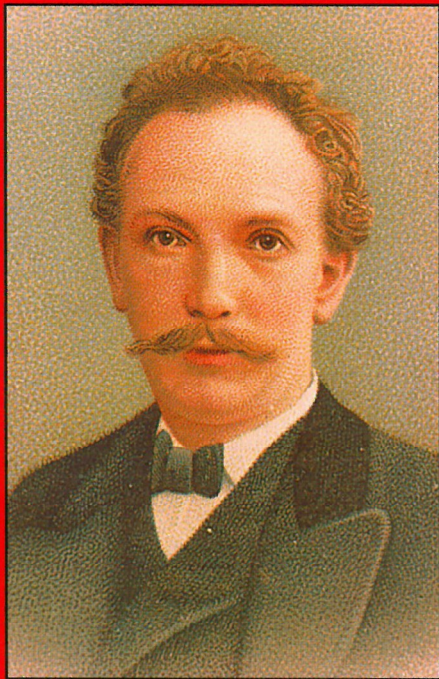


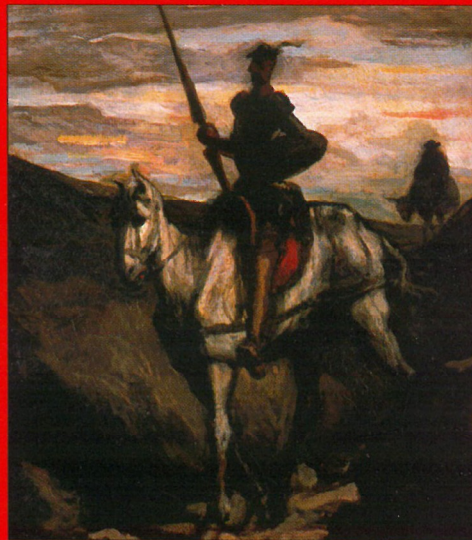
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STRAUSS

CHANDOS

Symphonic Poems Volume 2



Symphonia domestica
Till Eulenspiegel
Macbeth
Don Quixote
Also sprach Zarathustra

Royal Scottish National
Orchestra

NEEME JÄRVI



Richard Strauss
Mary Evans Picture Library

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864–1949)

COMPACT DISC ONE

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|
| | Symphonia domestica, Op. 53 | 42:04 |
| 1 | Introduction – | 5:15 |
| 2 | Scherzo – | 12:05 |
| 3 | Adagio | 11:39 |
| 4 | Finale – | 3:28 |
| 5 | Epilogue | 9:36 |
| 6 | Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, Op. 28 | 14:58 |
| 7 | Macbeth, Op. 23 | 19:54 |
| | | TT 77:10 |

COMPACT DISC TWO

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| | Don Quixote, Op. 35 | 43:57 |
| | <i>Fantastic Variations on a Theme of Knightly Character</i> | |
| 1 | Introduction – | 8:57 |
| 2 | Variation I –
<i>The Adventure of the Windmills</i> | 2:37 |
| 3 | Variation II –
<i>The Battle with the Sheep</i> | 1:38 |
| 4 | Variation III –
<i>Dialogue between Knight and Servant: Sancho's demands, questions and proverbs</i> | 8:33 |

5	Variation IV	1:53
	<i>The Adventure with the procession of Penitents</i>	
6	Variation V	4:34
	<i>Don Quixote's Vigil during the summer night</i>	
7	Variation VI	1:13
	<i>Meeting with a country lass: Sancho tells his master she is Dulcinea bewitched</i>	
8	Variation VII	1:11
	<i>The Flight through the air</i>	
9	Variation VIII	1:50
	<i>The Adventure of the Enchanted Boat (Barcarolle)</i>	
10	Variation IX	1:06
	<i>The Contest with the supposed Magician: The Attack on the Monks</i>	
11	Variation X	4:22
	<i>Duel with the Knight of the White Moon; The Defeated Don Quixote decides to give up fighting, contemplates being a shepherd, and goes home</i>	
12	Finale	6:03

