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Musical Analysis of Richard Strauss Duett - Concertino

F-major, for Clarinet and Bassoon with String Orchestra and Harp,

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ABSTRACT

Richard Strauss started to compose his *Duett-Concertino* in 1947, just two years before he died. It was his last instrumental work with orchestra. This piece should be known more as other instrumental compositions, for example, the one written right before it, *Oboe Concerto in D major with Small Orchestra*(1945), one of his most famous instrumental compositions, not only because of its maturity but also its place within the composer's oeuvre. This paper argues that *Duett-Concertino* is more sophisticated than scholars have realized. Most of the current resources discuss the first and second movement only. The reason might due to the ambiguity of programmatic issues. The hidden story in the music, which have not been described clearly yet by neither scholars nor Strauss himself, can be approached after comprehending the information as hints left by Strauss within his words and notes. With the study of composing background and discovery of the numerous hints contained within the music, this less-frequently-heard piece should be regarded as brilliant as Strauss's other pieces.

Keywords: Richard Strauss

Background of composition

Starting composing *Duett-Concertino* on 29 January 1947, Richard Strauss's life-style and living environment drastically changed in his old age because of World War II. This period was named by Gilliam¹ as "The late Strauss 1930-49" and "Nationalsozialismus und letzte Jahre (1933-1949)" by Werbeck,² Kennedy even marked this time as "The dark years, 1933-1949" in his book.³ The reason was just as written as in Richard Strauss: Biography on the official website of Boosey & Hawkes: "With the Nazis' seizure of power in 1933, the most troubled period of Strauss's life began." The events of World War II forced Strauss into a deep depression. In 1941, he even claimed that his career was over after writing Capriccio, which is his last work with an opus number. It would be just "wrist exercises" if there are still come composing activity for keeping his musical mind active and to benefit his posthumous property. Boyden even called May 1945 to September 1949 in Strauss's life as "Im Abendrot" in his book. The emergence of the Nazi party and National Socialism forced Strauss into exile in Switzerland in 1945, near the end of World War II. Instead of establishing a permanent home, he and his family continually moved between the cities of Logano, Baden, Zurich, Montreux, and Pontresina. Such an unstable and insecure lifestyle did not bode well for Strauss's physical or emotional health. Surprisingly, the Duett-Concertino was composed in this situation, just after the famous Oboe Concerto (1945).

¹ Bryan Gilliam, Ph.D., Harvard University. Author of books and articles on late 19th-and early 20th-century German music. Specialties include Richard Strauss, Anton Bruckner, Kurt Weill, Erich Korngold, German opera, fin-de-siècle Vienna, film music, German musical aesthetics.

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³ Kennedy, Michael. *Richard Strauss Man, Musician, Enigma*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999

⁴ Boosey & Hawkes, http://www.boosey.com.

⁵ Turley, Sarah Leigh. Richard Strauss's Duett-Concertino: A study of the Programmatic Elements for the Performer. Denton, Texas: University of North Texas, 2004.

⁶ Boyden, Matthew, *Richard Strauss*, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999

The *Duett-Concertino* was Strauss's last instrumental work with orchestra. It was proposed by Otmar Nussio (1902 – 1990), who was the Principal Conductor of the *Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana* at that time. But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von Bülow's letter: But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von Bülow's letter: But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von Bülow's letter: But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von Bülow's letter: But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von Bülow's letter: But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von Bülow's letter: But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von Bülow's letter: But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von Bülow's letter: But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von Bülow's letter: But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von Bülow's letter: But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von Bülow's letter: But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von Bülow's letter: But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von But the idea may have been in Strauss's mind since 1885 when he was reading von But the idea may have been in Strauss's mi

The late Glinka's sister has just sent me the last composition of this master that is not exactly significant also a little old fashioned but nevertheless still playable, a Trio Pathetique for piano, clarinet and bassoon. I will send it to you through a music dealer; perhaps the combination will inspire you to some thing of your own. 9

Nussio's proposition of the *Duett-Concertino* maybe were in with same situation as von Bülow.

