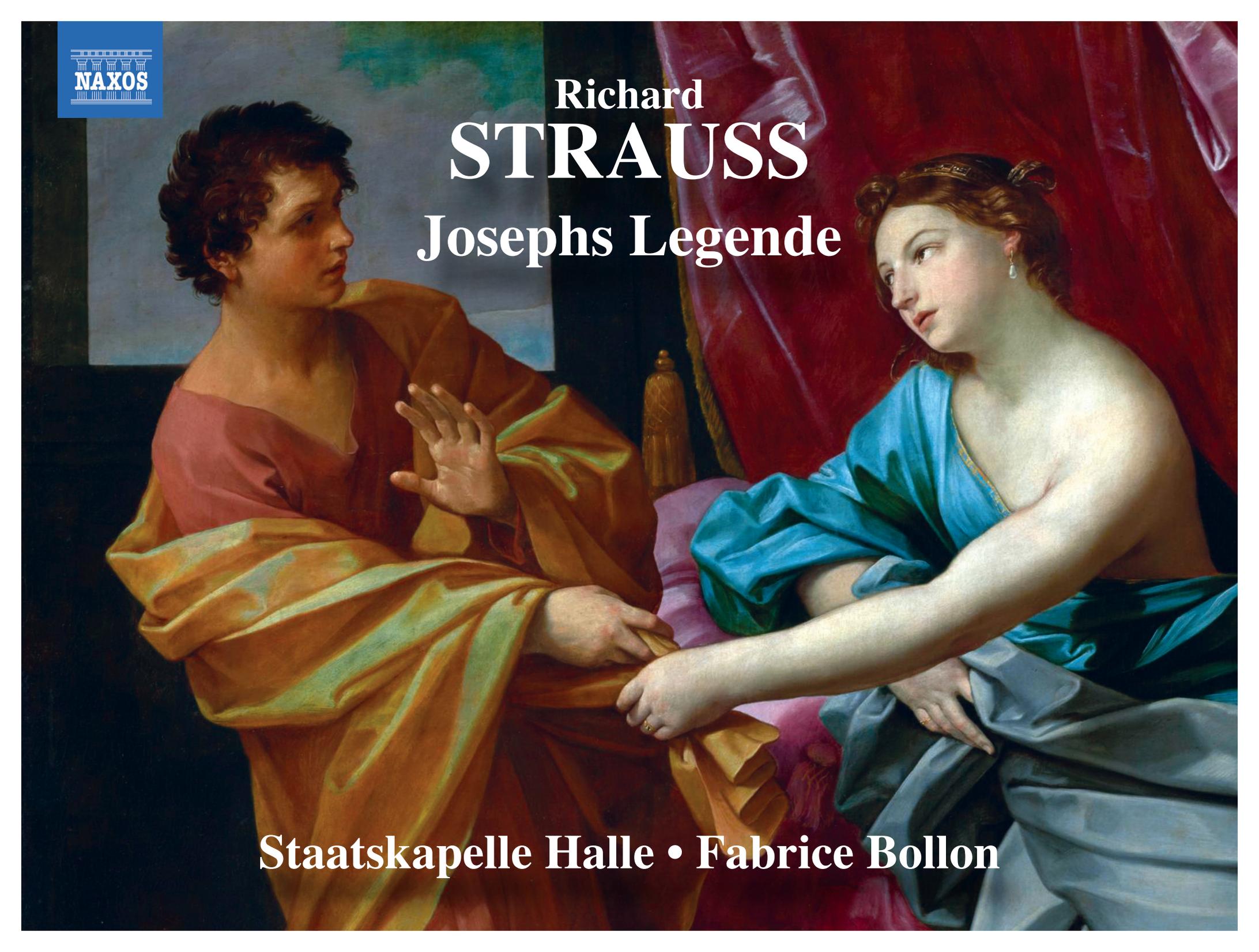


The NAXOS logo is located in the top left corner. It consists of the word "NAXOS" in a white, serif font, centered within a blue rectangular box. Above the text, there are three stylized white columns.The background of the album cover is a classical painting. On the left, a young man with curly brown hair, wearing a red and gold robe, stands and looks towards the right. On the right, a young woman with red hair, wearing a blue and grey dress, sits on a bed and looks back at him. They are holding hands. The background features a red curtain and a window with a view of a landscape.

