved jarls,
Your blind King sees at last!
I have sought and found
The gold and silver,
Jewels and carving for the crown
Of which my father spoke.
I give you first
The gold from Sigurd's southlands.

[A VIKING HANDS HIM A SACK OF GRAIN.
HE POURS IT BEFORE HIM IN A WIDE
GESTURE AND HOLDS UP A DRIPPING
HANDFUL. AS HE DOES THIS, A GROUP OF
BONDERS APPEARS ON THE HILLSIDE,
CARRYING SHEAVES OF WHEAT.]

We need not drag gold
Harshly from this woman-earth,
56

Act three

But plow her, sow the seed,
And she will bear for us
This living gold!
And next,
The silver from the western coasts.

[ANOTHER FOLLOWER HANDS HIM A NET THROUGH WHICH CAN BE SEEN THE SHINING BODIES OF FISH, AND MEN WITH FISHINGNETS ENTER ON THE HILLSIDE.]

The sea forever yields
To Norway's fisherfolk
This living, gleaming silver!
And now,
The jewels from the east.

[A BASKET OF FRUIT IS PASSED TO HIM AND HE HOLDS UP APPLES, PEARS AND PLUMS. MEN BEARING FRUITBASKETS APPEAR ON THE HILL.]

These are earth's richest jewels,
Colorful and warm,
The living jewels of the sun!
And last,
The pattern for the crown.

[A VIKING PRESENTS HIM WITH A CROWN WOVEN OF REDWOOD FOLIAGE. BONDERS CARRYING REDWOOD BOUGHS JOIN THE OTHERS.]

 Lifkronan

O folk!
My traitorous queen was right.
This is Norway's crown,
Immortal, ageless,
Wrought with cunning craftsmanship
Around the great calm pillars
Of these trees,
That hold the northern sky
For men to lift their heads to see—
For men that walk like gods
In dignity and peace.
O jarls and bonders!
Lifkronan, the living crown,
Will be the symbol
Of your freeholds.
Stand here, most loyal Sigurd,
Ivar and brave Halvdan;

[HE MOTIONS TO THE JARLS AS HE SPEAKS,
AND THEY GO UP THE RAMP.]

To you I give the lands,
And to the people.
Under your just government
The folk of Norway,
Undisturbed by war
And bloody raids,
May freely hold their lands,

58

Act three

And freely use the riches
Of the lands and sea.

SIGURD: Great King,
This shall be Norway's law.
The dawn has come,
And with it ends
A dark and bloody age.

HAAKON: And from these four,
The golden grainfields
And the silver seas,
The jewelled orchards
And vast forests,
Shall Norway's crown be made!

[SIGURD PLACES THE REDWOOD CROWN ON HAAKON'S HEAD, AS THE ENTIRE COMPANY SINGS A POWERFUL MAJOR TRANSPOSITION OF THE CHANT OF THE BONDERS. THE CLOAKS OF HAAKON AND HIS VIKINGS ARE THROWN BACK, LEAVING THEM IN SHINING ARMOR, AND THEY FORM A LINE UP THE STEPS TO THE KING'S HOUSE, WITH HAAKON AT THE TOP. THE CHANT CONTINUES TO SWELL TO A MIGHTY TRIUMPH UNTIL THE ILLUMINATION IS OVER.]

synopsis of the music

BEHIND the composition of any serious music, there must, of course, be a very definite structure of thought from which mere notes and strains depend; and when the composer of the 1937 Grove Play had read the book of LIFKRONAN it became his aim to instill into his work not alone the vigor and the drama of the action, but the atmospheric spirit and color of the Norse people themselves as it inspires their own type of folk music. In working toward this end, the composer made a thorough-going effort to assimilate some of the vitality of that color and spirit by a study of Norse folk strains that have been passed down from the ancient generations of this restless, adventuresome people.

Before taking up a discussion of the individual compositions which comprise LIFKRONAN's musical score, the composer wishes to point out four significant motifs which appear frequently throughout the music and which must necessarily be referred to often in this discourse. The first is the brazen theme of the Viking warriors (Fig. I.) and is intended, through variation and modulation, to depict their various activities and fortunes through the play.

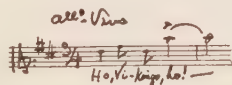


FIGURE I.