Edwin Paling *violin solo*
 John Harrington *viola solo*
 Raphael Wallfisch *cello solo*

Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30		32:30
13	<i>Introduction –</i>	2:16
14	<i>Of the Backworldsmen –</i>	3:32
15	<i>Of the Great Longing –</i>	1:46
16	<i>Of joys and passions –</i>	2:06
17	<i>The Song of the Grave –</i>	2:02
18	<i>Of Science and Learning –</i>	4:15
19	<i>The Convalescent –</i>	4:53
20	<i>The Dance-Song –</i>	7:43
21	<i>The Nightwanderer's Song</i>	3:57

TT 76:32

ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Edwin Paling, leader

NEEME JÄRVI, conductor

When the **Symphonia domestica** was first performed in 1904, solemn critics took Strauss to task for his 'tastelessness' in writing music about his family life with his wife Pauline and son Franz. He was as astonished by this attitude then as we are today. Not only was the work regarded as tasteless; it was also thought to be frivolous, not a worthy subject for art. 'What can be more serious than married life?' Strauss asked. 'Marriage is the most serious happening in life, and the holy joy over such a union is intensified by the arrival of a child. Yet life has naturally got its funny side, and this I have also introduced into the work in order to enliven it. But I want the symphony to be taken seriously.' Then, referring to the 'programme' of this work he added 'Whoever is interested should use it. Whoever really understands how to listen to music probably does not need it.'

So, symphony or tone poem? Both. It is a one-movement structure but divided into two parts which contain traces of the four movements of a classical symphony – introduction, *scherzo* and *adagio* in Part 1, a fugal *finale* and epilogue in Part 2. It was composed in 1902–03 and is scored for over one hundred players, among them sixty-two strings, five clarinets and four optional saxophones. Strauss conducted the first performance (in New York) and Mahler the first Vienna performance.

A series of short themes for cellos ('merry') depict the Father (Strauss himself). The mother (Pauline) has three themes, marked 'tender', 'hot tempered' and 'quarrelsome', the first, for flute, oboe and violins, being partially a direct inversion of the Father's first theme. The Child (Franz) is depicted by a gentle melody for oboe d'amore, with *tremolando* violins.

Once these themes are known it is easy to follow the family's progress through twenty-four hours – the Child's lusty cries while he is bathed, the lullaby sung to him at bedtime (7pm chimed on the glockenspiel), the Father at work in his study, the parent's passionate love-making and subsequent dreams, the household re-awakening at 7am to begin Part 2 with its elaborate fugal quarrel, a reconciliation and, finally, a happy ending in which the Child's theme is predominant on the heavy brass but the Father has the last word.

Almost a decade before *Domestica*, Strauss composed one of his most popular and

brilliant tone poems, his musical portrait of the rascally German fourteenth-century folk-hero, **Till Eulenspiegel**. His inspired use of rondo form as a frame for Till's 'merry pranks' enables the work to be self-sufficient as a musical structure and at the same time allows him to make each episode a sharply defined character-study. The tone poem was first performed in Cologne in 1895 and has been a favourite ever since, its scintillating orchestration commending it to performers and listeners alike.

It begins with a quiet introduction – 'once upon a time'. Then the solo horn plays the pawky and irreverent theme that depicts Till himself. This and a theme for the D clarinet are the basis of an exposition section which ends with a crash as Till rides his horse through a market, scattering pots and pans. He rides from his pursuers and emerges disguised as a priest. This 'blasphemy' gives him an uneasy moment but he shrugs it off and tries courting a girl instead. No luck, so, furious, he asks awkward questions to some dour academics. Soon his jauntiness gives way to terror (the uneasiness experienced earlier returns) and he is caught, tried and hanged. But this is only a tale (the real Till died in his bed), as the return of the gentle opening reminds us before the last exhilarating chords.