Richard
STRAUSS
Josephs Legende

Staatskapelle Halle • Fabrice Bollon

Richard
STRAUSS
(1864–1949)

Josephs Legende, Op. 63, TrV 231 (1912–14)

- | | | |
|-----------|--|------|
| 1 | Allegro moderato – Eine mächtige Säulenhalle im Stil des Palladio ...
(‘A huge, pillared hall in the Palladian style...’) | 1:13 |
| 2 | Jeder von ihnen tritt an den Hochsitz heran ...
(‘Each of them approaches the dais...’) | 1:22 |
| 3 | Zug und Tanz der Frauen (‘Procession and Dance of the Women’): Allegretto | 1:12 |
| 4 | Erste Tanzfigur (‘First Dance Figure’): Allegro moderato | 0:24 |
| 5 | Zweite Tanzfigur (‘Second Dance Figure’): L’istesso tempo | 1:51 |
| 6 | Dritte Tanzfigur (‘Third Dance Figure’): Allegro | 3:48 |
| 7 | Jedoch plötzlich löst sich aus ihrer Mitte eine Tänzerin ..., ‘Tanz der Sulamith’
(‘But suddenly, one dancer detaches herself from the others..., “Sulamith’s Dance”’) | 4:01 |
| 8 | Der Sheik winkt wiederum dem jungen Orientalen auf der Loggia zu ...
(‘The Sheik beckons again to the young Oriental on the loggia...’): Allegro moderato | 0:39 |
| 9 | Die Boxer beginnen eine Art Reigen ... (‘The boxers begin a sort of dance...’):
Moderato assai – Animato – Molto allegro | 4:01 |
| 10 | Der Sheik verbeugt sich nochmals und winkt noch einmal nach oben ...
(‘The Sheik once again bows low and makes a sign in the direction of the loggia...’):
Un poco meno mosso | 3:26 |
| 11 | Die erste Tanzfigur drückt die Unschuld und Naivität des Hirtenknaben Joseph aus
(‘The First Dance Figure: expresses the innocence and naïveté of Joseph the Shepherd Boy’):
Con anima | 1:17 |
| 12 | Zweite Tanzfigur: Dazwischen macht er vier Sprünge ...
(‘Second Dance Figure: He interrupts the dance by making four leaps...’) | 2:07 |
| 13 | Dritte Tanzfigur: drückt das Suchen und Ringen nach Gott aus ...
(‘Third Dance Figure: expresses the searching and wresting after God...’) | 5:14 |

14	Vierte Tanzfigur: Joseph hat Gott gefunden ... (‘Third Dance Figure: Joseph has found God...’)	4:04
15	Potiphars Frau fährt im Augenblick ... (‘Potiphar’s Wife makes a convulsive move...’): Poco più mosso	3:45
16	Sofort darauf wendet sie sich ... (‘Instantly, she turns from him...’): Più mosso	2:13
17	Der Abend bricht herein (‘Evening closes in’)	5:20
18	Die Musik schildert Josephs Traum ... (‘The music now depicts Joseph’s dream...’)	1:32
19	Da tut sich die Tür rechts im Portal auf ... (‘Then the door to the portal on the right is opened...’): Vivo con fretta	6:28
20	Nackt von der Schulter bis zur Hüfte steht er vor ihr (‘Naked from the shoulder to the waist, he stands before her’): Molto meno mosso, ma sempre	2:17
21	In diesem Augenblick kommen rasch und aufgeregt ... (‘At this moment, two greatly agitated attendants hurry...’): L’istesso tempo	0:46
22	Jetzt kommt eiligst von rechts aus dem Palastportal die junge Sklavin (‘Now the young female slave runs hurriedly out of the portal on the right’)	0:37
23	Erste Tanzfigur: Die eine läuft einmal schnell auf Joseph ... (‘First Dance Figure: One of the slaves runs quickly towards Joseph...’)	1:12
24	Zweite Tanzfigur: Schließlich steigern sich die Gebärden zu einem orientalischen Hexentanz ... (‘Second Dance Figure: Finally, the gestures culminate in an Oriental Witches’ Dance...’)	0:39
25	Plötzlich tritt eine dumpfe Stille ein (‘Suddenly there is an ominous stillness’): Moderato	2:44
26	Aus dem Palast kommen mehrere Henkersknechte ... (‘From the palace come several executioners...’)	3:39
27	Hinter diesem Lichtschleier und durch ihn hindurch ... (‘From behind this beam of light and through it...’)	2:55
28	In diesem Augenblick sind Joseph und der Engel ... (‘At this moment, Joseph and the angel...’): Con moto	2:46

Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

Josephs Legende, Op. 63, TrV 231 (1912–14)

When *Josephs Legende* debuted in Paris on 14 May 1914, it had a lot going for it. The team behind its creation included some of the most famous and successful names of the day: composer Richard Strauss, co-librettist Hugo von Hofmannsthal, producer Sergey Diaghilev, choreographer Michel Fokine, original choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky (also intended creator of the role of Joseph) and Léonide Massine, principal dancer. But bringing all this talent together led to a great deal of behind-the-scenes drama – including a break between Diaghilev and Nijinsky, and the failure of the librettists and composer to come to a common understanding of what the work was about.

