

VALHALLA

by Wade Bradford

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Valhalla deftly weaves together a number of Norse myths. When Baldur, the god of nature, is killed, Odin, the head of the gods, orders one of his Valkyries to find a hero who can bring his son back from the underworld. Unfortunately, the Valkyrie picks Siggy, a fast-talking coward. To get him ready for his mission, she tells him Baldur's life story.

Baldur's mother worried about his gentle nature, so she made all things – animal, vegetable, mineral – promise never to harm him. All, except the lowly mistletoe. Although invincible, Baldur always felt dwarfed by his brother Thor, the thunder god. Even though Baldur saved Thor from a vicious serpent; even though he rescued Tyr from certain death; even though he got Odin out of a jam with a troll; even though he averted doom when the apples of youth were stolen, he never got the respect he deserved. But he did incur the wrath of Loki, the god of mischief.

At Baldur's wedding, Loki encourages everyone to throw things at Baldur for fun, since nothing can harm him. But when Tyr shoots an arrow made from mistletoe, it strikes his heart and kills him. Baldur's mother bargains with Death, that if all things on Earth will shed tears for Baldur, he can return to life. Soon even the rocks cry: everything – except Baldur, himself. He prefers to stay in the underworld, wishing he had never been born.

Enter Siggy. He shows Baldur what the world would be like if he had never lived. His parents would be slaves to the troll; his sweetheart would be unhappily married to Loki. His brother Thor would be killed by the serpent, and Thursday couldn't be named after him! When Baldur starts to cry, he returns to Valhalla, the home of the gods, where everyone celebrates his return, and the Valkyrie welcomes Siggy as a true hero.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 m, 5 w, 7 flexible parts, extras)

THOR: The god of thunder.

TYR: The god of battle, blind.

ODIN: Head of the gods, father of Thor and Baldur.

VALKYRIE: A warrior daughter of Odin, who brings heroes fallen in battle to Valhalla.

SIGGY: The most cowardly hero on Earth.

IBUNA: Odin's wife, mother of Thor and Baldur.

LOKI: The god of mischief, an envious trickster.

BALDUR: The gentle, intelligent god of nature.

MIDGARD SERPENT: Voice only (see "Production Notes").

FREYA: The goddess of love.

GIMLI: The blacksmith of the gods.

BRAGI: The god of poetry.

NANNA: His sister, a wholesome, spunky maiden

TROLL KING: A vindictive, ugly creature.

GUNTHER: His horse.

MISTLETOE: A bush (represented by a puppet).

DEATH: A female version of the grim reaper.

ELVES: Non-speaking.

2 GOATS: Non-speaking.

NOTE: ODIN, THOR and BALDUR must be played by male actors, but TYR, LOKI and BRAGI could be played by either male or female actors. Other flexible roles include the SERPENT, MISTLETOE, and GOATS

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PRODUCTION NOTES

For the ice cracking down the middle during the hockey game, several off-stage cast members can pull apart the two white sheets that serve as the icy lake.

Two things create the effect of the Midgard Serpent:

1) Long green, flexible tubes, painted to look like the serpent's body. They can be stretched across the stage, going this way and that. At one end of the tube is a tail.

2) At another end – not necessarily the same tube – is the puppet head of the sea-serpent, complete with snarling teeth, big eyeballs, and a mean disposition.

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(AT RISE: The stage is dark. Somber, Nordic MUSIC plays – or perhaps something from Wagner’s “The Ring of the Nibelung.” When the MUSIC fades, a single LIGHT shines upon the face of a stern, brave warrior: THOR, the god of thunder.)

THOR: Oh, mighty father Odin. Please help my brother Baldur. He is the best of us all. He doesn’t deserve to be stuck down in the depths of Niffleheim.

(THOR steps out of the LIGHT, and in comes a beautiful woman, NANNA, to offer pleas of her own.)

NANNA: Dear Odin, please save my poor husband Baldur. Send your Valkyries to help him. Please, please rescue him.

(SHE steps out of the spotlight, and is replaced by the face of TYR, the god of battle, who wears sunglasses and carries a walking cane due to his blindness.)

TYR: Hey, Odin, give Baldur a break. He’s a decent guy. Never done wrong to anybody.

(The LIGHT fades. A cold WIND blows. Then, the full stage LIGHTS come up to reveal ODIN, the father of the gods. He wears distinguished Viking attire and has an eye-patch over his left eye. Entering from SL is a VALKYRIE, a beautiful, armor-clad woman with white wings attached to her back.)

ODIN: A lot of folks are praying for Baldur the Good.

VALKYRIE: Great Odin, the entire universe has been weeping for him. They’re begging for his release from Niffleheim.

ODIN: Yes, just about everyone wants him set free ... everyone except himself, that is.

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VALKYRIE: Baldur himself? Then what are we to do?

ODIN: First, my loyal Valkyrie, we are in need of a mighty hero. Fly down to Earth, swoop over the most harrowing of battlefields, and bring back the spirit of the most valiant, and most recently slain warrior. Look down, through the clouds, a battle unfolds as we speak.

(SOUND EFFECT: Shouting men and clanging swords can be heard as ODIN and VALKYRIE peer off the edge of the stage.)

VALKYRIE: I shall select the hero with the mightiest scream.

VIKING: *(Offstage.)* Aaaaaaagghghghghaagghhhh!

VALKYRIE: That sounds like our guy.

(SHE dashes offstage, singing or whistling Wagner's "Flight of the Valkyries.")

ODIN: I'm so tired of hearing that song.

(VALKYRIE rushes back in. She brings along a very confused- looking VIKING – Siegfried, or Siggy for short. Besides the bewildered expression on his face, he also has a spear sticking through his body. Note: The spear can simply be placed between the actor's arm and chest.)

VALKYRIE: Here he is, my Lord. Freshly slain from the field.

ODIN: Welcome, brave hero!

SIGGY: Where am I?

ODIN: Where else could you be, but in the most magical kingdom on Earth?

SIGGY: Disneyland?

(A grieving woman, IBUNA, crosses the stage, crying profusely.)

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IBUNA: Oh my poor son, Baldur. How will we ever carry on without him?

SIGGY: What's wrong with her?

ODIN: Valkyrie, why don't you explain things to our newfound hero. I must comfort my wife. Come back, my dear ...

(IBUNA exits, while ODIN rushes to catch up with her.)

SIGGY: So ... what's going on, exactly?

VALKYRIE: I have flown you across the rainbow bridge to Asgard, land of the gods. You stand in the palace of Valhalla, in the very throne room of Odin.

SIGGY: No, that can't be true. To be in Valhalla, I'd have to be ... dead.

(VALKYRIE nods. SIGGY chuckles until he looks down to see the spear poking through him.)

SIGGY: Oh no!

VALKYRIE: Fret not, mortal. Because of your bravery, you have been summoned here to spend eternity in our happy hunting grounds.

SIGGY: My bravery?

VALKYRIE: Yes. We could tell by your battle cry that you must have died facing a hundred men.

SIGGY: Oh, that's very kind of you ... but not quite true.

VALKYRIE: Fifty men?

SIGGY: Actually, there was just one guy involved: me.

VALKYRIE: You?

SIGGY: When the battle started, all of those clanging swords and twirling axes scared me ... so I ran. Someone must have thrown this spear at me.

VALKYRIE: *(Examining spear.)* What's this carved into the wood? "Siegfried?"

SIGGY: Oh, that's my name! But my friends call me Siggy. Hey this is my spear! Now I remember; while I was running away, crying in fear, I tripped and fell on my own weapon. Ha! Silly me!

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