

A portrait of Richard Strauss, an elderly man with white hair and a mustache, wearing a dark suit and a bow tie. The background is a textured, warm-toned wall.

Strauss

MUSIC OF RICHARD STRAUSS

"The President's Own"

UNITED STATES MARINE BAND

Strauss

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MUSIC OF RICHARD STRAUSS

Richard Strauss was a study in contradictions. Widely hailed in his youth as one of the most innovative composers since Hector Berlioz, many observe that nothing he wrote after World War I equaled his works before that time.

He was a superb conductor yet could be cynical, aloof, and apathetic on the podium. While conducting opera, Strauss was at times seen checking his pocket watch — most concerned about reaching the pub before closing time.

Among the wealthiest composers, he developed an unflattering reputation for being parsimonious. Associates used the phrase “money grubbing” to describe a man who constantly spoke of royalties and fees, who played cards with his

orchestral players for money — often putting them in financial difficulties, and who recopied his own scores in order to sell the duplicates. Conductor Fritz Busch commented, “the puzzle of Strauss...[was] his decided inclination toward material things,” and W.J. Henderson observed, “[The] creator of carnal visions in three-four time, he is also a dreamer of dollars... .”

Various described as “amoral and apolitical,” Strauss incited strong emotions on the part of colleagues and competitors. He could be unfailingly well mannered, and some knew him as a man with a ready wit who enjoyed cards, beer, sports, and the company of friends. To others, Strauss could appear “notoriously vain, jealous, and hypersensitive.” Fellow conductor Hans

Knappertsbusch said, "He was a pig."

Perhaps most revealing is that the composer of the semi-autobiographical *Ein Heldenleben* (A Hero's Life) was the most henpecked husband imaginable. He was completely dominated by his wife, Pauline, who ruled the household with an iron hand. She controlled nearly every aspect of his life, from giving him a pittance for spending money, to chiding him when card playing or any other activity interfered with his work. He dared not enter their home without repeatedly wiping his feet and was at the mercy of her moods and idiosyncrasies.

Beyond the contradictions, Richard Strauss was a musical genius, was considered the world's greatest composer during his lifetime, and was the last prolific operatic composer. His style was a combination of progressive techniques rooted in the Romantic traditions of Brahms, Liszt, and Wagner. In the end, these influences may have ensured his permanent place in the hearts of listeners, leading Ethan Mordden to call him

"the last best seller in music."

Richard Georg Strauss was born in Munich on June 11, 1864, the son of Franz Joseph Strauss — the most famous French horn player in Germany. Franz Strauss was the illegitimate child of Urban Strauss, however was allowed to take his father's surname in an act of either generosity or resignation. Franz Strauss was an outspoken man of fiery opinions and enormous talent. His ability kept him in the principal French horn chair in the Munich Court Opera orchestra for 42 years, a position that brought him into contact with the greatest composers and musicians.

Franz was married at 29 to Elise Sieff, daughter of an Army bandmaster, with whom he had two children, but lost both wife and children to the devastating cholera epidemic that swept Munich in 1854. He then met and married Josephine Pschorr, daughter of the wealthy brewer whose beer was the best known in Germany. Richard was born 10 months later, and three years following, a daughter, Johanna.

Richard was exposed to music from birth. He began piano lessons at age 4 1/2 with August Tombo who was the harpist in the Court Orchestra and his father's colleague. By age 7 Richard went on to study violin with Benno Walter, concertmaster of the orchestra, and at age 11 began lessons with Carl Niest, a well-known Munich piano teacher. During secondary school he started to study theory, harmony, and conducting with Friedrich Wilhelm Meyer, Richard's first bona fide composition teacher. By age 13, his violin playing had progressed to the point that he could perform in his father's semi-professional orchestra.

Among his first significant compositions was the wind Serenade, Opus 7, composed when he was 17. His first large-scale orchestral composition was his Symphony in D minor which premiered on March 30, 1881, in Munich with Hermann Levi conducting. Richard attended high school in Munich, graduating in 1882, then started at the University in Munich, pursuing a broad

curriculum of art history, aesthetics, and philosophy — the things any cultured man should know. University life did not appeal to him, however, and he left in 1883 intent on a professional career. By this time he had attracted the attention of Hans von Bülow, the famous German conductor and former assistant to Richard Wagner.

Von Bülow was so impressed that he hired Richard in 1884 as the Assistant Conductor of his Meiningen Orchestra, despite the fact that Franz Strauss and von Bülow were longtime enemies. The elder Strauss had enormous contempt for Richard Wagner's music and regularly fought with von Bülow, a convenient scapegoat for his anti-Wagner sentiments. He believed Wagner was "a subversive" and took every opportunity to express his disdain. Franz Strauss even walked out of rehearsals for the premiere of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. When Wagner died in 1883 and conductor Hermann Levi announced this fact, the entire orchestra rose except one individual: Franz Strauss.

In December 1884, the New York Philharmonic under Theodore Thomas premiered Richard's second symphony. During his tenure in Meiningen with von Bülow, he met one of the men most influential to his future: the poet and musician Alexander Ritter. Ritter was a member of that orchestra, was 30 years older, and was married to Wagner's niece, Franziska (whose name is a feminization of the name Franz after Franz Liszt, the composer and father of Wagner's wife, Cosima).

Ritter was a sophisticate, especially in matters musical, and he introduced young Strauss to *zukunftsmusik*, the "music of the future." Strauss said of Ritter, "His influence on me was in the nature of a stormwind. He urged me on to the development of the poetic, the expressive in music, as exemplified in the works of Liszt, Berlioz, and Wagner."