It is very hard to tell precisely where and what Strauss was referring to in Glinka's *Trio Pathetique*. It is irresponsible to rush into a conclusion that Strauss follow Glinka's way just because using clarinet and bassoon this unfamiliar combination. One of the most prominent ways, and perhaps the only way, that the two compositions are similar is that both the first movements are attacca to the second movements, although is not a rarely composing technique after nineteenth century. However, there must be some points in *Trio Pathetique*, as a master piece that inspires Strauss about the combination of the two instruments.

Another inspiration might come from Hugo Burghauser (1896-1982), whom this work was dedicated to. He was one of Strauss's old friends since 1918, when Strauss hired him as the principal bassoon of the *Vienna State Opera Orchestra* and the *Vienna Philharmonic*. Immigrating to the United State and playing in the *Metropolitan Opera House*, Burghauser helped to increase the sale of some of Strauss's manuscripts to generate much-needed funds. Strauss was obviously grateful when he wrote to him in October 1946 that he was "busy with an idea for a double concerto for clarinet and bassoon, thinking especially of your beautiful tone." Because of this friendship, Strauss could return to work from the pain and in defiance of his doctors' constant interference, and at the end of November he completed this pleasing and delicate piece. Writing about this joyful piece to its dedicatee Burghauser, Strauss said: "My father always used to say it was Mozart who wrote most beautifully for the bassoon. But then he was also the one to have all the most beautiful thoughts, coming straight down from the skies!"

Premiere

The piece was officially finished on 16 December 1947. It was not long until the full score was completed and ready to be performed. In a letter Strauss wrote to Clemens Krauss: 12

Ich habe mein Duettconcertino für Clarinette und Fagott mit streichorchester und harfe soeben zum Fotografen geschickt. Nussio wird es am 11. März in Monte Ceneri-radio zuerst zu Gehör bringen. 13

After receiving the music, Nussio and the *Radio Lugano Orchestra* gave the premiere of *Duett-Concertino* in Lugano on 4 April 1948. The principal clarinetist of the orchestra, Armando Basile, played the solo part with the principal bassoonist, Bruno Bergomaschi. At the time of the premiere, the performers played with sections of the manuscript copied from the autograph score by Bruto Mastelli, who was the second clarinetist of the orchestra. This piece was not published until 1949 by Boosey & Hawkes. After the concert, *Schweizerische Musikzeitung*, a german journal, published a review of the premiere in May of 1948. The reviewer pointed out the performance had been broadcasted by foreign radio stations, as what Turley wrote and cited in her essay, ".....allowing a lager audience to hear a new work by a composer who many had deemed 'out of the running.' 14 "15" Also, the reviewer praised not only the piece itself, but also Nussio's interpretation, which is another important issue of this piece that will be discussed further on in this paper.

Programmatic Sources

Although the title of the piece, *Duett-Concertino*, seems like an absolute music, there is much evidence that shows that Strauss put a program behind this work. After knowing Wagner's music, Strauss learned and followed many Wagnerian elements in his own compositions. In a letter to Jan Levoslav Bella, ¹⁶ Strauss showed his desire of becoming a proponent of program music by telling his opinion about the controversy between program music and absolute music:

Program music: real music! Absolute music: can be written with the aid of a certain routine and craftsmanship by and only moderately musical person. The first--art! The second--craft!¹⁷

⁷Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana means Orchestra of Italian Switzerland. It is Located in Lugano. It is also called Radio Monte Ceneri or Radio

⁸ Hans von Bülow, 1830 – 1894, Principal Conductor of Berlin Philharmonic 1887-1892.

⁹Schuh, Willi and Franz Trenner ed. Hans and Richard Strauss: Correspondence. Anthony Gishford trans.. London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1953.

¹⁰ Schmid, Mark-Daniel. *The Richard Strauss Companion*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2003.

¹¹ Kennedy.

