



DECCA

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ELOQUENCE

## RICHARD STRAUSS

Burleske

Duet-Concertino

Oboe Concerto

Aus Italien

Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme

Herbert Blomstedt

Vladimir Ashkenazy

Lorin Maazel

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864-1949)

CD 1

64'09

- 1 Burleske in D minor for Piano and Orchestra 19'04

Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano  
Gewandhausorchester Leipzig  
Herbert Blomstedt

Duet-Concertino for Clarinet & Bassoon

- 2 I Allegro moderato 6'41  
3 II Andante 3'08  
4 III Rondo 9'53

Dimitri Ashkenazy, clarinet  
Kim Walker, bassoon  
Radio-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin  
Vladimir Ashkenazy

Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra in D major

- 5 I Allegro moderato 8'31  
6 II Andante 8'52  
7 III Vivace – Allegro 7'44

Gordon Hunt, oboe  
Radio-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin  
Vladimir Ashkenazy

**CD 2****Aus Italien, Op. 16**

<b>1</b>	I	Auf der Campagna	9'58
<b>2</b>	II	In Roms Ruinen	11'03
<b>3</b>	III	Am Strande von Sorrent	12'36
<b>4</b>	IV	Neapolitanisches Volksleben	8'11

**The Cleveland Orchestra**  
**Vladimir Ashkenazy**

**Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme****Der Bürger als Edelmann**

<b>5</b>	I	Overture to Act I	4'00
<b>6</b>	II	Minuet	1'33
<b>7</b>	III	The Fencing Master	1'49
<b>8</b>	IV	Entry and Dance of the Tailors	5'27
<b>9</b>	V	Lully's Minuet	2'08
<b>10</b>	VI	Courante	3'04
<b>11</b>	VII	Entry of Cléonte	4'16
<b>12</b>	VIII	Prelude to Act II	3'10
<b>13</b>	IX	Le Diner	10'03

**Friedrich Gulda**, piano  
**Willi Boskovsky**, violin  
**Emanuel Brabec**, cello  
**Wiener Philharmoniker**  
**Lorin Maazel**

**77'32**

Total timing: 141'41

There's nothing like Italy to make a composer's juices flow. Felix Mendelssohn's visit in 1830-31 inspired his 'Italian' Symphony and Elgar's *In the South (Alassio)* was the result of a holiday taken at the Riviera by the composer and his wife during the winter of 1903. *Aus Italien* (From Italy) is Strauss's first contribution to the musical picture-postcard industry. Sometimes it is referred to as a tone poem, but Strauss called it a 'symphonic fantasy' – a more appropriate term, given that the work is in four separate movements, and roughly follows the scheme of a symphony.

While barely in his twenties, Strauss served as assistant to conductor Hans von Bülow in Meiningen. Although he remained there for less than a year, he learned a lot from von Bülow, who was a mentor not just in conducting, but also in matters of musical taste in general. After von Bülow's departure from Meiningen, Strauss had little interest in remaining there, so he accepted an appointment with the Court Opera in Munich, to begin in August 1886.

Finding himself with several months at his disposal, and with a relative willing to bankroll his travels, Strauss set out for Italy. The young composer saw and did almost everything a tourist would be expected to do there (including climbing up Mount Vesuvius), although he

hardly spoke a word of Italian. He had a grand time, the theft of his guide-book, suitcase and clothes notwithstanding. He took in the beautiful art, beautiful architecture and beautiful women. He thought Italian music was 'trash', though, and reserved special opprobrium for Verdi's *Aida*, calling it 'dreadful'. (He granted that there were some tolerable parts to that composer's Requiem, though.)

*Aus Italien* was begun even before Strauss had left Italy, and was completed that September, a month into Strauss's tenure in Munich. The movement titles leave little doubt as to what images were going through Strauss's mind as he composed: the Campagna, Rome, Sorrento and Naples had all been among his destinations. In the last movement, 'Folk Life of Naples', Strauss quotes the popular song *Funiculi, Funiculà*. Apparently he believed that it was a traditional song, but the song's composer, Luigi Denza, was very much alive, and successfully sued Strauss for pinching his tune!

Strauss conducted the premiere in March 1887. It was largely a success, although there was some hissing, and also the shaking of heads about the brashness of it all – including from Strauss's father, who played the horn in the orchestra. Von Bülow, the score's dedicatee, seemed a little nonplussed by *Aus Italien*.

