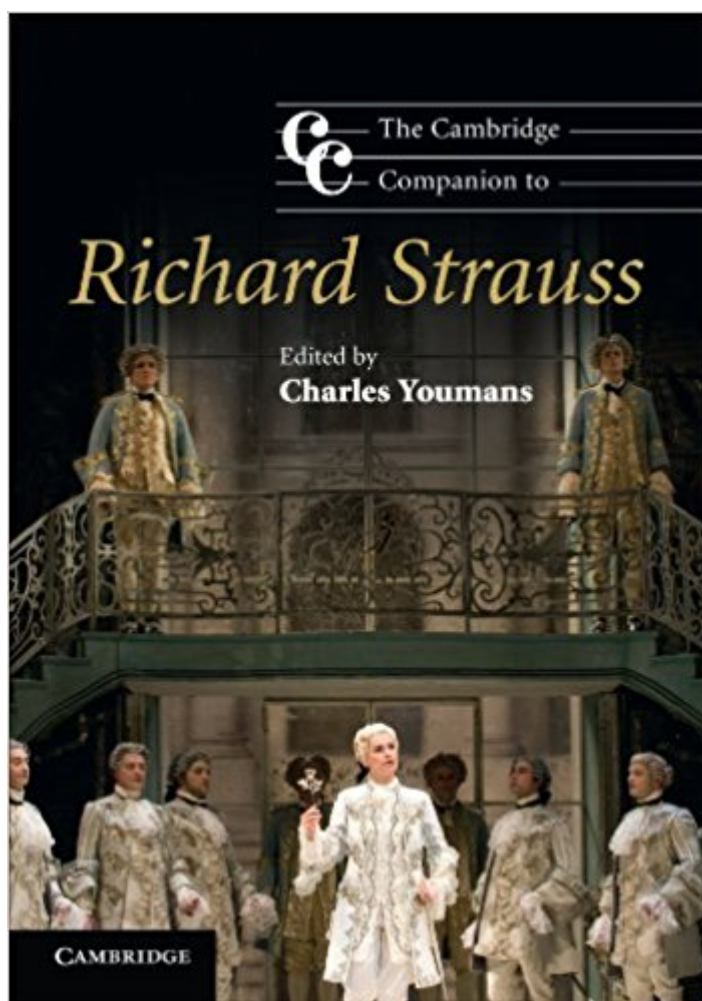


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The Cambridge Companion To Richard Strauss (Cambridge Companions To Music)



Synopsis

Richard Strauss is a composer much loved among audiences throughout the world, both in the opera house and the concert hall. Despite this popularity, Strauss was for many years ignored by scholars, who considered his commercial success and his continued reliance on the tonal system to be liabilities. However, the past two decades have seen a resurgence of scholarly interest in the composer. This Companion surveys the results, focusing on the principal genres, the social and historical context, and topics perennially controversial over the last century. Chapters cover Strauss's immense operatic output, the electrifying modernism of his tone poems, and his ever-popular Lieder. Controversial topics are explored, including Strauss's relationship to the Third Reich and the sexual dimension of his works. Reintroducing the composer and his music in light of recent research, the volume shows Strauss's artistic personality to be richer and much more complicated than has been previously acknowledged.

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Customer Reviews

"The contributions are both up to date in their scholarship and eminently readable, while the copious notes to each chapter provide invaluable links to further research." --Music and Letters

Long beloved by audiences, Richard Strauss inspired little scholarly activity until the mid 1980s, when there was a resurgence of interest on both sides of the Atlantic. This Companion reflects the

latest research, showing Strauss's artistic personality to be richer and more complicated than has been previously acknowledged.

This book contains valuable analyses of every major piece Strauss wrote. I found it particularly helpful in preparing for my final DMA recital performance of the Oboe Concerto.

The Cambridge Companion series of volumes on classical music composers generally collects diverse essays on a given composer on specialized topics, not necessarily adhering to a strict biographical or single-themed format. This volume on Richard Strauss follows in that pattern, with 17 essays by 16 authors divided into 3 overall sections, "Background", "Works", and "Perspectives". The one author who contributes two essays is Bryan Gilliam, and the most familiar author in the group beyond specialist academic circles is Alex Ross. Four of the essays are by German-speaking scholars, with English translations by Jürgen Thym. The 17 essays are grouped into three sections, 3 under "Background", 7 under "Works", and 7 under "Perspectives". Some of the essays are off the beaten track, such as James Deaville looking at the musical scene in Munich during Strauss' youth, or Raymond Holden examining Strauss as a conductor. Most of the essays, however, quite understandably stay with fairly obvious subjects, such as two essays devoted to the tone poems and 3 to the operas. Elsewhere, Michael Walter has an essay on "Strauss in the Third Reich" that appears to steer a middle ground between the hostility of Matthew Boyden and the more sympathetic/much less hostile attitude of Michael Kennedy. The audience for this volume would appear to be more scholars and specialists in the music of Richard Strauss, rather than a general or "intelligent layperson" audience. While several of the essays are accessible to intelligent laypeople, by taking a more historical approach and avoiding technical jargon generally (e.g. the essays by Morten Kristiansen, Gilliam, and Philip Graydon on the operas), the other writers tend to use specialist musicological terminology more in their essays. James Hepokoski, in his essay on the tone poems, manages the curious combination in his prose of being exuberant and clotted at times. For admirers of Alex Ross, a few general assertions of possible relationships between Strauss works and those of other composers sound more like speculation than arguments with hard evidence, and slightly weaken matters. Obviously no single volume can encompass the achievement of Richard Strauss' music. However, although the level of discourse in this volume is too high to qualify as an "introduction" to Strauss, it does quite well as a slightly idiosyncratic assembled overview. For that, and the generally strong level of content, it warrants 5 stars.

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