



SEATTLE SYMPHONY
COLLECTION

Richard
STRAUSS

Ein Heldenleben
Sextet from Capriccio

Seattle Symphony
Gerard Schwarz

Richard Strauss (1864-1949) Ein Heldenleben • Sextet from *Capriccio*

The German composer and conductor Richard Strauss represents a remarkable extension of the work of Liszt and Wagner in the symphonic poems of his early career. His operas show an equally remarkable use of late romantic orchestral idiom, often within an almost Mozartian framework. Born in Munich, the son of a distinguished horn-player and his second wife, a member of a rich brewing family, Strauss had a sound general education at the Ludwigsgymnasium in Munich, while studying music under teachers of obvious distinction. Before he left school in 1882 he had already enjoyed some success as a composer, continued during his brief period at Munich University with the composition of concertos for violin and for French horn and a sonata for cello and piano. By the age of twenty-one he had been appointed assistant conductor to the well-known orchestra at Meiningen under Hans von Bülow, whom he succeeded in the following year.

In 1886 Strauss resigned from Meiningen and began the series of tone-poems that seemed to extend to the utmost limit the extra-musical content of the form. The first of these works, *Aus Italien* ('From Italy'), was followed by *Macbeth*, *Don Juan*, *Tod und Verklärung* ('Death and Transfiguration') and, after a gap of a few years, *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Also sprach Zarathustra* ('Thus Spake Zarathustra'), *Don Quixote* and *Ein Heldenleben* ('A Hero's Life'). Meanwhile Strauss was establishing his reputation as a conductor, directing the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra for a season and taking appointments in Munich and then at the opera in Berlin, where he later became Court Composer.

The new century brought a renewed attention to opera, a medium in which he had initially enjoyed no great success. *Salome*, performed in Dresden in 1905, was followed in 1909 by *Elektra*, with a libretto by the writer with whom he was to collaborate over the next

twenty years, Hugo von Hoffmannsthal. *Der Rosenkavalier* ('The Knight of the Rose'), a romantic opera set in the Vienna of Mozart, was staged at the Court Opera in Dresden in 1911, followed by ten further operas, ending with *Capriccio*, mounted at the Staatsoper in Munich in 1942.

It was unfortunate that, in the eyes of many, Strauss was compromised by his seeming acquiescence under the National Socialist Government that came to power in 1933, taking over from conductors threatened by the régime or from those, like Toscanini, who refused engagements under the prevailing circumstances. In particular his acceptance in 1933 of the position of President of the new *Reichsmusikkammer* established by Joseph Goebbels, with Furtwängler as Vice-President, brought later criticism and hostility, although Strauss's actions may be seen as defending his Jewish daughter-in-law and his own grandchildren from the obvious dangers that the Third Reich presented. After 1945 he withdrew for a time to Switzerland, returning to his own house at Garmisch only four months before his death in 1949.

Strauss completed his tone-poem for large orchestra, *Ein Heldenleben*, in 1898 and conducted the first performance on 3 March 1899 at a Museum Concert in Frankfurt. The work, which was dedicated to Willem Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra, had a varied reception as it was introduced to audiences. Critics in Berlin took matters personally and Hanslick in Vienna, who had never had anything good to say about symphonic poems, found pleasing respite from musical battle only in the singing of the composer's wife, Pauline de Ahna, clearly his better half. The daughter of General de Ahna, she had married Strauss in 1894 and something of her character is reflected in the new tone-poem. *Ein Heldenleben*, however unheroically Strauss may have

