



THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA
FRANZ WELSER-MÖST

STRAUSS

RICHARD STRAUSS
THREE TONE POEMS

Macbeth

Don Juan

**Till Eulenspiegel's
Merry Pranks**

THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA
conducted by **FRANZ WELSER-MÖST**

*Recorded live in
Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Concert Hall
at Severance Music Center*

RICHARD STRAUSS
THREE TONE POEMS

MACBETH, Opus 23
Track 1 16:29

DON JUAN, Opus 20
Track 2 15:11

**TILL EULENSPIEGEL'S
MERRY PRANKS, Opus 28**
Track 3 14:05

High resolution stereo sound.

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TCO0004-D



born June 11, 1864
Munich, Germany

died September 8, 1949
Bavaria, Germany

Richard Strauss

Orchestral Mastery & Art

Richard Strauss's gift for touching our hearts and commenting on human behavior through music is peerless. In the three tone poems on this recording, he demonstrates his great skill as a master storyteller. He looks at the exuberance and weight of unbridled passion (*Don Juan*), at the consuming fire of ambition (*Macbeth*), and at the delightful tricks and slight-of-hand that humans, almost alone among earth's living creatures, understand and thrive upon as humor (*Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*).

In each, Strauss never overwrites. His orchestral mastery is extraordinary — and in perfect service to each subject, showing off not for the sake of doing so, but because that is the emotional storyline itself, just as he writes moments of tenderness, secretiveness, ardor, caring, and so forth. Of course, these scores can be over “interpreted” and played

simply for orchestral brilliance. But that, I have learned, misses the point and lessens the musical impact.

Strauss was a master of heartache, of yearnings, of drama and calm, comedy and tragedy. Of full-throated emotions across so many categories, including the little moments of everyday life, the small truths that overwhelm us sometimes, but are in actuality not important except in that moment of reality. All of these, Strauss's music manages with an unflinching mastery that quite often leaves me speechless and with a big smile on my face — not in laughter but in admiration for his many perfect touches of musical coloring and punctuation.

His music is always creatively focused on human thoughts and feelings. And, in fact, looking back through his long life, I would argue that the voice was Strauss's main instrument. In his youth, he wrote

many pieces, including a surprising number of songs, wrestling with how to balance meaning with melody and musical gestures. That some of his early successes were with orchestral tone poems does not contradict that he wrote music with a special understanding of the voice.

After an initial short period of learning, he wrote very naturally for the entire orchestra, those that breathe and drive musical lines by breath — singers, brass, woodwinds. And also for the strings and percussion, who must remember to keep breathing, and whose lines especially in Strauss's writing are human, where the breathing so precisely matches the musical phrasing.

Strauss composed songs throughout his long career, from his teenage years up to near the very end of his 85-year lifespan. He wrote operas, combining orchestral writing and voice, for the latter two-thirds

of his life. His earliest songs and his brilliant tone poems were, in many senses, how he prepared himself to write for operas.

Along with Mozart, Strauss is the one great classical composer who so ably wrote music across so many different genres and in varying styles. For me, in their hands, craft and artistry blend toward perfection.

A MASTER STORYTELLER

In the three tone poems on this album, Strauss honed his craft as a master of orchestral storytelling. Two became undisputed masterpieces in the repertoire of every symphony orchestra. While the first, *Macbeth* has had a mixed history.

Indeed, *Macbeth* is a more challenging work to perform. It took more time than usual in rehearsal for The Cleveland Orchestra and me to discover the underlying truths in this score, to find and connect its story-

line to the music itself, and to find the tempos that allow the music to flow and engage. Yet it was well worth the effort, and, in the end, I think we found how this dynamic, if sometimes elusive, work of art can make a telling impression.

Don Juan is much more well-known and admired. Yet, here, too, I believe it is important to see the unity in this work alongside the variety. For instance, as I discussed with the musicians of The Cleveland Orchestra, this tone poem, according to Strauss's own metronome markings, is really in a single tempo throughout, with some moments being slightly faster or others slightly slower. Don Juan's candle burns at a steady, intense rate, occasionally fanned or cooled. To work in performance, I believe that these differences of tempo should not be exaggerated.

The contrast between the storylines of each of these works is also telling, as Strauss works to portray three different sides of human nature. In *Till Eulenspiegel*, he balances with care both the good and the bad of his focal character's attributes, juxtaposing the humor of this tall-tale jokester with the many headaches he

brings to the victims of his schemes. Somehow, we feel it all. The fun and the fury, the humor amidst the chaos.

DRAMA and TRUTH

Beginning with early sketches for *Macbeth* in 1886, Strauss wrote eight tone poems over the next dozen years, from his mid-twenties to mid-thirties. These were very much Strauss's own self-directed apprenticeship in mastering orchestration and storytelling.

It did not take him long to reach perfection. We might easily say that *Aus Italien* is more a symphonic travelogue than a true tone poem, because only with *Macbeth* did he begin consciously to portray an actual storyline. He took *Macbeth* through three revisions and perhaps never quite got it right, but with *Don Juan* he announced his mastery. After which, his orchestral art flowed.

