versions (see the editorial reports in the critical editions of the keyboard and orchestral versions of the *Wunderhorn* songs).[5] Ironically, these findings would add yet further support to Vignoles's inspired approach to the art of accompanying.

Jeremy Barham
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Richard Strauss

Symphony No. 2 in F minor op. 12
Romanze in F major
Six Songs op. 68

Eileen Hulse *sop*, Raphael Wallfisch *vc*, Neeme Järvi *cond*, Royal Scottish National Orchestra

Chandos Classics CHAN 10236 (76 minutes: DDD: 24-bit/96 kHz digitally remastered)
Notes and translations included.

Few would argue that there is a shortage of recordings of Richard Strauss's music. Indeed, his tone poems, most of his operas and many of the *Lieder* are core works for any representative collection; and the multiplicity of performances – both recent and historical – available for most of his mature compositions makes picking definitive recordings of works such as *Don Juan*, op. 20 (TrV 156), or *Till Eulenspiegel*, op. 28 (TrV 171), both a challenge and a pleasure for anyone who cares about Strauss's music.[1] In recent years even Strauss's less well-known works have begun to appear in multiple recordings, and that welcome development focuses our attention on compositions that give us a better – that is, a more accurate picture – of Strauss's place in late nineteenth-century musical culture.

Strauss left a more accessible record of his early works than did many other nineteenth-century composers. Eighteen of his scores were published before the premiere of *Don Juan* in 1889 placed his name at the forefront of the German avant garde, and many of those early works have been recorded at least once or twice on various boutique or speciality labels. The first of those scores, the *Festmarsch* (TrV 43) of 1876, appeared in 1881 as Strauss's op. 1 in the catalogue of Breitkopf & Härtel only because the composer's uncle covered the expense of engraving that work. Later that same year, the Munich firm of Aibl Verlag issued Strauss's op. 2, a string quartet, thereby inaugurating a business relationship that lasted for almost two decades. Aibl published 29 other works by Strauss – including all of

5 Gustav Mahler, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vols 13/2b, ed. Renate Hilmar-Voit and Thomas Hampson (Vienna, 1993) and 14/2, ed. Renate Hilmar-Voit (Vienna, 1998).

* * *

1 'TrV' numbers refer to the chronological order of Strauss's works in Franz Trenner, *Richard Strauss Werkverzeichnis*, Veröffentlichungen der Richard Strauss-Gesellschaft München 12 (Munich, 1993).

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the tone poems through to *Don Quixote*, op. 35 (TrV 184), and many of his most famous *Lieder* (up to the op. 37 collection [TrV 187] dedicated to Strauss's wife on the birth of their son) – and the earliest of those scores testify to the conservative nature of Strauss's training.

Chief among them is the Symphony No. 2 in F minor op. 12 (TrV 126), a work that occupies an especially important place in Strauss's career. It was his first major composition for orchestra to appear in print and also the first to be heard widely by audiences beyond his native city.[2] Strauss had already had several modest orchestral works performed by the Wilde Gung'l, an amateur orchestra in Munich conducted by his father, Franz Strauss, but none was ever performed elsewhere.[3] Likewise, Strauss's unpublished Symphony in D minor (TrV 94) was never heard anywhere else after its premiere by the Munich Court Opera Orchestra on one of its Musical Academy concerts in 1881.[4] By contrast, the Symphony in F minor was not only one of Strauss's first premieres outside Munich, it also became his first international premiere when Theodore Thomas conducted it on a New York Philharmonic Society concert on 13 December 1884. The work had been acquired in manuscript from Franz Strauss, when Thomas had visited Germany the preceding summer in search of new works for his American orchestras.

