

NAXOS

Richard
STRAUSS
Intermezzo

DEUTSCHE OPER BERLIN

rbb KULTUR

Philipp Jekal • Maria Bengtsson • Thomas Blondelle
Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin • Sir Donald Runnicles



Richard
STRAUSS
(1864–1949)

Intermezzo

A bourgeois comedy with symphonic interludes in two acts,
Op. 72, TrV 246 (1924)

Libretto by the composer

First performance: 4 November 1924 at the Schauspielhaus, Dresden

Robert Storch, court conductor	Philipp Jekal, Baritone
Christine, his wife	Maria Bengtsson, Soprano
Franzl, their son	Elliott Woodruff
Anna, the chambermaid	Anna Schoeck, Soprano
Baron Lummer	Thomas Blondelle, Tenor
Stroh, a conductor	Clemens Bieber, Tenor
Notary	Markus Brück, Baritone
Wife of the Notary	Nadine Secunde, Soprano
Commissioner	Joel Allison, Bass-baritone
Lawyer	Simon Pauly, Baritone
Singer and Cook	Tobias Kehrler, Bass
Resi, Marie and Therese	Lilit Davtyan, Soprano

Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin
Sir Donald Runnicles, Musical Direction

General Director: Dietmar Schwarz • General Music Director: Sir Donald Runnicles
Managing Director: Thomas Fehrle • Artistic Administrator: Christoph Seufferle
Dramaturge: Jörg Königsdorf • Legal and Media Advisor: Sebastian Garten

Act I

Scene 1 (a): Vor der Abreise des Mannes

- ❶ Anna! Anna! Wo bleibt denn nur die dumme Gans?
(Christine, Robert, Anna)

12:49

Scene 1 (b): Im Ankleidezimmer

- ❷ Nun wollen wir frisieren! (Christine, Anna, Franzl,
Chambermaid, Cook) – [Entr'acte]

12:34

Scene 2: Auf der Rodelbahn

- ❸ Bahn frei – Obacht! Sie Esel! Sehn Sie denn nicht...
(Christine, Baron Lummer) – Waltz

5:36

Scene 3: Ball beim Grundlseewirt

- ❹ Ich kann nicht mehr! So toll... (Christine, Baron Lummer)
– [Conclusion of the Waltz]

6:09

Scene 4: Möbliertes Zimmer im Hause des Notars

- ❺ Wissen Sie, mein Mann, der immer an der Arbeit sitzt...
(Christine, Wife of the Notary)
– [Entr'acte:] *Leicht fließend*

4:41

Scene 5: Wohnung der Frau Storch

- ❻ Es ist wirklich ein sehr netter, ungeheuer bescheidener
Mensch... (Christine, Cook, Marie, Baron Lummer)
– [Entr'acte:] *Allmählich etwas bewegter*

24:32

Scene 6: Zimmer des Barons im Hause des Notars

- ❼ Frau Notar, können Sie mir meinen Koffer
heraufschicken? (Baron Lummer, Wife of the Notary,
Resi) – [Entr'acte]

4:43

Scene 7: Draußen starkes Schneegestöber

- ❽ Tausend Mark will er haben! (Christine, Baron Lummer,
Anna) – [Entr'acte:] *Leidenschaftlich bewegt*

7:17

Scene 8: Das Schlafzimmer des Kindes, nur mit einer Kerze erleuchtet

- ❾ Mein lieber, lieber Bubi! Ich bin so furchtbar unglücklich!
(Christine, Franzl)

7:55

Act II

Scene 1: Die Skatpartie

- ❿ [Introduction:] *Sehr gemächlich* – Ach, Sie kennen sie
nicht, Herr Justizrat! (Commissioner, Singer, Stroh,
Lawyer, Robert) – [Entr'acte:] *Schnell und heftig*

15:26

Scene 2: Bureau des Notars

- ⓫ Guten Tag, Herr Notar (Christine, Notary)
– [Entr'acte:] *Stürmisch bewegt*

5:50

Scene 3: Im Prater. Gewitter und Sturm

- ⓬ Es ist einfach zum Rasendwerden! (Robert, Stroh)
– [Entr'acte:] *Sehr schnell* –

8:31

Scene 4: Das Toilettenzimmer der Frau in wildester Unordnung

- ⓭ [Introduction:] *Presto* – Anna! Ich hätte den Baron
doch nicht dahin schicken sollen
(Christine, Anna, Therese) –

