

FROM: **AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE**
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RICHARD STRAUSS

Richard Georg Strauss was born in Munich in 1864, and died in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria in 1949, aged 85. He has proved to be the most vital and successful of the successors of Richard Wagner. His operatic methods were based on those of his exemplar, his harmonies, naturally, as he developed, growing more “modern” and individual, and his orchestration (which is masterly) more personal. Unlike Wagner, he wrote much independent instrumental music, usually in the form of highly “programmatic” symphonic poems. His songs are noteworthy. As an opera conductor he enjoyed the highest reputation and held his most important positions.

He was born into a musical circle, his father being first horn player to the court orchestra at Munich. He developed early, and at 17, a symphony of his was publicly heard. At first, and until he definitely put aside parental influence on his art, he was of distinctly conservative tendencies; then the leaven of Wagner and Franz Liszt began to work in him and quickly “leavened the whole lump.”

It is a possible criticism of him that he sometimes went to excess in the violent expression of passionate emotion, and that at times his musical (and literary) material did not soar above the level of vulgarity. Most musicians looking down his long list of works would probably pick as his most purely enjoyable the symphonic poem *Till Eulenspiegel* and the opera *Der Rosenkavalier*, perhaps suggesting that he was greatest on his somewhat lighter side. He was fortunate in his association with a fine librettist in Hugo von Hofmannsthal. (*Elektra*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, *Die Egyptische Helene*, and *Arabella*).