Strauss's tone poems were very much influenced by Franz Liszt's pioneering work of this form — and especially in how Liszt adapted different classical forms as the basic structure for such works. And although Strauss's father disapproved of Liszt's modernisms, the younger

Strauss found the tone poems inspiring, embracing Liszt's reach and experimentation in mixing together emotional weight and classical form.

In his tone poems, Strauss examines and portrays both humanity and philosophy, emotions as well as thought. He was less telling a story, of Don Juan, for instance, but rather telling the emotional impact of Don Juan's path in life — the exhilaration and frustration, the disappointment and personal cost of being Don Juan. Strauss understood our emotional lives and recreated this inner churn in music.

From the trio on this album, Strauss went on to write four more tone poems before turning his attentions almost fully to opera: *Death and Transfiguration*, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, *Don Quixote*, and *Ein Heldenleben* or "A Heroic Life." Followed eventually — and in the midst of and between his operatic work — by *Symphonia domestica* and *Alpine Symphony*.

With the exception of *Domestica*, which I believe is often misunderstood by performers and audiences alike, the others have also become repertoire staples. Yet they are too often mistreated as hackneyed

musical warhorses — performed with overwrought virtuosity, instead of as the masterpieces of nuance, drama, and understanding that they each offer up.

Strauss himself, later in life, while making a recording with the Vienna Philharmonic, told the musicians to "play my music like Mozart." What he meant was not to play it in an old-fashioned way, but to openly embrace the nuance and dialogue within the music itself, to let the music speak for itself. There is no reason, in Strauss — or in Mozart — to interpret. When Strauss wanted a *rubato*, he wrote it in. When he marked a phrase *espressivo*, it doesn't mean louder, it means he wants that line to be heard, but not to overpower everything else.

When performing Strauss's music, it is important to remember all of this, to keep the classical forms in mind that Strauss was working with, to be open to his ideas as they are, on paper in the score. This music is not about wallowing in a big sound, but in working to ensure transparency between its many elements. There is a fine line when too much power and strength become vulgar.

Domestica is one of my particular favorites, and is a magnificent

learning experience for any orchestra or audience who is willing to accept it at face value, as a deft and humorous portrayal of human life and emotion, rather than the self-absorbed, egotistical diatribe it is too often performed to be.

The sheer melody and virtuosity in the writing of *Ein Heldenleben* has left that great work less injured by the accusation of egotistical self-portrait — yet how many masterpieces of visual art and literature are also self-portraits, admired and celebrated for their mastery and not for their self-centered focus?!

I believe that Strauss's musical self-portraits should be given the same latitude as the works of great visual and literary artists, as opportunities to understand, and laugh with him, at the very human man he presents in his music — and not ridiculed for any lack of perspective. In part, because his mastery in such storytelling is exactly what allowed him to write the emotionally affecting and fully real humans that inhabit his greatest operas. His self-portraits, when examined, show that he was not celebrating himself, but making fun of his own self-consciousness.

In this same vein, it is vital that everyone — audiences and performers alike — always remember that there is more to *Also sprach Zarathustra* than the opening three minutes. The entire tone poem is a musical whole, distilling for us Strauss's emotional view of some of Nietzsche's profound philosophical thinking, the intensity of his arguments about life's truths, the actual value of existence, of being alive. Strauss does not present this philosophy directly, but as a series and set of feelings, of, as I often say about Beethoven's most profound writing, as "philosophy turned into sound." It touches us not by explaining the philosophy, but by showing us the emotional mindset of these philosophical ideals. It is philosophy and politics and humanity itself. It is all the good that we can do as a species, filled with emotional excitement, caring, and well-being, for ourselves and the world.

OBSERVING HUMANITY

The older I become, the more I appreciate Strauss's unique and well-tuned ability to comment on life through music, to highlight the truths of being alive. His knowledge and understanding of music — of its history and its emotional powers —



is almost unmatched. To this you can add his keen understanding of human emotions, of human thinking and intellectual philosophies, and his mastery in telling stories in music.

That Strauss's musical works are so lifelike and moving is a testament to his skills not just as a composer, but as an observer and questioner of what it means and feels to be human.

—Franz Welsler-Möst

STRAUSS

TONE POEMS

Listed in order of publication and assigned opus number.

