

ARABELLA

Composer Biography: Richard Strauss



Richard Strauss (June 11, 1864–September 8, 1949) was a German composer of the late Romantic and early modern eras. Born into a family of musicians, he received a formal music education from his father and wrote his first composition at the age of six. He heard his first Wagner operas in 1874; the composer would go on to hugely influence Strauss's style. He became the Music Director in Meiningen at the age of 21 and, a year later, the Musical Director at the Munich Court Opera. 1886 saw the peak of his skill at orchestration. In 1889, he moved to Weimar and became 2nd Kappelmeister. He married soprano Pauline de Ahna in 1894. *Salome* premiered in 1905, and Strauss became known as the father of modern opera music. His operas during this time were met with extremely mixed reactions. *Elektra*, like *Salome*, was considered extremely risqué by critics. After World War I, Strauss's fortune was confiscated as "enemy assets". He began to compose Lieder again during this time. In 1919, he was appointed Vienna State Opera Music Director and fought against its image as an outdated institution that produced only traditional operas by bringing new productions to the opera house. Wishing to confront the bleakness of the post-war era with cultural beauty, he helped to co-found the Salzburg Festival in 1920. He also toured in the USA and South America during this time. The interwar period saw the production of more light-hearted tunes and musical comedies. This is a stark contrast to the following period in which he was made President of the German State Music Bureau "Reichsmusikkammer" in 1933. He was unable to convince others in his fight against the Aryan policies of Hitler and thus incurred Goebbels's wrath. Eventually, he escaped to Switzerland in 1945, where he experienced great financial hardship. He relived some of his old fame before his death in 1949.

For more in-depth biographical information on Strauss, please see these websites:

- <http://www.richardstrauss.at/biography.html>
- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard-Strauss>