Hofmannsthal and Count Harry von Kessler had concocted the scenario for Strauss two years earlier. Both were enthusiasts for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, at that time all the rage in Europe, and hoped that the Russian impresario would mount the work. Strauss accepted the libretto with enthusiasm, writing to the authors on 2 July 1912: 'Joseph is excellent: I'll bite! Have already started sketching it out.' But by September his interest was waning, writing, 'The chaste Joseph himself isn't at all up my street, and if a thing bores me, I find it difficult to set to music.'

To keep the project moving ahead, Strauss looked for inspiration to music he had written before starting on *Josephs Legende*. As Kurt Wilhelm describes in *Richard Strauss: An Intimate Portrait*, the composer looked through an old sketchbook and found 'something he had given the title "Dance Legend". He also discovered that a large quantity of material he had originally sketched for *Der Insel Kythere*, a pantomime of his own devising, inspired by the paintings of Watteau and Fragonard, could be put to use in the ballet.'

When the composer laid out some of his themes for the co-librettists in December 1912, Hofmannsthal contended that Strauss did not understand the character of Joseph as he and Kessler had conceived him. What they (and original choreographer Nijinsky) objected to was a sense of 18th-century pastiche, totally appropriate, they said, for *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*, but not for *Joseph*. They were hoping for something more along the lines of the Biblical world Strauss had evoked so boldly in *Salome* and the pagan excesses of *Elektra*. 'You have drawn a sombre, stifling world', Hofmannsthal told him. 'Into this world steps a young hero, a boy hero, but he is a figure belonging to the same atmosphere that is, all in all, tragic; he must bear no trace of another, dainty world, the world of the menuet, or else this whole work is ruined.' It was a conflicting view that was never entirely resolved between the collaborators.

The plot is a parable about the struggle between good and evil, between beauty and vileness. It is a highly sensual version, told from the librettists' artistic perspective, of a thrice-familiar tale from both the Old Testament and the Quran. It opens during a sumptuous feast at the court of Potiphar (the wealthy captain of Pharaoh's guards), as he is buying gifts for his wife. The ultimate gift is a handsome slave boy, Joseph (known to many as the titular hero of Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*), whose beauty and innocence simultaneously attract and repel Potiphar's wife. She toys with the boy, and when he rejects her, she becomes bent on vengeance. Potiphar, seeing his wife in distress, arrests Joseph and has him bound in chains. But an archangel arrives, in *deus ex machina* fashion, to set Joseph free, and the frustrated wife kills herself in anger and despair.

Strauss's score calls for an orchestra much larger than a typical ballet company's pit band. It requires four flutes (one doubling piccolo), three oboes (one doubling English horn), heckelphone, five clarinets (including bass and contrabass clarinets), six horns, four trumpets, four trombones, tenor and bass tubas, six timpani (two players), a large array of percussion (three players), celesta, four harps, piano, off-stage organ and – at least as stipulated in the score – 64 string players.

Josephs Legende is a through-composed work. Much of the action falls under the category of mime, although there are certain select dance numbers such as the *Procession and Dance of the Women* [3]–[7], distinguished by asymmetrical rhythms that lead to a seductive waltz. The dance of the Turkish boxers [8]–[9] that follows is characterised by aggressive timpani and masculine gestures from the orchestra.

The central leitmotif of the ballet, based on a *Rose-Picking Round Dance* from *Kythere*, makes its first appearance as Joseph enters [10] and recurs frequently after that [14] [18] [19] [20]. Its distinctive, delicate orchestration often features flutes, harp, piano and celesta (suggesting it is played by the young musicians who follow Joseph on stage, although it is performed in the pit). It has an almost archaic sound, featuring – in the words of music critic Felix Vogt – 'persistent, mystic-primitive parallel fifths'. Strauss biographer Norman Del Mar noted its 'pure, musical box colouring'. It was the one theme that had excited the librettists when Strauss played them excerpts from his sketches early in the process. Hofmannsthal called it 'incomparable' and 'a glorious, bell-like motif', although he and Kessler might have been less enthusiastic had they known it was recycled from an earlier work – and a pastorale at that.

