

STRAUSS, Richard: Also sprach Zarathustra, op. 30; Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, op. 28; Le bourgeois gentilhomme (Der Bürger als Edelmann) Suite, from op. 60; Ein Heldenleben, op. 40; Don Juan, op. 20; Waltz from Schlagobers, op. 70; Tod und Verklärung (Death and Transfiguration), op. 24; Sinfonia Domestica, op. 53. Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Richard Strauss conducting (also the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra). Vanguard SRV-325/329, five-record set, not available separately, monaural only. \$19.90.

This set is one of the landmarks of recorded music. It is now available in the United States for the first time. Richard Strauss was as important a conductor as he was a composer. He gives these performances an authority which goes beyond that of an ordinary composer-conductor. Other conductors today would do well to study these records along with the scores. Listeners can find here performances that they may prefer on an absolute basis. In the course of this discussion, I will try to show in detail just how the composer's interpretation can surpass all others.

The works in this set include all of Strauss's most famous tone poems, with the single exception of Don Quixote, which he recorded elsewhere. He also made commercial recordings of all the works here except Also sprach Zarathustra and Sinfonia Domestica. (A complete discography of all Strauss's recordings, by this reviewer, will appear in this Journal vol. 9, no. 1.)

There is distressingly little information to be had concerning the origin of these recordings. In 10,000 words of excellent program notes by Joseph Braunstein, there is not one word about the performances themselves. A bit more is known than Vanguard tells us. In 1944, Strauss gave a series of broadcasts of his own music with the Vienna Philharmonic, organized in celebration of his 80th birthday (June 11, 1944). These are those performances. We can presume that the original programs were first broadcast live, for there are some obvious errors, such as the horn player makes on the opening page of Till, that would have been corrected quickly and easily in a separate recording session. But the performances were also taped, and tape copies were apparently distributed to radio stations throughout Germany for re-broadcast. We can be certain that they were recorded on tape, for there is none of the surface noise and none of the side breaks which are inevitable with disc recording. They were not recorded during regular concert performances, for there is no applause and no audience noise whatever. Tapes of the same performances have appeared at various times and places, which suggests that they were distributed rather widely.

The set of tapes presented on these records first appeared in East Germany in 1973 on the Eterna label (nos. 826204/826208). The recordings were then licensed to Tokuma Musical Industries Co., Ltd., in Japan and appeared there as Clavier CT-1501/CT-1505. Now it seems that the Japanese company has licensed them to Vanguard.

Some of the individual works have appeared elsewhere. In the early 1950s, the Sinfonia Domestica came out on Vox PL-7220 in the United States. The same recording is now on Turnabout TV-4363. At the same time, the Bourgeois gentilhomme Suite was released on Urania RS 7-8 and later on Regent 5013. More recently, Also sprach Zarathustra and the Schlagobers Waltz appeared both on Turnabout THS-65021 and on Olympic (Everest) 8111. There is also a three-record set of all but Sinfonia Domestica released by the Bruno Walter Society.

All of these releases are recordings of the same performances and from duplicates of the same tapes. Side-by-side comparison establishes this fact beyond any doubt. The two early releases (also issued without any useful documentation) probably derive from tapes discovered by Americans in Germany shortly after the war. The recent Turnabout tape of Zarathustra is said to come from Dr. Franz Strauss (the composer's son). The Bruno Walter Society set is known to consist of dubbings from the Eterna pressings. The Olympic release also sounds like a dubbing.

The sound of the Vanguard records is astonishingly good. I consider it good enough for regular listening, not just for research. It is a relative matter, of course. If you are uneasy with any but the latest stereo techniques, these are not for you. But if you can listen with pleasure to recordings by Toscanini or Furtwängler, then these records will be quite satisfying. They are certainly superior to any recordings made on disc masters. If you have the early releases of Sinfonia Domestica or the Bourgeois gentilhomme, the present ones will be a revelation. The German engineers have done a fine job of processing the tapes—discovering a wide range of highs and lows in the recordings and mastering them virtually without distortion. I have the five records on Clavier from Japan. The Vanguard set is made from new masters, but the sound is every bit as good as the former release. Of the other releases, those on Olympic and BWS should be dismissed without further ado. The Turnabout record of Also sprach Zarathustra, on the other hand, is nearly as good as the Vanguard. It is a viable alternative if you want only the one piece.

