

# Gewandhausorchester Leipzig/Andris Nelsons: The Strauss Project Part I

**Start time:** 7.30pm

**Approximate running time:** 105 mins including a 20-minute interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change

## Programme

### **Richard Strauss** *Macbeth*

#### *Der Rosenkavalier*

1. Vorspiel (Prelude)
2. Präsentation der Silbernen Rose (Presentation of the Silver Rose)
3. Walzer von Baron Ochs (Baron Ochs's Waltz)
4. Ist ein Traum (It's a Dream)
5. Walzer (Waltz)

#### *Ein Heldenleben*

1. Der Held (The Hero)
2. Des Helden Widersacher (The Hero's Adversaries)
3. Des Helden Gefährtin (The Hero's Companion)
4. Des Helden Walstatt (The Hero at Battle)
5. Des Helden Friedenswerke (The Hero's Works of Peace)
6. Des Helden Weltflucht und Vollendung (The Hero's Retirement from this World and Completion)

**Tonight's concert begins with one of Strauss's earliest mature works, a piece in which he first enthusiastically embraced the musical style that would bring him such success, writes David Kettle.**

Richard's father, Franz Strauss, was the eminent principal horn at the Bavarian Court Opera (now the Bavarian State Opera) in Munich, and had steadfastly supported his son's remarkable musical endeavours – but had warned him away from such dangerous radicals as Wagner and Liszt, lest they exert too much of a decadent influence on the young man's music.

At first, Richard concurred. But in 1885, things changed. Two years earlier he'd been appointed assistant to the eminent conductor Hans von Bülow at the Meiningen Court Orchestra, and in 1885 got to know Alexander Ritter, one of the orchestra's violinists, who became a firm friend. It was Ritter who lured Strauss away from the safety of conservative musical traditions and encouraged him to explore the far more perilous, unpredictable, free-thinking world of Liszt and Wagner. Strauss called it a 'completely new path', and vowed to invent a new musical form for each story he wished to convey.

*Macbeth* was one of his first attempts in his brand new language, and predictably, plenty of toil and trouble went into getting it right. He showed an initial draft to von Bülow, who wasn't impressed, and went on to create two more versions before arriving at the work we know today, which was premiered in 1890. Though the piece clearly conjures the world of Shakespeare's Scottish play, Strauss left no specific description of what he intended his music to represent. Nonetheless, it's not hard to discern contrasting themes for *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth* after the work's opening fanfares, nor the arrival and murder of Duncan, *Macbeth's* coronation, and a final breakdown for *Lady Macbeth* before a bright victory for Malcolm and Macduff.

We jump ahead two decades for tonight's next piece, and in that intervening period, Strauss's music had taken enormous leaps forward too. His reputation was cemented by his wildly decadent operas *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909), which scandalised and titillated audiences in equal measure. But in his next opera, *Der Rosenkavalier* (The Knight of the Rose) Strauss veered away from outrage and moved instead into gentle, sophisticated comedy. The middle-aged Marschallin is having an affair with dashing 17-year-old Octavian, but when the boorish Baron Ochs co-opts the young man to deliver his own marriage proposal to the youthful Sophie (by offering her a silver rose, hence the opera's title), Octavian and Sophie end up falling for each other.

barbican

Critics hated *Der Rosenkavalier*, but audiences loved it, and it made Strauss a lot of money. He capitalised further through the orchestral music he extracted from the opera, though the *Rosenkavalier Suite* most often performed today was probably put together by New York Philharmonic conductor Artur Rodziński, and published with Strauss's approval in 1945. It brings together the opera's key moments, though not in narrative order.

We begin with stormy love-making from the Marschallin and Octavian (those whooping horns leave little to the imagination) before the music calms to find them in post-coital bliss. The Suite then jumps to Octavian's presentation of the rose to Sophie, and the two young people fall in love to a touching oboe melody and sparkling harmonies from flutes, celesta and harps. We then jump back to a waltz tune in which Baron Ochs brags about his impending engagement to Sophie, before music from the opera's concluding trio in which the Marschallin releases Octavian, and the young lovers sing their rapturous duet. The Suite concludes with more boisterous music as Baron Ochs is chased offstage by his creditors.

From Strauss the pioneer to Strauss the operatic romantic to – well, Strauss the hero? Though he never quite came out and said that the subject of his *Ein Heldenleben* (A Hero's Life) was himself, it seems fairly obvious that that's the case. He admitted that the long, capricious violin solo in 'The Hero's Companion' was a portrait of his wife Pauline, and 'The Hero's Works of Peace' is a tapestry of quotations from his own earlier pieces.

Strauss was 34 when he conducted *Ein Heldenleben's* premiere in 1899, and riding high on success both as a conductor and composer. Those headings mentioned above are the titles of two of *Ein Heldenleben's* six distinct sections, which run together in a single span of music, and chart an overall storyline of love, peril, triumph over adversity, and final transcendence.