By embracing Wagner's music, Strauss knew that he was at odds with his father and was often warned about this fact. However, Ritter became a surrogate musical parent, and this "new" and

controversial music began to take hold in Richard's consciousness. A turning point came when he heard *Tristan und Isolde*. After that, he proclaimed himself convinced of Wagner's genius, his father's sentiments notwithstanding.

In 1886 Richard left Meiningen to become third conductor at the Court Opera in Munich. The greater opportunities of the larger opera house made the allure of being third conductor in Munich greater than being second conductor in Meiningen. Aside from other opportunities, it was in Munich that he got to know Pauline de Ahna, a talented soprano, daughter of a retired General, and his future wife. The two first met some years earlier, and now Strauss consented to coach her in operatic roles, several of which he subsequently conducted.

Inspired by the music of Liszt, Richard began thinking about concentrating on the composition of tone poems. He made a trip to Italy (on the advice of Johannes Brahms) and while there began to sketch out *Aus Italien*

which contained his own elements and music he perceived as "Neapolitan folk tunes" (at least one of which wasn't Neapolitan at all). *Aus Italien* was premiered March 2, 1887, in Munich under Strauss's direction, and was hissed by the audience. Some described it as "noisy, ugly, and confusing." This probably had little impact on Strauss who once commented to Gustav Mahler, "I employ cacophony to outrage people."

This setback aside, he continued to compose in other forms and to make a name as a conductor. In 1889 he resigned his post in Munich and went to Weimar where he became assistant to Lassen at the Court Opera. During that year he completed his first successful tone poem, *Don Juan*, which drew significant inspiration from the power and sweep of Liszt's music. *Don Juan* was premiered November 11, 1889, in Weimar with Strauss conducting, and the overwhelmingly favorable response was the first major break in his compositional career.

This launched a series of highly successful tone poems in which he

inherited Liszt's mantle as a master of program music. These included *Macbeth* (premiered October 13, 1890, in Weimar, R.S. conducting) and *Tod und Verklärung* (premiered May 10, 1894, in Eisenach, R.S. conducting). Taking a cue from Wagner, Strauss incorporated a series of *leitmotifs* (leading motives or themes) into his tone poems. These elements were so carefully planned that audiences were provided with explanatory brochures detailing the various musical themes and their intended meanings. When asked about such matters, Strauss said, "There is no such thing as abstract music; there is good music and bad music. If it is good, it means something, and then it is Program Music." He once told music critic Ernest Newman, "Music must progress until it can depict even a teaspoon."

Strauss's acceptance as a true Wagnerian was complete when, in the summer of 1891, Cosima Wagner (widow of Richard) invited him to conduct *Tannhäuser* at Bayreuth, the theater Wagner built to be the permanent shrine

and ideal setting for his music dramas.

One thing Strauss had not done to follow in Wagner's path was compose an opera. To do it as Wagner would, Strauss needed to compose his own libretto which he did when he completed his first opera, *Guntram*, during an extended tour of the Mediterranean region. *Guntram* premiered May 10, 1894, in Weimar with the soprano lead sung by Pauline de Ahna.

While *Guntram* proved highly disappointing, 1894 did not prove to be a total loss. Richard and Pauline were married on September 10th of that year. Although they remained together for the remainder of his life, friends and colleagues saw a consistent pattern of her domination. Pauline never let him forget that she came from more noble stock than his own background of musicians and brewers. She was a difficult and abrasive woman who berated him in front of friends and ordered him around like a servant. If she felt that he had not devoted sufficient time to his work, she would demand, "Richard, go compose!"

At the other extreme, she once interrupted his composing to send him to the grocer for milk, not wanting to trouble their maid who was "busy" washing windows at the time.

A major opportunity came when he succeeded von Bülow as conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, a post he held for only one season. During this period, he also served as Assistant Conductor of the Munich Opera and went on to become Chief Conductor in 1896. Although his reputation as a skilled conductor of operatic and orchestral repertoire was growing, he furthered his prowess as a composer by continuing with highly successful tone poems. These included *Till Eulenspiegel's lustige Streiche* (premiered November 5, 1895, in Cologne) which many feel is the most spontaneous of his tone poems; Also *Sprach Zarathustra* (premiered November 27, 1896, in Frankfurt am Main); and *Don Quixote* (premiered March 8, 1898, in Cologne).

Strauss was carrying on in the Romantic tradition, but his musical lan-

guage was shocking to some for its "modernism." Even those who had difficulty grasping the style did not deny the power and the impact of his tone poems. Claude Debussy said, "It is not possible to withstand his irresistible domination."

In 1898 he assumed one of his most important operatic posts as conductor of the Berlin Royal Opera, a job previously held by conductor Felix Weingartner. This relationship with the Berlin Royal Opera would be one of his most enduring. He was appointed Generalmusikdirektor in 1908 and stayed on until 1918-1919 when he became co-director of the Vienna State Opera.

The indefatigable Strauss continued to compose actively despite the many demands placed upon him. He next delivered the dramatic, semi-autobiographical *Ein Heldenleben* (A Hero's Life) which premiered March 3, 1899, in Frankfurt am Main. Audiences at the premiere found it banal, crude, and "a monstrous act of bad taste." Fortunately, Strauss was not in the least insecure about his abilities.

From this time on Strauss focused more on operatic composition, closing an incredible period in his life and in 20th-century music. The eight tone poems for which Strauss is so well known, and which mark his highest development as an orchestral composer, were completed before 1900. He would live another 50 years after composing *Ein Heldenleben*, but many feel that his orchestral composing reached a zenith during this period.

