



Richard STRAUSS

Don Juan

Richard Georg Strauss (11 June 1864 – 8 September 1949) was a leading German composer of the late Romantic and early modern eras. He is known for his operas, which include *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Elektra*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *Salome*; his Lieder, especially his *Four Last Songs*; his tone poems, including *Don Juan*, *Death and Transfiguration*, *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, *Ein Heldenleben*, *Symphonia Domestica*, and *An Alpine Symphony*; and other instrumental works such as *Metamorphosen* and his Oboe Concerto. Strauss was also a prominent conductor in Western Europe and the Americas, enjoying quasi-celebrity status as his compositions became standards of orchestral and operatic repertoire. Strauss, along with Gustav Mahler, represents the late flowering of German Romanticism after Richard Wagner, in which pioneering subtleties of orchestration are combined with an advanced harmonic style.

Don Juan, Op. 20, is a tone poem in E major for large orchestra written by the German composer Richard Strauss in 1888. It is singled out by Carl Dahlhaus as a "musical symbol of fin-de-siècle modernism", particularly for the "breakaway mood" of its opening bars. The premiere of *Don Juan* took place on 11 November 1889 in Weimar, where Strauss served as Court Kapellmeister; he conducted the orchestra of the Weimar Opera. The work, composed when Strauss was only twenty-four years old, became an international success and established his reputation. In comments written two days after the premiere, Strauss said, "Well then – *Don Juan* had a great success, it sounded wonderful and went very well. It unleashed a storm of applause rather unusual for Weimar.

The Don Juan legend originated in Renaissance-era Spain. Strauss's tone poem is based on *Don Juans Ende*, a play derived from an unfinished 1844 retelling of the tale by poet Nikolaus Lenau. Strauss reprinted three excerpts from the play in his score. In Lenau's rendering, Don Juan's promiscuity springs from his determination to find the ideal woman. Despairing of ever finding her, he ultimately surrenders to melancholy and wills his own death. Performances of the work last around sixteen minutes. Excerpts from *Don Juan* are staples of professional orchestral auditions due to the numerous technical and musical demands on each instrument.