

beginning.

After the virile, Schumann-esque opening bars, which provide the soloist a bravura hunting motif, the horn offers a far more lyrical second subject. The soloist takes the lead through the development section, the orchestra merely underlining the solo part and providing a few short bridge passages, including one that gently leads straight into the second movement.

This Andante is a highly lyrical ballad for the horn over a rudimentary orchestral accompaniment built from a simple and extremely repetitive four-note figure. Halfway through, the horn takes up a more extroverted but still long-lined theme over a twittering woodwind figure; the inspiration now seems to be French opera arias.

The finale is a fast rondo featuring a bravura main theme for the horn, which gives way to more expansive but still urgent material. The scherzo-like final bars require fine control and an extremely light touch, as if Strauss were turning to Mendelssohn for a few last words.

RICHARD STRAUSS

# SYMPHONIA DOMESTICA

CONCERTO NO. 1 IN E-FLAT MAJOR FOR HORN AND ORCHESTRA

GEORGE SZELL

THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

Myron Bloom - Soloist, French Horn



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*.

Strauss was only 18 and had yet to develop his own distinctive style when he completed his first horn concerto in 1883. He wrote it for his father, a professional horn player, but the elder Strauss found the work too difficult. Today's soloists, ironically, find it much easier than the horn concerto Strauss wrote at the opposite end of his life. Schumann is the dominant influence here; it's hard not to detect a bit of the earlier composer's *Konzertstück* for four horns, and other works, in some of Strauss' more declamatory passages, especially the

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- 1 Thema I. Bewegt -Thema II. Sehr lebhaft - Thema III. Ruhig 4:49**
- 2 Scherzo (munter) - Wiegenlied. Mässig langsam 11:36**
- 3 Adagio - Langsam 11:45**
- 4 Finale - Sehr lebhaft 13:17**
- 5 Concerto No. 1 For Horn And Orchestra 15:55**

Sinfonia Domestica Recorded by Columbia: January 1964 Sinfonia Domestica  
Horn And Orchestra Recorded by Columbia October 1961  
Producer - Paul Myers



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