Just how good, really, are Strauss's performances? We often hear it said that a composer's performance of a work is definitive—that it offers special insights not to be found in other performances. I happen to be one who believes this to be true, especially in the case of a conductor of Strauss's intrinsic caliber. I do not think, however, that it is enough merely to make this pious pronouncement. Instead, we ought to look at one work in considerable detail, to see exactly what Strauss does that other conductors do not do. I have chosen Till Eulenspiegel, mainly because I am already familiar with

it—as countless numbers of people are. Norman Del Mar (Richard Strauss, vol. 1, London 1963, p. 131) writes: "Till is indeed arguably Strauss's masterpiece... " Not many would argue the point too vigorously. It is, therefore, an appropriate work for study.

An important assumption is that the composer has written in the score precisely what he wishes the orchestra to play. A "forte" or a "presto" is no more to be ignored than a D-flat. This is particularly significant in the case of Richard Strauss. As a conductor with years of experience before he wrote Till Eulenspiegel, he knew (we must presume) exactly what a conductor needed to be told in a score. It is occasionally said that a conductor who follows the score to the letter will produce a stodgy and mechanical performance. I do not believe this to be the case with Till Eulenspiegel (nor indeed with most musical works). Strauss has written all his musical excitement right on the pages of the score. Only those who contradict the score will give a stodgy performance. Those who follow the written music have the best chance of giving the most vivid performance.

I have compared the following recordings in detail:

Strauss—Vienna Philharmonic (1944) - Vanguard set SRV-325/329
Strauss—Berlin State Opera Orch. (1929) - Heliodor 2548.722
Toscanini—NBC Symphony (1954) - Victrola VIC-1267
Furtwängler—Vienna Philharmonic (1954) - Seraphim 60094
Bernstein—New York Philharmonic (1961) - Columbia MS-6225, etc.
Karajan—Vienna Philharmonic (1963) - London CS-6211

These are selected because they are the best of the available performances, not because they are unusual or deviant in any way. I am not loading the dice in Strauss's favor. I have also studied recordings conducted by Antal Dorati, Otto Klemperer, Serge Koussevitsky, Leopold Stokowski, and Karl Böhm, but find each one seriously deficient in one respect or another. I would have liked to compare the records made by Rudolf Kempe, Fritz Reiner, Georg Solti, and George Szell, for I suspect that they are of high quality. (I also wish I could hear Strauss's 1917 recording.) They were unfortunately not available to me. There have been some 58 different recordings of Till Eulenspiegel to date—as catalogued by Alan Jefferson in a discography of Strauss's orchestral and instrumental music soon to be published in J. F. Weber's Discography Series.

Each of the performances to be considered has its own general characteristics, and each is in most ways typical of its conductor. Strauss, for instance, follows his score more closely than any other conductor. This is an observable fact. In my strong opinion, he also conducts the two most exciting of all the recordings of Till.

Toscanini's version is closer to the score than any but the composer's. It also has probably the greatest accuracy of execution of any of the recordings. This orchestral precision, aided by an unresonant studio, gives the piece great transparency. Even though the sound is only monaural, one can hear more individual detail than in any other recording. (It is the only one, for instance, in which one can hear the glissandi on p. 35) The result of this kind of accuracy is a very exciting performance. (I should add that I am not one of those Toscanini fans whose hero can do no wrong. I find some of his records unlistenable. Here, however, he is quite right.)

Furtwängler's fabled freedom of execution is borne out by the evidence. In this instance, his numerous departures from the score, I feel, destroy the headlong pulse of the music. His rather eccentric style is better suited to less clearly notated scores. Some composers have not indicated what they want as unequivocally as Strauss. Their scores can benefit more from the Furtwängler treatment.

Bernstein is noted for his fidelity to the score—a primary source of the great excitement he can generate in a piece of music. This is clearly evident in his recording of Till. A tiny portion of the time, alas, he is absolutely wrong-headed. Such a moment occurs here in the extremely fast tempo he chooses for Till's song (p. 58). Except for such a misjudgement, his performance would equal Toscanini's.

