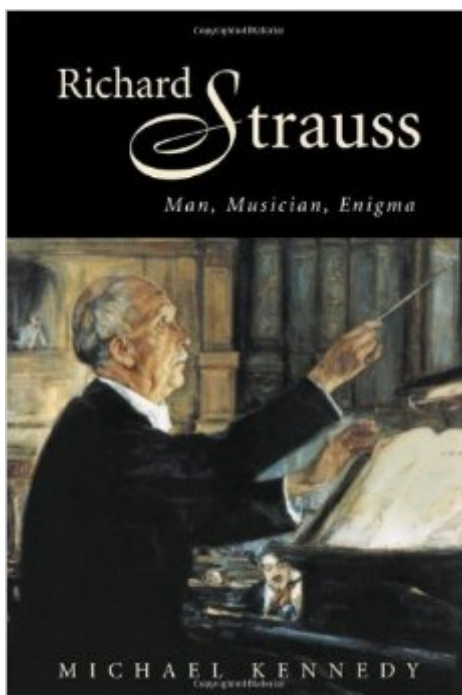


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Richard Strauss: Man, Musician, Enigma



Book Information

Paperback: 468 pages

Publisher: Cambridge University Press; Reissue edition (November 2, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0521027748

ISBN-13: 978-0521027748

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.7 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

Having been a fan of Richard Strauss's music for years, I wanted to know more about him than the standard opinions out there. I got a glimpse of him in my reading of Henry de La Grange's epic biography of Gustav Mahler, who was contemporary to Strauss (having been born just 4 years before him in 1860). Both men, along with Wagner and Bruckner are considered the greatest Romantic symphonists and conductors, both in and since their own time. Kennedy's book brings a complex and paradoxical man to life in this book, yet a lot of what he writes is spent trying to explain, perhaps even absolve Strauss's apparent shortcomings in the parts of his life which are most discussed among historians and music lovers, namely the depth of his creativity and his seeming blindness to horrors committed by the Nazi regime from 1933 to 1945 in Germany. Certainly Strauss's body of work is varied and extensive and much of it has enjoyed enormous popularity over the years. But as Kennedy himself seems to imply, he wrote for the masses, looking with a keen eye for symphonic and operatic "hits." And score them he did with "Electra," "Salome," "Der Rosenkavalier," "Also Sprach Zarathustra," "Ein Heldenleben," "Till Eulenspiegel..," and scores of lieder and other works. For this reader I was left with the persistent question as to what constitutes "great" art. If staying power is a key ingredient, then Strauss's music is certainly great. Most of his output has great "legs" and will be heard in concert and opera halls for many years to come, just as will Puccini's and Verdi's works.

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