The second principal strain is that of the Bondars (Fig. II.) and is intended to indicate the dominant mood of this group of characters.

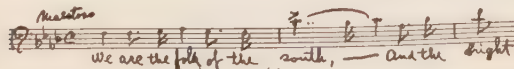


FIGURE II.

The other two strains apply not only to people, as individuals, but to dramatic highlights of the story as well. One of these is the principal motif of THE SONG OF REVOLT (Fig. III.) while the other is the characteristic of THE SONG OF VICTORY (Fig. IV.).



FIGURE III

The PRELUDE TO LIFKRONAN (No. I.) opens with the first trumpet introducing the Viking theme (Fig. I.), beginning softly and immediately becoming intensified until it reaches a pronounced crescendo. At the fifth measure, the revolt theme (Fig. III.) is introduced; and promptly thereafter the violoncelli (divisi) inject the strain of the Bonders (Fig. II.). The Bonders' motif is then developed, becoming more dramatic and assuming new intensity as it proceeds through a passage of eighteen measures.



FIGURE IV.

At the end of this phase, the Viking theme is once more presented, this time in agitated form; and its development is intended to suggest the storms at sea mentioned in the opening scene of the play.

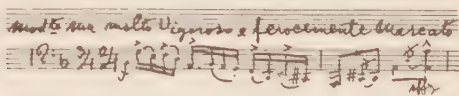


FIGURE V.

The **BERSERKER DANCE** (No. II.) is intended essentially to depict the innate wildness and vigor of the Norse warriors. After the first two introductory measures, a timpani solo sets the rhythm; and at the fifth measure the violoncelli and viole begin the actual theme of the dance (Fig. V.).



FIGURE VI.

The second strain of the composition (Fig. VI.) introduces new material, of a more vigorous nature and with more dramatic development. This leads to a new, more melodious theme and gives an important counter-rhythm to the string basses, marcato in character (Fig. VII.). The initial strain is then re-introduced, bringing the dance to a wild and vigorous conclusion.

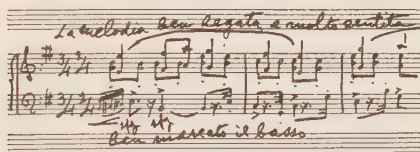


FIGURE VII.

The **SONG OF VICTORY** (No. III.) opens from a distance, with the chorus singing the victory theme (Fig. IV.) unaccompanied off-stage. The music gradually becomes louder as the singers emerge from the dragon ship and the orchestra joins with the vocalists. The second strain of the song is the Vikings' theme (Fig. I.).



FIGURE VIII.

HALVDAN'S SOLILOQUY (No. IV) begins with a funereal strain (Fig. VIII.), played by the solo violoncello, which is intended to depict the mental transition of Halvdan as he thinks first of the old King's death and then of the anguish and fury of the people over the loss of their lands and freedom.

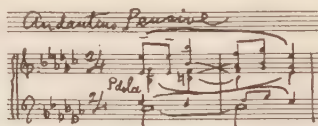


FIGURE IX.

THE FUNERAL MARCH (No. V.) opens with a passage of two bassoons and a gong, to give the impression of slowly marching feet. Over this phrase appears a passage played by muted strings using triplets of sixteenth notes whose purpose is to suggest the muffled sound of funeral drums. The first really important melody of the march, in C Minor, is then introduced by the first violins and later by the oboe. This is the strain, incidentally, which was indicated during the opening violoncello passage of ERIC'S SOLILOQUY.

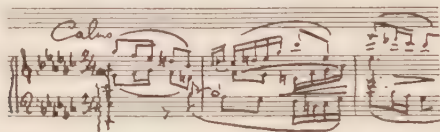


FIGURE X.

Although the INTERMEZZO ACT II. (No. VI.) is in $3/4$ time, its opening, for reasons of continuity, is reminiscent of the slow steps in the funeral march which closed the preceding act. On the eighteenth measure, a new motif is introduced in the key of E \flat Minor (Fig. IX.) by horn and flute, playing in octaves. Later, the violins introduce a contrasting melody (Fig. X.) and after sixteen measures a transition into C Minor occurs. Four horns and two clarinets take the original theme and the flute and later the violins present the second theme simultaneously. The number is concluded by a cadenza-like passage for the solo violin.