Karajan's recording of Till Eulenspiegel has been widely praised, and indeed it contains many felicities. On balance, however, I feel it fails to hold together. At a number of crucial points, the conductor simply ignores the score. Several times, too, he is betrayed by mistakes of his musicians or his engineers. Ultimately, of course, these flaws reflect back on his ability as a conductor. Once I liked this record a great deal better, but its faults have reduced its staying power.

Now we can look at a number of specific points in the score. I feel these are points which are important for distinguishing among the styles of various conductors. In referring to them, I have used the widely-available Eulenberg miniature score (no. 443). It runs to exactly 100 pages. Since there are no bar numbers, I have used page numbers as references.

1. Page 3. The first six measures, a slow introduction, are marked simply: "gemächlich," that is, comfortably, comodo. The next seven bars, however, are marked to be played precisely three times as fast as the first section. Strauss has written that a dotted quarter-note of the second equals an eighth-note of the first. As it happens, no one, including Strauss, follows this direction precisely. Eighty years of performance practice

have sanctified the playing of the second phrase, Till's theme on the horn, too fast. Strauss, both times, takes the introduction at ♩ = 80. The Till theme then follows a ♩ = 115. All the conductors in the select group use tempi which are very close to Strauss's. Toscanini approaches the score more closely than any of them, with respective metronome markings of 76 and 105. Curiously, the conductor who comes closest of all to the score is Leopold Stokowski, who is very wayward in other parts of Till. He does it by taking the slow introduction much more quickly than anyone else, which is not "comfortable," in my opinion. His tempi are 95 and 108. I suppose that if the composer-conductor departs from the score, one is quite justified in following him. Nevertheless, I would like someday to hear a performance in which the introduction is taken at ♩ = 80, followed by the first playing of the Till theme in a slow tempo of ♩ = 80, then followed (p. 4) by the repetition of the theme at ♩ = 120. This could make a very exciting contrast between the two horn calls which is not found in any recorded performance that I know. (Toscanini, uniquely, gives an idea later in the work of what it might sound like. On p. 64, he takes the horn call at ♩ = 88, repeated at ♩ = 110 on p. 65.)

There is another point, a small one, on page 3. The chord in the two flutes in measure 6 is marked sfzp. Strauss is the only conductor who gives a noticeable attack here. It sounds, and should sound, rather like a cork being popped out of a bottle. Other conductors treat it simply as harmonic background, which is contrary both to the score and to Strauss. It is also worth mentioning that the first horn has a bad beginning in measure 7 of Strauss's 1944 recording. Since every horn player on earth knows this phrase as well as that of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, it can only be a momentary lapse, one which would obviously have been corrected if there had been a chance for a re-take.

2. Pages 18-19. The staccato sixteenth-notes are marked "grazioso," not just once but three times. Strauss's humorous intent, it seems to me, was to lull the listener into a false sense of tranquility before the explosion on page 20, when Till rides headlong through the marketplace. Yet many conductors play these graceful little phrases with a hard attack and tension which completely spoils Strauss's surprise. In both his recordings, Strauss does these bars very lightly and gracefully. The point is to play them almost without accent. The phrase, after all, begins each time on the second beat of the measure. All the conductors in our group do well at this point. One with a tense style, like Dorati, gives the notes entirely too much emphasis and anticipates the following crescendo and cymbal clash.

3. Page 24. After Till's wild ride, he hides in a hole, sticking his head out cautiously to see if the coast is clear. The woodwinds are marked pp and the strings are ppp. Now triple-

piano is very quiet indeed, and Strauss does not write a sound level above p until a small crescendo on page 26. Yet it is the rare conductor who can keep this section anywhere near as quiet as it is supposed to be. Strauss does, within the limits of the recording technology of the day. Toscanini gives it a wonderful transparency, like his whole performance. Furtwängler also does well here, but Bernstein and Karajan are both rather too loud, perhaps wanting to push onward, with the impatience of younger men. It is worth noting that a tape recorder of 1944 was not capable of capturing pianissimo sounds with nearly the fidelity of one twenty years later. Karajan may, in fact, be playing no louder on an absolute scale than Strauss in 1944, but it seems louder because of the improved technique. A conductor needs to be aware of such nice distinctions. I wonder if any of the newest recordings give us a true ppp in the strings, as one might hear in a concert hall.