Hofmannsthal also liked Strauss's music for Potiphar's wife, which is not so much a leitmotif but a colour – dark and brooding brass and minor-mode sonorities (listen to track 2 at c. 0:47). In a long letter to the composer, written the day after he heard the piano sketches, he referred to 'the wonderful, monumental theme that immediately establishes Potiphar's wife: this is a definite world, a style, your most personal style, the style which – to mention what is perhaps its finest moment – created Clytemnestra [in *Elektra*].'

Strauss demonstrates his orchestral mastery in *Josephs Legende* in many ways. Consider the frequent skittering, descending violin figures, often balanced by rising figures in low strings. An upward thrusting motif appears frequently, especially in the opening scene. He also contrasts the sound of his massive orchestra with moments of chamber-like scoring, such as the tender music primarily for woodwinds, solo violin and solo viola heard as Potiphar's wife approaches the sleeping Joseph 10. In Joseph's *Second Dance Figure* 12, four harps accompany four flutes (doubled by two clarinets) to reflect the lightness in Joseph's leaping steps.

After its premiere, *Josephs Legende* travelled to Covent Garden in London for six performances under Strauss's baton. Then it languished while the world into which it was born turned its attention to war. But a major revival in 1922 (produced by Alfred Roller in Vienna) and a subsequent distinguished production in Munich set the work back on its course. Rudolf Hartmann, a friend of the composer and one-time director of the Bavarian State Opera, asserted in his book *Richard Strauss: The Staging of His Operas and Ballets* that 'thenceforward this fine ballet has re-appeared in the repertoires of all major theatres.' An orchestral suite (*Symphonic Fragment from 'Josephs Legende'*) fashioned by the composer at the time of the ballet's premiere and orchestrated for a slightly smaller symphonic ensemble has also helped keep the work before the public.

Strauss himself, writing in 1941, summed up his lofty goal, which went beyond mere music. 'My intention in *Josephs Legende* was to revive the dance,' he wrote. 'The dance, the mother of all arts, standing, as it were, like a mediator between them. ... The modern variant of the dance, in which it is nothing but rhythmic or paraphrased action, only too frequently leads us away from the essence of the genuine, purely inspirational form of the dance dedicated to movement and to absolute beauty, i.e., the ballet. It was this that I intended to rejuvenate.'

Synopsis

The following précis of the action, keyed to the tracks on this recording, is edited and adapted from the English-language libretto published in the Fürstner piano score, thus reflecting the elevated, poetic language of the authors:

1 The curtain rises on a huge, pillared hall. On the dais, in front of the loggia, sit Potiphar and his wife. A sheik stands centre stage, holding a pair of silver scales into one side of which a female slave is pouring gold dust from a leather pouch. Potiphar's slaves are carrying to the dais the valuables he has just purchased, including precious stones, a great carpet and two greyhounds. 2 They approach Potiphar's wife and offer their treasures in turn. She sits rigid and erect, her demeanour expressing a brooding weariness of life. 3 Next, the sheik presents Potiphar with three litters, each bearing two female slaves – one veiled and the other unveiled. The women emerge 4 and begin a nuptial dance meant to symbolise how a bridegroom unveils the bride on their wedding night. 5 Slowly, with cat-like movements, the unveiled women approach their veiled counterparts. 6 They begin to uncover, with passionate gestures, the upper bodies of their partners. Various attendants join in the dance, and eventually the upper bodies of the veiled ones are re-covered, but their faces are then revealed. 7 One dancer emerges from the group and begins the 'Dance of Passionate Love-Longing'. Once that has ended, the veiled women cover their faces again. Two slaves present them formally to Potiphar's wife, who strikes one of the women with the back of her hand, haughtily dismissing them all.

8 At a signal from the sheik, six Turkish boxers appear, followed by many others in Turkish dress. They form two circles, with three boxers inside each. 9 The boxers begin a sort of dance, during which they walk round each other with a heavy tread expressing rage and hate, goading each other on to the lust of battle. When the two circles are opened, the boxers suddenly rush at each other with measured, rhythmical movements. But the fight rises to such an intense fury that one feels they will surely kill each other. Their companions rise to separate them but cannot. Potiphar signals his men-at-arms, who bring the boxers to their knees with their whips, bind them and escort them into the palace. His wife has watched the violent scene without showing any signs of emotion.

