

Randall Johnson







About the composer

Dr. Randall Johnson received his Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting from the University of Washington in Seattle. He then joined the faculty of the University of Guam with principal responsibilities in solo and ensemble vocal music. His additional responsibilities varied through the years but included ear training, jazz band, conducting, music theory, saxophone and others as needed. He has been able to travel to over 30 countries as a conductor, singer, instrumentalist and clinician. He has

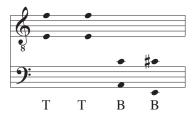
written choral music for many different choirs and his university ensembles have won competitions internationally and (more fun than competitions) performed in choral festivals and tours to 13 different countries. Randall has been a frequent clinician and adjudicator in Seoul and Tokyo: most notably St. Mary's High School whose groups, directed by Randy and Rachel Stenson, have premiered many of his compositions.

Text and composer notes on page 22 & 23 Cover illustration by Peter Bergting

Commissioned by

The American Choral Directors Association for the 2025 National Grades 7-10 Tenor/Bass Honor Choir Randy Stenson, conductor

Ranges





Ragnarök

(Destiny of the Gods)



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1820-18







Ragnaröh

(Destiny of the Gods)

Jörmungandr, Midgard Serpent.

Midgard Serpent cast out by Odin and thrown into the sea.

Foe of Thor, no one could foresee all the strength and size he would be.

He encircled the earth, he moves and the mountains tremble and quake,

Destiny of the Gods and Giants are with this snake.

Son of Loki prepares for war, lightning flashes, thunder roars.

Ragnarök! The twilight of the Gods, the earth by fire and floods consumed. Ragnarök! The world order changes, even Gods must meet their doom.

Jörmungandr lets go his tail and slithers to the shore, Thor is ready with hammer strikes from a mighty God of war! Midgard Serpent spits endless venom while Mjolnir finds its mark, Thor is victor but venom takes him, his eyes go dark.

Ragnarök! The twilight of the Gods, Valhalla burns in the attack, Ragnarök! The world order changes, the stars are gone, the sun turns black. Ragnarök! All of Midgard stands aflame. Ragnarök! The final battle!

Odin, King of the Gods, battles with the giant wolf, Fenrir, and loses his life. Vidar, son of Odin, has his revenge, he sends Fenrir to his afterlife. And the land sinks into the deep.

The war now over, and the earth re-born, I see the land climbing up from the sea. No evil found, the end is the beginning, with Balder bringing beauty and light.

The Lyrics are inspired by Völuspa (Prophecy of the Seeress) from the first poem in the ancient Norse text, the Poetic Edda. The Poetic Edda is the modern name for an untitled collection of old Norse anonymous narrative poems composed between AD 800–1100. They were not written until the 13th century by the Icelandic chieftain, poet, and historian Snorri Sturluson. These Norse prophecies influenced other cultures and people including JRR Tolkien (Lord of the Rings) and Richard Wagner (Der Rings des Niberlungen). They are, of course, part of modern culture through Marvel movies and video games. My attempt in the text is to stay as accurate as possible to the original although this is, perhaps, impossible as there are many translations of the Poetic Edda but none of the translators were fluent in ancient Icelandic script.

Terms and names used in the text in order of appearance are:

Ragnarök: RAG-na-rök (ö pronounced as "ah" with lips rounded like "oh") The foreseen battle between gods that will destroy the world, but some people and benevolent gods survive to start the world over as a better place.

Jörmungandr (YÖR-muhn-gan-der): The Midgard Serpent, son of Loki and cast into the sea by Odin. He grew to encircle Midgard and held the end of his tail. He is an enemy of Thor and when he lets go of his tail, Ragnarök begins.

Midgard: Middle earth where people (not gods and creatures) live.

Odin: God of war and death and many other things. Father of Thor and stepfather of Loki.

Thor: God of thunder, lightning and lesser god of war among other things.

Loki: God of mischief and deception and is the adopted son of Odin.

Mjolnir (mi-OL-nir): Thor's hammer

Valhalla (val-HAL-uh): The home of Odin, other gods and fallen warriors.

Fenrir (FEN-rir): A giant wolf and one of Loki's sons.

Vidar (VI-dar): A son of Odin and God of vengeance.

Balder (BAL-der): Another son of Odin and God of light and beauty.