Strauss leaps onto the stage with the swashbuckling horn and string theme that opens the first section, 'The Hero', though the heroic mood is shattered by the prattling woodwind and grumbling tubas of 'The Hero's Adversaries', a rather vicious portrait of the critics who'd found fault in Strauss's creations. He turns to his wife in 'The Hero's Companion', before taking up arms against his detractors in the immense military canvas of 'The Hero at Battle'. He returns victorious, but retreats to consider his contributions to the world in 'The Hero's Works of Peace', which quotes from *Don Juan*, *Death and Transfiguration*, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Don Quixote* and *Macbeth*. *Ein Heldenleben* concludes gently in 'The Hero's Retirement from this World and Completion', with Strauss and his wife Pauline represented in a horn and violin duet, rising above trivial earthly conflict in a glowing duet.

© David Kettle

Produced by the Barbican

# Performers

**Andris Nelsons** conductor

**Sebastian Breuninger** concertmaster

**Andreas Buschatz** concertmaster

**Julius Bekesch** associate concertmaster

**Andreas Seidel** associate concertmaster

## Gewandhausorchester Leipzig

violin I

**Elisabeth Dingstad**

**Tristan Thery**

**Susanne Hallmann**

**Brita Zühlke**

**Dorothea Vogel**

**Ina Wiehe**

**Gunnar Harms**

**Johanna Berndt**

**Franziska Mantel**

**Kana Ohashi**

**Simon Riverin**

**Olatz Ruiz de Gordejuela Aguirre**

**Anna Schuberth-Richwien**

violin II

**Peter Gerlach**

**Karl Heinrich Niebuhr**

**Sebastian Ude**

**Dorothee Appelhans**

**Camille Gouton**

**Bernadette Wundrak**

**Dietrich Reinhold**

**Kathrin Pantzler**

**Edwin Ilg**

**Lars Peter Leser**

**Lydia Dobler**

**Nemanja Bugarčić**

**Ayano Tajima**

**Anna Wiedemann**

**Theresa Reustle**

**Jakub Strzelecki**

**Zeno Fusetti**

viola

**Luke Turrell**

**Dorothea Hemken**

**Olaf Hallmann**

**Alice Wedel**

**Katharina Dargel**

**Matthias Weise**

**Ivan Bezpálov**

**Anton Jiváev**

**Tahlia Petrosian**

**Ivo Bauer**

**Jihye Han**

**Maria Körner**

cello

**Valentino Worlitzsch**

**Daniel Pfister**

**Matthias Schreiber**

**Gayane Khachatryan**

**Ulrike Strauch**

**Heiko Schumann**

**Christian Erben**

**Henriette Neubert**

**Axel von Huene**

**Pedro Peláez**

**Vincent Lo**

double bass

**Christian Ockert**

**Felix Leissner**

**Karsten Heins**

**Waldemar Schwiertz**

**Tobias Martin**

**Bernd Meier**

**Eberhard Spree**

**Christoph Winkler**

**Henning Rasche**

flute

**Katalin Stefula**

**Sébastien Jacot**

**Yejin Han**

**Manfred Ludwig**

**Johanna Schlag**

piccolo

**Gudrun Hinze**

oboe

**Henrik Wahlgren**

**Susanne Wettemann**

**Thomas Hipper**

**Amanda Tauriņa**

english horn

**Gundel Jannemann-Fischer**

**Aurélien Laizé**

clarinet

**Thomas Ziesch**

**Andreas Lehnert**

**Matthias Kreher**

**Edgar Heßke**

bass clarinet

**Volker Hemken**

bassoon

**Riccardo Terzo**

**Axel Benoit**

**Albert Kegel**

**Thomas Reinhardt**

contrabassoon

**Hans Schlag**

horn

**Bernhard Krug**

**Clemens Röger**

**Jochen Pleß**

**Fabian Borchers**

**Juliane Fleischman**

**Jürgen Merkert**

**Maciej Baranowski**

**Wolfram Straßer**

trumpet

**Gábor Richter**

**Jonathan Müller**

**Szabolcs Schütt**

**Karl-Heinz Georgi**

**Johann Clemens**

trombone

**Tobias Hasselt**

**Tomás Trnka**

**Dirk Lehmann**

**Stefan Wagner**

bass trombone

**Tino Mönks**

tuba

**Ole Heiland**

**Niklas Horn**

timpani

**Mathias Müller**

**Tom Greenleaves**

percussion

**Steffen Cotta**

**Philipp Schroeder**

**Wolfram Holl**

**Wolfgang Gindlhuber**

**Matthias Dölling**

**Norbert Rabanser**

harp

**Carmen Alcántara Fernández**

**Miriam Ruf**

celeste

**Charlotte Steppes**



The City of London  
Corporation is the founder  
and principal funder  
of the Barbican Centre