¹² Clemens Krauss, 1893-1954, an intendant of the *National Theatre Munich* at that time. He premiered Strauss's operas *Capriccio*, *Friedenstag*, and *Die Liebe der Danae*, and then became one of his closed friends.

¹³ "I have just sent the photographer of my *Duett-Concertino* for clarinet and bassoon and string orchestra and harp. Nussio will bring it to *Monte Ceneri radio* on 11 March for the first hearing."

Kende, Götz Klaus und Willi Schuh Augewählt und herausgegeben. Richard Strauss Clemens Krauss Briefwechsel. Müchen: Verlag C.H. Bech, 1963

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Turley

¹⁶Ján Levoslav Bella (1843-1936), a Slovak composer, conductor and music teacher.

Hefling, Stephen E. Miners Digging from Opposite Sides: Mahler, Strauss and the Problem of Program Music in Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work, ed. Bryan Gilliam. London: Duke University Press, 1992.

There are several different stories told or written by Strauss himself to his friends about *Duett-Concertino*. One of them was "Swineherd." Youmans wrote in his book *Richard Strauss*, "In a program booklet of 1954 Roland Tenschert, citing Clemens Krauss as a key witness, names Has Chistian Andersen's 'the princess and the Swineherd.' "18 Another clear indication of Strauss's programmatic intentions for *Duett-Concertino* came from Strauss himself in remarks he once confided to Burghauser:

it is about a princess and a bear, the princess shows up on the scene dancing, being followed and scared by an impetuous bear, but then, after some considerations, she decides to dance with him. And they dance until he turns into a prince---and that is how you too, Burghauser, in the and will also turn into a prince, and all is well that ends well.¹⁹

Still another version of the story is offered more convincingly, showed up in Strauss's sketches, see Table 1, which is provided in Schmid's *The Richard Strauss Companion*,²¹. He wrote down those programmatic hints when he was planning this piece. This sketchbook reveals a possible programmatic foundation: a musical representation of the "beggar's Tale."

German	English Translation
Baden 15.12.46 clar./ Allegro moderato/ Gedichtniederschrift: Frühling v. Hermann Hesse/ in dämmrigen Grüften	Baden clar 15:12:46 / Allegro moderato / Poem writing: Spring v. Hermann Hesse/ in dim crypts
2 clar. Andante/ Prinzessin und	2 clar. Andante / princess and
3 Bettler/ fagott jammernd	3 beggars bassoon / wail
Feierlicher Marsch	solemn march
Violine Allegro	violin Allegro
Nachsatz	postscript
Allegretto	Allegretto
coda	coda
Allegretto/ Clar./Fag.	Allegretto / Clar. / Fag.
Seufzend / fragend	Sighing / questioning
Clar. hilfreich /Erzählung	Clar. helpful / narrative
Duet	duet
Nach der Erzählung des bettler	After the story of the beggar
Allrgro moderato	Allrgro moderato
Clarinette. Die Gestalt.	Clarinet. The figure.
Finale	finals
Grazioso	Grazioso
Allegro/ andante	Allegro/ Andante
Anfang	beginning
frei harmonisiert nach Beethovens	free harmonized after
Amollquartett	Beethoven's Amollquartett
Moderato	Moderato
Allegro moderat	Allegro moderate
Allegro moderato	Allegro moderato
Finale	finals
Palast /tutti	Palace / tutti
Prinzessin führt den bettler vor	Princess shows off the beggar

Both Burghauser and Krauss based their respective versions on the composer himself, an argument is intensified when comparing Strauss's programmatic hints in the sketches with the two fairy tales. It turns out that they agree with none of the stories. None of the scholars can tell for certain which story was the final decision taken by Strauss. One of the scholars even mentioned "Tellingly, Strauss never answered a request from Willi Schuh²⁰ for a more precise indication of the program, which seems not to have influenced the composition beyond a few incipient ideas." However, Even though there are three different stories, they still share same commons with each other.