Aus Italien [*From Italy*]

Orchestral Fantasy in Four Movements, Opus 16 — 1886

Don Juan

Tone Poem after Lenau, Opus 20 — 1888-89

Macbeth

Tone Poem after Shakespeare's Tragedy, Opus 23
— 1886-88, revised 1889-91

Death and Transfiguration

Tone Poem for Large Orchestra, Opus 24 — 1888-89

Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, Opus 28 — 1894-95

Also sprach Zarathustra

[*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*], Opus 30 — 1896

Don Quixote, Opus 35 — 1896-97

Ein Heldenleben [*A Heroic Life*], Opus 40 — 1897-98

Symphonia Domestica, Opus 53 — 1902-03

An Alpine Symphony, Opus 64 — 1911-15

STRAUSS

Macbeth, Opus 23

Tone Poem after Shakespeare's Tragedy

composed 1886-88, revised 1889-1891



RICHARD STRAUSS'S professional career began in 1885 at the celebrated Meiningen Court Orchestra as assistant conductor to Hans von Bülow. From there, he soon moved to the Munich Court Opera, where his father was principal horn (Franz Strauss was among the most acclaimed orchestral horn players of the era).

Rapidly widening his skills in orchestration, the younger Strauss composed *Aus Italien*, a picturesque suite of four symphonic movements recalling his Italian trip the year before. There followed *Macbeth*, the first of what was to be a series of nine tone poems (see complete list on page 6). Although Strauss started *Macbeth* first, his next tone poem, *Don Juan*, was completed more quickly, premiered to acclaim, and published first — thus earning a lower opus number.

Having been brought up to compose such things as violin sonatas and

string quartets in impeccably classical forms, Strauss turned in his twenties toward the literary potential of — and musical freedom within — the ideas set out by Franz Liszt's pioneering tone poems. These were works that combined programmatic storylines or depictions with musical forms and formats.

With *Macbeth*, Strauss was still finding his way, unsure how far he could successfully go in depicting characters, events, and emotions in the stories he chose. Which is why, while *Macbeth* is a powerful portrait of the two main players in the drama, it is not a blow-by-blow of Shakespeare's narrative. There are no witches, for example, and no ghosts. King Duncan is represented by a big, striding theme at the very beginning, which stands more for the idea of kingship than for that particular king himself. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have their own themes,

which merge when their shared ambitions work to the same end.

It should perhaps be noted that Shakespeare, the English bard, became as well-known and revered in German-speaking lands as in his native tongue. Not just for his great stories, but for his theatrical mastery. A series of well-crafted and poetic German texts for most of the plays of the Shakespeare canon were created in the first half of the 19th century. Credited to August Wilhelm Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck, a number of other authors were involved (including at least two women). These standardized German translations were oft-performed throughout central Europe — and how Strauss knew *Macbeth*. They are used even today, by German readers and for German stage presentations.

Strauss's *Macbeth* is a true symphonic poem, for it condenses a literary source into a single orchestral

movement. His model might well have been Liszt's (or Tchaikovsky's) *Hamlet* or one of the many symphonic poems coming out of Russia or France at around the same time. That said, the vast expansion of Strauss's orchestral imagination shocked both Bülow and Franz Strauss. Bülow even advised the young composer to hold back by not concluding the work with a triumphal march for Macduff. Strauss's first revision provided a different, somber ending, and yet another second revision, first performed in Berlin in 1892, was wildly successful — and helped launch Strauss on the path that led to the brilliant succession of tone poems and, eventually, to a string of varied and imaginative operas. (In the operas, Strauss finally combined all his interests together: voice, orchestra, and human drama.)

With the theme of kingship firmly stated at the opening, and recurring throughout the work, Strauss conforms to classical sonata form in presenting his first group of themes to represent Macbeth himself, and a second group, starting with a theme in the upper winds, standing for Lady

Macbeth. At this point, Strauss wrote her lines in the score, beginning:

*Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits
in thine ear,
And chastise with the valour
of my tongue
All that impede thee
from the golden round.*

Strauss is at his unequalled best when building climaxes from a complex group of themes, and this is a repeated procedure in *Macbeth*. The intricacy of his orchestral writing and the wide range of orchestral colors at his command (he includes a part for the rare bass trumpet) create superb dramatic tension. At one summit, the theme of kingship is forcefully heard, announcing the arrival of King Duncan. Later, the music is overwhelmed by the fearful knocking that terrifies Macbeth:

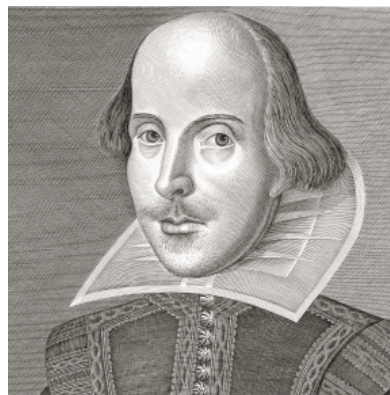
*Wake Duncan with thy knocking;
I would thou couldst.*

Ultimately, the man Macbeth is brought down by his fateful entanglement in his wife's wiles. Musically,

the terrifying entry of tam-tam and snare drum marks his downfall. At the very end, the triumph of Macduff and enthronement of Malcolm are briefly alluded to, but it is the tragic fate of Macbeth himself that we take from the closing bars.