4. Page 27. This section, marked "gemächlich," portrays Till dressed up as a priest. Conductors and listeners should know this. The sacrilege was considered a great deal more serious in 1895 than it would be today—even though the Schelm, the rogue, "peeps out of the big toe," as Strauss said. The theme should be played quite straight, even squarely, to set off the dissonant rogue who soon appears from under the robes. Yet too often this theme is given a full "grazioso" treatment, as if it were a dance movement by Haydn. Nothing could be more alien to its mocking intent. Strauss the conductor keeps this music very rigid and lacking in expression. It is the only way to treat the inherently graceful melody. It puts a sour edge on the music which is heightened by the discords and the explicitly "roguish" clarinet in D. It also makes a seamless transition to the following phrases of Till's premonition of his bad end. If a conductor had never known the program of Till Eulenspiegel, he could easily consider this section to be a graceful interlude. Strauss, in the score, shows us clearly that it is not, and he conducts it that way. Toscanini and Furtwängler, opposite spirits in so many ways, both treat this passage in a properly square manner. Bernstein and Karajan, by contrast, give it entirely too much rubato phrasing. With them it is "gemütlich" instead of merely "gemächlich."

5. Pages 45-48 present a purely technical problem. From the bottom of page 45 (Till posing insolent questions) to the top of page 48, there are an unusual number of cross-rhythms within both the woodwinds and strings. They are complicated by grace notes at different places in all the instruments. This passage, alas, often becomes a very uneasy scramble for everybody. It is not a question of expression, only of plain coordination, and many conductors flunk the test. Strauss handles it neatly both times. People who watched him conduct say that he had a small and very clear beat. It is, obviously, just what is needed to align these various syncopations. Perhaps he beat the passage in a simple two, while maintaining an even tempo throughout. It is

a gauge of technical competence rather than interpretive insight, but no less important for so being. Toscanini, as one might expect, handles the section with a greater precision and security than even Strauss. Bernstein also does it very nicely, though he takes the passage quite a bit slower than Strauss. Furtwängler, also as expected, makes a mess of it. His woodwinds simply have no idea of their entrances. His notoriously uneven and expressive beat was just not the right tool for the challenge. Karajan, more surprisingly, also has a difficult time. One would think that with the opportunity for unlimited repetition made possible by tape editing he would get it right. The result, however, is a considerable scramble. Strauss and Toscanini show, if anyone doubts, that the passage can be done both fast and correctly. Apart from interpretation, this is an important lesson which a composer can give to others.

6. Pages 58-59. There has been a long build-up, climaxed by a fortissimo trill in all the high instruments of the orchestra. Strauss called it "Till's Great Grimace." He than has the problem of getting off of this pinnacle. Without transition, he has Till turn his back and go off down the street whistling a frivolous song. In fact, he marks the section "leichtfertig"—"frivolous." He also carefully indicates that one beat of the new $\frac{2}{4}$ time equals a beat of the preceding $\frac{3}{8}$ section. It should not be fast. Two eighth-notes to a beat is more relaxed than three, and the preceding passage, though very loud and full of notes, is not fast. You would think, with all these guides in the score, that more conductors would get it right. It does not happen that way. Strauss tosses off the street song in a relaxed tempo ($\downarrow = 118$ in 1944 and 114 in 1929) which perfectly expresses Till's insouciance after his tense confrontation with the pedagogues. Toscanini makes a rare mistake by taking the song too fast ($\downarrow = 144$). His Till has not completely relaxed. Furtwängler is right with Strauss ($\downarrow = 118$). Bernstein is extremely fast ($\downarrow = 160$), which is all wrong, as if he is trying to top the preceding climax. Karajan is fairly slow ($\downarrow = 128$), but too serious, his downbeat accents too heavy, which robs the song of its frivolity. It is a difficult point to express in words, and even in the score. It is a clear-cut instance of why conductors should listen to Strauss's performance before they conduct the work.