It surely is a story of a prince and a princess. Compared to other concerto or concertinos, Strauss's *Duett-Concertino* is more story-like, with dialogue between the clarinet and bassoon. Some of the scholars believe that this dialogue-like composing style is the main reason Strauss decided to

Willi Schuh, 1900-1986, friend of and authority on Richard Strauss, who appointed him as his official biographer.

¹⁸ Youmans, Charles, ed. *Richard Strauss*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2010.

¹⁹Kennedy.

²¹ Schmid, Mark-Daniel, ed. *The Richard Strauss Companion*, Westport, CT: An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc. 2010.

name it as "Duett-Concertino" instead of "Concertino for Clarinet and Bassoon." The prince always appears lower in the hierarchy than the princess at the beginning of the piece, characterizing a beggar, a bear, or a swineherd. After wooing or learning dancing, the beggar, bear, or swineherd become a prince and eventually win the princess. There is a chance that Strauss combined and mixed three of the stories together into a new fairy-tale. Each different idea of the tale will lead to a different interpretation of music, which will make significant differences in Strauss's music. Ashely stresses the value of programmatic elements in Strauss's works:

The relationship between subject matter and expression is of paramount importance in evaluating Strauss's achievement. To play down the relevance of non-musical sources is perilous. His best-known orchestral works are programmatic and the impetus behind them is crucial to their understanding and interpretation ²²

Programatic Analysis

The relationship between the fragmentary elements in the draft and the hidden story can be revealed from comprehending and organizing the information of Strauss's sketches, letters, and the score. The following table, Table 2, is the way how sketches elements fitted in to each movement. With all of those information, the music can totally match with the story. Strauss, in my interpretation, combined all the story together and created his own fairytale, which was told by music not by words, but by notes.

Table 2.

The First Movement:

Baden clar 15:12:46 / Allegro moderato / Poem writing: Spring v. Hermann Hesse/ in dim crypts; 2 clar. Andante / princess and; 3 beggars bassoon / jamernd; solemn march; violin Allegro; postscript; Allegretto; coda; Allegretto / Clar. / Fag.

The Second Movement:

Sighing / questioning; Clar. helpful / narrative; duet; After the story of the; beggar; Allrgro moderato; Clarinet. The figure.

The Third Movement:

Finals; Grazioso; Allegro/ Andante; beginning; free harmonized after Beethoven's A moll quartett; Moderato; Allegro moderate; Allegro moderato; finals; Palace / tutti; Princess shows off the beggar

According to the letter Strauss wrote to Burghauser, the beginning scene of the piece should be a princess dancing alone in a opening spring morning. In the Music Example 1,²³ measure one to nine, Strauss used string orchestra to create a background of the story: a peaceful spring morning with joyful dancing music. All the existing articles agree with the long, beautiful, and dreaming clarinet melody represents the princess.

The next scene is the entrance of the solo bassoon, Music Example 2. What does the bassoon represent for, a beggar, a bear, or a Swineherd? After bassoon's rude entrance, Schmid claims, clarinet becoming more agitated is the moment princess getting upset by the swineherd.²⁴ Comparing three different stories with the music, we can get a conclusion, which is founded on the character of the music. The best interpretation of role that bassoon representing for, neither a annoying Swineherd nor a wailing beggar, is a bear, whose entrance scared and made the princess scream. After this unforgettable entrance, the bear tries but fails to dance, shown by the passage rarely hitting the downbeat. This character is just fit to "an impetuous bear" as Strauss described or "grotesque gestures of a bear"as Kennedy wrote.²⁵ Besides this difference, almost all the authors have the same view in the rest of the first movement and second movement. It is not necessary to repeat them again here.

Strauss, Richard. Duett-Concertino in F major for Clarinet and Bassoon with String Orchestra and Harp. London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1949. Usage of source from:

Alexander Street, Richard Strauss, Duett-Concertino for Clarinet and Bassoon with String Orchestra and Harp, TrV 293,

quoted from:

Kennedy, Michael. Richard Strauss Man, Musician, Enigma. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999

 $^{^{\}rm 22}$ Ashley, Tim. $\it Richard Strauss.$ London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1999.

