



Strauss, Thuille and Taillefer or singing loud enough to make the tower tremble

I have already said it once in a lecture and allow myself this opportunity to repeat it: everything than can be said or written about Richard Strauss has already been said or written, and usually more than once. His stance during the period of Nazi domination was held against him, the accusation rejected, the rejection attacked, the attacks dashed to pieces - and so on ad infinitum. Something similar applies for the airing of the superfluous question as to whether Richard Strauss was a revolutionary or a reactionary, and if so why he changed from one to the other ... well, perhaps the question is not superfluous, one can and should always ask the question; what is superfluous is the answer. Artistically, Richard Strauss was always in the fortunate position of being able to be what he preferred being: Richard Strauss - and that wholeheartedly, even in secondary works which even the most persistent Strauss admirers, and I include myself among them, would not want to hear absolutely every day, at least not twice, such as the Imperial Japanese Festival Music or the Festive Entry of the Knights of the Order of St John, or Taillefer, or whatever the work in question might be.

Little in the life and art of Richard Strauss has remained unexplored, at most irrelevant problems can cause headaches for those who have no other cares in life, such as : why has Strauss not given an opus number to the wonderfully audacious and spirited Burleske for piano and orchestra, while the already-mentioned Festival Music, or to give it its almost bordering on Baroque title To celebrate the 2600th anniversary of the Japanese Empire was deemed worthy of an opus number - 84? This work, which was completed on 23 April 1940 during a holiday visit of the maestro to Merano, also raises the question as to how this score, gigantic in every respect including its orchestration, managed to cross the battle fronts and arrive in Tokyo, where it must have arrived, for this veritable treasure reposes there in the Imperial Library, and on 7 December 1941 the work was premiered in the

Kabukiza Theatre. But it so happened that in 1940 the loophole to the East was still just open, and so the score actually travelled via Russia – which was still a friendly ally of Hitler’s Germany at that time – and Siberia and Vladivostok to Japan, which actually remained at peace with Russia until 1945.

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A truly epochal occurrence such as Richard Strauss has the effect of causing other, smaller or perhaps not very much smaller stars to pale in comparison with this central sun. Not that I am not thankful to the prevailing spirit of the age for bringing forth this genius Richard Strauss, whom – and I attach great store by this description – I regard as “the last crusader of tonality”, but I still wonder what would have happened without him, whether such lesser stars as Kyrill Kistner, Alexander Ritter, Max von Schillings and – someone we’ll deal with in more detail later – Ludwig Thuille would not be more frequently represented in opera house and concert programmes thus established in the awareness of the music-enjoying public? Richard Strauss himself, however, had no interest in outshining other stars. On the contrary: examining the programmes of concerts where he conducted, it is amazing to note with what commitment he supported the works of his composing contemporaries, including Ludwig Thuille. Excuse this parenthetical suggestion, but it would be fascinating to compile a festive concert programme of the premieres of the works of other people which Richard Strauss conducted.

Richard Strauss’ friendship with the three years older Ludwig Thuille dated from their early youth. This friendship, which ended with the early death of Thuille in 1907 (Thuille died of heart failure at the age of 46), was decisive and important for the development of the young Strauss, and the singular collapse at the end, which we will deal with in detail later, casts a particularly significant light on



Strauss' the work and person, so that is useful to take a closer look at this small aspect.

A word in advance: together with Rudolf Louis, in the last years of his life Ludwig Thuille wrote a subsequently frequently-reprinted harmony tutor which appeared in 1907 – an extremely profound work which is generally known among experts as “the Louis Thuille”. As Louis is the French version of Thuille's first name, the belief became widespread that Thuille was a French name, and on the albeit rare occasions when one of his works is broadcast on radio, he is wilfully mistreated as “Thüij”. The otherwise precise Grove even apostrophised Thuille as “of Savoyard origin”. No, Thuille is a fairly common Rhaeto-Romanic name in South Tyrol and is found with different spellings. Thuille's father was a bookseller in Bozano who died young, as did the mother, and Thuille was brought up by an uncle in Kremsmünster, where he came into contact with the eminent music culture of the venerable monastery and received his first intensive musical education (violin and piano). Later, at 15, Thuille came to the extremely musical house of the Nagiller family in Innsbruck. Matthäus Nagiller, already dead by then, was in his time also a composer and conductor of no small international repute, and his widow Pauline (who was distantly related to Thuille) took charge of the young man and provided for his further formal musical education with teachers who included Josef Pembaur the Elder, whose son, Josef Pembaur the Younger would later become a student of Thuille and an institution in Munich's musical life as the “poet at the piano”. Around this time – 1876 to 1881 – Thuille completed his first compositions: lieder, piano sonatas and a string quartet.

