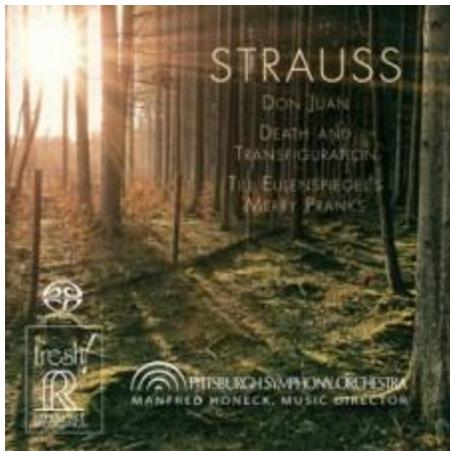


<http://www.classicstoday.com/review/honeck-pittsburgh-strauss-reference-recordings-amazing/?search=1>

# Honeck, Pittsburgh, Strauss, Reference Recordings, Amazing

Review by: David Hurwitz



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Artistic Quality: 10

Sound Quality: 10

Recordings like this restore one's faith in the possibility of true musical greatness. Manfred Honeck conducts this music as do few others today. He's not afraid to have a good time, nor is he a strict literalist. In his notes he speaks almost apologetically of a couple of liberties he takes—in the judgment scene of Till Eulenspiegel (with the dynamics of the solo clarinet), and at the moment of death just before the coda of transfiguration, where he lets the tam-tam reverberate for a few extra bars (sound clip)—surely what Strauss intended in both cases, even if it's not exactly what he wrote.

What Honeck doesn't mention is the added bass drum part in Don Juan, or the extra thud for the same instrument in Till Eulenspiegel. All of this is done quite sensibly, to be honest, but the point is that these and other distinctive touches never sound mannered or gratuitous. Rather, they offer evidence of Honeck's remarkable engagement with the music, his belief in it, and his willingness to do whatever he deems necessary to realize Strauss'

programmatic vision as vividly as possible. For all of their larger-than-life qualities, Honeck remains sensitive to every dynamic nuance, intricacy of balance, and rhythmic quirk. Every one of these versions ranks with the best available.

The Pittsburgh Symphony plays the living daylights out of this music. Really, is there another group out there today that can play with this kind of bravura? For example, listen to the way that Honeck slows down for the big horn tune in Don Juan (sound clip), and my goodness, how these players make a meal of it! The live sonics are, typically for Reference Recordings, of demonstration quality whether in stereo or 5.1 surround sound, and the audience is almost perfectly silent. This disc is the first in a new partnership between Reference Recordings, Pittsburgh, and Honeck—a rebirth for the label, and a huge victory for serious classical music lovers everywhere.

- See more at: <http://www.classicstoday.com/review/honeck-pittsburgh-strauss-reference-recordings-amazing/#sthash.7T87UVmv.dpuf>