²³ All music examples from:

https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/373094.

²⁴Schmid.

²⁵ "Strauss visualized a dancing princess (clarinet) alarmed by the grotesque gestures of a bear (bassoon). But when she dances with it, it becomes a prince."

The third movement, compared to the previous movements, is quite long, like how Kennedy describes, "As in the sonatinas for wind, Strauss's fertile mind led him into the prolixity of the finale," he also calls this piece as "two short movement precede a long and rambling rondo finale," in his another book. It seems that Kennedy really does not like the finale. He expressed it by writing such conclusion:

Duett-Concertino for clarinet and bassoon, which has been much less frequently heard, perhaps because the long and garrulous finale tends to nullify the effect of the two ravishing short movements.²⁸

With a superficial glimpse or without deeply listening, it might be true that the third movement is not as interesting as the first and the second movement. Almost all the existing articles only had discussed and focused on the story of the first two movements but ignored or just left "happy ever after" for the third movement. After looking at Strauss's sketches, I found out the length of the third movement sketch is as same as the others. It means Strauss had payed as much attention on planing the story of third movement as the first and second. If he truly had done it, it is unfair to make the same judges as those articles just after reading them but without learning the piece.

Personal Analysis and Interpretation of the Finale

Before the analysis, there is one issue needed to be clarified: many of the existing articles claim that the princess accepted the proposal right after the proposing theme, Music example 3, four bars before rehearsal number 14 (Rh.No.14), performed by the bassoon in the transition between the second and third movement. Based on this idea, the whole third movement is concluded as a happy ending. However, I do not agree with it. First, the clarinet never hits a cadence or stops on the tonic, which means there is not a certain answer from the princess. If there is not a firmly certain answer, there is not a happy ending. Another reason to support my view is that the proposal theme appears again in the middle of the third movement and is continuously repeated throughout, in my opinion, that is the real wedding moment or proposal. With the thought in this way, the story of the third movement becomes more interesting and complicated than it had been described before.

The joy motif appears in the beginning of the third movement, Music Example 4. The bassoon, representing the prince, plays the melody in its retrograde form which makes it sound like a question about the joy, because of the prince still does not have the confidence since he himself just had transformed from a bear. The clarinet, which displays the original joy motif in the first bar, shows that her joy becomes more pleasant by playing its variation in the third bar, which rhythm is even faster. A few bars later, Music Example 5, a new theme is introduced by the clarinet which is an ascending fifth scale, related to the original defending fifth prince theme, ²⁹ added before and leading into the joy motif, meaning the princess believes that the he will bring her a joyful life, a life with love. With this interpretation, the ascending scale can be called as the "love motif." In the following section, the prince keeps "questioning"the joy motif, because he does not have a firm belief of bringing happiness to the princess yet. Even the princess, the clarinet, brings out the melody of the bear's failure dancing again, at Rh.No. 18, which can be seen as the moment that the princess is remembering and thinking of how the prince looked like before the transformation.

Moving on to the next rehearsal number, unlike the first time played in the dynamic of piano, the clarinet plays the love motif in mezzo forte with diminuendo, which sounds like it's encouraging the prince. The princess, I believe, is asking: "Can you bring me happiness?" This time the answer of the prince becomes more affirmative, with forte dynamic, landing on the downbeat, which is added for the first time, shown in Music Example 6. After receive a positive response, the two soloists, the princess and the prince, start singing together, shown as the circled part in the Music Example 7-1 and 7-2, which initially happened when the prince transformed earlier in the first movement.