10 The sheik bows and signals in the direction of the loggia. Two slaves enter, bearing a hammock of gold cloth, slowly and carefully carrying it over the loggia and down the steps. Behind it walk two young harpists with harps of gold, two flautists and two boys with cymbals. When the hammock touches the floor, it opens to reveal Joseph, wrapped in a shepherd's mantle and smiling in his sleep. The sheik approaches and wakes him. The boy gazes around him in astonishment, but he is unafraid and imbued with a certain majesty. 11 The musicians who followed him begin to play and Joseph begins to dance, slowly and as if in mystic ecstasy. The first dance figure expresses the innocence and naïveté of Joseph the shepherd boy. The movements, slow and a little hesitant, show how he comes into the presence of God to present the purity of his heart and body. 12 He interrupts the dance to make four leaps in the four directions of the compass, prescribing the limits within which he dances the second dance figure. 13 The third dance figure expresses the searching and wrestling after God mingled with moments of despair. It consists mainly of leaps such as those of David before the Ark of the Covenant. Midway through, Joseph seems bound to the earth with heaviness; he stumbles and falls as one who has missed his goal. But he dances on with childlike faith.

14 In the fourth dance figure, Joseph has found God; his movements are now a glorification of the Lord. Without effort he makes high, winged leaps that express the most sublime joy. During the dance, Potiphar's wife is gradually roused from her apathy: a new world of feeling and emotion is revealed to her. She sits leaning far forward as if spellbound, breathless, with burning eyes. 15 Potiphar directs his slaves to take possession of Joseph, but when they touch him, his wife shudders and sits straight upright on her throne. She approaches Joseph, and he, with kindly and serious mien, follows her to the dais. She takes a necklace from among the precious jewels her husband has just bought for her and hangs it around Joseph's neck. 16 Potiphar signals that the banquet is over, and as he, his wife and guests leave for the palace, the sheik and his companions make obeisance – but Joseph remains firmly yet modestly erect. Potiphar's wife pretends to ignore him. The servants proceed to clear the tables with much clatter.

17 Evening closes in. Joseph remains alone for a moment. Two servants enter to reveal a cellar-like space below the loggia and make a sign to Joseph to enter and go to rest there. He kneels to pray, then, wrapping himself in his mantle, lays down on the couch and falls asleep. 18 The music now depicts Joseph's dream, in which he has a vision of an angel approaching his bed to guard him. 19 Then a door opens and Potiphar's wife, clothed in a flowing white gown, comes stealthily in. She approaches Joseph and lays her hand on his neck. She shudders and extinguishes her lantern, as if loathe to see the boy's innocence. She holds herself erect, like a column of ice. Joseph awakens and mistakes her for a kindly guardian angel. She falls to her knees and buries her face at his feet but recovers quickly and makes as if to flee. But she regains control of herself, stroking Joseph's hair. She bends over him and succumbs to temptation, touching his mouth with her lips. Joseph starts up, runs past her out of his cell, hiding his head in his mantle. She follows him and, with both arms around him, presses him more and more passionately to her, trying to uncover his face – making movements that recall the dance of the unveiled women at the beginning of the ballet. Joseph at first stands motionless, then his whole frame is gradually seized with more and more violent trembling.

20 Suddenly the trembling ceases, he breaks free from her and makes a gesture of contempt with his left hand. She falls to her knees as if dazzled by the sight. Spreading her hair over his feet, she becomes the repentant sinner praying for pardon. But in vain; he remains motionless, harsh and boyishly inexorable. Then suddenly she raises herself before him, gazes at him with a look of hatred and contempt and tries to strangle him. He frees himself and with a calm, effortless movement he forces her back to her knees. 21 At this moment, two agitated servants enter bearing torches. Discovering Joseph with their mistress they hasten to set her free. Potiphar's wife, pointing with a broad, queenly gesture to Joseph, commands them to seize him with an expression of deadly hate and wildest frenzy on her face. 22 More female attendants enter and surround their mistress. Their mourning gestures as they circle round her result in a kind of uncouth, inchoate dance rhythm.

23 Each of the slaves makes a movement of the arms toward Joseph as if to ward off an evil spirit. Their gestures assume the shape of an exorcism, making the impression of some sort of black magic. 24 Finally the gestures culminate in an Oriental witch's dance of hysterical wildness, like whirling dervishes. Joseph stands motionless at his full height as if in a trance. 25 Potiphar arrives with his men-at-arms and orders them to seize Joseph. They fix heavy chains on his hands and feet. Potiphar's wife, nearly senseless, takes Joseph's mantle and holds it in her hands, as one entranced. Suddenly she rouses herself and, standing as though made of stone, she offers her lips to Potiphar to be kissed – a movement seductive yet false. When he reciprocates, she dispassionately rejects him and points, with growing passion, to Joseph. Potiphar stamps his feet in fury and makes a sign toward the palace.

