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SUPER AUDIO CD



**FRITZ
REINER**
**INGE
BORKH**
RICHARD STRAUSS
Scenes from
SALOME
and
ELEKTRA
*CHICAGO
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA*

OPERA ~ RICHARD VERREAU • SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF TURIN, PELLEGER
SIBELIUS—VIOLIN CONCERTO ~ HEIFETZ • CHICAGO SYMPHONY
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MORE CLASSICAL MUSIC FOR PEOPLE WHO HATE CLAS
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RICHARD STRAUSS (1864-1949)

Elektra

- 1 Elektra's Soliloquy: Allein! Weh, ganz allein 9:34
- 2 Recognition Scene: Was willst du, fremder Mensch? 21:37
- 3 Finale: Elektra! Schwester! Komm mit uns! 9:42

Inge Borkh, soprano

Paul Schoeffler, baritone

Frances Yeend, soprano

Chicago Lyric Theatre Chorus

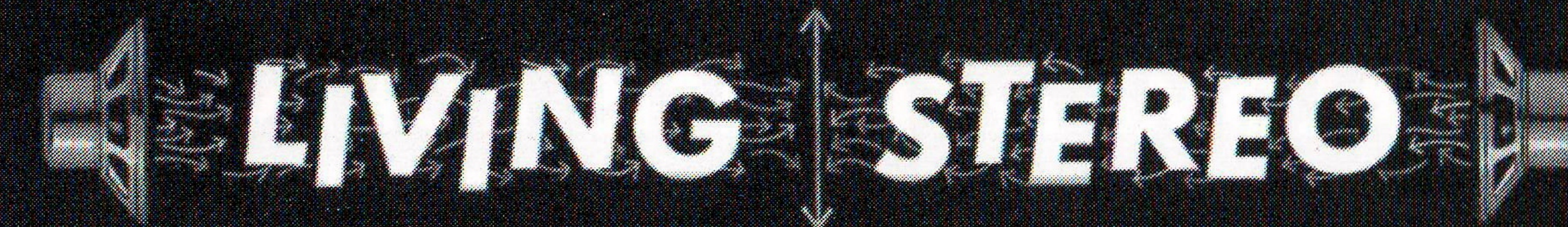
(Recorded April 14 & 16, 1956)

Salome

- 4 Dance of the Seven Veils* 9:04
- 5 Final Scene: Ah! Du wolltest mich nicht deinen Mund 17:03

Inge Borkh, soprano

(Recorded March 6, 1954 and December 10, 1955)



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Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Fritz Reiner, conductor

(Recorded Orchestra Hall, Chicago)

Produced by Richard Mohr & *John Pfeiffer

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These were original two-track recordings; in SACD multi-channel mode, the music will be heard only from the front left and right channels.

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ELEKTRA AND SALOME BY FRANCIS ROBINSON

ASSISTANT MANAGER OF THE METROPOLITAN OPERA (1956)

The scholars tell us *Salome* and *Elektra* should not be compared musically. Two of the learned company of musicologists have likened the effects of the one to changeable silk—they borrowed this comparison from Strauss himself—while the other is bigger, darker and more terrible. Nevertheless, the works have certain other points of interest in common. Both adhere strictly to the classic dramatic unities of time, place and action, are in one act, taking about an hour and a half each to perform. Both are shockers, obsessed with what an early critic called blood-madness. In *Salome* Wilde conceived “a woman dancing with her bare feet in the blood of a man she has craved for and slain.” Twice in his version of *Elektra* Hofmannsthal refers to steaming blood. The word blood occurs incessantly in the text; we are splashed with it, but steaming

blood is something new and Strauss pictures it for us all too vividly.

Salome had troubles before Strauss set it to music. Wilde wrote his play in Paris and in French. He read it to Sarah Bernhardt who immediately saw herself in the leading part. The words, she said, must fall like pearls “on a disk of crystal”; there should be “no rapid movements, the gestures stylized.” The author himself had some pretty fancy ideas. “I should like everyone on the stage to be in yellow,” he said, the sky violet and “in place of an orchestra, braziers of perfume...the scented clouds rising and partly veiling the stage from time to time...” Neither perfume nor curtain rose on that production.

Back in London, June 1892, the play had been in rehearsal three weeks when the Lord Chamberlain clamped down. Unearthing an ancient statute which forbade Biblical characters on the stage,

he denied *Salome* a license. Sarah, frugal as the next Frenchwoman, was furious at the loss of time and money and Oscar for the first time in his life lost his sense of humor. The success of his first play (*Lady Windermere's Fan*) had gone to his head. He haughtily announced he was going to renounce his citizenship and live in France. The press had a high old time.