7:55

Scene 5: Das Esszimmer, festlich geschmückt

- ⓮ [Introduction:] *Sehr lebhaft und fröhlich* – Er kommt!
Herrgott, wie ich mich freue!
(Christine, Therese, Robert)

8:38

Final Scene: Das Esszimmer, festlich geschmückt

- ⓯ Da bin ich, gnäd'ge Frau!
(Baron Lummer, Christine, Robert)

17:49

Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

Intermezzo

Toying with his own image

Tobias Kratzer in conversation with Jörg Königsdorf

Jörg Königsdorf: *Intermezzo marks the mid-point of your Strauss trilogy at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. In the first instalment, Arabella, you gave us a modern take on emancipation and gender, which was a surprise to some. Is there modernity mileage to be had from Intermezzo?*

Tobias Kratzer: Unlike *Arabella*, *Intermezzo* contains nothing in the way of a gender conflict. *Intermezzo's* modernity consists more in its appreciation of the daily round, something that was not deemed worthy of depiction on stage until the advent of the New Objectivity movement. The idea of a telephone ringing as part of the onstage action, for example, was unthinkable. However, the more our Strauss cycle progresses, the more I realise that I'm not at all trying to point up some streak of modernism in Strauss; instead I want to show how people in the present day can fully relate to his operas, for all the arms'-length monumentality of their music. *Intermezzo* is a case in point, as the storyline alone reveals a Strauss who is more accessible – and with it more vulnerable. With our gaze suitably focused by *Intermezzo*, we are apt to take a different view of other operas such as *Die Frau ohne Schatten* ('The Woman without a Shadow'). In this work Strauss is more centred and grounded than he is, say, in the mythological pieces of his advanced years, when librettists lured him into storylines that were weirder than anything that would have tallied with his down-to-earth nature.

JK *The question of modernity is relevant for another reason, though: in his preface to the score Strauss himself claims to have pointed musical theatre in a new direction with his Intermezzo.*

TK There are two things he could have been alluding to. Firstly, something we might call musical prose: a singing diction that's very chopped-up and alternating, and, as with Janáček, more akin to everyday language than following great sweeping melodies, even including stretches of melodramatic text spoken over the music. You could call that Strauss's contribution to the New Objectivity. The other thing he could have meant was the auditory portrayal of everyday goings-on. But there's a third aspect that really interests me nowadays: by basically writing himself into his own opera, Strauss is effectively opening a wry auto-fictional window onto his work. He seems to be toying with his own image. And that amounted to a major break with the artistic notions of the 19th century, in which the biographies of 'great artists' often impinged on their works but never in the form of depicting, say, Richard Wagner as an onstage character. That Strauss chose to place thinly veiled alter egos of himself and his wife in front of an audience reveals a self-reflection more associated with post-modern strategies. What I love about the piece is his game-playing with his own role as a composer and also the switching between fiction and reality.

JK *Not that the vast majority of the audience at the world premiere in 1924 got that. It was Strauss's exhibitionism that was used as a stick to beat him with.*

TK Because the little slice of his life presented by Strauss in *Intermezzo* had nothing to do with high-flown passions, heroic deeds or political intrigues; it only dealt with a banal misunderstanding that led to his wife assuming he was having an affair – not the kind of material that you expect to spawn great masterpieces; this rather makes a spectacle out of one of those petty, embarrassing details on the fringe of any terrestrial existence. Far from levitating above us, the artist is an ordinary human being who plays skat, loves rose hip jelly and travels in the course of his work. The only thing we are not privy to is a scene of him ... on the privy.

JK *Strauss dubbed his eighth opera a 'bourgeois comedy'. Does the adjective refer to an emerging urbaneness or to an outdated moral code and a nostalgic yearning for the good old days before the First World War?*

TK Whatever it refers to, the work is perfectly applicable to the present day. We are presented with the template of a middle-class marriage that's still broadly familiar to many people. 'Bourgeois' encompasses a degree of tolerance towards wayward spouses, as long as their flings stay under wraps. Here we've gone a step further with this marriage *à la française* and turned Christine's full-on flirt into an actual affair. After all, much of what she accuses her husband of is only projected self-reproach. *Intermezzo* may not give us a 2024 marriage manual, as could be said of *Arabella*, but there is no reason why the work has to be set in the Wilhelminian period.