regarded himself, is autobiographical. Its six movements, intricately interwoven, provide what is essentially a single symphonic movement, incorporating a slow movement and a *scherzo*. The titles, later omitted by the composer, start with the introduction of the hero, whose strong theme opens the work. A love-theme is introduced, with a theme of hope and courage, leading to a third element, a stirring, martial theme, a first subject group. These are developed, with the final return of the principal theme. There follows a caricature of the hero's enemies, with the cackling *scherzo*-like passage of wind instruments. The hero's theme returns, now down-hearted, in a minor key and lacking its earlier exuberance, until a theme of victory quells the critical intervention. This transition leads to the second subject depicting the hero's companion. This is introduced by a solo violin, capricious and varied in what it has to offer, before joining the hero in a song of love, with critics now defeated and disappearing into the distance. Off-stage trumpets call the hero to battle in the equivalent of a development, and in the tumult the hero and love triumph over the enemies, their theme heard from the trumpet, to be banished in heroic victory. The hero's works of peace are heard in references to Strauss's earlier compositions, including themes from *Don Juan*, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, *Tod und Verklärung*, *Don Quixote*, the opera *Guntram* whose failure had brought him enemies, *Macbeth*, and the song *Traum durch die Dämmerung* (Dream in the Twilight), a comprehensive recapitulation. The last section, a final coda, depicts the hero's withdrawal from the world and fulfilment, with battles over, not in the pastoral simplicity that *Don Quixote* had attempted, as the *cor anglais* suggests, but now comforted by the love of his wife.

Strauss's *Capriccio*, described as *Konversationsstück für Musik* (Conversation Piece for Music), has a libretto by the composer and Clemens Krauss and is on a subject suggested by Stefan Zweig, now an exile from Germany. In London, Zweig had seen a copy of Casti's libretto for Salieri's opera of 1786, *Prima la musica poi le parole* (First the Music and Then the Words), the idea behind the

Strauss opera. *Capriccio* was first performed in Munich in 1942, the year of its completion. In a château near Paris, about the year 1775, the birthday of Countess Madeleine is being celebrated. Her interests tend towards music, but her brother, the Count, favours poetry and the actress Clairon. The entertainment to be given includes music by Flamand, a play by the poet Olivier and a theatrical piece by the whole company. Alone with the Countess, Olivier declares his love, while Flamand, returning with a setting of a sonnet translated from Ronsard by Olivier, in turn declares his own love for the Countess. It is the enthusiasm of the theatre director La Roche for the grandiose and spectacular in opera that leads Olivier and Flamand to collaborate on an opera, while the Countess herself is left at the end of the work still unable to decide between the poet and the composer, words or music.

Capriccio opens with a string sextet, a sonatina. The exposition is built from a series of short phrases of similar character. After a definite close on the dominant, the development starts with *tremolo* strings and thematic elements for the first violin and first viola. This part of the movement gently unwinds, until the return of the material of the exposition. Before the performance of the opera in October 1942, the *Sextet* was given a private performance at the house of the Gauleiter of Vienna, Baldur von Schirach, who had been of material assistance in helping Strauss and his family to retain possession of the house in Vienna they had been able, in happier times, to have built for them.

Keith Anderson

Ilkka Talvi



Finnish-born violinist Ilkka Talvi was initially self-taught and later studied with famous teachers in Helsinki, Vienna, Paris and in the US. Talvi has performed as soloist and in recital in many European countries, as well as in many U.S. cities. At the age of twenty he became a faculty member at the Sibelius Academy, Finland's leading conservatory. Talvi has made numerous recordings, many of which have been world premieres, including concertos and other works by Bach, Hindemith, Diamond, Albert, Klami, Piston, Creston and many others. Talvi has performed regularly as soloist in concertos by Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, Brahms, Hindemith, Shostakovich and Glazounov, to name a few. After immigrating to the US he worked for the motion picture and recording studios in Los Angeles and served as Principal in the L.A. Chamber Orchestra, before moving to Seattle in the 1980s. Talvi has served as concertmaster of the Mostly Mozart Festival, Malmö Symphony and Waterloo Festival as well as the Seattle Symphony and Seattle Opera. He currently teaches at the Seattle Pacific University and is concertmaster for the Rainier Symphony.