7. Pages 65-90. There are 138 measures of $\frac{6}{8}$ time spread over these 26 pages, and there is one fact which applies to every one of them—they should all be played at precisely the same tempo. Strauss writes "Volles Zeitmass" at the top of page 65, meaning "strictly in tempo," and then indicates no tempo change whatever until the break on page 90. (Actually, the same tempo continues to page 94, but after a total change in the character of the music.) Strauss is the only conductor I have heard who follows his instructions to the letter. The cumulative impact of the relentless tempo is enormous. It is perhaps the single most important interpretive point in the whole piece, and it is a shame that only the composer observes

it. One can practically set a metronome in motion with Strauss on page 65 and find it still in step on page 90. His speed was $\downarrow = 116$ in the 1929 recording and $\downarrow = 110$ in 1944. He has written in his music such a variety of note durations, dynamics, instrumentation, and tessitura that the precisely regular pulse is necessary to hold the music together. The focus is on Till himself, as he grows progressively more reckless and exuberant. The great menacing chords of Justice come as a huge shock after such a relentless build-up. Toscanini comes closer to perfection than any other conductor but Strauss. His only lapse is a brief *rallentando* on pp. 81-82. It is interesting, too, that he takes the introductory passage, pp. 61-64, quite a bit more slowly than all the other conductors. This gives him much more emphasis on the fast steady tempo when it arrives. He takes it a $\downarrow = 110$, the same as Strauss in 1944. Furtwängler, predictably, makes several variations in tempo. He makes a very large ritard. on pp. 80-83, and accelerates from page 87 to page 90, like most conductors. Bernstein is very good. He stays rock-steady through quiet and loud parts up to page 87. Then he accelerates during the last four pages. Karajan is more wayward. He accelerates during the very beginning pages, from page 65 to page 70. He slows down for pages 80-85, and then speeds up along with the crescendo from page 85 to page 90. It is not what the composer had in mind. (Klemperer and Dorati err in different ways. Though they are both relatively even in tempo, the former is quite slow and the latter entirely too fast throughout.)

8. Pages 91-92. The menacing downbeat chords of Justice have an equally strong offbeat, which is seldom heard in recordings. The trombones, of course, give great impact to the primary chords. Strauss has recognized the need for extra emphasis to counteract this weight of tone and has written accents on the offbeats. He has also called for four extra horns to give extra strength to those offbeat chords. (In practice, including Strauss's, they are divided two-and-two.) The point is that Strauss considered those offbeat chords to be very important, yet they are often not heard at all. In Strauss's two recordings, they are heard, even though it was a difficult achievement for the recording processes then available. Toscanini's offbeat chords come through strongly. Furtwängler's do not, nor do Bernstein's. Karajan seems to be the victim of his engineers, who have recorded the side drum at such a high volume that very little else of any sort is audible.

9. Page 98. The quiet part of the Epilog ends with a pianissimo chord marked with a fermata. The chord must be truly pp, and it must be held for an indeterminate length, but longer than a half-note. Only if both qualities in this chord are observed will the following full-orchestra chord and the final eight measures come as a complete surprise—Till's last laugh. A conductor who plays the measure at about mf and in tempo will utterly lose the point of the joke. Again, Strauss handles the music beautifully. His chord, on both occasions, is as quiet as his recordings will

permit. He holds the fermata only a tiny fraction longer than a half-note, but enough so that the final cascade of notes is really unexpected. Toscanini again follows the score and achieves results very much like the composer's. Bernstein makes an unnecessary ritard before the chord, has a good chord, and then is unusually good in making the difficult crescendo from f to fff in the final eight measures. Karajan has a very fine pp, but then attacks on a downbeat. Furtwängler errs by making a crescendo on the pp chord, thus anticipating what is to come.