Strauss found his first operatic success with *Feuersnot*, which premiered November 21, 1901, in Dresden. While his greatest operatic triumphs were yet to come, Strauss was reassured by this accomplishment. His fame continued to grow, and requests to conduct his music abroad increased as did recognition inside Germany that Strauss was a national musical treasure. He traveled to London for a festival of his music in 1903, and in that same year received a Doctor of Philosophy degree, *honoris causa*, from the University of Heidelberg. He toured the United States in 1904 as conductor of the Wetzler

Orchestra, a post for which he received the staggering fee (at that time) of \$60,000.

During his tour of the United States, he witnessed the premiere of his *Symphonia domestica* March 21, 1904, at Carnegie Hall. Audiences and critics panned this new work, criticizing both its length and bombast. Compared to *Ein Heldenleben* and its predecessors, there was a widespread feeling that *Symphonia domestica* marked a significant decline in Strauss's art of composing.

The event that moved Strauss to the next compositional plane was the completion of *Salome*. Strauss based the opera on Oscar Wilde's version of the Biblical story which was controversial as a play and even more so in Strauss's setting. *Salome* premiered December 9, 1905, in Dresden and was considered highly decadent but attracted consistently full houses. *Salome* received its American premiere on January 22, 1907, at the Metropolitan Opera but was canceled after only two performances because of public outcry against this "blasphemous"

and "repulsive" production. Among the more shocking features were the semi-nude Dance of the Seven Veils and the final scene in which *Salome* comes to the front of the stage and kisses the severed head of John the Baptist. Despite the negative publicity, *Salome* cemented the reputation of Richard Strauss as an operatic composer. His rare gifts of orchestration, harmony, and melodic flair proved Strauss's mastery.

With his next opera, *Elektra*, Strauss began a relationship with the Austrian poet and dramatist Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Hofmannsthal was the librettist Strauss needed to meld his musical genius into an even more significant operatic whole. In personality and temperament, Strauss was the opposite of Hofmannsthal, but each recognized the other's gifts and knew the value of collaboration. Hofmannsthal was primarily responsible for leading Strauss into a new style which incorporated literary symbolism. Early in their professional relationship, Hofmannsthal wrote to Strauss, "We were born for one another

and are certain to do fine things together." Of Strauss's 15 operas, the six on which he collaborated with Hofmannsthal are considered his best and are the most frequently performed.

Having composed two successive operas with violent and dramatic themes, Strauss recognized the need for something entirely different. His lifelong affection for Mozart (inherited from his father) led him to approach Hofmannsthal about working together on what he called his "Mozart opera." The result was the delightful *Der Rosenkavalier*, described by Strauss as "a comedy for music in three acts." *Der Rosenkavalier* received its premiere on January 26, 1911, in Dresden with the conductor Schuch on the podium and became an instant sensation across Germany and everywhere it was performed. *Der Rosenkavalier* remains the most frequently performed 20th-century opera and stands out as one of Strauss's most endearing gifts. Had Strauss not already been a musical celebrity, *Der Rosenkavalier* would have put him

in the place of highest honor and public acclamation.

He followed the next year with *Ariadne auf Naxos* for which he conducted the premiere October 15, 1912, in Stuttgart. He then took a break from opera and returned to the tone poem with *Ein Alpensinfonie*, first performed October 28, 1915, by the Dresden Court Orchestra. This massive work, with its huge orchestra and battery of sound effects, still yields a mixed reaction. After hearing it Strauss commented, "At last I have learned to orchestrate!," but others said that his skill was entirely mechanical. Some even ventured that it represented a "complete exhaustion of art."

Four years later, Strauss produced his next opera with Hofmannsthal, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, first produced October 10, 1919, in Vienna. *Die Frau* received very positive reviews, but it was the last of his operas considered at the level of previous successes. Also in this period, he assumed the position of co-director of the Vienna State Opera along

with Franz Schalk. For his next opera, he wrote his own libretto for *Intermezzo* in which close friends observed a family joke about Strauss and the problem of Pauline's obsessive jealousy.

In 1925 Strauss was engaged to travel to Spain to conduct the Municipal Band of Barcelona in hand transcriptions of three of his most popular tone poems: *Tod und Verklärung*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, and *Don Juan*. The concert was presented in the town square, and photographs show a huge crowd surrounding the band. While there is little information on Strauss's contact with other bands, it is almost certain that he heard wind transcriptions of his music from excellent bands in Germany. Not everyone, however, was equally thrilled with the band versions of his music. When the Band of the Grenadier Guards played selections from Strauss's *Elektra* for King George V, a note was sent to the band reading, "His Majesty does not know what the band has just played, but it is never to be played again."

The last two operas on which he collaborated with Hofmannsthal were *Die ägyptische Helena* (premiered June 6, 1928, in Dresden) and *Arabella* (premiered July 1, 1933, in Dresden). While not unsuccessful, both critics and audiences noted a marked decline in his abilities.

The significant event of 1933 was Adolf Hitler's rise to power. Although Strauss had no use for politicians, Hitler (a recognized music enthusiast) sent Strauss an autographed photo and tried to court him for a public position. During this period, the world began to learn of Hitler's atrocities, which led many musicians and conductors to refuse to perform in Germany. One was Arturo Toscanini, who declined to conduct Wagner's *Parsifal* at Bayreuth in protest over Germany's treatment of Jews. Strauss substituted for Toscanini, and when Jewish conductor Bruno Walter was removed from conducting the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Strauss substituted for him as well.