FIGURE XI.

THE BALLAD OF THE SKALDS (No. VII.) is virtually the only opportunity in the play for the presentation of music in a lighter vein. It is in typical "spring dance" tempo, characteristic of the Norwegian peasants. It is introduced by oboe and strings (Fig. XI.) after which Björn begins to sing, somberly, in the key of G Minor. The chorus is in D Major, for relief, (Fig. XII.) but this lighter mood finally transposes back into the original minor key, and the choral parts gradually diminish in fragmentary repetition of the minor theme, restoring the mood of the scene.

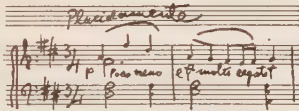


FIGURE XII.

The principal motif of THE BONDERS' CHANT (No. VIII.) is probably the most important strain of the entire score. It is in the form of the old Gregorian chants and in addition to appearing here, it is heard on two other occasions in the course of the play.



FIGURE XIII.

THE WEDDING MARCH (No. IX.) is predominantly harsh and blaring because of the savage nature of Eric. Throughout the number, the composer has resorted frequently to dissonance as a means of affecting accurate characterization. The march opens with four horns in unison which are shortly joined by a fanfare of trumpets (Fig. XIII.). The wood winds then intro-

duce the principal theme of the composition in the key of F Major. The middle phase brings a transition into B \flat (Fig. XIV.) and generally speaking is more melodious than the passages which precede it. The introductory theme then slowly reappears, bringing about a final, *vivace* rendering of the first part of the march.



FIGURE XIV.

The INTERLUDE ACT III (No. X.) was written with a view toward suggesting the excitement of the preceding act and the warlike nature of Eric's reign. Its opening, however, brings a series of fragmentary reminiscences of the wedding music.

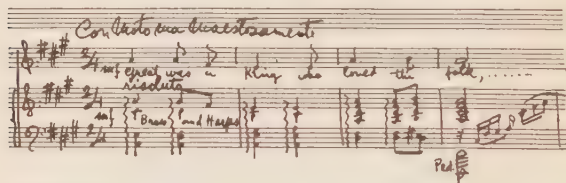


FIGURE XV.

THE NORSE KINGS (No. XI.) is a tenor solo for Björn in which he expresses pride in the race of Norse rulers, at the same time casting inferential aspersions on the tyrant, Eric (Fig. XV.). Consequently, it has been written in a somewhat heroic style.



FIGURE XVI.

THE MARCH OF THE JARLS (No. XII.) opens with a passage played on the hillside by two French horns (Fig. XVI.). The strain then is picked up by the horns in the orchestra. The brass section subsequently introduces the principal theme of

the march in $A\flat$ Major (Fig. XVII.), alternating with the strings and wood winds. The second strain (Fig. XVIII.) is written in the key of $E\flat$ Major and is developed in counter point style, ultimately returning to the original motif.

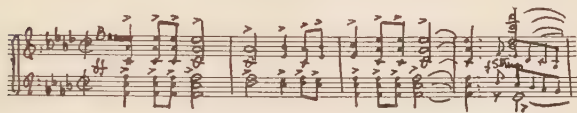


FIGURE XVII.

THE SONG OF REVOLT (No. XIII.), as its title indicates, is based primarily on the revolt theme (Fig. III.) and is exceedingly barbarous in character, depicting the breaking point of the pent-up emotions of the Bonders and utilizing their own theme (Fig. II.) in an agitated form.

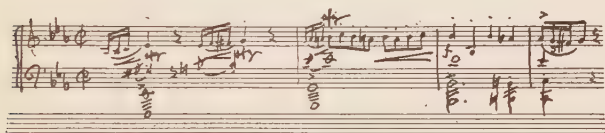


FIGURE XVIII.

In the FINALE, (No. XIV.) it has been the composer's aim to build from the softest pianissimo, flowing from the muted strings, to an unrestrained crescendo, making the fullest use of all the resources of the orchestra, the chorus and the organ.

The work is scored for two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, four trumpets, four trombones, tuba, two harps, celesta, glockenspiel, timpani, percussion, strings and organ.

