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disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 419

Klemperer & Blech conduct Strauss

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Don Juan has not lacked recordings. This new one draws a good line, and its colour is admirably laid on by Klemperer. In one or two places I should have liked a little more breathing time. Those who do not know the music will still, I think, find it moving, old as it is, and much more exciting, as are the doings of to-day; but programme music has never been more brilliantly represented than in these works of Strauss's. *Don Juan*, we need to remember, is well into the forties, and middle-age does not often find a musical work any more active than ours finds us. Take the end of side two as a sample of straightforwardness and simplicity (excellently handled here), in contrast with the devil-may-care heats of the beginning; and mark the tragedy of the close. It is big stuff, and I only hope the youngsters of to-day will find their stuff wearing as well when they get into the nineteen-sixties and seventies.

W. R. Anderson, The Gramophone, November 1930

Producer's Note

The present release brings together the complete Richard Strauss orchestral music recorded during the 78 rpm era by Otto Klemperer and Leo Blech. Although Blech also recorded some Strauss aria and song accompaniments, these were his only versions of the composer's purely orchestral repertoire, while Klemperer would go on to re-record his items and more for stereo LPs three decades later. Neither, however, left enough from the shellac era to fill out a CD, so it seemed fitting in this Strauss sesquicentennial year to combine them in one place.

Klemperer's recordings impress with their vitality (these must be among the fastest performances of *Don Juan* and *Till* on disc) and a surprisingly modern approach, both in terms of interpretation and ensemble playing. There are no rhetorical gestures which call attention to themselves, and neither are there very many of the string slides we associate with the prewar era. While he was not well-served by Parlophon's choice of venue or engineering, the clarity of the recordings do allow us to hear details often buried (including the substitution of a celesta for the glockenspiel in *Don Juan* [Track 1, 9:06-9:10], something he would not repeat in his 1960 Philharmonia remake). By contrast, his sole recording here by the HMV team sounds much more naturally balanced.

Blech, who was Klemperer's senior by fourteen years, is more of the old school in terms of elastic tempi and orchestral playing. His *Death and Transfiguration* is a rare opportunity to hear him in an extended work, as he was usually relegated to conducting overtures and short pieces on disc.

The sources for the transfers were early British Parlophones for *Don Juan*; Australian Parlophones for *Till*; German Electrolas for *Salome*, *Bourgeois Gentleman* and *Death and Transfiguration*; and an Australian HMV for the *Rosenkavalier* disc.

Mark Obert-Thorn

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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Klemperer and Blech

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conduct Richard Strauss
Berlin State Opera Orchestra



Don Juan • Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks • Salome
Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme • Death and Transfiguration
Der Rosenkavalier - Waltzes

Studio Recordings · 1928/29

Obert-Thorn

KLEMPERER AND BLECH *conduct Richard Strauss*

1 Don Juan, Op. 20 (15:01)

Recorded 28 June & 25 October 1929 in Berlin
Matrix nos: 2-21523, 2-21524-2, 2-21615 & 2-21616
First issued on Parlophon 9495/96

2 Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, Op. 28 (13:58)

Recorded 3 & 24 June 1929 in Berlin
Matrix nos: 2-21452, 2-21453, 2-21513 & 2-21514
First issued on Parlophon 9858/60

3 Salome, Op. 54 – Dance of the Seven Veils (8:38)

Recorded 25 May 1928 in the Philharmonie, Berlin
Matrix nos: CLR 4212-1 & 4213-2
First issued on Electrola EJ 276

Berlin State Opera Orchestra *Otto Klemperer*

4 Le Bourgeois Gentlehomme, Op. 60 – Intermezzo (3:56)

Recorded 18 October 1929 in Berlin
Matrix nos: CLR 5631-1
First issued on Electrola EJ 478

5 Death and Transfiguration, Op. 24 (20:43)

Recorded 15 October & 7 November 1928 in Berlin
Matrix nos: CLR 4618-4, 4619-1, 4620-1, 4716-1 & 4717-2
First issued on Electrola EJ 476/78

6 Der Rosenkavalier, Op. 59 – Waltzes (7:36)

Recorded 12 December 1928 in Berlin
Matrix nos: CLR 4851-2 & 4852-2
First issued on Electrola EH 350

Berlin State Opera Orchestra *Leo Blech*

Producer and Audio Restoration
Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

Cover artwork based on
photographs of Leo Blech (L)
and Otto Klemperer (R)

Total duration: 69:52

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