With tensions escalating, Strauss

was increasingly pressured to take a public role in the "official" music of Hitler's Germany. Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, established a state music bureau (Reichsmusikkammer) and proclaimed Strauss its president without consulting him. Strauss reluctantly agreed to be listed in this capacity, but his own distaste for the regime led him to resign for "health reasons" in July of 1935.

The pressures upon Strauss were increasing by the day. He sought a new librettist for his next opera *Die schwiegensame frau*, and in selecting the Jewish novelist and biographer Stefan Zweig, was clearly at odds with Nazi officials. The Nazis then learned that Strauss's daughter-in-law was half Jewish, and the combination of events caused great upheaval for Strauss and his family. Perhaps only the fact that he was Germany's most famous composer saved him from being persecuted. Strauss contributed an obligatory offering, his *Olympische Hymne* for the Berlin Olympic Games of 1936, but had little

other contact with the Nazi party. His opera *Daphne*, with Joseph Gregor as librettist, was produced October 15, 1938, in Dresden. At the outbreak of war in 1939, Strauss was 75 years old.

While at an age justifying retirement, he produced two more operas: *Capriccio* and *Die Liebe der Danaë*. At the end of April 1945, when the American Army occupied Bavaria, they found Strauss still occupied with composition at his home in Garmisch. When they were about to enter his house, the 81-year-old composer confronted them, saying in English, "I am Richard Strauss, the composer of the *Rosenkavalier*!" at which time the troops supposedly left. By special dispensation, authorities allowed him to keep his house.

Strauss and his family went into seclusion in Switzerland in October 1945 and stayed there for several years. He had been tainted by his affiliation with the Nazis and was not exonerated until June 8, 1948, three days before his 84th birthday. He returned to Germany in 1949 and died on September 8th of

that year at his home in Garmisch.

Among his later works were several that featured wind instruments, including the *Festmusik der Stadt Wien*, two Sonatas for 16 Wind Instruments: No. 1 "Aus der Werkstatt eines Invaliden" (From an Invalid's Workshop) and No. 2 "Fröhliche Werkstatt" (Happy Workshop), a second Horn Concerto, and an Oboe Concerto. Strauss's affection for wind instruments, no doubt forged from the cradle, continued throughout his life and was evident in his later years.

The man who began as one of the most controversial composers of the century faded quietly from the musical scene. Nicolas Slonimsky observed that Strauss was among "the most inventive music masters of the modern age," noting that he remained a Romanticist at heart. While Strauss began his career in a progressive vein, he ended it in a conservative one.

He completely dominated German music and was the most famous composer in the world at that time. He is also perhaps the last major com-

poser to reach both the hearts and minds of the public. His mastery of orchestration remains the subject of awe. H.L. Mencken wrote, "Strauss probably knows more about writing for orchestra than any other two men that ever lived, not excluding Wagner." Lawrence Gilman said, "This composer, make no mistake about it, is an authentic lord of tone, amazing in the range and richness and expressiveness of his art."

Although his works became part of the symphonic canon, and Strauss lived to see this happen, he commented, "I now comfort myself with the knowledge that I am on the road I want to take, fully conscious that there never has been an artist not considered crazy by thousands of his fellow men." Strauss said, "Work is a constant and never tiring source of enjoyment to which I have dedicated myself." His enjoyment is apparent in the skill with which he assembled various compositions, but pales in comparison with the enjoyment his music brought the world.

FESTMUSIK DER STADT WIEN

During 1942-1944 Strauss spent winters in Vienna where the government had given him land on the grounds of the Belvedere Palace. One of the more prominent ensembles in the city was the *Trompetenchor der Stadt Wien*, a brass ensemble comprised of members of the Vienna Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony, and the Vienna Volksoper. The leader of this ensemble, Dr. Hans Heinz Scholtys, invited prominent composers to write for his group and similarly approached Richard Strauss.

The resultant work, composed in 1943, is antiphonal in conception, written to showcase two choirs of brass instruments which pass musical lines back and forth in a manner similar to the brass compositions of Italian renaissance composer Giovanni Gabrieli.

The *Festmusik der Stadt Wien* is an incredibly difficult, ambitious, and long work. Its 11-minute duration

alone makes it an endurance test for even the most hardy brass players, which led to development of a shorter version, the abbreviated one known as the *Fanfare der Stadt Wien*. This performance uses the entire version of the fanfare as Strauss composed it for 10 trumpets, 7 trombones, 2 tubas, and timpani.

SERENADE IN E-FLAT, OPUS 7

This delightful work, inspired by but not modeled after Mozart's *Serenade in B-flat for 13 winds* K. 361, was composed in 1881 when Strauss was only 17. He dedicated it to Friedrich Meyer, his composition teacher from Munich. While Strauss would later dismiss it as "no more than the respectable work of a music student," it proved very important to his professional career.

During this period, Strauss composed many songs, and the lyrical nature of that effort may have inspired

him to write this serenade. It was first performed on November 27, 1882, by the Dresden Court Orchestra conducted by Franz Wüllner. It was so well received that it was accepted for publication by Eugen Spitzweg, who was the first to publish Strauss's music. Spitzweg was well connected in the musical community, and he sent a score to the influential conductor Hans von Bülow who performed it with his own orchestra in Meiningen in 1883 and subsequently in several other German cities.

