

Herbert von Karajan was among the most famous conductors of all time -- a man whose talent and autocratic bearing lifted him to a position of unprecedented dominance in European musical circles. He was born on April 5, 1908 in Salzburg, Austria, to a cultured Austrian family of Greek descent (their original name was Karajannis). His musical training began at the Mozarteum Conservatory in Salzburg where he studied piano with Franz Ledwenke, theory with Franz Zauer, and composition with Bernhard Paumgartner, who encouraged Karajan to pursue conducting. Karajan graduated from the conservatory in 1926, and continued his studies at the Vienna Academy of Music and Performing Arts, where he studied piano with Josef Hofman and conducting with Alexander Wunderer and Franz Schalk. Karajan's conducting debut came on January 22, 1929, with the Mozarteum Orchestra in Salzburg. Consequently, the young maestro directed a performance of Strauss' Salome at the Salzburg Festspielhaus, and was named principal conductor of the Ulm Stadttheater, where he remained in that capacity until 1934.

The next fourteen years saw the young conductor's reputation grow rapidly. He was named music director of the Aachen Stadttheater (1934-1942), had his debut at the Vienna State Opera (1937), and accepted a position with the Deutsch Grammophon Gesellschaft (1938-1943). In 1939, Karajan was appointed conductor of the Berlin State Opera, and director of the Preussische Staatskapelle Symphony concerts. In 1948, he was appointed for life, to the position of director of the Chorale Society at the Society of the Friends of Music, in Vienna.

In 1948, Herbert von Karajan also served at the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, and La Scala, before succeeding Wilhelm Furtwängler as the music director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra -- a union that would cement his reputation as one of the world's premier conductors. In 1955, Karajan brought that orchestra to the United States on the first of many international tours. The decade that followed saw Karajan accept several appointments, including those to the Salzburg Festival and the Vienna State Opera. In 1967, Karajan had his Metropolitan Opera debut, conducting a performance of Wagner's Die Walküre, and the same year, founded the Salzburg Easter Festival. In 1968, the Herbert von Karajan Foundation was founded to support the research of "conscious musical perception."

Herbert von Karajan was awarded the "Ring of the Province of Salzburg," Golden Gramophone, Arts Prize (Lucerne), Grand Prix International du Disque, Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society, German Golden Disc Prize, UNESCO International Music Prize, Olympia Prize of the Onassis Foundation, and multiple Gramophone awards, among others. He was elected to an honorary senate seat at the University of Salzburg. The maestro was also recognized with honorary degrees from a host of universities.

Karajan, along with Akio Morita and Norio Ohga (president and vice-president respectively, of Japanese Sony Group), unveiled and presented the Compact Disc Digital Audio System in 1981. In 1982, Karajan founded Telemondial S.A.M. with Uli Markle, in an effort to document the maestro's illustrious legacy on videotape and laser disc, and to help broaden the scope of "musical expression," through the use of modern technology. In 1984, Karajan recorded the complete Beethoven symphonies with film adaptation, made possible by his own Telemondial. In 1988, Deutsch Grammophone released a collection of one hundred "masterworks" recordings made by the conductor. Herbert von Karajan's discography is impressive to say the least, and will certainly endure in musical arenas, as some of the most valued interpretations of the repertoire available. Herbert von Karajan, often referred to as "general music director of Europe," died in Salzburg of heart failure July 16, 1989.

STRAUSS - Don Juan Death And Transfiguration



Mastered in DSD256

Vienna Philharmonic • HERBERT VON KARAJAN

Don Juan (1888) stands out among Strauss' early tone poems for its almost perfect structure and concise design. Taking Nikolaus Lenau's fragmentary play of the same title as his starting point, Strauss fashioned a tone poem which would convey the story of the legendary inveterate womanizer. The connection with Lenau's version of the story is confirmed by the quotation of text as an incipit in the score.

Strauss quickly captures the impetuous nature of Don Juan in the soaring theme which opens the piece. While Strauss did not allow a narrative description to be printed at the premiere (as was then often the case with program music), the story is easy enough to follow. Taking the more lyrical sections as depictions of various women, one after another, one hears the exuberant opening theme that occurs between them, and which opens the work, as Don Juan's own. This theme intensifies and becomes more ardent throughout until, near the end, it dissolves into the stormy music associated with the Commendatore, the father of a woman Don Juan had seduced. As in Mozart's similarly themed opera *Don Giovanni* (1787), the Don meets his end at the hands of the Commendatore. In Strauss' treatment, however, the spirit of Don Juan emerges even after his defeat.

Strauss himself conducted the premiere of the work in fall 1889, and it was well received from the start. In its exceedingly vivid orchestration, use of short motives, and intense lyricism, *Don Juan* provides a striking and enduring encapsulation of Strauss' musical language.

Among Strauss' tone poems, *Tod und Verklärung* (Death and Transfiguration) stands out for its concise program of an unnamed artist's demise and the subsequent transformation of his spirit. Unlike *Ein Heldenleben*, which contained an autobiographical element, *Tod und Verklärung* is more universal in its expression of dying. Here Strauss does not present a triumphant narrative of individual accomplishment, but rather explores the fleeting images of past experience as they dissolve before a dying person's eyes. Composed in 1888-1889, just after *Don Juan*, *Tod und Verklärung* departs from the kind of tone poem Strauss had written up to that time. Instead of using a literary source as the basis, he imagined his own scenario. In fact the verses by Alexander Ritter appended to the score are an afterthought Strauss added after he had completed the work. He is reputed to have said, just before his own death, that dying was just as he had depicted it in *Tod und Verklärung*.

Strauss cast the work in the form of an extended sonata form, with a structure freer than he had yet attempted in his tone poems. Several evocative motives occur at the outset, including one suggesting an irregular heartbeat that is critical to the denouement of the work. Strauss uses various other motives to depict the protagonist's respiration and suffering; he also presents, early on, a short contrasting idea, depicting an ideal state, that re-emerges the extraordinarily lovely portrayal of transfiguration later in the work. Given the relatively unspecific nature of the program, this tone poem has an open-ended quality that involves the listener in the work. The vast and varied orchestration is typical of the mature Strauss. The moment of transfiguration is brilliant: a C major chord builds from the basses up over a powerful tread that includes deep bells and gongs.

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- 1. Don Juan 17:07**
 - 2. Death and Transfiguration 23:55**
- Total Time: 41:02**

Transferred from a 2-track tape 15ips tape
Don Juan: Producer: John Culshaw Engineer: James Brown
Recorded by Decca January 1960 Sofiensaal, Vienna

Death And Transfiguration:
Producer: Erik Smith Engineer: James Brown
Recorded by Decca June 1960 Sofiensaal, Vienna



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