In spite of its opus number, which is later than that of *Don Juan*, **Macbeth** was the first tone poem Strauss composed. The first sketches were made in 1887, a year after the symphonic fantasy *Aus Italien*, which Strauss described as the bridge to the 'completely new path' he was to take by following the example of Liszt and Wagner in developing the expressive element in music. He was particularly impressed by the way in which 'the poetic idea' simultaneously functioned as the structural element in Liszt's symphonic poems. *Macbeth*, a tone poem in one sectionalized movement, was his first essay in this form. It was completed in 1888, whereupon Strauss sent it to his mentor, the conductor and pianist Hans von Bülow, whose assistant conductor he had been at Meiningen in 1885–86. Bülow criticized the ending by pointing out that 'it is in order for an Egmont overture to end with a triumphal march celebrating Egmont's victory, but a symphonic poem called *Macbeth* cannot end with a triumphal march for Macduff.'

Strauss accepted the stricture. He was then at work on *Don Juan* and wrote to Bülow in August 1888: 'For the time being *Macbeth* lies contentedly buried in my desk... I still

think it's better to follow one's true artistic conviction and to have said something wrong up a blind alley than something superfluous while keeping to the old, well-trodden high road... The precise expression of my artistic ideas and feelings and stylistically the most self-reliant of all my works to date is *Macbeth*'.

Strange as it may seem today, Bülow was appalled by the music's dissonance. Strauss was impervious. He told his father: "'The adversaries" [his word for the critics] will have damned little time for *Macbeth*... As for Bülow, his sensitive ears are a burden he must bear.' But he revised the ending and this version was twice played through, in January 1889 when he conducted it at Mannheim and some months later at Meiningen, when Fritz Steinbach rehearsed it. The first public performance was at Weimar, on 13 October 1890, with Strauss conducting. Still dissatisfied, he revised the scoring, completing the task in November 1891. The final version was performed in Berlin on 29 February 1892, when Strauss conducted the Berlin Philharmonic. He was delighted. 'The orchestra played wonderfully, the piece sounded fabulous', he wrote. Bülow was in the audience. 'It is a good piece after all', he said, and he reported to the publisher Spitzweg that *Macbeth* had had a 'colossal success. The audience roared for Strauss four times. The sound of the work too was – overwhelming'.

Macbeth does not slavishly follow the plot of the play. It is a character study of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. The opening theme, a type of fanfare, represents kingship and is followed by two Macbeth themes, an aggressive one in D minor and one that subtly indicates the weakness in his character. Later he has a *dolce* theme which suggests that he had his good points. His wife is introduced in A major, an alluring, sensitive theme marked *appassionato*, *molto rubato*. Duncan's arrival at the castle precedes a lengthy development section ending with the knocking which alarms Macbeth after he has killed the king. Thereafter the protagonists' themes dominate until the coda depicting their death, with Macduff's triumph reduced to quiet fanfares. Macbeth's *dolce* theme ends the work.

An unusual feature of the scoring is the use of a bass trumpet, which Strauss had heard in Wagner's *The Ring* while working at Bayreuth in 1890. He incorporated it into his revision as 'the only possible bridge and intermediary between trumpets and trombones'.

Don Quixote, perhaps the greatest of Strauss's tone poems, was composed in 1896–97 and first performed in Cologne in March 1898. It is in the form of an introduction, theme and variations, but is also a type of *sinfonia concertante* for cello, viola and orchestra. Because of the difficulty of the cello part, this is usually played by a leading virtuoso, but Strauss's intention was that it should be played by the orchestra's principal cellist, as the score indicates. The cello generally represents Don Quixote and the viola his servant Sancho Panza, but a solo violin occasionally shares the cello's role and the tenor tuba and bass clarinet the viola's.

The *Introduction*, long and elaborate, depicts Don Quixote at home with his books on knightly errantry. As he reads and his mind becomes deranged, the harmonies become more chromatic and dissonant. But the work opens with three short and simple themes all to be associated with his chivalry and courtesy. A romantic oboe theme represents his ideal woman, to be personified as Dulcinea. To the sound of harsh brass chords the old knight sets forth on his adventures, and the cello develops his first theme, interspersed with platitudes from Sancho/viola.