Three years later when Wilde desperately needed money for his defense he implored Bernhardt, who had promised to produce *Salome* at her own theater, to buy the play outright for three or four hundred pounds. The golden voice trembled and a few tears were shed. Thereafter she was unavailable. For once she was a bad businesswoman, as well as a poor friend. Her investment would have come back tenfold. Up to World War II Wilde was more widely read in Europe and Asia than any

writer in English except Shakespeare.

He was still incarcerated when *Salome* had its first performance in 1896. Bernhardt never did come through and it was Lugné-Poë who brought it to the stage for the first time. The poet wrote from Reading Gaol, “It is something that at a time of disgrace and shame I should still be regarded as an artist. I wish I could feel more pleasure, but I seem dead to all emotions except those of anguish and despair.”

Max Reinhardt presented *Salome* at the Kleines Theater in Berlin in 1901. It made him as a producer and was the beginning of Wilde's vogue in Europe. One night Strauss went to see the play. It was not the first time the composer had met his future heroine. A Viennese poet (not Hofmannsthal) had sent him the play and some verses for the opening scenes, but they had not roused Strauss' muse. After the performance a friend

said, "This is a subject for you." Strauss replied he was already at work on it. With the purging of a few purple passages, Wilde's play made a magnificent libretto.

The stir caused by the play was nothing to the storm which crashed about the opera. It brought down the wrath of such divergent music patrons and protectors of the public morals as the Emperor William II and J. P. Morgan—"a certain Mr. Morgan," Strauss fixes the latter for all time in his *Recollections and Reflections*. He quotes the Kaiser, "I am sorry Strauss composed *Salome*. I really like the fellow, but this will do him a lot of damage." The damage, Strauss adds laconically, enabled him to build his villa at Garmisch.

"Monstrous," "pestilential," "mephitic," "abhorrent," "diseased," "polluted," "bestial," "loathsome"—these are but a few of what Lawrence Gilman termed the

"malodorous vegetables of disesteem" flung at Strauss' indelicate heroine on her first revelation to America, January 22, 1907. The directors of the Metropolitan Opera and Real Estate Company went into action. Two days before the premiere they handed the unsuspecting general manager a resolution. *Salome* they considered "objectionable and detrimental to the best interests" of the house. There would, therefore, be no further performances of the work. After that single performance, which had been preceded by a public dress rehearsal, *Salome* was banished from the stage of the Metropolitan, not to return for twenty-seven years.

Sir Thomas Beecham had almost as rough a time with the censor when he disclosed *Salome* to London for the first time, in 1910. Because of the intervention of Archbishop Piffel, it was 1918 before the work reached the Vienna

Opera. The exigent daughter of Herodias, however, found a friend in Oscar Hammerstein who presented *Salome* at his Manhattan Opera House in 1909 with Mary Garden. Matchless Mary (as Mr. Gilman referred to her in later years, and everybody knew whom he meant) introduced the wayward girl to Chicago when the Windy City took over the bulk of Hammerstein's roster and repertoire. There was some lively name-calling in the public prints between Miss Garden on the one hand and the Chief of Police and the President of Chicago's Law and Order League on the other. As in New York, there were only two performances, the scandalized directors ordering the third one withdrawn and *Salome* into silence. Miss Garden bided her time until she became general manager of the company ten years later; then she made up for it. Her catlike performance is still one of the

wonders of twentieth-century theater.

Except for the brief lines of Herod and Herodias, we hear all of the finale of *Salome* in this recording. It begins with what Mr. Gilman described as "the most appalling moment in all opera." Madame Wittich, the creator of the title role at the Dresden premiere in 1905, went on strike not only because of some of the stage business she was given with the head of the Prophet ("I won't do it," Strauss quotes her, "I'm a decent woman") but also in protest against the difficulty of the music and the overpowering orchestration. "We want wild beasts here," Strauss once admonished his orchestra at a *Salome* rehearsal. The pack he unleashed in *Elektra* is bigger—112—and even more savage. There is a story that at the general rehearsal of *Elektra*, he walked down the aisle shouting to the conductor, "Louder, louder! I can still hear

Madame Schumann-Heink."