Ludwig Thuille lived in Innsbruck with his elder married step-sister, Marie Marchesani, and both she and Pauline Nagiller were close friends of the Strauss family. In the summer of 1877 Franz Strauss visited Innsbruck with his wife, daughter Johanna and Richard, who was then thirteen years old, and from this time on, despite the relatively wide age difference for their youth (Thuille was 16, Strauss 13 years old) this was the start of a close friendship as well as a very lively correspondence between Munich and Innsbruck which cast a colourful light particular on the musical development of the three years younger Strauss. The age difference was

compensated for by the fact that, for a child, Strauss could already boast considerable success: it was already four years since he had personally conducted the premiere of the orchestral version of his Schneider Polka. In the meantime Strauss had written several songs, piano pieces and other items, and by 1877 the young master, which must definitely felt himself to be, was already at Opus 13, which works numbering was naturally subsequently discarded.

Apparently the more cautious Thuille had little to offer in return, but this was not detrimental to the friendship. Some 24 of Strauss' letters to Thuille from the following two years have survived, but unfortunately not Thuille's replies, so that their contents can only be construed from Strauss' letters. The subject is almost always music, his own compositions, harmony and counterpoint studies, but above all Strauss' very numerous, frequent concert and opera visits, and from these accounts it is clear how really comprehensive the familiarity of the young Strauss was with the intricacies of even the rarely performed works. But it was the period of his blatant anti-Wagner attitude (taken over without a murmur from father Strauss), which was expressed occasionally in childish insolent outbursts. He called the Faust overtures “trash and chaos ..., truly without equal” (21 December 1877) and in an undated letter, which was certainly written in May 1878, Strauss wrote that he had seen Wagner's Siegfried and “had been bored stiff.” But in complete contrast, albeit interspersed with malicious comments, was the precise and detailed description of the opera, scattered with numerous notation examples and the instrumentalists strictly observed – remarkably, though, Strauss makes absolutely no comment on the thing which an adult and moderate Wagnerian can justifiably criticise, namely the text.

Incidentally, a remarkable point about the letters is that the handwriting of the young man, beautifully copperplate-like Suetterlin script, bears very little resemblance to the thoroughly characteristic handwriting of the adult Strauss, while the musical notation is already fully developed, and barely distinguishable from that which came later. I mean that this also points to the early maturity of the young Strauss, a maturity that



had nothing to do with a wunderkind sensation, but rather the self-evident personality evolving from within, as was also the case with Mozart.

The correspondence, which rarely referred to school matters, terminated after a brief holiday in Munich in 1878. After matriculation Thuille moved there completely in 1879 and became a student at the academy which was still called Royal School of Music. So the barely twenty-year-old was now exposed to the total musical wealth of the city, but above all he became a student of Joseph von Rheinberger, who has rather unfairly gone down in history merely as “Fugenseppl” (“Fugue Joe”). Thuille was able to survive with financial support from Pauline Nagiller, and after her death in 1881 he was her sole heir and able to live in humble but secure circumstances.

During this period there was a pronounced estrangement between the two friends, fairly understandably, as Thuille was now a student at the music school, treading professional ground as it were, while Strauss was still in grammar school. Clearly, according to the letters to his foster-mother Nagiller, the fuss the Strauss family was making over young Richard got on Thuille’s nerves. The nearer and more distant Strauss-Pschorr family regarded the compositions of their Richard as the hub of the universe. I would not describe this as envy, for evidence drawn from his life makes it clear such a sentiment was foreign to Thuille, but considering the situation of the pampered Strauss there must have been a certain resigning melancholy on the part of the country lad living alone in Munich without patronage. Strauss experienced all kinds of encouragement, all doors were open to him, and in 1881 no less a person than Hermann Levi conducted the first public performance of the seventeen-year-old’s D Minor Symphony – at a time when Thuille had just published his Opus 1, a sonata for violin and piano with the small Aibl music publishing house. In letters to Pauline Nagiller, Thuille bitterly criticised some of Strauss’ work, for example describing a movement of a piano sonata (it may have been the Grand Sonata in C Minor, then listed as Opus 22) “a strange mishmash of bad taste”, and accused Strauss of taking pleasure “in all manner of monstrosities”, a condemnation that was certainly not completely wrong, but which ignored the fact

that it was these very “monstrosities” that finally paved Richard Strauss’ way to mastery, those “monstrosities” that he abided by persistently and confidently when degenerate progressiveness in music demanded quite different monstrosities of which respectable Thuille, while anything but died-in-the-wool conservative (although Tyrolean) could have no idea. Thus years later the ageing Strauss took pleasure in the “monstrosity” of opposing prescribed Modernisms with his audacious public successes – all of which naturally Thuille did not live to witness.