The first climax of the third movement happens at Rh.No. 22, music example 8-1 and 8-2, when the two of them, two of the solo instruments, finally getting unified. I believe they are having sex at this moment, which is not the first time Strauss used music to describe sexual actions. The strings not only play the joy motif but also the proposing theme at the same time, while the couple are singing one gorgeous unison. After the ardor, there is an interesting detail, at Rh.No. 25: the prince asks, "Are you happy?" by the question motif in very dolce voice. The princess, however, does not respond until the fourth time the prince asks, and her answer is thejoy motif led by the love motif. Also, one more detail, after this point, the prince gets the princess; in the rest of the piece, only the joy motif confidently can be seen in the bassoon part, no more question motif.

The most humorous moment appears at Rh.No. 26, shown in Music Example 10. The proposing theme is brought out again but less seriously by the bassoon, the prince, even making fun of it. After hearing this answer, the princess plays out the failure of the bear dancing again to blame him. Then she turns to asking constantly with the proposal motif for his confirmation until the end of this section, five bars before Rh.No. 28. However, the prince still has not given her any answer yet. Between Rh.No. 28 and 29, the princess tries very hard to remind the prince about their love and happiness, but the prince always plays his own melody. Eventually, from Rh.No. 29, it turns into a serious fighting. Within the fight, at Rh.No. 30, the theme of the princess's dream appears in the bassoon part, representing that the prince complains about the princess always dreaming. It is ironic when the dream theme and joy motif are played together. The prince's complaining reaches the climax, with the loudest volume, in the seventh bar before Rh.No. 31. After a few bars of cooling down, they reconcile and try to sing together again, but they hardly become unified, Music Example 11-1 to 11-4, always being not able to enter or end together. Until the seventh bar of Rh.No. 32, Music Example 11-5, the love motif finally brings them together. They sing together again, at Rh.No. 33, but it is much shorter this time. Furthermore, in the last four bars of this section, Music Example 12-2, instead of playing the ardor melody, the bassoon leaves from the unison to play a fragmented prince theme, showing the love does not purely exist anymore.

²⁶Kennedy, Michael. *Richard Strauss*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995

²⁷Kennedy, Michael. Richard Strauss Man, Musician, Enigma, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999

²⁸Kennedy, Michael. *Richard Strauss*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995

²⁹ According to Turley's essay, the price's motif is the descending fifth in the clarinet solo at the beginning of the first movement.

As Strauss wrote in the sketches as *Palace / tutti*, Rh. No. 34 is the scene in the palace. The relationship between the prince and princess have been spread out. They must be getting married now. The following section is hilarious that the bassoon plays the love motif twice as slow without any energy, while the clarinet plays the failure of the bear's dancing, princess's blaming as before, shown in Music Example 13.

Continuing from Rh. No. 35, the strings play the same rhythm, representing the people in the palace giving the prince and princess their blessings of love by displaying the love motif in the fifth bar. From Rh.No. 36, while all of the people are offering their blessings of joy to the couple, meanwhile, only the princess has the motif of questioning, Music Example 14-1 and 14-2, as if only she worries about their marriage.

The wedding party is about to conclude at Rh.No. 38, where they are singing the love and joy motif loudly. But five bars later, suddenly this new couple's worries come out for four bars, where the melodies of two solo instruments go oppositely against each others, Music Example 15-2 and 15-3. This issue is solved shortly and carelessly while the rest of the voice keep celebrating the love and joy.

From Rh.No. 39 to the end, it sounds like a brainwashing. Playing the joy motif again and again, the new couple is trying to tell themselves, "It will be fine, it will be a happy marriage," Example 15-4 and 15-5. However, the ending shows people this couple's future: an eighth note away from the joy, Example 15-6, which introduced at the beginning of the movement as start on the downbeat.

Ending

Surprisingly, as a result, my interpretation is totally different than I had ever read from any other articles. Maybe the story is, not as complicated as I told, just a simply happy-ending fairytale. However, in my Opinion, Richard Strauss would not do such a easy task.

"He confessed on," Kennedy cited Strauss's words, "more than one occasion that he spoilt his works by 'putting far too much in them... I write in too complex a way. It's because I have a complicated brain."

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³⁰Kennedy, Michael. Richard Strauss, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995

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