JK *At the world premiere of Intermezzo the stage set for the drawing room replicated the Strausses' own drawing room. How important for you is this direct link to the composer's biography?*

TK I'm interested from a systemic point of view but not in any way connected to Strauss. Which is why he himself doesn't feature in our production but the archetypal characters that he created do: Elektra, Salome, Marschallin – all of whom are characters that have a core trait that people can relate to. In our approach to Storch, the Kapellmeister, we ignored the real-life Richard Strauss in favour of a fourth-wall reference to the performance here at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. Neither do I think that the opera gives us any special insights into Strauss's character, seeing as he doesn't lay himself bare but only offers us a snapshot – which is true of all autobiographies. You don't get to the bottom of the real-life Goethe by reading *Dichtung und Wahrheit*; instead, he comes over as a fictional character.

JK *Strauss can be said to be doubly present in Intermezzo: firstly as an onstage character, secondly by indulging his ego in the symphonic interludes, which form a major part of the score and are even mentioned in the elaboration tacked on to the opera's title. What's your stance on these two ways in which the composer draws attention to himself?*

TK I take a what-you-see-is-what-you-get approach to these intermezzi. I don't bestow any ulterior theatrical meaning on them. That's why we have the orchestra livestreamed on video. In Act II the stuff we captured on film earlier links playfully into the theme of the action. We're exploring the theatricality inherent in this – almost – puristic music. Because unlike most composers, whose intermezzi always have dramatic relevance, Strauss is really only thinking symphonically here.

JK *Compared to the Storch couple, all the other characters function largely as storyline facilitators. They remind us of the teeming crowds of characters in Ariadne and the hordes of nondescript protagonists of the Commedia Dell'Arte.*

TK We double down on this impression by – with the exception of orchestra scenes – doing without extras. This means we only use members of the ensemble, who get cast in minor roles, even roles with no lines to say or sing, like passers-by or passengers in a plane. That derives largely from their acting the part that society has allotted them. Strauss is uninterested in whether they have an interior private life, just as most people are blithely indifferent to the fates of 95 percent of the people they encounter. That's not a value judgement; they're hard-wired to do it. Their social roles supersede the individual.

JK *Even the young baron, who Christine has a fling with, seems to have been lifted from a comic play.*

TK Well, it was fun getting to grips with the character, even if he's a touch superficial. Just as the real-life conductor of the opera gets his cameo appearance within the metafictional play that is going on throughout the evening, so I have given the Baron a few of my own character traits, as an ironic wink at myself. Not that these are semantically unambiguous connections; they are false trails, adding to the metafictional playfulness of this work.

JK *Christine is based on Pauline Strauss, who was known to be quite crotchety and is depicted as such by her husband. How does a present-day production lean in against that portrayal?*

TK That depends to a large extent on the personality of the singer. Although the opera centres on Christine, our view of her is necessarily conditioned by her husband's view of her. Each singer has to liaise with the director and find her own angle on the character. I've gone out of my way to demonstrate that even at the moment when she sees herself as completely authentic, the protagonist is following certain behavioural patterns. This imprisonment in roles defined and determined by society is what comprises the tragic portion of this comic opera.

JK *To boot, the Storchs also have a child. Does Franzl get a raw deal as the Storchs' son?*

TK I love the way Strauss depicts the ambivalence of the child. Childhood is not depicted here as a refuge for innocence, nor the child as a tragic victim as in *Wozzeck* but rather as a chip off the paternal block, strenuously defending his father. As in real life, this throws up questions like: Whom does the child love most? Where did the parents go wrong – or right? That makes Franzl one of the most realistic and exact portrayals of a child ever to grace an opera stage.

JK *The opera closes with the sentence 'A happy marriage, if ever there was one'. Do you endorse that statement?*

TK I'd say that's the most ironic and ambiguous ending to an opera that Strauss ever dreamt up. Ironic not in the sense of asserting the opposite to what the words say but as an open question to us all: How would we define the concept of happiness?

Courtesy of Deutsche Oper Berlin
English translation by allround Fremdsprachen GmbH

Synopsis

Act I

Scene 1 (a) – Before the Husband's Departure

The composer and conductor Robert Storch is about to leave for a concert tour. His wife Christine stays behind at home.

Scene 1 (b) – In the Dressing Room

While having her hair done, Christine complains to her maid Anna about being 'the wife of a famous man'.

Scene 2 – At the Toboggan Run

An open-air accident leads to a consequential encounter: Christine meets young Baron Lummer.

Scene 3 – A Ball at Grundelseewirt

Christine and Baron Lummer spend several carefree hours together.

Scene 4 – Furnished Room at the Notary's House

Christine treats Baron Lummer as her protégé, finding a reasonably priced student room for him.