Franz Wüllner led the German premiere of the symphony exactly one month later on 13 January 1885 with the Gürzenich Orchestra in Cologne. Over the next four years – before the premiere of *Don Juan* – additional performances can be documented in Meiningen, Munich, Berlin, Dresden, Wiesbaden, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Leipzig, Milan, Bremen, Munster, Mannheim, Basel and Rotterdam; and even after Strauss's tone poems began to enter the repertoire, the symphony was still played regularly on both sides of the Atlantic.[5] The contemporaneous critical response was almost always exceptionally positive,[6] and no less a conductor than Hans von Bülow championed Strauss's Symphony until his own death in 1894.[7]

Despite all of that acclaim and support, the symphony eventually fell out of the repertoire, and only a few negative comments from Johannes Brahms remained to dominate the literature on this work. Brahms heard Strauss's symphony in

2 Two earlier works by Strauss for orchestra, the Violin Concerto op. 8 (TrV 110) and the Horn Concerto op. 11 (TrV 117), technically pre-date the Symphony op. 12 in print, but both were published initially only in piano reductions. Neither was heard with full orchestra until after the symphony.

3 Franz Trenner, 'Richard Strauss und die "Wilde Gung'l"', *Schweizerische Musikzeitung* 90 (1950): 403–5.

4 Willi Schuh, *Richard Strauss: A Chronicle of the Early Years 1864–1898*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge, 1982), 49–52.

5 See Scott Warfield, 'The Genesis of Richard Strauss's Macbeth' (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1995), 'Appendix B,' 451–66, for a selective list of performances of Strauss's orchestral works in the years 1884–97. Twenty-nine performances of the symphony can be documented during those years, with at least one in every year.

6 See ibid., 416–21, for two extended reviews (and English translations) of the German premiere in Cologne.

7 See, for instance, Bülow's letters of 25 March 1887, 19 August 1887, 18 January 1888, 13 December 1888, and 8 March 1891, all to Eugen Spitzweg, owner of Aibl Verlag, in which Bülow praises the Symphony in F Minor as superior initially to Strauss's *Aus Italien* op. 16 (TrV 147), and later to Strauss's first tone poem, *Macbeth* op. 23 (TrV 163). (Hans von Bülow, *Briefe und Schriften*, ed. Marie von Bülow, Vol. 8, *Höhepunkt und Ende 1886–1894* [Leipzig, 1908], 119 note, 121–2, 181–2, 236 and 332.)

Meiningen, when he travelled there for the premiere of his own Symphony No. 4 in October 1885. 'Quite nice', said Brahms about Strauss's symphony, adding, 'Take a look at Schubert's dances, young man, and try your own luck at the invention of simple eight-bar melodies.' He also told the young composer, 'Your symphony is too full of thematic irrelevancies. There is no point in this piling up of many themes which are only contrasted rhythmically on one triad.'[8]

Later criticisms of the work have echoed Brahms's objections, but almost everything written about this symphony has apparently been based more on examinations of the score than first-hand experience with the work as a sounding object.[9] On hearing this recording by Järvi and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, however, there is little to complain about in Strauss's first mature symphonic essay. Under Järvi's direction, the symphony almost always has the right weight and earnestness, and only occasionally does it fall into the sort of empty grandiloquence that reveals its composer's inexperience. Such moments occur primarily in the finale, especially in the last pages, where Strauss parades the themes of the earlier movements in a nod to the cyclical form of the work before leading to a bombastic coda that suggests the influence of Bruckner. Aside from that miscalculation, there is plenty to praise in the first three movements. Each is virtually a textbook example of its expected form, and the overall effect of the symphony acknowledges Strauss's early affinity for the Leipzig School, without sounding immediately derivative of Mendelssohn, Schumann or even the more proximate Brahms.

