

Richard Strauss - Also sprach Zarathustra • Till Eulenspiegels • Salome Tanz (1997)



Also sprach Zarathustra op.30 1. *Einleitung* 1:40 2. *Von Den Hinterweltlern* 3:39 3. *Von Der Grossen Sehnsucht* 2:20 4. *Von Den Freuden Und Leidenschaften* 2:01 5. *Das Grablied* 2:06 6. *Von Der Wissenschaft* 4:08 7. *Der Genesende* 4:53 8. *Das Tanzlied* 8:14 9. *Nachtwandlerlied* 4:18 10. *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* op.28 11. *Salome, Tanz der sieben Schleier* op. 54
Berliner Philharmoniker Sir Georg Solti - conductor

Decca was celebrating Solti's fifty years with the label when this live release came out in 1997; it was taped in the Berlin Philharmonie the year before, when the conductor was 83. In old age Solti, like Bernstein, preferred to be recorded in concert, but results could be mixed. The fieriest of conductors had banked his fires, for good and ill. When Solti was on, as in the second *Meistersinger* or the Mozart Requiem, one hears really superb musicianship, vigorous but seasoned. When he was off, the performance lost focus and wandered, as in some of his late Shostakovich recordings. On this occasion I hear many wonderful things. The Gramophone complained at the time that the strings sounded steely and recommended that readers opt instead for the earlier Strauss recordings from Chicago packaged as a bargain Double Decca. I can only shake my head. The transfers in that two-fer are piercingly shrill and glaring. This newer recording is far more listenable on my system.

As for the performances, they have a layer of crudeness removed. *Also Sprach Zarathustra* begins with grandeur but no wallowing or dawdling -- it's one of the most direct readings I know, and all the better for it. The Berliners play with robust magnificence. For Karajan they found more delicacy and nuance, but this isn't Debussy. Letting this music be as rousing and vulgar as it wants to be is fine with me. the only notable flaw is that Solti's phrasing is somewhat stiff at moments, but his ability to handle massive orchestral forces hadn't diminished at all. The two fillers to this relatively short (58 min.) CD are *Till Eulenspiegel* and the *Salome's Dance of the Seven Veils*. *Till* is marvelously played, with affection and no hint of pushing. As for *Salome*, I walked off the dance floor long ago, but this bit of lurid eroticism is also played with world-class

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skill, and Solti avoids excessive slinkiness (unless that's your thing).

As someone who has stood by Karajan's Strauss forever, this autumnal Solti concert came as a great and agreeable surprise. --- Santa Fe Listener, amazon.com

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