A couple of general thoughts about the score of Till Eulenspiegel should be noted—things which cannot be tied down to specific page numbers. For instance, Strauss wrote a part for clarinet in D to give voice to Till himself. This is an instrument which seems to exist only in Germany and Austria. My guess is that all the recordings done elsewhere use an Eb clarinet for the part. To my ears, there is a perceptible difference, though it is not a great one. One might say that the D clarinet sounds like a nasal Bb clarinet, whereas the Eb instrument is just plain shrill. I think Strauss knew exactly what sort of sound he wanted. It is incumbent upon non-German players, therefore, to make the Eb clarinet sound as full and mellow (relatively speaking) as it can, to resemble the D clarinet sound more closely.

Consider also the horns. Strauss has written a difficult part for horns—not just the first horn, but all four of them. (His father was a horn player, so he knew particularly well what he was doing.) Often the parts are distinctive, not just doubling. In the last eleven pages, he even calls for four additional horns ad lib. Altogether, they appear often enough that they give, or should give, a characteristic horn coloration to the whole work. Many conductors, however, reduce the horns to a mere supporting role, so they are audible only in a solo situation. In my opinion, this makes a bad imbalance in a performance. Among the recordings I have heard, only those of Strauss, Toscanini, and Bernstein have this strong horn sound throughout which I feel is implicit in the score.

Till Eulenspiegel has been considered at length because I think it demonstrates point by point why Strauss's recordings are indeed special, even in comparison with the very best of the alternative recordings. I have tried to show that there are real musical and dramatic reasons for following the score precisely, and that Strauss does so more than any other conductor. Does anyone, by the way, question that this and other performances in this set are actually conducted by Strauss? I trust this close analysis and the close similarity to Strauss's 1929 recording show that the composer's hand is unmistakable here. Personally, I listen to this performance of Till for pleasure more often than to any other.

It would be interesting to consider every performance here

in such detail. Perhaps, though, that is asking too much of a reader's patience. A brief summary of the other works will have to do for now.

This is Strauss's only recording of Also sprach Zarathustra. It is worthy to stand beside the best modern version (Reiner and the Chicago Symphony, on Victor LSC-2609, in my opinion). The sound is unusually good, considering that this piece is one of the great tests for a recording engineer. A very large orchestra is going full-out most of the time. It is very heavily scored. The recorded bass is better than anything which could be achieved on disc. The best characterization of Strauss's performance, as elsewhere, is "transparent." The thick texture of the work particularly needs a conductor who can isolate separate lines from the mixture. Does it seem strange to consider this a linear work? I think this is the major revelation that Strauss gives us: that it is not just blocks of sound but a work of logical thematic development. Had Toscanini ever recorded it, we might have heard it this way also. As in Till, Strauss emphasizes the sound of the brass instruments, which are responsible both for the general sound quality and also for most of the separate melodic motifs. It is a proper emphasis. He does make one interpretive lapse which bothers me. At the very beginning of the work, he holds the low C for only one measure instead of the written four measures. There is also an interesting technical point at measure 17. The recording engineer very obviously turned down his volume control, evidently because his tape was about to overload with all the sound. The audible change can be heard in every release of the performance, showing that the different tapes all derive from the same master tape. If he were around, I think Strauss would protest making the side break on the fermata rest on pp. 94-95 (Eulenberg score). This rest comes after one of the loudest moments in all music. It is clearly meant to allow the reverberation to hang in the air. It is at the center of a musical thought, not a pause. Yet it is a traditional place to break the work on an LP record. Fritz Reiner had the last and best word. In his 1954 recording (LM-1806), the mastering engineer made the break at this point. Reiner must have blown his top (as only he could), for in the 1962 recording the break comes ten bars later, on p. 96, which is much better.

The Bourgeois gentilhomme Suite has a much different sound from the other recordings here. The reason, of course, is that Strauss sticks to his original scoring, with only a 36-man orchestra. The microphones are closer to the instruments than in the other recordings in the set, and the sound is therefore the best of any of them. Strauss was especially fond of this music. He included large parts of it in his first orchestral recording session in 1917. He recorded parts in Chicago in 1921, did the entire Suite in 1930, and conducted it as late as 1947 for the Italian Swiss Radio. Perhaps his fast and dancelike approach to the music will win more converts to it--from lovers of 17th-century music as well as of 20th-century music. I have one small complaint about the Vanguard masters. They did not

see fit to make separate bands for the nine sections, as was done on the Japanese Clavier records. It is a minor nuisance.