In December of that year, Strauss traveled to Berlin for the first time and settled there for a period. He learned that von Bülow's orchestra was scheduled to perform in Berlin in February 1884 and that his Serenade in E-flat was on the program. This was a major break for such a young composer. Shortly before the Meiningen orchestra arrived in Berlin, however, the Serenade was given two terrible performances by a private orchestra under the inadequate command of Benjamin Bilse. Why Bilse chose to perform the Serenade is unclear,

but it may have been a pathetic attempt to "scoop" the great von Bülow by giving the first Berlin performances.

Fortunately, the abortive performances by Bilse's ensemble did not affect the plans of the Meiningen orchestra, and they performed the Serenade in Berlin in February 1884. Von Bülow conducted the rehearsals, but at the performances turned the baton over to his assistant conductor while he sat in the audience and applauded vigorously. Strauss and von Bülow became acquainted, and the great conductor described Strauss as "by far the most striking personality since Brahms." Further, he liked the E-flat Serenade so well that he asked Strauss to compose another work like it. The second work is the Suite in B-flat, which received the chronologically incorrect number of Opus 4. Incidentally, the Suite in B-flat was premiered on November 18, 1884, by Bülow's orchestra in Munich, and Bülow insisted that Strauss conduct this performance himself. Bülow's favorable impression of these two wind compositions was an

important part of his decision to offer Strauss a position as Assistant Conductor with the Meiningen Orchestra.

The fact that he proved so influential in Richard Strauss's career is ironic since von Bülow and Franz Strauss (Richard's father) had been considerable enemies in previous years. Franz Strauss made no secret of his hatred for von Bülow, and their public feud resulted in getting the elder Strauss fired from von Bülow's orchestra.

When Franz Strauss learned that von Bülow had supported and encouraged his son, he summoned his courage, resurrected his humility, and attempted to thank him. Unfortunately, memories were too keen to allow this polite transaction to be completed without incident. Von Bülow listened to Franz Strauss and then virtually exploded saying, "You have nothing to thank me for. I have not forgotten what you did to me in this damned city of Munich. What I did today I did because your son has talent, and not for you!" There is no record that the two men ever spoke again.

The Serenade in E-flat is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons, with four French horns and String Bass. It is composed in sonata form, with a central section in B minor which some fault as a technique to avoid more sophisticated development of the theme. Others, however, see these technical post mortems as missing the entire point of the Serenade, prefer to acknowledge its charms, and appreciate them in much the same manner as did Hans von Bülow.

PRELUDE TO ACT 2 FROM GUNTRAM, OPUS 25

Transcribed by J.B. Claus

While Strauss was being introduced to the "music of the future" by his mentor Alexander Ritter, it was inevitable that the subject of an opera would arise. Any serious composer, particularly one so allied with the music of Richard Wagner,

had to write an opera and must compose not only the music but also the libretto as Wagner had done.

In the summer of 1887, Ritter got an idea spurred by an article he read in *Die Neue Freie Presse*, a popular Viennese newspaper. He immediately told Strauss about the secret societies that flourished in Austria during the Middle Ages, some of which were religious in nature. Strauss was intrigued and set to work on an opera based on this theme.

With all reverence to Wagner, he named his hero *Guntram*, a hybrid of Wagnerian heroes Gunther in *Götterdämmerung* and Wolfram in *Tannhäuser*. Other names were also modeled on characters in Wagner operas. He completed the first draft of his libretto on September 6, 1888, but work proceeded slowly, and it would be several years before it would be completed. He shared some of the material with his father whose dislike of Wagner did little to endear the subject to him. Strauss also wrote to Hans von Bülow who wrote back and "wished him

success in summoning the necessary degree of artistic somnambulism." Von Bülow tried to divert Strauss to a play by Ibsen to no avail.

In June of 1892, Strauss became very ill with pleurisy and bronchitis. This was the latest in a series of illnesses, and for a period doctors feared that he might die. Conventional medical wisdom offered only one cure: escape to a sunny climate, and his wealthy Uncle Georg Pschorr offered 5,000 marks to finance an extended trip to Greece and Egypt. After traveling around, he settled for the winter in Cairo at Shephard's Hotel, and it was here that he completed the preliminary score. He marked the occasion by inscribing the last page "Dea Gratia! Und dem heiligen Wagner" (Thanks to God, and to the sacred Wagner). He set about orchestrating the score and accomplished this during travels that ranged from Egypt to Sicily to Bavaria. He put in the final touches on September 5, 1893.

Guntram received its premiere on May 10, 1894, in Weimar with Strauss

conducting. The soprano lead (Freihild) was sung by his friend and future wife, Pauline de Ahna. During rehearsals, there was a nasty argument between them, resulting in her stomping off to her dressing room followed by the exasperated Strauss. When the orchestra members heard raised voices coming from the room, they were uneasy but when silence followed, they became concerned. The leader of the orchestra went to the room to see what was happening. Strauss opened the door, and the leader explained that the musicians were appalled at Pauline's behavior and would refuse to play for any opera in which she appeared. Strauss replied, "That pains me very much for I have just this moment become engaged to Fräulein de Ahna." Their engagement was announced on the day of *Guntram's* premiere, and they were married on September 10th of that year.

The success of *Guntram* ranged from marginal to disastrous, and this seriously discouraged Strauss from the idea of ever composing another opera.

During Strauss's second season with the Munich Opera, *Guntram* was staged for one performance under the direction of Benno Walter who was Strauss's cousin and violin teacher. The entire affair was so bad that the two leading singers refused to take part, and the orchestra petitioned to be spared from "this scourge of God." Strauss was very bitter about how the public treated him in Munich and said, "It is incredible what enemies *Guntram* has made for me. I shall shortly be tried as a dangerous criminal." The opera was never heard again until a 1935 Berlin radio performance and even failed in a heavily cut version produced in 1940.