Scene 5 – At the Apartment of Frau Storch

Baron Lummer visits Christine at home. The meeting resembles a series of misunderstandings. Christine craves intimacy; Lummer is after financial support.

Scene 6 – The Baron's Room at the Notary's House

Lummer ponders his relationship with Christine and is visited by his friend Resi. He sends Christine a request for money.

Scene 7 – A Snowstorm

Christine is indignant at Lummer's requests for money. However, when she opens a letter addressed to her husband, other worries occupy her mind. Robert seems to be having an affair with the sender, 'Mieze Maier'. Christine is outraged and decides to leave her husband.

Scene 8 – The Child's Bedroom, illuminated by only a candle

Christine wants to depart with her son, Franzl. The child, however, is on 'Papa's' side.

Act II

Scene 1 – The Skat Round

During a round of skat with colleagues, Robert Storch receives a message from Christine. He does not understand why she wants to leave him. He knows no one by the name of 'Mieze Maier'.

Scene 2 – The Notary's Office

Christine wants to file for divorce with a notary. He, however, rejects the commission: 'I revere your husband far too much.'

Scene 3– At the Prater. A Thunderstorm

A chance encounter with his colleague Stroh sheds light on the cause of the misunderstanding. Stroh confesses that Mieze Maier is his lover, and her letter was only delivered to his colleague Storch because their similarity in name.

Scene 4 – The Wife's Dressing Room, in utter chaos

While Christine is packing her suitcases to leave, a message arrives, clearing up the misunderstanding. Despite the good news, Christine remains sceptical.

Scenes 5 and 6 – The Dining Room, festively decorated

Robert Storch returns home. Instead of reconciliation, a new argument ensues. Another visit from Baron Lummer offers no way out either. Christine and her husband always remain connected: '... this is what one truly calls a happy marriage'.

Courtesy of Deutsche Oper Berlin
English translation by Alexa Nieschlag

Philipp Jekal



Photo: Jeremy Knowles

Baritone Philipp Jekal studied with Roland Schubert at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Leipzig, and furthered his education at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music with César Ulloa. A prizewinner of the Bundeswettbewerb Gesang Berlin, he also received the Advancement Prize of the Walter and Charlotte Hamel Foundation. Further studies took him to the Accademia Teatro alla Scala in 2016, and in 2017 he was awarded a scholarship by the Richard Wagner Verband in Bayreuth. He has appeared in numerous important roles in the Wagner repertoire, including Sixtus Beckmesser (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) and Alberich (*Das Rheingold*, rehearsal cover) at Deutsche Oper Berlin, where he has been a member of the ensemble since 2019/20.

Maria Bengtsson



Swedish soprano Maria Bengtsson studied at the Hochschule für Musik Freiburg. Highlights of recent seasons include Contessa in *Le nozze di Figaro* in London, Vienna, Berlin and Munich; Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* in Naples and Hamburg; Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* in Paris, Vienna, Vicenza and Baden-Baden; Christine in *Intermezzo* in Berlin and Dresden; the title role in *Daphne* in Frankfurt; Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* in Geneva, Vienna, Amsterdam and Frankfurt; Gräfin in *Capriccio* in Vienna; Blanche in *Dialogues des Carmélites* in Frankfurt; Ellen Orford in *Peter Grimes* in Paris, London, Madrid and Helsinki; *Rusalka* in Vienna as well as the title role in the world premiere of Detlev Glanert's *Oceane* at Deutsche Oper Berlin.

www.mariabengtsson.com

Thomas Blondelle

Photo: Bjorn Comhaire



Belgian tenor Thomas Blondelle is acclaimed for his vocal versatility and compelling stage presence. A long-time ensemble member of Deutsche Oper Berlin, he is a regular guest at opera houses all over the world. He has also appeared at festivals including Aix-en-Provence, Bregenz and the BBC Proms, and with the New York Philharmonic. He is a specialist of Viennese opera, and an avid recitalist, with performances including *Winterreise* at the Staatsoper Berlin. Blondelle also composes and writes libretti, and has been a professor of singing at LUCA School of Arts since 2021. He is a laureate of numerous prestigious competitions, including the Belvedere and Queen Elisabeth Competitions.