The opening Sonata-allegro is a suitably serious first movement, even if its development relies excessively on mechanical sequencing to fill its space. The orchestration calls for only a double-wind ensemble and full brass, but this is far from a limitation for the teenage Strauss, who achieves a greater variety of timbral colourings than Schumann and deploys the winds with a skill that approaches Mendelssohn's. Not surprisingly, Strauss favours the brass more than his predecessors, but only rarely and briefly slips into a Brucknerian *Klang* that nevertheless suits the passage in question (see the first movement, track 1 at 5:30). The two inner movements are also well-made, mature-sounding works. The Scherzo, placed second in the overall design, is a gem of a movement, with an effervescent first theme that features shifting accents over a piquant augmented triad. The slow third movement opens with a noble, long-breathed melody that leads to a varied recall of the brass's transition theme from the first movement in a manner that does not sound artificial or forced. As with his orchestration, the young Strauss shows a remarkable understanding of purely musical logic that is beyond his years.

In this recording the RSNO gives Strauss's symphony a solid reading. Järvi's tempos give the material momentum without making it sound rushed, the RSNO players respond with generally good technique, and the Chandos engineers capture it all in a clear texture that allows one to hear the details. In contrast, the

8 Reported by Strauss himself in his *Betrachtungen und Errinerungen* (Zürich/Freiburg i.B., 1949), 148. The English translation is from Richard Strauss, *Recollections and Reflections*, ed. Willi Schuh, trans. L.J. Lawrence (London, 1953), 123–4.

9 See Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss* (Ithaca, NY, 1986), 1: 22–6, for one of the more negative descriptive analyses of the symphony. In contrast, a more sympathetic description is given by Theodore Bloomfield, a conductor who has led performances of the symphony, in his article 'A Case of Neglect: Richard Strauss' Symphony in F minor', *Music and Musicians* 22 (Feb. 1974): 24–9.

1985 recording of this Symphony by the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra under Michael Halász (Marco Polo 8.220358) sounds like an under-rehearsed ensemble relying on slow tempos just to get through the notes, which in any case are often obscured in a muddy recording. The difference between these two releases suggests immediately why we need first-rate ensembles to explore the unknown corners of the repertoire, rather than cede that turf to lesser groups working on the cheap. The result, as with Strauss's symphony, may not always be a diamond in the rough, but even semi-precious stones benefit from good settings.

The two remaining items on this disc are relatively unknown works from the same era as the symphony, Strauss's Romanze for Cello (TrV 118), and the later orchestrated set of *Six Songs on Poems by Clemens Brentano* op. 68 (TrV 235). The Romanze is typical of the salon style that Strauss practised in his youth, and the piece is well played here by Raphael Wallfisch. The songs, although properly beyond the bounds of this journal, were originally composed in 1918 for voice and piano, using the distinctive chromatic language of *Die Frau ohne Schatten* op. 65 (TrV 234), and Strauss orchestrated them two decades later. Soprano Eileen Hulse sings them marvellously in an effortless fashion that belies the difficulty of the vocal lines.

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Tchaikovsky

Eugen Onegin

Opera in Three Acts

Gertrude Jahn (Larina), Mirella Freni (Tatyana), Rohangiz Yachmi (Olga), Margaritha Lilowa (Filipjevna), Wolfgang Brendel (Eugen Onegin), Peter Dvorsky (Vladimir Lensky), Nicolai Ghiaurov (Fürst Gremin), Choir and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera, Seiji Ozawa *cond*

Live recording, 20 May 1988
Orfeo C 637 0421 (2 CDs 145 minutes: ADD: digitally remastered)
Notes and translations included.

There are four main points of interest here. First and foremost, this issue documents the first time that *Onegin* was heard in Russian at the Vienna State Opera. Second, it is distinguished by Seiji Ozawa's altogether exceptional handling of the score. Third, it features the luscious tones and heartfelt characterization of Mirella Freni's Tatyana. And fourth, the orchestral playing has moments of extraordinary distinction. There are significant downsides too, and even the primary strengths come with elements of fallibility. But no recording of this inexhaustible masterpiece captures anything like its full range of subtlety, and this one is certainly among the finest.

This May 1988 production of *Onegin* saw Ozawa's debut at the Vienna State Opera, although he was already well known for his concert appearances with the