He called Strauss a genius, but worried that the score was more difficult than it really needed to be.

Roughly speaking, the first part of Strauss's career as a composer was dominated by tone-poems, and the second by works for the stage, but he never left absolute music entirely behind. Over his lifetime, he wrote a number of concertante works, usually for specific performers. His first horn concerto, for example, was composed for his father, and the *Parergon zur Symphonie Domestica* and *Panathenäenzug* were composed for pianist Paul Wittgenstein, who had lost his right arm in World War One.

The *Burleske*, a virtual concerto in one movement for piano and orchestra, comes from Strauss's time in Meiningen, and so is even earlier than *Aus Italien*. It was intended for performance by von Bülow himself, who also was a fine pianist. Strauss's mentor was not glowing in his praise, however. Von Bülow called the *Burleske* 'unplayable' and perhaps there was some truth to that, because before the work finally could be premiered in 1890 (not by von Bülow, but by Eugen d'Albert, a pianist of fabulous skill), Strauss had to simplify the piano part. After the premiere, von Bülow wrote to Johannes Brahms with his verdict. Although he admitted that the *Burleske* had some genius

to it, he thought that in other ways it was 'horrifying'.

Strauss was all of twenty-one when he began the *Burleske*, and it is not hard to hear youthful cockiness and even irreverence in this work. Biographer Tim Ashley finds it all 'a colossal joke, turning the grandiloquence of the nineteenth-century concerto on its head.' The pianist and the orchestra trade jibes, make self-important pronouncements and then giggle over them. Furthermore, the treasure-house of German Romanticism has been raided. Echoes of *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Walküre* have been spotted in the *Burleske*, and it has been suggested that the work parodies Brahms's piano concertos. No wonder Brahms and von Bülow were keeping a close eye on the young composer! *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* was still a few years off, but in the *Burleske* one can feel Till kicking in the womb.

Decades later, long after he had established himself as a composer, Strauss brushed a little too close to the Nazi party for his good. He and his music became pawns during the years leading up to and including World War II, when German culture and politics became inextricably intertwined. He was even named president of Hitler's *Reichsmusikkammer*, which oversaw music composed and performed during the

Third Reich. Whether Strauss was naïve, opportunistic or something else entirely is not entirely clear.

Finally, the nightmare ended. On 30 April 1945, Hitler committed suicide and on the same day the Allies entered Garmisch, where Strauss had been living since 1908. In spite of the events of the recent past, he was able to bank on his fame, and he and his wife avoided being removed from their villa, which was to have been commandeered. In fact, he was treated largely with respect and even admiration – American soldiers visited him at his villa – although there were also those who attempted to charge him of complicity with the Third Reich.

One of those visiting American soldiers was oboist John de Lancie, who had played with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra before the war. At first, de Lancie's suggestion to Strauss that he compose a concerto for oboe seemed to go nowhere, but by the end of the summer, Strauss (then in his eighties) was hard at work. The finished work soon became part of the classical oboe repertoire – no less important than the sole oboe concerto by Mozart, which Strauss's concerto seems to tip its hat to. Gone was the drama and chromatic tortuousness of the later tone poems, for example. It is amazing how Strauss could return to such musical innocence,

after all that had happened to the world around him.

Fearing that he would be held officially accountable for his associations with the Third Reich, and concerned about living conditions in Germany, Strauss and his wife left Germany later that year and became exiles in Switzerland. As a result the Oboe Concerto was completed in that country. The first soloist was not de Lancie (who was granted exclusive pre-publication rights in the United States, however), but Marcel Saillet.

Now living in Switzerland, Strauss was frustrated by an apparent reluctance among that country's musicians to perform his music, the Oboe Concerto notwithstanding. He could not understand why operas by Verdi – who, as an Italian, had been indirectly associated with the Axis – were programmed, while his own operas were not. To keep himself occupied, the composer revisited older works and, when the occasion arose, created new ones. Another concertante work from this period is the *Duet-Concertino*.

As the name suggests, this is a small concerto for clarinet and bassoon, accompanied only by harp and strings. It was written for Hugo Burghauser, formerly principal bassoonist with the Vienna Philharmonic, and later living in New

York City. Burghauser had assisted Strauss in selling some of his manuscripts and thereby raising money to live on during his exile in Switzerland. It seems that the Duet-Concertino was a sort of thank-you gift for Burghauser, whose beautiful tone Strauss admired. It was completed at the end of 1947 and premiered, in a broadcast over Swiss radio, in April 1948.