www.thomasblondelle.com

Anna Schoeck



Soprano Anna Schoeck has performed a diverse repertoire of opera and concert music. Career highlights to date include regular performances at Deutsche Oper Berlin and Oper Leipzig, where she has sung the roles of Mimi (*La Bohème*) and Contessa (*Le nozze di Figaro*); her debut at the Bayreuth Festival in collaboration with Oper Leipzig; and appearing as Mariana (*Das Liebesverbot*) at Teatro Verdi Trieste. Schoeck studied at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin with Heidrun Franz-Vetter, receiving a scholarship from the Franz-Joseph Weisweiler Foundation of the Deutsche Oper Berlin. She has also appeared as Senta (*Der fliegende Holländer*), Manon Lescaut and Tochter (*Cardillac*) at Schleswig-Holsteinisches Landestheater, and Desdemona (*Otello*) and Antonia (*Le Contes d'Hoffmann*) at Staatstheater Darmstadt.

www.anna-schoeck.com

Elliott Woodruff



Elliott Woodruff (b. 2015) was born and raised in Los Angeles. Woodruff began acting at the age of five and has since appeared in numerous commercials and TV series, as well as German and American film productions. He has lived in Berlin since 2020.

Nadine Secunde



American operatic soprano Nadine Secunde trained at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Indiana University with Margaret Harshaw, and at the Musikhochschule in Stuttgart as a Fulbright Scholar. In 1987 she made her acclaimed debut at the Bayreuth Festival as Elsa in *Lohengrin*, and returned the following year as Sieglinde in *Die Walküre*. A specialist in the repertoire of Wagner and Richard Strauss, she has performed in prestigious opera houses worldwide including the Bayerische Staatsoper, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona and Teatro La Fenice, Venice.

Clemens Bieber



Clemens Bieber was engaged as a tenor at the Saarländisches Staatstheater from 1986 to 1988, and has been an ensemble member of Deutsche Oper Berlin since 1988. He was appointed Berliner Kammersänger in 2010. From 1987 to 2012 he was as a soloist at the Bayreuth Festival, appearing as Steersman (*Der fliegende Holländer*) and David (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), among others. Career highlights include the world premiere of Henze's *Das verratene Meer*; *Belmonte* at Komische Oper Berlin; *Die schweigsame Frau* at Semperoper Dresden; and *Lohengrin* at the 2010 Richard Wagner Festival Wels. Bieber has collaborated with renowned conductors such as Christian Thielemann and Peter Schneider, and guest performances have taken him across the world, including to The Metropolitan Opera in New York.

Photo: Monika Rittershaus

Joel Allison

Photo: Taylor Long



Canadian bass-baritone Joel Allison has curated a wide range of repertoire, including Biterolf in *Tannhäuser*, Schaunard in *La Bohème* and Donner in *Das Rheingold*. Further highlights include Bijou-Alcindor in Adam's *Le Postillon de Lonjumeau* (Oper Frankfurt, Tiroler Festspiele Erl), Leporello in *Don Giovanni* (Palermo Classica) and Lord Sydney in *Il viaggio a Reims* (Oper Leipzig), as well as Don Pizarro in *Fidelio*, Angelotti in *Tosca*, Fritz Kothner in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Frank in *Die Fledermaus*, Escamillo in *Carmen*, the Father in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, and Colline in *La Bohème*, all with Deutsche Oper Berlin.

www.joelallisonbassbaritone.com

Simon Pauly



Born in Cologne and raised in Bayreuth, baritone Simon Pauly studied at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Munich. He has worked as a soloist and ensemble member of various German opera houses since 1999; he was in the ensemble of Deutsche Oper Berlin for many years, and continues to collaborate closely with the company. Twenty years ago he discovered photography as another artistic outlet, and he specialises in portraits for opera singers, conductors, orchestras, instrumentalists and actors.

Tobias Kehrer



German bass Tobias Kehrer studied at the Universität der Künste in Berlin with Siegfried Lorenz. After graduating he was awarded the Franz-Josef-Weisweiler-Stipendium by the Förderkreis of the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and became a company member in the 2012/13 season, appearing as Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Landgraf (*Tannhäuser*), Daland (*Der fliegende Holländer*), Fafner/Hunding (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*), Rocco (*Fidelio*) and Osmin (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*). He has also performed internationally, including with The Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago and Opéra national de Paris, and at the Teatro alla Scala, Wiener Staatsoper and Teatro Real. He regularly appears as a guest artist at the Semperoper Dresden, and has performed at the Salzburger Festspiele, Glyndebourne, Dresdner Musikfestspiele and Bayreuth Festival.