The school that Thuille attended was unable to make a Wagnerian of him, or in the parlance of the time, a New German. Joseph von Rheinberger (whose well-earned nobility was almost always suppressed in concert programmes and record sleeve notes in strange contrast to contrast to Dittersdorf or Max von Schillings, for example) was not as dry or thin in his own works as one could have assumed from the nickname Fugenseppl, but with his students he attached great importance to the flawless mastery of the technical mastery of the material in the old, strict manner. Even twenty years later, Richard Strauss was to turn to Thuille with a technical movement problem relating to Sinfonia Domestica with the remark: “You are the better counterpointer.” On the other hand, Rheinberg’s school was certainly not capable of pointing the way to a sound musical future at the time, and naturally this could not avoid Wagner.

The redirection of attention to Wagner – in literature the term “conversion” also crops up – occurred almost simultaneously with Strauss and Thuille, appears to have resolved the artistic reservations of Thuille towards Strauss. The friendship took a more adult turn after Thuille had completed his studies with distinction (he only missed top marks in literature history), with the first performance of his piano concerto as his masterpiece, and after Strauss successfully matriculated and could finally devote himself entirely to music.

Just a year after Thuille left the music academy, he was back there teaching piano and harmony, subsequently as a professor. Strauss, to be sure, followed the predestine path as though a foregone



conclusion, starting off where the ambitions of some others also ended: in 1885 he became court music director in Meiningen – admittedly still provincial, but a cultural haven under an arts-loving duke.

In his new-found fame Strauss did not forget his friend. The correspondence rekindled in Strauss' absence (even during his important study trip to Leipzig, Dresden and Berlin in 1884 – 85), but above all Strauss conducted the first performance of Thuille's Symphony in F Major; Thuille was unable to be present as his teaching duties kept him in Munich. In a letter written on the day after the performance (24 February), Strauss reported on the success: "the public received the performance very favourably, also His Highness spoke well of it. But for neither Strauss nor Thuille approval of His Highness, the aforementioned keen music and theatre lover Duke George II of Saxony-Meiningen, as important as the warm congratulations communicated to them from the self-appointed leader of the New Germans, Alexander Ritter.

I hope I do Alexander Ritter no injustice when I describe him as a musical Don Quixote, a Knight of the Sad Countenance, whom he also resembled in appearance with his long, pointed beard. He would like to have been the father of modern music, but in order to enjoy at least a little success, he had to devote himself to youngsters such as Richard Strauss. He was thirty years older than Strauss and Thuille, came from the Baltic region and was the son of the same Julie Ritter whose repressed erotic-matromonly relationship with Richard Wagner was manifested in massive financial help for Wagner who had fled into exile in 1848. This brought the young Alexander into the sphere of influence of Wagner at an early age, and he remained a staunch Wagnerian all his life, further confirming this by marrying Wagner's niece Franziska (daughter of Albert Wagner). Ritter, who until then had earned his living as an orchestra leader, violinist and dealer in musical items, was more or less thrust by Wagner into the Bayreuth festival scene, and for several years he was a violinist in the festival orchestra. Ritter was truly a prophet of the New German school, and had far more effect with his sermons in this cause than with his own compositions, few of which were performed either at the time or

subsequently. Perhaps the attempt at a premiere of a work by the man whom both the young Strauss Thuille looked up to as an important and eminent spiritual mentor at that time would be an act of gratitude for a future Strauss Week. And perhaps this would help rectify the evaluation of Ritter.

In any case, Strauss accepted Ritter's second opera *To Whom the Crown?*, a one-acter, and following careful rehearsals, conducted the work in Weimar in 1890. Naturally, as a Wagnerian, the text was by Ritter himself, and it is rather uneven, but all in all the opera was passably successful and was subsequently performed several times in other theatres.