"I will never sing the role again," Schumann-Heink stoutly declared after creating the part of Klytämnestra at the premiere in 1909. "It was frightful. We were a set of mad women...There is nothing beyond *Elektra*. We have lived and reached the furthest boundary in dramatic writing for the voice with Wagner. But Richard Strauss goes beyond him. His singing voices are lost. We have come to a full stop. I believe Strauss himself sees it." Strauss, the great contralto's survivor by thirteen years, had the last word. He referred to her, rather ungallantly, as an "old star" and said she had been miscast as the guilt-ridden queen of Mycenae. In any event, he did show more consideration for the voice in his next work. It was *Der Rosenkavalier*.

It was Strauss' intention to follow

Salome with a comedy. Instead he went to the opposite extreme. On the advice of a friend he went again to Reinhardt's theater and saw the same actress who had played *Salome* in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's one-act tragedy after Sophocles, *Electra*. Here began the historic collaboration with Hofmannsthal.

The first American production of the opera (on his title page Strauss calls it a "tragedy") was by Hammerstein in 1910 at the Manhattan Opera House, sung, as *Salome* had been, in French. The first production at the Metropolitan did not occur until 1932 and scored such a success it paved the way for the return of *Salome* to those hallowed premises two years later.

The degraded, disheveled figure of *Elektra*, digging like a dog in the palace courtyard, confirmed the critics' worst fears. Strauss' "*Din and Dirt*" was the

caption of the review in the *Literary Digest* which quoted liberally from a head-shaking Ernest Newman. "*Salome* had emitted a mingled odor of perfume and decay"; say Brockway and Weinstock, "*Elektra* omitted the perfume, and decay had become decomposition. Here was stench in the terms of music."

Elektra and *Salome* could not have been written in any other time—"that ornamental dying time," one commentator has defined it, "which ended the Hapsburgs and cradled Freud." The nameless loves, hatreds and fears which erupt in these scores, rightly or wrongly, have since come to light on many an analyst's couch. Strauss peered into areas no composer before or since has had the daring or the skill to probe—the inmost recesses of the psyche. With what Ernest Newman calls "the tremendous expressive apparatus of modern

music," he shows us, and without reticence, "a beauty at the very heart of horror."

Fritz Reiner (1888-1963) was recognized as the world's foremost interpreter of the works of Richard Strauss, with whom he enjoyed both an artistic association and a personal friendship for nearly 35 years. In 1914, at 25 and fresh from his native Budapest, Reiner was appointed principal conductor of the Royal Opera in Dresden, which vied with Berlin for top place among the theaters of Germany. Strauss' favor had much to do with the preeminence of Dresden, where nine of his 16 operas—*Salome*, *Elektra* and *Der Rosenkavalier* among them—received their premieres. During the seven years Reiner was in Dresden he worked with Strauss on

productions of the early operas and conducted the German premiere of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. *Salome* was the vehicle of his Metropolitan Opera debut, on February 4, 1949, and during his decade as music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1953-63) Reiner conducted many notable performances of Strauss scores.

Strauss performances have also been one of the chief glories of the Chicago Symphony. Theodore Thomas, its first conductor, gave the American premieres of *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1897), *Don Quixote* (1899) and *Ein Heldenleben* (1900). And during the 1903-04 season the composer himself conducted a program of his own music, with his wife as vocal soloist.

Devotion to the compositions of Strauss is reflected in Reiner's discography, which includes *Ein Heldenleben*,

Don Quixote, *Burleske*, *Symphonia domestica*, scenes from *Salome* and *Elektra*, the suite from *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, the *Rosenkavalier* waltzes and two versions each of *Zarathustra*, *Don Juan*, *Till Eulenspiegel* and *Tod und Verklärung*.

Inge Borkh first appeared as a stage actress, then turned to music, studying in Vienna and Milan. She made her debut with the Lucerne Opera in 1941, and her career was centered in Switzerland until the 1950s when it became an international one with appearances in Munich, Vienna, London, and the United States where she made her debut in 1953, with the San Francisco Opera as *Elektra*. In 1956 she sang *Salome* with the Chicago Lyric Opera, and that was the role of her Metropolitan Opera debut

on January 24, 1958. "She was a charismatic performer," wrote Speight Jenkins in a liner note, "and her demonic intensity and powerful soprano made the opera's ninety minutes pass in a flash. Three years later the German-born artist undertook a role even better suited to her, the heroine of *Elektra*... This opera's excitement and drama only make a thrilling evening in the theater if a soprano can be found who really can sing the never-stop title role. Such an artist was Inge Borkh." The Swiss soprano made her farewell operatic appearance at the 1988 Munich Festival.