Lilit Davtyan



Photo: Veronica Trigubets

Armenian soprano Lilit Davtyan studied at the Yerevan State Conservatory, and from 2018 to 2021 worked at the institution's Opera Studio as an accompanist and singer. She joined the Bolshoi Theatre Young Opera Artists Programme in 2021, studying with Dmitry Vdovin, and has taken part in masterclasses with leading international artists. A prizewinner of several competitions, she was a finalist at Neue Stimmen 2022 and a semi-finalist at Operalia 2024. Since 2023/24 she has been a member of the Deutsche Oper Berlin ensemble, with roles including Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Lauretta (*Il trittico*), alongside major European and US debuts.

askonasholt.com/artist/lilit-davtyan

Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin



The history of the Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin is closely linked to that of its home city, with the ensemble being based in the opera house on Bismarckstraße since 1961. Principal conductors have included Bruno Walter, Ferenc Fricsay, Lorin Maazel, Christian Thielemann and Sir Donald Runnicles, who has been general music director since 2009. Artistically, the orchestra focuses on the works of Wagner and Richard Strauss, as well as continually exploring contemporary music, with world premieres in recent years including Aribert Reimann's *L'invisible*, Detlev Glanert's *Oceane*, Chaya Czernowin's *Heart Chamber*, Giorgio Battistelli's *Il Teorema die Pasolini* and Rebecca Saunders' *Lash – Acts of Love*. The orchestra's discography comprises more than 200 titles, including multiple award winning and critically acclaimed releases. Audiovisual releases of Janáček's *Jenůfa* and Zemlinsky's *Der Zwerg* were nominated for GRAMMY Awards, and recent projects also include the highly praised *Der Ring des Nibelungen* under the baton of Sir Donald Runnicles.

Sir Donald Runnicles



Sir Donald Runnicles has built his reputation on enduring relationships with several of the world's most significant opera companies and orchestras over his 45-year career. He is especially celebrated for his interpretations of Romantic and post-Romantic repertoire, which are core to his musical identity. The 2025/26 season marks both his final season as music director of Deutsche Oper Berlin (since 2009), as well as his first season as the chief conductor of the Dresdner Philharmonie. He also serves as music director of the Grand Teton Music Festival, and as the principal guest conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Chief artistic leadership roles include the San Francisco Opera (1992–2008), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (2009–16), Orchestra of St. Luke's (2001–07), and principal guest conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (2001–23). Donald Runnicles was born and raised in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was appointed an OBE in 2004, and was made a Knight Bachelor in 2020. He holds honorary degrees from The University of Edinburgh, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland), and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Richard Strauss summed up his two-act opera *Intermezzo* as a ‘bourgeois comedy with symphonic interludes’. The soprano role of Christine with its shimmering cantilenas represents Strauss’s wife Pauline, while the successful Kapellmeister Robert Storch serves as Richard Strauss himself in a domestic drama that was avant-garde for its time but now resonates with the accessibility of today’s reality shows. This production from the Deutsche Oper Berlin was acclaimed for its lush orchestral sound and superbly characterful cast led by a formidable central performance from Maria Bengtsson.



Richard
STRAUSS
(1864–1949)
Intermezzo

A bourgeois comedy with symphonic interludes in two acts (1924)
Libretto by the composer

Robert Storch, court conductor Philipp Jekal, Baritone
Christine, his wife Maria Bengtsson, Soprano
Franzl, their son Elliott Woodruff
Anna, the chambermaid Anna Schoeck, Soprano
Baron Lummer Thomas Blondelle, Tenor
Stroh, a conductor Clemens Bieber, Tenor
Notary Markus Brück, Baritone
Wife of the Notary Nadine Secunde, Soprano

Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin • Sir Donald Runnicles

A detailed track list and artists’ details can be found inside the booklet.

Recorded live: 25, 28 April and 1, 5 May 2024 at Deutsche Oper Berlin, Germany • Audio producer: Johanna Vollus

Sound engineer: Nikolaus Löwe • Assistant sound engineers: Lilian Werk, Jan Göhler, Ulrich Hieber

Microport technicians: Maria-Elisabeth Graf, Henrike Zeller, Max Liebewirth, Tilman Kasper

Editor: Anne-Kristin Sölter • Booklet notes courtesy of Deutsche Oper Berlin

Publisher: Adolph Fürstner, Berlin / Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG

Stage production by Deutsche Oper Berlin, directed by Tobias Kratzer

A production by Deutsche Oper Berlin and Naxos in association with Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (rbb)

Cover photo by Thomas Aurin

© 2025 & © 2026 Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd • www.naxos.com