—Hugh Macdonald © 2022

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His books include works about Beethoven,
Berlioz, Bizet, and Scriabin.*



MACBETH AT A GLANCE

Strauss began sketching a musical work based on Shakespeare's Macbeth as early as 1886, completing the tone poem in 1888, and then revising it and conducting the premiere at the Weimer Hofkapelle in Weimar, Germany, on October 13, 1890. A later revision was first performed by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra on February 29, 1892, again under the composer's direction.

This tone poem runs about 15 minutes in performance. Strauss scored it for 3 flutes (third doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, english horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, bass trumpet, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, snare drum, tamtam, cymbals) and strings.

The Cleveland Orchestra presented this work for the first time in October 2021, conducted by Franz Welser-Möst.

Recorded live in Mandel Concert Hall at Severance Music Center in Cleveland, Ohio, October 7, 8, 9, 14, and 17, 2021.



STRAUSS

Don Juan, Opus 20

Tone Poem after Lenau

composed 1888-89

JUST EXACTLY who is Strauss's tone poem *Don Juan* about? The mesmerizing, hyper-masculine seducer projected from tale and legend? Or perhaps . . . was it Strauss himself?

Much has been speculated about the autobiographical nature of Strauss's *Don Juan*. For starters, the composer's youthful affair with Dora Wihan — the wife of the Munich Court Orchestra's principal cellist — was evidently still burning brightly enough to be in constant danger of discovery. Add to this his parents' continuing worries, expressed quite openly in letters to their son (and reflected even more explicitly in letters from friends to father Franz and mother Josephine) over Richard's less-than-discreet dalliances with a number of young women in several of the towns he visited as a guest conductor. And, most poetic of all, Strauss first met his future wife,

Pauline de Ahna, in the fall of 1887, just as (by some accounts) he was beginning work on *Don Juan*.

All of this, of course, provides rich material for biographers, and lively reading for concert audiences. But the truth is neither so neatly certain nor so picturesque. For although the 24-year-old Strauss leapt to full artistic maturity with *Don Juan* — much as Don Juan the man himself leaps fully to life in the opening phrase of the tone poem — the “autobiographical” nature of this work (unlike that of several of the composer's later tone poems) is largely the wishful thinking of over-romantic writers.

No one really knows when Strauss conceived the idea of a tone poem about Don Juan or when he began writing it. Strauss himself, some twenty years after the fact, stated that “*during a . . . journey to Venice in May 1888 I invented the first themes of Don*

Juan in the courtyard of the monastery of San Antonio in Padua.” This would place the start of composition at least nine months after his first meeting with Pauline, although perhaps still within a timeframe for his interest in her to manifest itself musically. Some biographers, however, have suggested (with very little hard evidence) that Strauss began sketching the new work during the autumn of 1887, quite soon after meeting Pauline. This “early start” is suggested in order to give the young composer plenty of time to finish such a complex score by the following autumn, when he played through the entire piece (on the piano) for the Weimar Opera's conducting staff. We should not, however, downplay the kind of speed that youthful energy and newly-ignited creativity can produce. Only a half-dozen years later, Strauss masterfully completed his *Till Eulenspiegel* tone poem in less

than six months.

Prior to, and even during his early courtship of Pauline, however, Strauss had his eye on another woman, and pursued a relationship that caused some concern among those around him. Yet, more than a century later, despite many fairly open references in various letters and journals, it is almost impossible to judge just how far any of Strauss's youthful romances may have gone, in the words of Strauss biographer Norman Del Mar, “*beyond the point considered respectable by the society of those days.*”

That journalists and music critics have from the first been able to point out graphic portrayal of specific sexual acts within the score of *Don Juan* tells us far more about those writers (or human nature in general) than about Strauss's youthful experiences. Although, of course, Strauss very much admitted to such depictions in later

works, including such as the opera *Rosenkavalier's* brief orchestral opening. Strauss's experience and feelings and yearnings as a man did, of course, help him understand and portray Don Juan as a man. But autobiography in music was not yet the composer's intention.

Strauss left us almost no "programmatic" explanation for *Don Juan* beyond some lines of poetry he copied from an unfinished lyric poem by Nikolaus Lenau. Lenau was a minor Austrian poet from the early 19th century who, it is interesting to note, visited the United States in the early 1830s and lived briefly in Ohio while trying to capture a sense of the "frontier freedom" that this country symbolized in Romantic European circles. Disillusioned by the gritty reality of American frontier life, he returned to Europe and tried to depict, through his imagination via his writing, the kind of full-bodied poetic life he had been unable to experience in person.

At the end, Lenau's lines about Don Juan reflect a disillusion with life's realities, not unlike the poet's own experiences. His is not the indiscriminate Don Juan of popular legend. The character had, in fact, evolved a long way from its 17th-century Spanish origins and been infused with real

emotions and regrets. No longer a callous seducer merely expanding his catalog of sexual conquests with little regard for the society around him (an image fixed in many minds by Mozart's great tragicomic opera *Don Giovanni*), Don Juan had become — through Lord Byron and other Romantic poets such as Lenau — a man much more aware of the pain he causes, to himself if not to others, and to the emotional emptiness of his pursuits. For Lenau and Strauss, Don Juan was not ignoring society but trying desperately to find how his life's incessant desires fit within it. Satisfying his lust was, in many senses, merely his way of trying to find love — successful in body but not in spirit.