Strauss's Heldenleben performance has a unique authority. It is more than just a case of a composer conducting his own work. It is a composer conducting a deeply autobiographical work. He gave, albeit reluctantly, a general program of the piece for public consumption. His inhibition against saying more, however, would seem to indicate that there are specific programmatic points in the music which only he knew. I am not suggesting any mystical communion between Strauss and the score, but only saying that he had, intrinsically, a better idea than anyone else of just how to phrase and accent this music. For instance, we know that the third section of the work is intended to be a portrait of the Hero's wife. Many conductors, knowing stories about the irascible character of Pauline Strauss, will treat the whole section with pointed phrasing and harmonic harshness, as if the music were meant sarcastically. Strauss on the other hand (with the help of a splendid violin soloist) rounds off the corners on even the strongest statements. He gives the Love Scene a grand sweep which tells of a deep attraction between the Hero and his wife. (The Strausses were only two months from their fiftieth anniversary.) In the following Battle Scene, by contrast, Strauss accentuates all the hard edges of the music. This is good. A modern tendency is to soften and homogenize the sound, as if to say that the old guy really did not mean it to be all that ugly. Strauss did mean it, and his version retains all the crudity of the original score. (The trumpets, by the way, are not offstage, as they should be.) The Hero's Works of Peace are not convincing. Perhaps Strauss dwells too lovingly over each one of his thirty-odd self-quotations, and the music as a whole is fragmented. The final section, however, the Hero's retirement, is played with enormous tenderness—slower and more gently phrased than even Strauss's own earlier recordings (1926 and 1940). For me, it is the most moving musical experience in the whole Strauss set. One is tempted to think that in 1944, in a collapsing world, he felt a powerful longing (Sehnsucht) for a peace that he personally was never to know. It is a very introverted performance altogether, which for an autobiographical work gives us a unique insight into the music. The recorded sound is very good, even better than that of his last studio performance of the same work in 1940.

Don Juan, an autobiography of a wholly different sort, is given a different sort of performance. It really is very extroverted. I did not have the score at hand when I listened, but I suspect it is very close to what is printed. The oboe melody, in fact the whole Love Scene, is played very tenderly. The finale, for a change, is not overplayed.

The Schlagobers Waltz is not much of a piece, an attempt to be jolly with a Heldenleben orchestra at full volume. It might have been a delightful thing with a Bourgeois gentilhomme orchestra. Those who might be interested can still get the entire ballet conducted

by Erich Kloss on Lyrichord LL-741, a two-record set, the only recording of the whole work. An odd fact about the present recording of the Waltz is that the Eterna, Clavier, and Turnabout records all state that it was performed with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra. Vanguard (and the dubbed releases) state that it is with the Vienna Philharmonic, like all the other works in the set. The acoustic quality, on close listening, does indeed seem different, though it also appears to be a taped recording. I presume that the attribution to Berlin is correct, and that those to Vienna are just sloppiness. The snippet was probably appended to the Vienna recordings to fill a space in a broadcast program. What else might he have recorded in Berlin at the time? We know of no other recordings from that period.

Tod und Verklärung is played with a transparency equal to that of Zarathustra. In both heavily-scored works, that particular quality is most important. The known program for this tone poem is probably as detailed as any but Till Eulenspiegel. Strauss knew it well and expressed it well. Make no mistake—Strauss's programs are extremely important, both to the conductor and to the listener. In particular, here the composer holds the Transfiguration section together better than almost anyone. He keeps up the rhythmic pace at a steady tempo. Lesser conductors will treat a slow tempo as a license for "expressive" phrasing. Strauss does not permit small variations in speed and volume. He maintains a constant pulse through the whole section. This recording, unfortunately, is not the equal of the others. Perhaps it was made by a different recordist. The highs and lows are still present, but many times key instruments are lost in the distance, recorded at too low a level. The important tam-tam (gong), for instance, is never really audible. The recording is not unlistenable, just not as good as the other ones in the album.