In Variation I, knight and squire, inspired by thoughts of Dulcinea (strings now have her oboe theme), attack giants which turn out to be windmills. II. Quixote (three solo cellos in unison) is all set to vanquish a king's armies – in reality a flock of sheep, depicted in a famous passage by flutter-tongued woodwind and muted brass. A shepherd pipes a pastoral tune (similar to one in *Ein Heldenleben*). In III Quixote and Sancho converse together. Then in F sharp major there is a radiant dissertation by the knight on chivalry. Sancho is sceptical. IV. The travellers meet a procession carrying an image of the Virgin. Quixote thinks they are abducting a maiden, attacks them and is felled. Sancho's cries restore his master to consciousness.

In the wonderful Variation V, Don Quixote keeps vigil over his armour and muses on Dulcinea – solo cello with orchestral cellos and harp. VI. He mistakes a peasant-girl for Dulcinea (a bucolic version of her theme). She flees. VII. Harps, flutes and wind machine suggest that Don Quixote is flying through the air on a Pegasus – but the pedal D tells the listener he is still on the ground on a toy horse. In VII the two travellers' boat sinks. They escape, dripping wet (*pizzicato*) and offer a thankful prayer. A scherzo-like

IX is the knight's attack on three monks (bassoons) whom he suspects of kidnapping a girl. He routs them but in X he loses a duel and starts for home. Steady drum-beats accompany his ride. As his mind clears so the harmonies return to the diatonic and to dominant chords on the violins. In the affecting *Finale*, the solo cello has a new and tender version of the main Quixote theme as the dying, gentle knight looks back over his life and dies peacefully.

'Freely after Nietzsche' was Strauss's description of his tone-poem **Also sprach Zarathustra**, his musical tribute to the author's prose-poem based on the philosophical and spiritual pronouncements of the Persian prophet Zoroaster who lived, it is believed, in the sixth century B.C. Nietzsche's book inspired vocal music from other composers – Mahler and Delius, for example – but Strauss's orchestral distillation of its principal themes is intended to convey 'an idea of the evolution of the human race'. Some undertaking, and if the result is nearer to the evolution of Strauss, that is perhaps not far from the original intention. Today, when Nietzsche's idea of the Superman is outmoded and discredited, Strauss's tone poem remains relevant as an independent organic structure, enjoyable for its purely musical attributes, not least of which is the richness and variety of the scoring, ranging from such opulence as the famous 'Sunrise' opening for trumpets, timpani and organ, to passages where the symphony orchestra is reduced to the intimacy of a chamber group.

The work was composed in 1894–96. Its thesis is the unresolved dichotomy between Nature in the key of C and the Spirit of Man in the key of B. Nature's C major is established in the 'Sunrise', while Man's theme, in B minor, is first heard in the section called *Of the Backworldsmen*. Strauss shared Nietzsche's antagonism to organized religion, so his ironic treatment of the plainsong Credo (muted horns) makes a piquant prelude to a sensuous reverie for sixteen-part strings and organ. In the *Great Longing* section, the organ interposes the Magnificat but this is swept aside by the unbridled *Joys and Passions*.

The *Song of the Grave* is in a harmonically shadowy B minor that yields briefly to the return of the C major Nature motif, and becomes a slow fugue – writhing chromatically in the depths of the orchestra – representing *Science*. Enough of this; the

Spirit of Man dispels the gloom with a dance on high woodwind and strings, but is banished – *Convalescent* – by the Nature theme. Cheerfulness, however, keeps breaking in, as trumpet calls and violin trills introduce the *Dance of the Superman* (as the *Tanzlied* is often known). This is a Strauss joke, for the dance is a Viennese waltz led by a solo violin. The tone poem now builds to an enormous climax. At its height, the Midnight Bell sounds and the *Nightwanderer's Song* is a warmly glowing epilogue ending with Nature's C on trombones and basses alternating with Man's luminous B major chords. Nature has the last word – Strauss's solution rather than Nietzsche's.

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