Strauss chose thirty-two lines from Lenau's unfinished poem to include at the front of the printed musical score (see page 24-25). Cloaked in thick Romantic longing, these passages help clarify the composer's intention — not to tell the physical story of Don Juan leaping from bed to bed, but rather to portray the story's inner mental drama. The music forcefully and painfully shares with listeners both the exhilaration and ultimate disillusionment in one man's search for love. At the work's end, it is not a physical death we hear, but the psychologi-

cal comprehension of total defeat, to the point that physical life no longer matters. Don Juan is disillusioned, defeated, and filled with despair.

The premiere of *Don Juan* in November 1889 catapulted Richard Strauss into the world's musical headlines and, in the words of Del Mar, established "Strauss once and for all as the most important composer to have emerged in Germany since Wagner." The verdict was just, because — along with his other short tone poem, *Till Eulenspiegel* (each clocks in at about 15 minutes) — *Don Juan* stands as Strauss's most perfect creation in the form. Not a note is wasted, not a phrase overwrought. The formal structure of the music is beautifully constructed without intruding on the work's seemingly improvisational nature. Contrasting sections meld seamlessly into one another, and the whole piece ends well before any musical ideas might grow tiresome. Perfection of this sort comes all too rarely — for composers, performers, and concertgoers alike.

—Eric Sellen © 2022

Following twenty-eight years as program book editor, Eric Sellen is now Editor Emeritus with The Cleveland Orchestra.

DON JUAN AT A GLANCE

Strauss wrote most of his tone poem Don Juan during 1888 while also working on Macbeth. He may have begun sketching parts of Don Juan as early as the fall of 1887. He completed the orchestration in 1889 and conducted the work's premiere on November 11, 1889, at the Weimar Hopfkapelle. Published in 1890, Don Juan is dedicated to Strauss's friend Ludwig Thuille.

Don Juan runs about 15 minutes in performance. Strauss scored it for 2 flutes, piccolo (doubling third flute), 2 oboes, english horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (triangle, cymbals, bells), harp, and strings.

The Cleveland Orchestra first presented Don Juan in April 1922 and has played it often since that time. The Orchestra previously recorded this work for commercial release conducted by George Szell (1957), Lorin Maazel (1979), and Vladimir Ashkenazy (1989).

Recorded live in Mandel Concert Hall at Severance Music Center in Cleveland, Ohio, October 7, 8, and 9, 2021.

from Don Juan

by Nikolaus Lenau (1802-1850)

Strauss was inspired to write his tone poem about Don Juan after seeing a performance of the play Don Juans Ende by Paul Heyse (1830-1914). Heyse's play, in turn, was based on an unfinished dramatic poem written by Nikolaus Lenau in 1844. In the first publication of the tone poem, Strauss asked that the three excerpts shown on these pages, selected from three different sections of Lenau's poem, be printed in the score.

Den Zauberkreis, den
unermesslich weiten,
Von vielfach reizend
schönen Weiblichkeiten
Moth' ich durchziehn im
Sturmer des Genusses,
Am Mund der letzten
sterben einese Kusses
O Freund, durch alle Räume
möcht' ich fliegen,
Wo eine Schönheit blüht,
hinknien vor jede,
Und, war's auch nur
für Augenblicke, siegen.

*The magic circle,
expanding forever —
to encounter again and again
beautiful womanhood
would I journey through
storms of pleasure,
at her mouth at last
to die from a kiss.
Oh, Friend, to any and
every place would I fly,
wherever a beauty blooms,
to kneel before each,
and, if only
for a moment, conquer.*

Ich fliehe Überdruss
und Lusterillattung,
Erhalte frisch ill Dienste illich
des Schönen,
Die einzle kränkend
schwarill' ich für die Gattung.
Der Odell einer Frau,
heut Frühlingsduft,
Druckt morgen rnich

*I escape from boredom
and the cessation of pleasure,
I refresh myself in service
to beauty,
the individual woman suffers
as I revel in the entire species.
The breath of a woman,
today like the smell of spring,
may stifle me tomorrow —*

vielleicht wie Kerkerluft.
Wenn wechselnd
ich mit meiner Liebe wandle
Im weiten Kreis
der schönen Frauen,
Ist meine Lieb' an jeder eine andre;
Nicht aus Ruinen will ich Tempel bauen.
Ja! Leidenschaft ist immer nur die neue;
Sie lässt sich nicht von der
zu jener bringen,
Sie kann nur sterben hier,
dort neu entspringen,
Und kennt sie sich,
so weiss sie nicht von Reue.
Wie jede Schönheit einzig in der Welt,
So ist es auch die Lieb',
der sie gefällt.
Hinaus und fort
nach immer neuen Siegen.
So lang der
Jugend Feuerpulse fliegen!