On October 6, 1953, RCA Victor made its first experimental "binaural" recordings. At New York's Manhattan Center, Leopold Stokowski conducted a pick-up orchestra in Enesco's *Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1* and Tchaikovsky's Waltz from *Eugene Onegin*. In December RCA continued stereo tests in Manhattan Center with Pierre Monteux and members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Then, in February 1954, RCA took equipment to Boston's Symphony Hall, where Charles Munch and the Boston Symphony were recording Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*. For the first time, RCA engineers captured the performance on both mono and two-track tape. These experiments, combined with further technological refinements employed in Chicago's Orchestra Hall in March 1954, were the first forays into the world of stereo.

At the time that RCA initiated multi-track sessions, disc mastering and consumer playback technology were monaural. RCA Victor proceeded to use two- and three-track equipment to record the world's greatest artists—Heifetz, Piatigorsky, Reiner, Munch, Rubinstein, Fiedler—in anticipation that home technology would catch up to stereo sound. Finally, in 1955, 1/4" 7 1/2ips stereophonic tape players arrived on the consumer market, and RCA released its first Stereo Orthophonic tapes.

Stereo Orthophonic tapes redefined high fidelity. In 1958, the Western Electric Company produced the breakthrough Westrex stereo disc cutter, thereby revolutionizing master disc production. Stereo playback equipment was developed to coincide with the new disc-cutting technology. The same year, Living Stereo LP records were

launched, ushering in the golden age of stereo high fidelity.

RCA Victor's first two-track sessions in late 1953 and early 1954 were captured on proprietary RCA RT-21 1/4" 30ips tape machines, wired to a pair of mono mixers, each dedicated to one tape track. Neumann U-47 cardioid and M-49/50 omnidirectional microphones were favored, as were RCA-designed LC-1A 15" duo-cone speakers in the control room. Three-track recordings were realized on tube-amplifier Ampex 300-3 1/2" machines running at 15ips and in later years at 30ips, and were mixed down to 1/4" two-track masters. No equalization was used in the original tracking process; the microphone signals were summed through passive electronics and printed straight to tape. In addition, no equalization was used to alter playback takes for artist approval.

TECHNICAL NOTES

JOHN NEWTON, SOUNDMIRROR INC.

Since the earliest days of recording, engineers have strived to make recorded sound as immediate and thrilling as natural sound. The earliest electrical recordings were made with a single microphone positioned in the hall for optimum balance. The signal was fed to a cutting lathe, and with the advent of magnetic recording, to a monaural tape recorder; a copy of that tape was used to produce the LPs which consumers listened to at home.

With stereo, two microphones were placed in the hall. Signals were fed to a stereo tape recorder and consumers, listening back on two speakers, heard a new "depth" of sound. By placing microphones in the left, center, and right of the hall, engineers progressed to 3-channel recordings, which afforded them greater control over the musical balances that ended up in the stereo mix. Even as CDs

replaced LPs, this same process was often followed.

Today, with the advent of SACD and multi-channel playback, the listener can hear the left, center, and right channels exactly as the engineers heard them at the original recording sessions. In this series of Living Stereo reissues on hybrid SACDs, we have used the 3-channel original tapes whenever they existed; when the material was recorded only in stereo, we used that tape. Some of the SACDs will therefore contain 2-channel, or a combination of 2- and 3-channel material. We used only two or three of the available six channels on the SACD disc because that was the vision of the original producers.

In remastering these tapes, we kept the signal path as short as possible. A Studer-Aria analog tape recorder was connected with premium Siltech cabling

directly to specifically chosen dCS converters. This DSD data is directly encoded on the SACD. Thus the listener is able to hear the output of these converters exactly as we heard it in the studio. The DSD program is essentially identical to the analog tape. What you hear are faithful copies of each historic recording—the pure performance, presented in its original splendor. No signal processing was necessary to "improve" these extraordinary tapes.

Throughout this very exciting project, history came alive as we heard the voices of legendary engineers verbally slating the tapes with the location and date of each session. We were greatly impressed not only with how little the original tapes were edited, but how skillfully engineers edited with their high-tech tool of the day, namely, a razor blade! Applying the best in

21st-century remastering technology, we believe we have done justice to the best in 20th-century recording technology for a new generation of listeners.