

Richard Strauss

BORN 1864, Munich, Germany. **DIED** 1949, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria.



HIGHLIGHTS

1. Richard Strauss was born on June 11, 1864, in Munich, Germany.
2. Strauss played the piano at 4, wrote a polka at 6, and spent his teens writing chamber music, a concerto and a symphony.
3. Strauss lived 85 years and during that period experienced three musical incarnations. In his youth, he wrote in the conventional Romantic style. In his mid-20s, he shocked the world with his avant-garde tone poems and operas. Then, in the last half of his life, he turned to more conventional music.
4. Strauss was a superb conductor who guest conducted orchestras throughout Europe, England, and America.
5. Strauss was a notorious card shark who delighted in leaving his opponents bankrupt.

BACKGROUND & TIMES

1. Strauss's *Don Juan* and the music that followed made him the darling of the progressives in music. Famous conductor Hans Von Bulow christened him "Richard the Second," an honor coming

from one of the oldest and most faithful of Wagner's disciples.

2. In 1933, Strauss accepted an official post in the Nazi regime as director of the Third Reich Music Society. Although Strauss later resigned his post, his music since that time has been tainted with infamy.

INNOVATIONS IN STYLE

1. The composer whom Strauss worshipped his entire life was Richard Wagner, even though Strauss' father was one of Wagner's most vocal detractors.
2. By the time Strauss was 21, he was a fervent Wagnerian and had left behind the concerto and chamber music for the symphonic poem. He said: "There is no such thing as abstract music: there is good music and bad music. If it is good, it means something; and if it means something it is programme music."
3. From 1887 to 1898, Strauss wrote a series of symphonic poems, or tone poems, that were so dissonant and strikingly original that they raised an uproar in musical circles.
4. Strauss' masterpiece *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks* was con-

sidered such a complex work that at its premiere it was played twice to give the audience a chance to understand it.

UNIQUE INFLUENCE

1. Strauss once said "I can translate anything into sound. I can make you understand by music that I pick up my fork and spoon from this side of my plate and lay them down on the other side." These sounds, his adventurous use of dissonance, are what made Strauss an orchestral genius and so controversial.
2. Strauss was 47 when he wrote the opera *Der Rosenkavalier*. It is considered his greatest opera, full of psychological depth, sophistication, well-developed human characters, romance, fun, and beautiful music. It is considered a masterpiece, containing some of his most beautiful music.
3. Although *Der Rosenkavalier* is almost four hours long, it has become a staple in the repertoire of almost every great opera house.
4. Strauss, along with Mahler, was one of Germany's greatest 19th-century song writers.

MAJOR WORKS

OPERAS

Salome; *Elektra*; *Der Rosenkavalier*; *Adriadne on Naxos*; *The Woman Without a Shadow*; *Intermezzo*; *The Egyptian Helen*; *Arabella*; *The Silent Woman*; *Day of Peace*; *Daphne*; *The Loves of Danae*; *Capriccio*.

BALLETS

Legends of Joseph; *Schlagobers*.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Ein Heldenleben; *Macbeth*; *Don Juan*; *Death and Transfiguration*; *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; *Don*

Quixote; *Aus Italien* Symphony; *Metamorphosen*; *Dance of the Seven Veils*; *Der Rosenkavalier Suite*; *Horn Concerto No. 1* in E-flat.

SONGS

Vier letzte Lieder (Four Last Songs).