*like the air in a dungeon.
When, always changeable
but loving, I travel
through the wide circle
of beautiful women,
my love is different for each;
Amidst no ruins will I make a temple.
Indeed! Passion is always and only renewed;
It cannot be moved from
one to another,
it can only be expended here,
to spring anew elsewhere.
And it does not recognize itself,
it knows nothing of regret.
As each beauty is unique in the world,
so also is my love for each
one specially made.
Hither and yon then,
always to new conquests!
For however long the
fiery pulse of youth continues!*

Es war ein schöner Sturm,
der mich getrieben,
Er hat vertobt und Stille ist geblieben.
Scheintot ist alles Wunschen,
alles Hoffen;
Vielleicht ein Blitz aus Höh'n,
die ich verachtet.
Hat tödlich meine Liebeskraft getroffen,
Und plötzlich ward die Welt mir
wüst, umnachtet;
Vielleicht auch nict;
— der Brennstoff ist verzehrt,
Und kal und dunkel ward es
auf dem Herd.

*It was an exhilarating storm
that urged me on,
it is depleted, and stillness now remains.
Lifeless shadows are all my wishes,
all my hopes;
Perhaps a lightning bolt from on High,
which I despise,
has fatally consumed my power to love,
and suddenly the world for me is now
a pointless wasteland;
Or perhaps not;
— my fuel is consumed,
and inside I am cold and dark
by the hearth.*

STRAUSS

Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, Opus 28

[*Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*]

composed 1894-95



20th century drawing of Till Eulenspiegel on horseback — with his Owl [Eulen] and Mirror [Spiegel] or "shiny plate."

IN THE SERIES of symphonic tone poems that followed Strauss's "conversion" to the path laid out in that form by Franz Liszt, *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks* is fourth, following *Macbeth*, *Don Juan*, and *Death and Transfiguration*. In many ways, across the nine such works he created (not counting the earlier four-movement symphonic travelogue *Aus Italien*), each tone poem became longer and more complex than the previous one. Each called for a bigger orchestra — requiring Strauss to keep learning, not just how to congregate the loud and dense sonorities possible from such a large ensemble, but also how to create transparency and focus across the assembled instrumentation. The last of the series, *Alpine Symphony*, finished in 1915, runs nearly an hour in performance and requires massive forces including an army of offstage horns.

Till Eulenspiegel was completed in 1895, when Strauss was assistant conductor at the Munich opera, having already established a reputation as one of Germany's leading conductors alongside his position as the most advanced composer of his time. He was busy and productive in both roles, and the energy that propelled him is clearly to be heard in this work. He later boasted he could portray almost anything in music (even a "soup spoon"), and the tone poems' subjects range from the contemplation of death and eastern philosophy to the humorous episodes of Till Eulenspiegel's adventurous, short life.

Till "Owlglass," in ancient German lore, is a charming, heroic villain — or man of the people — who gets away with a series of pranks until the law finally catches up with him.

The real Till is believed to have lived in the Germanic city of Braunschweig (or Brunswick) in the mid-14th century and to have died a victim of the Black Death. His life was the subject of many tales told for generations, and became an early subject popularized through books with the inventing of the printing press. He is said to have been apprenticed to many trades and to have played tricks on the wise men and leaders of the city. Such victims of his practical jokes, often humiliated or simply angry at being duped, forced Till to move from city to city.

For his tone poem, Strauss picked a number of episodes from the many recorded in ancient accounts and presented them "*in Rondeau-form*," which contributes a joke of Strauss's own — because the piece is not by any means in traditional rondo

form, even though, like rondos, it has a series of non-recurring episodes.

Before the action begins, we learn that Till is an endearing character from the sweet phrase delicately presented by the violins:



But the solo horn's tricky rhythms tell us that he's also a slippery individual, intent on setting off to have some fun. The real Till — clever and complicated — is revealed by a squeaky clarinet, landing on a teasing chord for four oboes. The endearing smile we heard at the beginning was only a mask:



For a while, Till just saunters along, looking for something to amuse himself with, as the orchestra indulges a variety of possible scenarios for fun, passing his theme back and forth and around the stage. Suddenly, Till strides into the town marketplace and, with a heavy cymbal clash and a noisy rattle, he overturns the tradesmen's

stalls and runs off, leaving havoc behind.

Cautiously peeping out from his hiding place, Till decides to play being the preacher, dressed as a priest. The music is solemn (rather than holy). A series of slithering chords in the brass represents his alarm at contemplating the fearful punishments meted out to those who mock religion, and so, with a solo violin *glissando* from the top of its range, Till escapes and prepares himself for his next adventure.

This time he is to play the cavalier, ready to trap any pretty girl that passes. Swooning phrases fall from his lips, and he seems to fall genuinely in love — only to be rejected by a girl who sees through the imposture.