Strauss never confirmed what extra-musical meaning, if any, lay behind the Duet-Concertino. He suggested that it was inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's tale 'The Swineherd' but he also told Burghauser that the music was about a princess (the clarinet) and a bear (bassoon). (In either case, the swineherd and the bear finally are transformed into a handsome prince.) Like the Oboe Concerto, the Duet-Concertino trades Strauss's earlier style for a Mozartean simplicity, even innocence.

The work of French playwright Molière had served as an inspiration for Strauss's opera *Der Rosenkavalier*. Following the opera's great success when it was premiered in 1911, Strauss and librettist Hugo von Hofmannsthal decided to return to Molière – specifically, to *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, or, to use its German title, *Der Bürger als Edelmann*. Strauss and Hofmannsthal envisioned a sort of double-header in which a performance of Molière's

comedy, in an adaptation by Hofmannsthal, and with incidental music by Strauss, would precede a new opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos*. The composer and the librettist quarreled over the idea, and the coupling of Molière's parvenu Jourdain with the abandoned princess of Greek mythology finally proved to be artistically and practically unmanageable. The opera took precedence, and like Ariadne herself, *Der Bürger als Edelmann* was left behind.

Left behind, yes, but not forgotten. A year after the revised version of *Ariadne auf Naxos* was presented in Vienna, Hofmannsthal suggested that it would be worthwhile to revisit *Der Bürger als Edelmann*. The music Strauss already had composed could be reused, and new music could be added to fill out the production. This revised version was presented in Berlin in 1918, and was little more successful than it had been when it was tethered to *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Undeterred, Hofmannsthal suggested that an operatic treatment might work, but Strauss had had enough of it, although he did return to the music a year later to create the concert suite recorded here.

Strauss makes good use of his gift for both pastiche and parody in this music. The Overture introduces us to the pompous (but not wholly unlikely) Jourdain, newly wealthy and all too

eager to demonstrate his class and good taste to all. Next, he is taught the minuet, and the melody Strauss uses is taken from his aborted ballet *Das Insel Kythere*. The Fencing Master comes to give Jourdain a lesson; Jourdain is quickly put to shame. Now it is time to dress the *bourgeois gentilhomme*, and the tailors enter with a gavotte.

The next three numbers are adapted from Jean-Baptiste de Lully, who composed the music for several of Molière's plays when they were first produced. Cléonte is a young suitor who wishes to wed Lucille, Jourdain's daughter. The Intermezzo is Strauss again, albeit in a pastiche of period style.

Strauss's best joke is saved for last. In 'The Dinner', after dances for the cooks and scullery boys, several courses are served, including fish and mutton. For the former, music from Wagner's *Das Rheingold* is quoted, suggesting that the fish might have come from the Rhine river. For the latter, Strauss quotes from his own *Don Quixote* – specifically, the variation in which Quixote and Sancho Panza attack a herd of sheep, believing them to be an army of evil-doers. Next comes a dish of larks and thrushes (dawn music from *Der Rosenkavalier*) and an 'omelette surprise', the 'surprise' apparently

being a kitchen boy who dances an athletic waltz for Jourdain's guests.

**Raymond Tuttle**



EMIL BERLINER STUDIOS

**Recording producers:** David Mottley (Burleske); Michael Haas (Duet-Concertino, Oboe Concerto); Andrew Cornall (Aus Italien); Erik Smith (Le Bourgeois Gentlehomme)

**Recording engineers:** Eike Bohm, Martin Atkinson (Burleske); Stanley Goodall (Duet-Concertino, Oboe Concerto); Colin Moorfoot (Aus Italien); Gordon Parry (Le Bourgeois Gentlehomme)

**Recording location:** Sofiensaal, Vienna, Austria, October 1966 (Le Bourgeois Gentlehomme); Masonic Auditorium, Cleveland, USA, July 1990 (Aus Italien); Jesus-Christus-Kirche, Berlin, Germany, January 1991 (Oboe Concerto), December 1991 (Duet-Concertino); Gewandhaus, Leipzig, Germany, September 2004 (Burleske)

**Remastering engineers:** Daniel Schleaf, Harald Gericke: Emil Berliner Studios, Hannover, Germany

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