

# STRAUSS ON THE RECORD

## Karajan and the Legacy of Sound Materiality

SALZBURG, 6-7 SEPTEMBER 2019

### Call for Papers

Herbert von Karajan's recordings of Richard Strauss's orchestral works shaped the history of modern sound on several notable occasions. In 1947 he made the first recording of the *Metamorphosen*; in 1968 his *Also sprach Zarathustra* featured in the first film soundtrack to use exclusively pre-existing music (Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*); and in 1980 he selected the *Alpine Symphony* to present the world's first Compact Disc. The sonic landscapes of Strauss's symphonic works, which display bracing post-Wagnerian harmonies, hyper-technologically sensational orchestrations, and shockingly unconventional extra-musical themes, presented Karajan with ideal aesthetic "statements" for developing new sound technologies and listening platforms. But is it purely coincidental that Strauss's musical legacy intertwined with such modern technological milestones of the late twentieth century? Or might such convergences reveal a previously overlooked aspect of Strauss's aesthetic, one that privileges the experience of sound as a kind of material object in its own right, perhaps even revealing a latent predisposition to new technological mediums and modes of aural experience?

Upon closer inspection, Karajan's interpretative approach to Strauss, which showcases lushly sweeping soundscapes, slow but full-bodied Wagnerian tempi, and a vivid aural pictorialism, seems at odds with the quicksilver tempi and lean neoclassical brightness of Strauss's own studio recordings (about which little research has been devoted). Indeed, Karajan's interpretations represent a marked departure from those of his contemporaries, especially the Strauss protégés, such as Karl Böhm, Georg Szell, and Fritz Reiner (not to mention later conductors such as Wolfgang Sawallisch and Fabio Luisi). To what extent, one might ask, can Karajan's gravitation toward sound innovation be traced back to the sound world (*Klangwelt*) of Strauss himself, who conceived his works during the industrial and technological boom of the German Kaiserreich (1871-1918)? Conversely, what aesthetic and cultural factors informed Strauss's own interests in sonic innovation, performance practice, and technological mediums that may, in turn, have resonated with the younger Karajan and his musical vision of sound?

This conference seeks to investigate the phenomenon of Strauss in performance and "on the record" in all its facets, but particularly welcomes the following themes:

- Karajan's influence on Strauss reception
- Theoretical approaches to Strauss and listening experiences/mediums
- Aesthetics of recording Strauss's works for private listening (opera vs. orchestral)
- The perspectives (and agendas) of producers and studio engineers
- Strauss as studio musician vs. live performer (pianist/conductor)
- Strauss as composer vs. performer
- Early radio broadcasts of Strauss and his works
- Conductors and collaborators who championed Strauss on the record (or off)
- Sound and image combinations (e.g. film and filmic presentations)

The selection committee also welcomes contributions dealing with the concert and recording legacies of **Karl Böhm**, whose artistic estate is housed at the University of Salzburg and Richard-Strauss-Institut.

Presentations in English or German will be allotted 30 minutes plus 10 minutes for questions. Please send **abstracts** of **250 words** (German or English) by **30 April 2019** to [matthew.werley\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:matthew.werley[at]gmail.com).

#### CONFERENCE SELECTION COMMITTEE

- Peter Revers (Salzburg /Graz)
- Matthias Röder (Salzburg)
- Dominik Šedivý (Garmisch)
- Matthew Werley (Salzburg)