26 Several executioners enter, carrying a brazier with blood-red flames. They seize Joseph and prepare to torture him, but he gazes heavenward, as one drawn upward by a distant dream. Potiphar's wife gazes intently into his face, with feelings that range from passionate longing to hatred and then fear. The light on Joseph's face cast by the brazier slowly and mysteriously turns from red to a heavenly radiance, bathing his whole body in the celestial light of a holy martyr. At the same moment a star rises in the heavens and a shaft of light descends to separate Joseph from the others. 27 From this light appears an archangel in golden panoply. While he floats down before Joseph, horror and contrition appear more and more plainly on the face of Potiphar's wife. Joseph's chains fall, and the archangel leads him toward the steps. Potiphar's wife looks as though she would follow them, but instead strangles herself with a string of pearls and falls dead in the arms of her women. 28 The heavens grow bright with the glow of dawn, and among roseate clouds are seen youthful angels playing musical instruments. Potiphar retreats slowly, horror-struck, while his wife's attendants carry her body off stage. Joseph and the archangel go slowly on, reach the end of the loggia and vanish into space behind it.

Frank K. DeWald

Staatskapelle Halle



Photo: Felix Broede

The Staatskapelle Halle is one of the largest symphony orchestras in Central Germany and traditionally deeply rooted in the world of concerts and music theatre productions. With a vast range of symphonic repertoire spanning five centuries, the 115 musicians act as cultural ambassadors far beyond the city's boundaries. Of particular note is the orchestra's focus on George Frideric Handel and the music of the Baroque period, which is played by the Händelfestspiel Orchestra Halle. For 30 years musicians from the Staatskapelle Halle have devoted themselves to performance practice on historical instruments – a unique concept in the German orchestral landscape. The orchestra's long history has also been shaped by renowned conductors and soloists such as Kurt Masur, Hartmut Haenchen, Daniel Barenboim, Isabelle Faust and Ragna Schirmer, among many others. Founded in 2016, the Staatskapelle Halle's Orchestra Academy accompanies outstanding young musicians on their path as budding orchestral musicians, building an important bridge between training and career entry. The orchestra embodies the ethos of tradition shaping the future. Fabrice Bollon has been musical director and chief conductor since the 2022/23 season. www.buehnen-halle.de/de/staatskapelle

Fabrice Bollon



Photo: Anna Kolata

Fabrice Bollon studied with Michael Gielen and Nikolaus Harnoncourt in Paris and at Salzburg's Mozarteum before completing his studies with Georges Prêtre and Mauricio Kagel. He has made numerous appearances with many renowned European orchestras, and from 2009 to 2021 served as general music director/chief conductor at Germany's Theater Freiburg, overseeing numerous recordings for Naxos including a remarkable interpretation of Korngold's *Das Wunder der Heliane* in 2018 (8.660410-12). His work in Freiburg garnered international acclaim, including Editor's Choice accolades in *Gramophone* magazine and Diapason d'Or Awards, among others. He has been chief conductor of the Staatskapelle Halle and general music director of the Halle Opera since August 2022. Bollon is also an acclaimed composer, and his operas *Oscar und die Dame in Rosa* and *The Folly* have been highly acclaimed by both critics and audiences. In 2020 his album of original compositions released on Naxos (8.574015) received a Choc de Classica award and an ICMA nomination. www.fabricebollon.com

Richard Strauss's single-act ballet *Josephs Legende* emerged in 1914 just as the world's attention was turning to war. But with its exotic instrumental colouring and the composer's intent to rejuvenate dance into a 'purely inspirational form' dedicated to 'absolute beauty', it reveals a great ballet composer and demonstrates his orchestral mastery to the full. *Josephs Legende* is a parable about struggles between good and evil based on the familiar Old Testament story of the slave boy Joseph. The work's dramatic tale is set with alluring sensuality expressed through Strauss's gift for soaring themes.

Richard
STRAUSS
(1864–1949)

1–28 Josephs Legende
(‘The Legend of Joseph’),
Op. 63, TrV 231 (1912–14)
(Ballet in one act)

Staatskapelle Halle
Fabrice Bollon

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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