



Richard Strauss: An Owner's Manual (Unlocking the Masters)

David Hurwitz

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The life and music of Richard Strauss (1864-1949) span what was arguably the most turbulent period in human history, encompassing the Franco-Prussian War, the unification of Germany, and two world wars. He was one of the very last composers to have started his career in service to the old European aristocracy, but near the end of his life, the continent lay in shambles, and he faced financial ruin even as he remained Germany's greatest living composer. Virtually from the day they were written, Strauss's tone poems from the late nineteenth century—works such as *Don Juan*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, and *Death and Transfiguration*—have been repertory standards. So have the operas *Salome*, *Elektra*, and *Der Rosenkavalier*. And yet a tremendous quantity of very good music, both early and late, has only recently come to the attention of musicians and music lovers alike. This owner's manual, accompanied by a full-length CD, surveys all the major works with orchestra: symphonies, concertos, tone poems, operas, ballets, suites, and songs. Many of them will be new even to listeners familiar with the popular pieces, part of a vast legacy of immaculately crafted, beautiful music that deserves to be rediscovered and treasured.

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