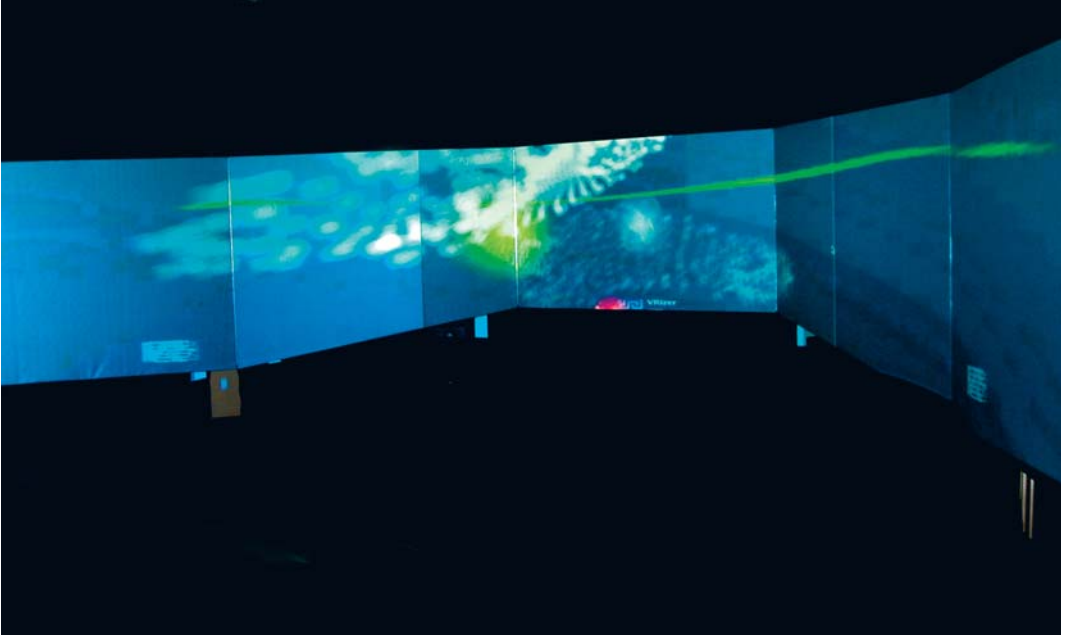


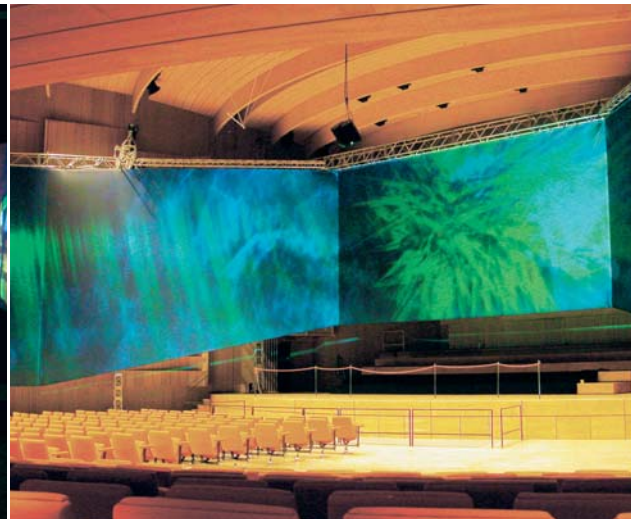
..... **Rheingold**



For a concert performance of *Rheingold* at the Brucknerhaus Linz, Johannes Deutsch and the Ars Electronica Futurelab were commissioned to design an interactive, computer-controlled visualization that will surround the audience seated in that venue's main concert hall with an 850 m² black projection screen. Then, concertgoers wearing 3-D glasses will be completely immersed into a three-dimensional manifestation of virtual gods and their spheres. The Ars Electronica Futurelab used advanced computer technology to interlink the scenes prepared by Johannes Deutsch with the musical score, whereby the work's performance by an orchestra and soloists playing and singing live via microphone directly influences the visual presentation on stage. Thus, for the first time, the musical interpretation the conductor conveys to the orchestra and the soloists will go on to provide the actual dramaturgy of the unfolding and modulation of this virtual world.

Rheingold—Virtual Realm of the Gods

Following thorough research into the work's musical and dramaturgical background, the challenge was to blaze a new trail in the visual design of the music and the drama. The artistic concept is an answer to the structure of the narration in *Rheingold*. It juxtaposes the vocalizations, which follow the plot in the libretto, to the references of the leitmotif, which interrupt the sequence of events with flashbacks or peer into the future as a way of prefiguring what is about to transpire. In order to bring together psychoanalytic (Donington, Schickling) and political considerations (Mayer) in a balanced interrelationship and also to assimilate dramatic experiences like Chéreau's spectacularly definitive *Ring* into the mise-en-scène, the decision was made in favor of an ambience that manifested the



spheres of the divine realm and the gods themselves as abstract 3-D worlds and objects. This virtual realm of the gods is controlled and transformed interactively by the music. The precision of the adaptation by new media makes it possible to work dramaturgically directly with music: orchestra and soloists can sing Alberich's rage red and redder, or even let him spew forth sparks. While boundless demands are driving Alberich to steal the gold, Alberich's anticipatory vision of the "Ring" becomes visible on the virtual stage. In the conviction of thereby more closely approaching the conceptualizations of the "musical poet" and "musical thinker" (Schönberg), both performances at the Bruckner Festival will "turn Wagner's stage into a podium for a sort of visualized concert [...] of the most radical staging of the music" in the words of Mauricio Kagel in Bayreuth in 1982. Kagel—as a proxy for many musical poets—likewise voiced the wish "to see Wagner's longing for the absolute realized, for once, on the stage [...] The singers are placed on a completely darkened stage throughout, although sometimes plot elements are carried out in order to give audience members the pleasure of the illusion of possible action." The genealogy of the stereo-projected spatial construction of this virtual 3-D world displays elements that recall not only to its early precursors—the panoramas of the 19th century—but also later models such as the avant-garde stage sets of the early 20th-century Russian Constructivists and particularly Friedrich Kiesler's convertible stages from 1926–27 and 1949.

Translated from German by Mel Greenwald