ULDERICO MARCELLI.

production

THIS, the thirty-sixth Grove Play of the Bohemian Club of San Francisco, presented by members of the club in Bohemian Grove, Sonoma County, California, on Saturday night, July 31, 1937, is produced under the stage direction of Edward P. Murphy.

The members of the Production Committee, in charge of the presentation of the play, are as follows:

CHAIRMAN, PRODUCTION COMMITTEE: Kendrick Vaughan.

PRODUCTION MANAGER: J. Harold Weise.

PERSONNEL MANAGER: John D. Costello, assisted by William T. Doyle, George D. Hart, Frederick B. Henderson, Jr., and Paul Speegle.

STAGE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION: Ernest E. Weihe, assisted by Edgar P. Nelson.

COSTUMES: Kenneth G. Hook, assisted by Templeton Crocker.

LIGHTS: Laurence D. Lewis, assisted by Tirey L. Ford, Albert E. Larson and John B. Worden.

PROPERTIES: James M. Hamill, assisted by William M. Maxfield and William E. Vaughan.

STAGE MANAGER: Robert L. Rose, Jr.

WARDROBE MANAGER: William C. Wise, Jr., assisted by Albert H. Baker, Vincent I. Compagno, Cachot S. Davis, Edmond E. Fout, Walter Fox, Jr., Donald Y. Lamont and William Van Wyck.

MAKE-UP MANAGER: Frederick C. Cordes, assisted by Edmund H. Brassel, Guy S. Millberry, Karl L. Schaupp and Rolla B. Watt.

ASSISTANTS TO THE DIRECTOR: Richard Walberg and James J. Gill.

DANCING GROUP

William Baxter, Vincent J. Beschel, Albert J. Camille, George D. Clark, Jr., Elmer Collett, George B. Eveleth, Wyman B. Garthwaite, Eminel P. Halsted, Otis R. Marston, Albert Galatin Powers, William R. Richards.

STEWARD OF THE DANCE: August W. Virden.

PIANO ACCOMPANIST: A. Judson Weiler.

Valuable assistance has been rendered the Production Committee by Miss Betty Horst in the creation and direction of the dance numbers.

THE ORCHESTRA

The Bohemian Club Symphony Orchestra is conducted by Ulderico Marcelli, with James H. Todd serving as Concertmaster. Those participating are:

VIOLINS: William O. Atwater, Arthur E. Bachrach, Donald Blackmarr, D. M. Bonsack, Walter Beckh, William H. Brink, George R. Chambers, Jr., Dean S. Donaldson, Frederick M. Dorward, John V. Gifford, Parker L. Hall, Donald V. Hutton, Armand J. Lepout, Sidney T. Maar, N. B. Thomas, Louis C. Thynnes, Edward H. Towler, C. B. White.

VIOLAS: Frank J. Frost, Charles Everett Moore, F. Pierce Spinks, L. C. Trueblood, William L. Waterhouse, E. J. White.

CELLOS: James De Fremery, Paul Elder, Jr., Hamilton R. Howells, M. A. Kaufman, Albert W. Larson, Harold P. Nachtrieb, D. Schneider, G. O. Wilson.

BASSES: Albert G. Biehl, Roberto F. Escamilla, Allyn Ferguson, Oliver W. Johnson, C. O. Sappington.

FLUTES: Will G. Corlett, W. Higgins, Bruce T. Sweney.

CLARINETS: T. Eagan, W. E. Knuth, Emil Stern.

OBOES: Ray G. Gibbons, Leslie J. Schivo.

ENGLISH HORN: H. H. Utschig.

BASSOONS: Alexander T. Case, Elmer Dearborn.

TRUMPETS: Felix Eber, R. E. Krieger, Mark P. Mohr, Alfred E. Powell.

HORNS: B. F. Himmel, Herbert V. Stockton, Charles E. Tryner, A. C. Whitaker.

TROMBONES: Tom F. Chapman, Frank E. Howell, Edward F. Jake.

TUBA: Charles J. Sthol.

PERCUSSION: Burton A. King, Norman E. Rotermund, George S. Pomeroy, William S. Warner.

PIANO: George F. Keil.

ORGAN: Paul Padden Ralston.

LIBRARIAN: Karl Fuhrman.

