

Classical Music Sentinel

Always on the Lookout for the Best Recordings

NEW RELEASES

**RICHARD STRAUSS - Tone Poems - Manfred Honeck (Conductor) -
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra - 030911270728 - Released:
November 2013 - Reference FR-707SACD**

- 1 } Don Juan, Op. 20
- 2 } Death and Transfiguration, Op. 24
- 3 } Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, Op. 28



As if to emulate the protagonist portrayed in *Don Juan, Op. 20*, conductor **Manfred Honeck** delivers the opening pages of this orchestral masterpiece with a swift, impulsive, impetuous and almost arrogant demeanor, true and relevant to the character. The members of the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** respond with aplomb and sparkle of course, but better display their colors and quality of sound in the more lyrical and expressive passages that form the core of this work, especially, and this is only one example, when the big-boned theme on the horns comes in at the 10:30 mark, and again at 15:20. They can really throw their weight around. And notice the magnificent and dramatic gear shift at 17:25 from a roaring full-steamed boil to a simmer. Whereas the opening minute impresses by its bravura, the final closing minute, by its dead quiet, will give you the shivers.

And when it comes to orchestral magic, *Death and Transfiguration, Op. 24* certainly holds a position very near the top of the list. **Richard Strauss** was a master when it comes to combining orchestral timbres with deep philosophical concepts, and his orchestration skills are second to none. Even in the darkest and quietest passages of this work there glows an energy like a candle in the black of night. The final 10 minutes or so are most impressive, and the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** players

produce a sound to match. And if the mountain of sound they build isn't enough of a jaw-dropper, it's in the final blissful minute or so, that the ever so soft brass section shines so much they almost glow.

This **Reference Recordings** release is presented in HDCH, SACD 5.1 Surround, SACD Stereo and CD Stereo, and is the first in a series of "Pittsburgh Live!" recordings. Definitely a series off to a great start and one to follow.

Jean-Yves Duperron - November 2013