For a short while, he fumes with rage, and then forgets the whole episode by taking up with a group of argumentative professors (played by the bassoons). The discussion gets more and more intense, with Till's teasing contributions causing them to turn on him in fury. A demonic trill on the "four-oboe" aptly notes his predicament, from which he escapes with the jauntiest little tune, like a cheeky grimace.

From this point, Strauss left no record of particular adventures he had

in mind, but instead leads the music round to a recapitulation that brings back the opening horn solo. All the themes are heard again in increasingly dense combinations. Till is surely finding himself in increasingly hot water, and the law is bound to catch up with him sooner or later.

When the solemn preacher's melody is heard on the full brass (with extra horns and trumpets as an option), the game is finally up for this "hero." A snare drum supports the solemn deliberations of his judges.

The slithering brass chords tell us that punishment is due, and two brutal notes on trombones, horns, and bassoons represent Till's fate on the gallows. But his spirit is not dead, and in the people's memory Till Eulenspiegel wins a new smile, even a guffaw. . . and the stage is set for retellings of evermore boastful and amusing tales. Onward and forever, finding (or creating) humor in everything good or bad, important or trifling.

—Hugh Macdonald © 2022

TILL EULENSPIEGEL AT A GLANCE

Strauss began writing Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks in late 1894, and completed the score in May 1895. Franz Wüllner conducted the world premiere on November 5, 1895, in Cologne. The work received its United States premiere just ten days later, with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Strauss dedicated the published score to Anton Seidl.

This tone poem runs about 15 minutes in performance. Strauss scored it for piccolo, 3 flutes, 3 oboes, english horn, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns (4 more ad libitum, "if desired"), 3 trumpets (plus 3 more ad libitum), 3 trombones, tuba, percussion (snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, ratchet), timpani, and strings.

The Cleveland Orchestra first performed Till Eulenspiegel in December 1923, conducted by Nikolai Sokoloff. It has been performed frequently since then, in performances by all the Orchestra's music directors, and on tour domestically and internationally.

Recorded live in Mandel Concert Hall at Severance Music Center in Cleveland, Ohio, October 7, 8, and 9, 2021.

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Listing as of February 2022.

This roster lists the fulltime members of The Cleveland Orchestra. The number and seating of musicians onstage varies depending on the piece being performed.

Seating within strings sections rotates on a periodic basis.

About the Orchestra

One of the few major American orchestras founded by a woman, The Cleveland Orchestra's inaugural concert took place in December 1918, at a time of renewed optimism and progressive community ideas. By the middle of the century, decades of growth and sustained effort — along with its own concert hall — had turned the ensemble into one of the most admired around the world.

Under the leadership of Franz Welser-Möst since 2002, The Cleveland Orchestra continues to extend its artistry and musical abilities, and remains one of the most sought-after performing ensembles in the world. Year after year the ensemble exemplifies extraordinary artistic excellence, creative programming, and community engagement. In recent years, *The New York Times* has called Cleveland “the best in America” for its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion, “virtually flawless,” and “one of the finest ensembles in the country (if not the world).”

A long history of strong community support from across the ensemble's home region continues to drive the Orchestra forward and

has provided remarkable energy and focus throughout the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic. New initiatives for audience growth and community service have been launched in recent years, including new technological infrastructure and capabilities to capture the Orchestra's unique artistry and the musical achievements of the Welser-Möst and Cleveland Orchestra partnership. Among these is a new streaming service called Adella (named after the ensemble's founder, Adella Prentiss Hughes) and a flagship series of streaming concerts, launched in 2020, called *In Focus*.

The past decade has seen an increasing number of young people attending concerts, bringing fresh attention to The Cleveland Orchestra's legendary sound and committed programming. A series of annual opera presentations has also showcased the ensemble's unsurpassed artistry and collaborative work ethic. Productions have included Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* (2019), Debussy's *Pelléas and Mélisande* (May 2017), a doublebill of Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin* and *Bluebeard's Castle* (April 2016), and an innovative presentation of Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* (May 2014,

with encore performances in Cleveland and Europe in 2017).

The partnership with Franz Welser-Möst marks its 20th year with the 2021-22 season and has earned The Cleveland Orchestra acclaim around the world, including a series of residencies at the Musikverein in Vienna, the first of its kind by an American orchestra. The Orchestra's 100th season in 2017-18 featured two international tours, concluding with the presentation on three continents of Welser-Möst's *Pro-metheus Project* featuring Beethoven symphonies and overtures presented in May and June 2018, at home in Cleveland, in Vienna's Musikverein, and in Tokyo's Suntory Hall.

The Cleveland Orchestra has a long and distinguished recording and broadcast history. A series of DVDs (available through Clasart Classics) and CD recordings under the direction of Mr. Welser-Möst continues to add to an extensive and widely-praised catalog of audio recordings made during the tenures of the ensemble's earlier music directors. In 2020, it launched

its own recording label to great fanfare and praise, and also created a brand-new series of streaming broadcasts for audiences at home during the pandemic.