THE CHORUS

The members of the Chorus appear in the following singing groups:

VIKINGS: Arthur Austin, Lawrence A. Bailey, J. Kendrick Bell, William F. Bramstedt, Robert P. Bullard, Charles Docker, Melvin S. Donaldson, Earl B. Grosh, Frederic F. Janney, C. Albert Kulmann, Richard Lundgren, George W. Metlar, Frank Mueller, Walter A. Petterson, Neil H. Peterson, Harold E. Saville, John S. Selfridge, Henri A. Shefoff, John Tallman, Wilson B. Taylor, P. Harrison Ward, Ralph E. Wastell.

BONDERS: Maurice Anger, W. R. Augustine, Ralph J. Bidwell, George W. Booth, Ambrose H. Breininger, Gilbert H. Chick, David De Haven, Lawrence W. Dickey, C. Stanley Dimm, Malcolm Donald, Clarence E. Engvick, Charles J. Evans, Wendell T. Fitzgerald, Harold R. Freemon, Eric Gerson, Edwin P. Gerth, Morris W. Gilland, Robert C. Green, Henry H. Haight, Milton G. Harper, Edwin C. Imhaus, Walter R. Kneiss, Emil B. Leland, William A. Mitchell, John McCrea III, James A. McDonald, Harold H. McKelvie, Bert F. McKibben, Ramsey Probasco, Richard R. Robertson, Eugene W. Roland, James St. Clair Sheean, Alex H. Still, Ralph V. Vincent, Charles A. Whitton.

SKALDS: Frank D. Andrews, Harold S. Dover, Fred S. Herrington, Kenneth M. Morse, Svend H. Nielsen, Martin H. O'Brien.

CHORUS DIRECTOR: James H. Todd.

CHORUS PERSONNEL MANAGER: Paul J. Mohr.

ACCOMPANIST: Paul Padden Ralston.

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

The following non-singing participants appear as Vikings, Bonders, Priests, Thralls and Women:

C. Robert Adams, William W. Adams, Ralph N. Aldrich, Frank H. Allen, Harry B. Allen, Larry Allen, Algernon R. Angell, Raymond M. Alvord, Aaron A. Arbogast, Morton Bailey, Frank M. Ballard, Stanley H. Barrows, Harold K. Baxter, Charles Bayly, Jr., Joseph H. Beamer, Nelson L. Best, John E. Black, W. P. F. Brawner, James E. Brenner, Noah M. Brinson, Frank O. Bristol, Leroy Brooks, Malcolm Bruce, James A. Bull, Edmund Butler, E. Ray Campbell, Philip S. Carlisle, Charles P. Chamberlain, Ernest L. Chapman, Robert A. Clarke, R. A. Clinkenbeard, Forrest A. Cobb, Roswell H. Cochran, F. J. S. Conlan, Malcolm Cravens, Anderson E. Cross, Bartley C. Crum, Perry T. Cumberston, William G. Donald, Herbert I. Dunn, Edward W. Engs, Harold C. Faulkner, Charles F. Flinn, Alexander Field, William F. Gabriel, Maurice A. Gale, John O. Gantner, Jr., George R. Gay, Frank L. Gerbode, Harry F. Gittings, Jr., Chalmers G. Graham, Harrington B. Graham, Bert I. Graves, Karl G. Haub, Samuel M. Haslett, Jr., William L. Holloway, Erwin V. Holton, Warren D. Horner, Francis C. Hutchens, Harold B. Keefer, Talbot Kendall, Francis J. Knorp, Charles R. Knox, Everett S. Layman, Harvey W. Leach, James MacPherson, Samuel C. May, Alexander McAndrew, Alfred M. McCarty, Charles A. Meals, Samuel W. Means, Garfield D. Merner, Leo W. Meyer, Theodore C. Muegge, Guido Musto, William H. Olin, W. E. J. Ord, Fred W. Pabst, Alvin F. Payne, William Payne, Paul A. Pflueger, Edwin S. Pillsbury, T. Eric Reynolds, Wilmot Rogers, William L. Rogers, James Rolph III, A. Theodore Roth, Arthur W. Seppich, John A. Schaertzer, John F. Schurch, George B. Smith, Leroy Spencer, Laurence H. Tharp, William B. Tyler, Carl F. Volker, Lloyd E. Wasson, Stuart C. Way, Clarke E. Wayland, Mark H. White, Cornelius Winkler.