Years later, Strauss erected a monument in the garden of his villa in Garmisch which read, "Here rests the honorable and virtuous youth *Guntram*, singer of songs, who by the symphonic orchestra of his own father was cruelly stricken down. Rest in Peace." This reminder shows that Strauss never entirely recovered from the experience. He also quoted passages from *Guntram*

in other works. Musical detectives report that *Ein Heldenleben* quotes a few bars, that a violin solo in *Tod und Verklärung* is identical with a passage from Act I of *Guntram*, and another quote is found in the song *Beim Schlafengehen* (Going to Sleep) in Strauss's last composition, the Four Last Songs. That he returned to music composed 56 years earlier shows a certain affection for *Guntram* that never diminished.

Each of *Guntram*'s three acts begins with an orchestral prelude. Act 2 is set in the Banquet Hall in the Old Duke's Castle where *Guntram* has been invited for a celebration, and where the principal dramatic action of the opera occurs. The Prelude to Act 2 is subtitled "The Festival of Song at the Duke's Court" and is based in part on the Jester's aria at the end of Act 1 announcing the festival of song. It conveys the pomp and splendor of the event and was published separately as a concert selection. The transcription for band by J.B. Claus was prepared for Sousa's Band and was made available by the Music

Division of the Library of Congress in Washington.

PARADE-MARSCH DES REGIMENTS KÖNIGS- JÄGER ZU PFERDE NO. 1 PARADE-MARSCH CAVALLERIE NO. 2

During 1904 when Strauss was music director of the Berlin Opera, the Crown Prince attended a performance of the *Sinfonia Domestica*. The Prince was so taken with the performance that he recommended that his father (Kaiser Wilhelm II) become familiar with Strauss's music. Sometime thereafter the Kaiser attended a performance of Weber's *Der Freischütz* which Strauss conducted, and the two met. The Kaiser expressed his enjoyment of the performance, talked to Strauss about his music, and asked why he had not composed any marches. Strauss, whose musical temperament was leaning more toward *Salome* than military

marches, carefully avoided giving a direct answer to the question and implied that he was not all that familiar with the march genre.

This proved a dangerous tactic. Shortly thereafter, he was summoned to the palace where the Kaiser ordered his military bands to parade in the courtyard and play marches for a period approaching three hours, all for the benefit of educating Strauss in the form of the military march.

If this account is correct, Strauss would have been better served to acknowledge the marches he did compose, including a Festmarch in E-flat of 1876 (numbered his Opus 1), and the Fest-marsch in D, composed 1884-85 (revised 1888), and the Festmarch in C of 1889.

The marches composed for the Kaiser are thought to be the Two Military marches, Opus 57. Following their premiere, the Kaiser awarded Strauss the Crown Order, 3rd Class, in recognition of his efforts.

Strauss composed these Parade

Marches in 1905. Since they were written during the same period, they may have resulted from the episode with the Kaiser. Both have a distinctly Prussian flavor, proving that Strauss must have gotten something from the Kaiser's command performance. The first march bears a title identifying it as a march for the Regiments of the King's Mounted Hunters, and the final statement of the main theme incorporates trumpet fanfares very much in the style of those performed by trumpeters attached to mounted regiments. The second march simply refers to the Cavalry, which suggests that Strauss may have simply intended one for each of the Kaiser's household military forces.

LOVE SCENE FROM *FEUERSNOT*, OPUS 50

Transcribed by J.B. Claus

Following the failure of *Guntram*, Strauss was reluctant to return to opera and waited more than four

years before considering another topic. His bitterness toward the Munich audiences who rejected *Guntram* would figure prominently in the development of *Feuersnot*.

In 1898, Strauss met the poet and satirist Ernst von Wolzogen in Berlin, and they began discussing potential ideas for an opera. Wolzogen suggested an old Flemish tale "The Quenched Fires of Audenaarde" which appeared in J.W. Wolf's *Sagas of the Netherlands* published in 1843. The story is based in part on legends of fire festivals held in Europe during the Middle Ages. Scholars have determined that bonfires were built as superstitious protection from cattle plagues that were rampant at the time.

This story tells of a young lover who is spurned by a capricious girl. He seeks the help of a wise old magician hoping for resolution. He then woos the girl from the street under her balcony and allows himself to be lured into a basket which was supposedly to be drawn up to meet her. She tricks him and leaves him hanging half way up until

morning when he suffers humiliation by the entire town. The lover goes back to the magician who helps him get revenge by extinguishing all the fires in the town. The only way in which the fires can be rekindled is by the flame which will issue from an unmentionable part of the girl's anatomy. Various writers have attempted to convey this scenario in the vaguest of terms, however, knowledge of the details is essential to understanding the motives for selecting this story.

The ribald nature of the tale fit Strauss's purpose perfectly. He and Wolzogen conspired to "wreak vengeance" upon the people of Munich by setting the opera there (in ancient times, of course) and by portraying the townspeople as a group of ignorant Philistines. In developing the score for *Feuersnot*, Strauss may have used some music from his abandoned opera about *Till Eulenspiegel*. He also made liberal use of direct and indirect references to Richard Wagner. The libretto is swimming with puns and allusions to the magician (who represents Wagner) and his apprentice (who repre-

sents Strauss). He also used Wagner's Valhalla motif from *Der Ring des Nibelungen* to denote the old magician.

