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■Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

■Eine Alpensinfonie Op. 64 (50')

Richard Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie (An Alpine Symphony)*, Op. 64 was composed between 1911 and 1915 (Strauss completed the orchestration on February 8, 1915). The first performance took place in Berlin on October 28, 1915, with Strauss conducting *Hofkapelle* Dresden (today's *Staatskapelle* Dresden). The piece is one of Strauss's largest orchestral works, scored for an orchestra of an immense size, even requiring an offstage ensemble consisting of twelve French horns, two trumpets, and two trombones.

Since the creation of his first tone poem *Aus Italien (From Italy)*, Op. 16 in 1886, Strauss composed such works with a steady pace, amounting to a total of ten pieces by the time he finished his *Eine Alpensinfonie*. Many remain popular today and are frequently included in the programs of professional orchestras worldwide. Among his tone poems are *Tod und Verklärung (Death and Transfiguration)*, Op. 24 (1889), *Also sprach Zarathustra (Thus Spoke Zarathustra)*, Op.30 (1896), and *Ein Heldenleben (A Hero's Life)*, Op. 40 (1898). After completing *Eine Alpensinfonie*, however, Strauss lost interest in tone poems and began concentrating on operas.

Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie* reflects his enthusiastic feelings towards nature. Strauss liked the mountains in particular; he even built a house in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria, where he could enjoy the stunning view of the Alps. The composition, however, is much more than a simple depiction of an experience in the mountains. The tone poem can be traced back to a draft of an incomplete composition Strauss wrote in 1899. The composer soon incorporated it into a different piece titled *Die Alpen (The Alps)*, which he also left unfinished. Strauss did not come back to the piece until he learned about Gustav Mahler's death in 1911. At this point, the composer decided to write a two-part tone poem illustrating nature and its power that can lead to the "moral purification" of

people. Lamenting on Mahler's premature death, Strauss thought his friend could have accomplished even more if not for the discriminatory attitude against Jews that had been prevalent in the German-speaking societies. Strauss even said, "the German nation will achieve new creative energy only by liberating itself from Christianity." The new tone poem thus was going to be called *Der Antichrist: Eine Alpensinfonie* (*The Antichrist: An Alpine Symphony*). In the end, however, the composer only wrote the first part and decided to change its title to the current one.

[Akira Ishii]