Gerard Schwarz



Gerard Schwarz serves as Music Director of the Eastern Music Festival and Conductor Laureate of the Seattle Symphony. A renowned interpreter of nineteenth-century German, Austrian and Russian repertoire in addition to contemporary American composers, Schwarz recently completed his final season as Music Director of the Seattle Symphony after an acclaimed 26 years. His previous positions as Music Director include New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and the New York Chamber Symphony. As a guest conductor he has worked with many of the world's finest orchestra and opera companies. His discography of over 350 releases showcases his collaborations with the Seattle Symphony, the Berlin Radio Symphony, The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic, the London Symphony Orchestra and L'Orchestre National de France, among others. His pioneering recordings of American symphonists Diamond, Hanson, Hovhaness, Piston and William Schumann have received high critical praise, as have his cycles of works by Brahms, Mahler, Rimsky-Korsakov, Robert Schumann, Shostakovich, Richard Strauss, Stravinsky and Wagner. Schwarz has received hundreds of honours and accolades including two Emmy Awards, 13 GRAMMY® nominations, six ASCAP Awards and numerous *Stereo Review* and *Ovation* Awards. He holds the Ditson Conductor's Award from Columbia University, was the first American named Conductor of the Year by *Musical America* and has received numerous honorary doctorates. The National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences gave Schwarz its first "IMPACT" lifetime achievement award.

Seattle Symphony

The Seattle Symphony, founded in 1903, has gained international prominence with more than 140 recordings, twelve GRAMMY® nominations, two Emmys and numerous other awards. Gerard Schwarz led the orchestra from 1985 to 2011, and is now Conductor Laureate. The Seattle Symphony is internationally recognized for its innovative programming and extensive recording history. The orchestra performs in one of the world's finest concert venues – the acoustically superb Benaroya Hall – in downtown Seattle. Under the leadership of Music Director Ludovic Morlot since September 2011, the Symphony is heard live from September through July by more than 315,000 people. For more information on the Seattle Symphony, visit www.seattlesymphony.org.

Autobiographical in content, Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* is one of a series of tone-poems, including *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Naxos 8.571215), in which he explored the utmost limits of extra-musical content in this form. The hero passes through love and adversity, confrontation, triumph in battle and fulfilment in a single, powerfully descriptive symphonic span. Gerard Schwarz's *Ein Heldenleben* has been acclaimed as "exciting and inspired" (*Gramophone*). The opera *Capriccio* is a romantic struggle to choose between words and music which opens with a gloriously bitter-sweet string sextet.


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Richard
STRAUSS
(1864-1949)

Ein Heldenleben, Op. 40, TrV 190*

44:16

1 Parts I-III

21:42

Der Held (The hero) – Des Helden
Widersacher (The hero's enemies)
– Des Helden Gefährtin
(The hero's companion)

(The hero's battlefield) – Des Helden
Friedenswerke (The hero's works
of peace) – Des Helden Weltflucht
und Vollendung (The hero's retreat
from the world and fulfilment)

2 Parts IV-VI

22:34

Des Helden Walstatt

Capriccio – Opera, Op. 85, TrV 279a

3 Sextet

13:22

Ilkka Talvi, Violin*
Seattle Symphony • Gerard Schwarz



Recorded on 22 May 1990 (*Ein Heldenleben*) at the Seattle Center Opera House, USA and
20 January 2009 (*Sextet*) at the Benaroya Hall, Seattle, USA

Executive Producer: Amelia S. Haygood • Recording Producer: Adam Stern
Recording Engineers: Andrew Dawson (*Ein Heldenleben*), Dmitriy Lipay (*Sextet*)
Associate Engineer: Al Swanson (*Ein Heldenleben*) • Assistant Engineer: Li Teo (*Ein Heldenleben*)
Booklet notes by Keith Anderson

Cover photo & inlay photo of Gerard Schwarz by Ben VanHouten
Publishers: Kalmus reprint (*Ein Heldenleben*), Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. (*Sextet*)
Ein Heldenleben previously released on Delos International