Finally, we come to Sinfonia Domestica. I first heard it in this same performance on Vox in the early 1950s. (It was the work's second recording actually.) I did not like the music then, and I am little more fond of it today. Having stated my basic prejudice, I must admit that there are some very beautiful sections in the score: the Lullaby, the Dream sequence, the beginning of the double fugue (if only the melodies were more memorable!). The first section of the symphony is quite choppy in Strauss's performance. Perhaps, he was too close to the music, wanting to invest each little phrase with all its personal significance. Similarly, the Love Scene is taken at a very high intensity. It certainly is written that way, but the result is very wearing. There is thick orchestration throughout, with a great deal of harmonic sequencing. One can sympathize with Strauss's problem, no matter how much he brought it upon himself. Many of his critics rejected the idea of his writing a very heavy symphonic work to such a light program. But many critics also rejected the work on purely musical grounds. Yet Strauss would naturally take even the most dispassionate criticism as an affront to the personal subject matter. Thus, the harder he tried to "sell" the piece, the

more distorted became his performance of it. I am still not happy with it under other conductors, and the tranquil sections are still remarkably lovely under Strauss's baton. One almost wishes, however, that he had permitted extensive performance cuts in it, as he so often did with his operas. Those who have been familiar with the Vox release (now on Turnabout), by the way, will be astonished at how much more sound quality is in the recording than they ever heard before.

A couple of minor points might be mentioned. The high frequencies may have been given a small boost in the mastering. I would recommend a modest roll-off in the highs for optimum listening pleasure. Use the "MONO" switch on your amplifier, if you have one. Vanguard provides only paper sleeves inside the album box. It is a good idea to replace these with vinyl-lined sleeves. I wish Vanguard would stop printing its record labels on an imitation marbled paper pattern. It makes the text on the label extremely hard to read. It is important in an instance like this set, where you have to pick one record out of five by reading what is on the label.

There are unquestionable mistakes and cases of orchestral imprecision throughout these recordings. In my opinion, there are no more than can be found in any concert performance by any great orchestra and conductor. In these days of perfectly edited tapes, we forget that transient errors can occur in any single performance. Even the obtrusive one in Till is not enough, for me, to disfigure an otherwise splendid recording. In the 1960s, Deutsche Grammophon released on their Heliodor label many of Strauss's earlier electric recordings for Polydor, both of his own music and that of other composers. None of these is available at present in the United States. I have heard it said that DGG plans another release in the near future. Even in the company of these 1944 recordings, the others should not be allowed to go out of print. Maybe someday they can be given the incredible sort of computer restoration that has recently been applied to some Caruso recordings. Finally, if Vanguard (or anyone else) can provide some first-hand information about the provenance of the present recordings, I am sure this Journal would be happy to publish it. For one thing, I wonder if Strauss also conducted Don Quixote or any other works in those 1944 sessions.

In summary, then, we have in this set of records Richard Strauss's own conducting of most of his major orchestral works. We often hear wistful expressions—if only we knew how Chopin played his Etudes!—if only we could hear Beethoven conduct one of his symphonies! It is a unique phenomenon of the twentieth century that we do have evidence of how composers performed their own music. It is one of the wonders of the world that such evidence is so widely ignored. Perhaps the 22nd century will appreciate these records better than we do today. They are unusually valuable as documentation of a man who was a great conductor independently

of his ability as a composer. The combination of composer and conductor is hard to match. Even though Strauss recorded most of the works on other occasions, these have the best recorded sound of any, and the interpretations are the equal of or superior to any of the earlier ones. They should be heard along with the score as a matter of course by any conductor planning to conduct one of these Strauss works—not that he would copy it, but only learn from it.

Their value, however, goes beyond documentation to pure good listening. Four of these recordings (Also sprach Zarathustra, Till Eulenspiegel, the Bourgeois gentilhomme Suite, and Ein Heldenleben) are ones which I personally listen to in preference to any other—if not to the exclusion of all others. Since I have had the corresponding Clavier records for three years, this opinion stands the test of time. The other works certainly merit respect and attention. Richard Strauss simply knew better than anyone else how to present his music at its very best. His best is very great indeed.

Peter Morse