

Fritz Reiner was one of the most acclaimed conductors of the 20th century -- noted for the vast range of his repertoire, which included both symphonic and operatic pieces spanning from the traditional canon to contemporary material, he was also an influential educator who counted among his pupils Leonard Bernstein. Reiner was born in Budapest, Hungary, on December 19, 1888; despite earning a law degree from the University of Bucharest, he pursued a career in music, and at age 21 was named chorusmaster of the Budapest Opera. A stint as conductor with the Budapest Volksoper followed before Reiner was chosen in 1914 to serve as principal conductor of the Royal Opera in Dresden, where he collaborated with Richard Strauss on productions of several of the composer's early operas.



In 1922 Reiner left Europe to relocate to America, settling in Cincinnati, OH, and signing on as conductor with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; a decade later he was tapped to head the orchestral and opera departments at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, where his students included Bernstein. After next serving as the music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony between 1938 and 1948, he served five years with the Metropolitan Opera. While Reiner's frequent migration might have been attributed largely to a restless creativity, he was also a notoriously difficult personality who frequently alienated those around him -- many of the musicians under his command openly loathed him, although he inevitably inspired the best work of their careers.

Reiner's own best work was undoubtedly his tenure with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which he elevated into one of the most celebrated ensembles in the world. Moving over to the CSO in 1953, he not only established the orchestra as a top-flight live attraction but also as a popular recording entity -- the countless albums they made for RCA's Living Stereo series during Reiner's decade-long tenure were much acclaimed by collectors for both the power of the performances and the unusually high fidelity of the recordings themselves. Releases like Fritz Reiner Conducts Richard Strauss and Fritz Reiner Conducts Bartók in particular remain definitive interpretations of the composers in question. Health problems forced Reiner to resign his position in 1962, and he died in New York City on November 15 of the following year.

# R. STRAUSS

## SINFONIA DOMESTICA

Fritz Reiner - The Chicago Symphony Orchestra



Richard Strauss once claimed that he could translate anything into musical sounds, that he could take even the events of something so mundane as the process of eating -- using one utensil and then another, sampling this dish and then that one -- and craft a musical equivalent. He put his own claim to the test when composing the *Sinfonia Domestica*, Op. 53, of 1902-1903; here is a tone poem (it is not strictly called such, but it is certainly not a real symphony either) whose subject is not a figure of legend, as in *Don Juan*, or the mysteries of Death and Transfiguration, or a portrait of the composer as hero, as in *Ein Heldenleben*, but rather a simple day in the life of a family man. The *Sinfonia Domestica* is a warm, tender, and often lightly humorous work, scored for a massive orchestra (Strauss even adds four saxophones to his orchestra). It received its world premiere all the way across the Atlantic Ocean during a 1904 festival of Strauss music in New York City.

Strauss originally wrote many programmatic indications in the score of the *Sinfonia Domestica*, but he eventually opted to take almost all of them out. Still, even without them, the "action" is easy enough to follow. An opening movement introduces us to the family as a group and then, in three sections marked *Thema One*, *Thema Two*, and *Thema Three*, to the father, mother, and child in turn (presumably Strauss, his wife Pauline, and their son Franz). The child's fun and games make for a fine Scherzo, but soon it is time for bed (*Wiegenlied*, or lullaby). A voluptuous Adagio contains a romantic interlude, but when morning comes the parents are found fighting with one another (Strauss appropriately provides an exhilarating double fugue, tempo *Sehr Lebhaft*). Peace is made, however, and the safety, coziness, and happiness of hearth and home are assured by a rousing F major.

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## SINFONIA DOMESTICA

Fritz Reiner - The Chicago Symphony Orchestra

**1 Bewegt 5:22**

**2 Scherzo 6:27**

**3 Wiegenlied / Cradle Song 6:04**

**4 Adagio 12:18**

**5 Finale 13:34**

**Total Time: 43:45**

**Producer – Richard Mohr    Recording Engineer – Lewis Layton**  
**Recorded November 5, 1956, at Orchestra Hall, Chicago by RCA**



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