Wolzogen completed the libretto in mid-1900, and Strauss began composing the music in October of that year. He revised and scored the work during the next few months and completed it in Charlottenburg on May 22, 1901, the date of Wagner's birthday. As he had done with *Guntram*, he annotated the score with a tribute to Wagner. This one read, "Completed on the birthday and to the greater glory of the 'Almighty.'"

Strauss elected to have the premiere in Dresden because he was concerned that cultured audiences in Vienna might be shocked by the off-color nature of the story. The premiere took place on November 21, 1901, with Ernst von Schuch conducting and was a great success. However, some did object with "moral indignation" to the plot and the way it satirized the people of Germany (in this case, Munich in particular). Censors were also bothered by the "indecent" nature of the story, and in

Berlin the Kaiser had the production of *Feuersnot* stopped. One American writer wrote, "[Strauss] frankly sought for an unclean topic and found it in *Feuersnot*. That there is a certain lewd humor in this story cannot be denied, but it is not seemly for men and women to talk to one another about the plot." Regardless, it continued to be produced and to be popular with audiences. It was Strauss's first operatic success, and he savored it. In the coming years, Strauss (ever the shrewd businessman) would bargain that Dresden, for instance, could produce *Der Rosenkavalier* only if they agreed to a minimum number of performances of *Feuersnot* and *Elektra*.

Feuersnot was conducted in Vienna by Gustav Mahler and in London by Sir Thomas Beecham. Beecham was quite fond of it, called it "gay and audacious," and performed excerpts throughout his life. In 1947, Beecham invited Strauss to London for a festival of all-Strauss compositions. The 83-year-old composer traveled to London (making his first airplane ride) and heard Beecham con-

duct two concerts with the Royal Philharmonic, one of which included excerpts from *Feuersnot*.

The opera is staged in one scene, and the Love Scene occurs near the end of the opera when the young man finally makes his way into the girl's room. A faint glimmer of light is seen from the room, building with the orchestral climax (which portrays the passion between the two lovers) at which time all the lights burst into flame as the townspeople cheer. This section of the opera has minimal vocal parts and was often performed as an instrumental selection. While the music in *Feuersnot* was generally found beautiful, the Love Scene represented "the mark of inspired Strauss." It was published separately for orchestra and was subsequently transcribed for band by J.B. Claus for the band of John Philip Sousa.

FEIERLICHER EINZUG DER RITTER DES JOHANNITER-ORDENS

Throughout his life, Strauss responded to requests for music to meet ceremonial and official occasions. In addition, there are fanfares in his orchestral music (notably in *Ein Heldenleben*), and he composed a fanfare in 1891 for A. W. Iffland's play *Der Jäger*.

The title of this work broadly translated into English might read "Fanfare for the Solemn Procession of the Knights of the Order of St. John." It was composed in 1909 at the request of this society, which was founded in Jerusalem during the first Crusade. It is scored for 15 trumpets, four French horns, four trombones, two tubas, and timpani. Strauss apparently thought well of it and rescored it later for full orchestra with an *ad libitum* organ part. Unlike most works considered in the fanfare genre, this one begins quietly and reverentially before gradually building to a

powerful and dramatic climax. There are Wagnerian overtones in the style, perhaps influenced intentionally or otherwise by the solemn Procession of the Knights of the Holy Grail in Wagner's *Parsifal*.

SUITE FROM DER ROSENKAVALIER, OPUS 59

Transcribed by Thomas Knox

Following the violence and gore of *Salome* and *Elektra*, Strauss and Hofmannsthal decided to turn in an entirely different direction. Only weeks after the premiere of *Elektra*, Hofmannsthal wrote to Strauss from Weimar where he was staying at the home of Count Harry von Kessler. He told Strauss of a play he had seen in Paris entitled "L'Ingenu libertin." Hoffmannsthal had a list of characters drafted on the back of a menu and soon developed the outline of a plot which he conveyed to Strauss. It was meant to be light in

nature, a comedy of manners in the style of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* or *Così Fan Tutti*, with perhaps a bit of Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* thrown in for good measure. From the beginning the two must have sensed that they had something special.

Scholars have identified four other sources that contributed to the eventual plot of *Der Rosenkavalier*. Three are French plays: "Les amours de chevalier de Faublas" by Louvet de Couvray (a contemporary of Beaumarchais) and two by Molière: "Monsieur de Pourceaugnac" and "Les Fourberies de Scapin." There was also some influence from the painting "The Levée" by Hogarth, which shows a young woman seated at her dressing table surrounded by characters portrayed in the opera.

Hofmannsthal developed the idea of two main roles which he described as follows: "one for a baritone and one for a young and graceful girl dressed as a man, of the type of a Farrar or Mary Garden. The period: Vienna at the time of Maria Theresa." The 18th-century setting of

Vienna in Mozart's time brought elegance and charm to the plot that was perfect for what they had in mind. Hofmannsthal also wrote that this was "a turning away from Wagner's erotic screaming-boundless in length as well as degree: a repulsive, barbaric, almost bestial affair, this shrieking of two creatures in heat as he practices it."

The story tells of the Feldmarschallin, the Princess von Werdenberg, who has become bored in her marriage and tired of being left alone. She takes a lover in 17-year-old Count Octavian Rofrano, and the opera opens in her bedroom after a night together. When they hear someone approaching, Octavian disguises himself as a maid, ironic since the role of Octavian is sung by a soprano that in the disguise "he" achieves the proper gender. The visitor turns out to be the Princess's cousin, Baron Ochs auf Lerchenau, who is a lecherous and coarse individual. Upon seeing the maid (who is Octavian), the Baron tries to seduce her.