Seven music directors — Nikolai Sokoloff, Artur Rodziński, Erich Leinsdorf, George Szell, Lorin Maazel, Christoph von Dohnányi, and Franz Welser-Möst — have guided and shaped the ensemble's growth and sound since its founding in 1918.

Through concerts at home and on tour, radio broadcasts and a catalog of acclaimed recordings, The Cleveland Orchestra is heard today by a broad and growing group of fans around the world. For more information, visit clevelandorchestra.com.



PHOTO BY ROGER MASTROIANI

Franz Welser-Möst



Franz Welser-Möst is among today's most distinguished conductors. The 2021-22 season marks his twentieth year as music director of The Cleveland Orchestra. With the future of this acclaimed partnership extended to 2027, he will become the longest-serving musical leader in the ensemble's history. *The New York Times* has declared Cleveland under Welser-Möst's direction to be "America's most brilliant orchestra," praising its virtuos-

ity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion.

With Welser-Möst, The Cleveland Orchestra has been praised for its inventive programming, its ongoing support for new musical works, and for its innovative work in presenting semi-staged and staged operas. An imaginative approach to juxtaposing newer and older works has opened new dialogue and fresh insights for musicians and audiences alike. The Orchestra has also been hugely successful in fostering a new and, notably, a young audience. To date, the Orchestra and Welser-Möst have been showcased around the world in nineteen international tours together. In 2020, despite shutdowns caused by the global pandemic, the ensemble launched its own recording label — and new streaming broadcast performances — to continue and extend sharing their artistry globally.

In addition to his commitment to Cleveland, Mr. Welser-Möst enjoys a particularly close and productive relationship with the Vienna Philharmonic as a guest conductor. He has been selected three times to conduct their celebrated New Year's Concert,

and regularly leads the orchestra in subscription concerts in Vienna, as well as on tours globally. Highlights of appearances in recent seasons include performances of Strauss's *Die Aegyptische Helena* at Teatro alla Scala, as well as concerts with the New York Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. He is a regular guest at the Salzburg Festival, where his work leading a series of opera performances has been widely admired. These have included *Rusalka*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Fidelio*, *Die Liebe der Danae*, Aribert Reimann's *Lear*, and Strauss's *Salome* and *Elektra*. At the 2022 Salzburg Festival, he leads performances of Puccini's *Il Trittico* and the Camerata Salzburg in a program of music by Schubert.

From 2010 to 2014, Franz Welser-Möst served as general music director of the Vienna State Opera. His partnership with the company featured a wide-ranging repertoire, including a series of critically-praised new productions. Mr. Welser-Möst had earlier led the Zurich Opera across a decade-long tenure, conducting more than forty new productions.

Franz Welser-Möst's recordings and videos have won major international awards and honors. With The Cleveland Orchestra, his recordings include a number of DVDs on the Clasart Classic label, featuring live performances of five of Bruckner's symphonies and a multi-DVD set of major works by Brahms. A number of his Salzburg opera productions, including *Rosenkavalier*, have been released internationally on DVD by Unitel.

As part of the 2020 Salzburg Festival, Mr. Welser-Möst was given the festival's Ruby Pin and the Salzburg Badge of Honor. In 2019, he was awarded the Gold Medal in the Arts by the Kennedy Center International Committee on the Arts. His other honors include The Cleveland Orchestra's Distinguished Service award, two Cleveland Arts Prize citations, the Vienna Philharmonic's "Ring of Honor" for his personal and artistic relationship with the ensemble, recognition from the Western Law Center for Disability Rights, honorary membership in the Vienna Singverein, and the Kilenyi Medal from the Bruckner Society of America.

Photo by Julia Wesely

Home of The Cleveland Orchestra

Mandel Concert Hall at Severance Music Center



Hailed among the world's most beautiful concert halls when it opened as Severance Hall in 1931, Severance Music Center has served as home to The Cleveland Orchestra for over ninety years. Its famed acoustics have helped shape the Orchestra's renowned sound and refined performance style. The building was named to honor John Long Severance (president of the Orchestra's board of trustees, 1921-1936) and his wife, Elisabeth, who donated most of the money for its construction.

Designed by Cleveland's Walker & Weeks, the building's elegant Georgian exterior was constructed to harmonize with the classical architecture of the surrounding University Circle neighborhood. The interior of the building reflects a combination of design styles, including Art Deco, Egyptian Revival, Classicism, and Modernism.

An extensive renovation and expansion of the facility was completed

in January 2000, including careful enhancements to the clarity and warmth of the 2,000-seat concert hall's acclaimed acoustics, a project designed by David M. Schwartz Architects and Jaffe Holden Scarborough acousticians.

More recently, the main performance space has been augmented with a state-of-the-art robotic video camera system to capture and create a new generation of streaming programming. In 2021, the concert space was named in recognition of a generous grant from the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation, whose gift is funding the video equipment outfitting along with other initiatives to further The Cleveland Orchestra's ongoing success and to expand its reach for audiences around the world in the 21st century.

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