

The Austrian conductor, Karl Böhm, the son of a lawyer, studied law before he entered the Graz Conservatory and then the Vienna Conservatory, where he studied under Eusebius Mandyczewski, the friend of Johannes Brahms.

In 1917 Karl Böhm became a rehearsal assistant in his home town, in 1919 the assistant director of music and in 1920 the senior director of music. In 1921, Bruno Walter called him to Munich. In 1927 he was appointed as chief musical director in Darmstadt. From 1931 to 1934 he fulfilled the same function at the Hamburg Opera and was appointed professor. In 1933, he conducted in Vienna for the first time in Tristan and Isolde by Wagner. He succeeded Fritz Busch, who had gone into exile, as the head of the Dresden Opera from 1934 to 1942. This was an important period for him in which he conducted first performances of works by Richard Strauss Die schweigsame Frau (1938), and Daphne (1938), which is dedicated to him. He also conducted the first performances of Romeo and Juliet (1940) and Die Zauberinsel (1942) by Sutermeister, and the Concert No. 2 for cornet (1943) by R. Strauss. In 1938 he took part in the Salzburg Festival for the first time, conducting Don Giovanni by Mozart, and thereafter he became a permanent guest. From 1943 to 1944 he directed the Vienna Opera. On the occasion of the 80th birthday of Richard Strauss, he conducted the festival performance of Ariadne on Naxos. In 1948 he conducted Don Giovanni at the Scala, in 1949 he gave a guest performance in Paris with the Vienna Opera. From 1950 to 1953, Böhm directed the German season at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, and conducted the first Spanish performance of the opera Wozzeck by Alban Berg, which had been translated into Spanish for this occasion. In 1953 he was responsible for the first performance of Gottfried von Einem's work Der Prozess. From 1954 to 1956 he directed the reconstructed Vienna Opera. In 1957 he conducted Don Giovanni at the Met. In 1962, he gave his debut in Bayreuth with Richard Wagner's opera Tristan and Isolde, which he conducted until 1970. 1964: The Mastersingers of Nürnberg by Wagner in Bayreuth; 1965 Fidelio by L.v. Beethoven in Tokyo; 1965-1967: Der Ring des Nibelungen by Wagner in Bayreuth – the last production by Wieland Wagner; 1971: visit to Moscow and The Flying Dutchman by Wagner in Bayreuth.

Karl Böhm's unyielding harshness and youthful spirit, his sensitivity, authority and total commitment to the music characterised this conductor, who always receded behind the works he conducted. He owed his world-wide success to his diligent life style. He appreciated Richard Strauss, L.v. Beethoven, Richard Wagner, Anton Bruckner and Alban Berg, but his special devotion was reserved for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, whose symphonies he recorded in 1974. He received numerous many honors, among which 1964 first Austrian 'Generalmusikdirektor.

RICHARD STRAUSS

ALSO SPRACH ZARATHUSTRA, OP. 30 BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER/KARL BÖHM



Like many of his contemporaries, the young Richard Strauss was enthralled with Wagner; indeed, a number of his compositions, especially the early opera *Guntram* (1887-1893), reveal an intent on Strauss' part to re-create the spirit of the older composer's works. However, as evidenced by his adoption of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* as the subject of a tone poem, Strauss' music soon took on a distinct identity. By this time, Nietzsche, though a former Wagner devotee, had become the most vocal and articulate critic of Wagner's philosophy and art. By aligning his artistic vision with that of Nietzsche, Strauss forever removed himself from the camp of "true" Wagnerians.

Also sprach Zarathustra (Thus Spoke Zarathustra), one of the high points of Strauss' early career, was completed in the summer of 1896 and premiered in November of the same year. Sandwiched between *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (1894-1895) and *Don Quixote* (1896-1897), it was among the works that forever solidified the composer's reputation and distilled the essence of his singular orchestral language.

Also sprach Zarathustra has nine sections. The introduction -- which has gained a peculiar immortality from its prominent use in Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey* -- is followed by these distinctive episodes, each of which explores an element of Nietzsche's text, from "Von den Hinterweltlern" (From the Back-world People) to an expression of intense yearning ("Von der großen Sehnsucht") and a portrayal of joy and passion (Von den Freuden und Leidenschaften). At the center of the work is "Das Grablied" (Song of the Grave), which sets the stage for the clever and ironic "Von der Wissenschaft," in which a truncated fugue gently pokes fun at science by -- perhaps prophetically --

including all twelve chromatic pitches in its subject. "Der Genesende" (The Convalescent) slowly regains its strength, bursting forth into the energetic "Das Tanzlied" (Dance-Song), led by a solo fiddle.

The final section, "Nachtwandlerlied" (Song of the Night Wanderer), makes subtle use of tonal and thematic cues (most notably, a return to the tonality of the opening section) to suggest that the journey of the unnamed Night Wanderer is cyclic -- eternally returning to its beginning. This lack of resolution is mirrored in the lingering dissonance, the half step between B and C, which ends the work, capturing the questioning and unsettling nature of Nietzsche's own conclusion.

The whole of *Also sprach Zarathustra* is through-composed; though some suggest that it contains aspects of both sonata and rondo forms, no structural analysis is sustainable without reference to Nietzsche's text. Like most of Strauss' tone poems, *Also sprach Zarathustra* employs massive instrumental forces; however, it provides a contrast to Strauss' more strongly narrative works in its deployment of the orchestra in a more subtle and deft manner. Here, short, transformable motives take the place of the long, sinuous tunes that emerge in works like *Ein Heldenleben* (1898). The relative concision of its musical material suggests the composer's attempt to mirror the nature and character of his literary source.

RICHARD STRAUSS

ALSO SPRACH ZARATHUSTRA, OP. 30

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER/KARL BÖHM

- 1 Einleitung, oder Sonnenaufgang 1:43**
- 2 Von den Hinterweltlern 3:39**
- 3 Von der grossen Sehnsucht 2:01**
- 4 Von den Freuden und Leidenschaften 1:50**
- 5 Das Grablied 2:16**
- 6 Von der Wissenschaft 4:58**
- 7 Der Genesende 5:18**
- 8 Das Tanzlied 8:04**
- 9 Nachtwandlerlied 5:07**

Violin [Solo] – Michel Schwalbé
Recording Info: Recorded by DGG 1958



For more info e-mail us:
admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
or visit our website:
www.highdeftapetransfers.com