The real purpose of his visit is to

ask the Marschallin to help find a Rosenkavalier to deliver a silver rose to his betrothed, Sophie. Through a circuitous series of events, the Baron agrees to have Octavian deliver the rose, unaware that he is in the room at the time. After sending Octavian to do his duty, the Marschallin contemplates her age and the fact that she will not keep her young lover forever.

Octavian delivers the rose to Sophie but, in the process, they fall in love. The Baron catches them together and challenges Octavian to a duel that results in the Baron getting a small scratch from which he howls in pain as if mortally wounded. The libidinous Baron then sends a note to the "maid" he met earlier (still not recognizing who it was), and Octavian decides to get revenge by agreeing to meet him dressed as the maid. He goes to the arranged meeting during which Octavian torments and plays various tricks designed to embarrass and humiliate him. At the key moment, the Marschallin, Sophie, and her father arrive. The Baron realizes

he was duped by Octavian, and the love between Octavian and Sophie is acknowledged. In one of the most touching and melancholy moments in opera, the Marschallin releases him to be with his new love. The conclusion is dominated by the famous scene in which the Marschallin, Octavian, and Sophie join in the sublime trio, a stunning tour de force. Strauss, who had a love affair with the soprano voice, was never more brilliant.

Strauss began the score in spring 1909 and completed it on September 26, 1910. It was premiered on January 26, 1911, at the Court Opera in Dresden with Schuch conducting. *Der Rosenkavalier* was an incredible and immediate success across Germany and Europe. There were special "Rosenkavalier" trains running from Berlin to Dresden, as well as a host of products and foodstuffs affiliated with the opera. Considering that there had not been an internationally successful German opera since Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* in 1868, this was a major accomplishment. Further, it is the

only German opera that has remained so prominently in the repertory.

Nearly 90 years later, critics fall over one another in their attempts to catalog its merits and praises. It has been called "the most Viennese" of operas, although only the librettist Hofmannsthal was Viennese. Some have said that Strauss successfully combined bel canto vocal style with musical invention, and his harmonic and scoring touches win high marks all around. In the silver rose theme, for example, the celeste plays a series of chords unrelated to the harmonies underneath it, but the effect is so subtle and effective that it does seem to convey a "silvery" quality. The famous *Rosenkavalier* waltz, which is entirely out of place in the 18th-century setting (a minuet would have been more appropriate), is among the highest development of the waltz form in symphonic literature. Strauss revealed that the theme came from a sketchbook in which he once jotted down waltz themes years earlier while vacationing on the Isle of Wight. What is not known, however, is

whether he was aware of the thematic similarity with the *Dynamiden* waltz, Opus 173, composed by Josef Strauss in 1865.

Neville Cardus wrote, "Strauss's orchestra is a mirror that reflects every movement; or rather that it is a magical glass in which the play is actually happening ... he gave the music wings." Writer and music critic H.L. Mencken said, "The first act of *Der Rosenkavalier* is worth all the Italian operas ever written." The accolades still abound today, and it is not entirely surprising that no other work he composed achieved the same level of success. It is considered his last consistently great work, and from this time on everything else paled in comparison.

There have been several suites assembled of music from *Der Rosen-*

kavalier, but the most enduring is this one dating from 1945. During World War II, the copyrights to Strauss's music were transferred to the British firm of Boosey & Hawkes, a company where composers rarely created the suites of their music (even though this one has occasionally been billed as Strauss's compilation). Speculation leans heavily in favor of conductor Artur Rodzinski as the arranger of this compilation. It includes many of the very best moments, including the prelude, the music from Act II when the silver rose is presented to Sophie, Baron Ochs's waltz that ends Act II, the Act III Trio and the closing duet, the rambunctious waltz that accompanies Ochs' departure, and the coda. The transcription was prepared by the former chief arranger of the Marine Band, Thomas Knox.

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COLONEL JOHN R. BOURGEOIS
and LTCOL TIMOTHY W. FOLEY, *conducting*

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Recorded May 20-24, 1996, at the Center
for the Arts, George Mason University,
Fairfax, VA.

Richard Strauss images used courtesy of
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Special thanks to Oberstleutnant Kurt

Ringelmann for assistance in locating
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MUSIC OF RICHARD STRAUSS

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- 1 Festmusik der Stadt Wien 11:15
Colonel John R. Bourgeois, *conducting*
- 2 Serenade for Winds, Op. 7 9:37
LtCol Timothy W. Foley, *conducting*
- 3 Prelude to Act 2 from *Guntram*,
Op. 25 4:26
Transcribed by J. B. Claus
LtCol Timothy W. Foley, *conducting*
- 4 Parade-Marsch des Regiments
Königs-Jäger zu Pferde No. 1 2:41
Arranged by Fritz Brase
Colonel John R. Bourgeois, *conducting*
- 5 Parade-Marsch Cavallerie No. 2 3:10
Arranged by A. Peschke
Colonel John R. Bourgeois, *conducting*
- 6 Love Scene from *Feuersnot*, Op. 50 6:19
Transcribed by J. B. Claus
LtCol Timothy W. Foley, *conducting*
- 7 Feierlicher Einzug der Ritter des
Johanniter-Ordens 6:53
Colonel John R. Bourgeois, *conducting*
- 8 Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*, Op. 59 22:21
Transcribed by Thomas Knox
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