As early as the 1860s, Ritter had drawn up a manifesto, *Decay and Reform*, in which he called for the development of a "serious-light" form for future opera and declared his belief that everything else in the field of musical theatre had been or was in the process of being brought to a definitive conclusion by Wagner. As an example, Ritter quoted German fairy-tale opera. This could certainly have been an oblique reference to the Fairy-tale opera composer Engelbert Hungerdrück who for some time also belonged to the inner circle of the Bayreuth Order of the Holy Grail.

Ritter's *Wem die Krone?* Was such a fairy-tale opera, and Ritter persuaded both Strauss and Thuille to act in this regard, and Strauss actually wrote, to his own text, the "serious-light" *Guntram*, a work which, not least due to its really cumbersome and strangely unmusical text, has enjoyed no real success to this day. Thuille shared the lack of success with Strauss, for he wrote a "serious-light" opera, to a text that Ritter had hurriedly provided him with: *Theuerdank*. Apart from the name, the libretto had nothing in common with the verse epos dealing with the times and person of Emperor Maximilian I. Ritter also made use of a second-hand source, namely a harmless comedy by Hermann von Schmid. Quite rightly Ritter hid behind the pseudonym *W.thm*. Ritter's poetic abilities are proven in a piece upon which Strauss based his tone poem *Tod und Verklärung*. If it had been meant humorously, it would have been good. But it was not. Strauss was encouraged to compose the tone poem by Ritter's poem as it would seem, but rather



quite the reverse. Ritter wrote the poem afterwards and, to put it bluntly, thrust it into the face of Strauss who, in devotion and perhaps also in gratitude, incorporated it in the score. It was actually a different story, as we know and how could it be otherwise, with Strauss' instantly successful tone poem *Don Juan*, whose accompanying poem by Lenau was of quite a different calibre. *Don Juan* is actually dedicated to Ludwig Thuille, who then adapted the work for four-handed piano. Alexander Ritter also received a dedication some time later with *Macbeth*, the most rarely-heard of Strauss' tone poems, which cannot be blamed on the dedication.

Strauss, at that time court conductor in Munich, premiered Thuille's and Ritter's *Theuerdank* in 1897, which turned out to be an even more dismal failure than Strauss' own *Guntram*. The premiere was preceded by considerable problems including orchestra and singers, and after four performances it disappeared from the repertoire. But Alexander Ritter did not live to experience this as he had died the previous year. Little is known of the reactions of Thuille and Strauss to the failure, for at this time there was no correspondence as both friends were actually living in Munich.

Perhaps Thuille was not quite so deeply affected, for firstly the Prince Regent Luitpold Prize for a new opera which Thuille received for *Theuerdank* was a consolation (however only one-third, as the other two-thirds went to Zemlinsky and a composer Arthur Könnemann, about whom I could discover nothing), and secondly even before the premiere of *Theuerdank*, Thuille was busy with his second opera, the text for which was written by Otto Julius Bierbaum, the man who would become the stumbling in Strauss' relationship with Thuille some ten years later.

Otto Julius Bierbaum, one year to the month younger than Richard Strauss (born in 1865) was a passionate, excessive author possessed with the need to write as well as a fervent greed for money. In 1897 Bierbaum founded a literary magazine in Berlin (one of his many such projects that usually only flourished briefly) with the title *Der bunte Vogel* ("the colourful bird") which could certainly also have been applied to Bierbaum himself. Without actually completing any course, he studied

the length and breadth of all possible subjects in Zürich, Munich and Berlin, from philosophy and art history to Chinese – bits of everything, and then became what someone with such a half-completed education from the "Faculty of Life" (Bierbaum's description) becomes with little resistance, namely a journalist. He lived for a time in Munich, joining the circle around Michael Georg Conrad and the *Gesellschaft für modernes Leben* ("Society for Modern Living"), moved for a time to Berlin, where he joined the movement producing the magazine *Pan*, was for a period a member of the editorial staff of the *Freie Bühne* and the *Neue Deutsche Rundschau*, besides numerous articles also wrote occasionally bulky novels such as the three-volume *Prinzen Kuckuck*, a key work of the Munich Moderns of the time with whom Bierbaum felt himself allied, just as with everything else new, whereby it seemed that he was not the spirit who recognised the true path and whom the arts world in general was in need of for revival. He conducted the revival with the stagnant means of the old ways that he rejected.

Also Richard Strauss wrote music for Bierbaum texts; six lieder are based on his poems, including the especially beautiful *Traum durch die Dämmerung* and *Freundliche Vision*. In addition to all his literary and journalistic machinations Bierbaum also found time to write opera librettos, including one for Ludwig Thuille, *Lobetanz*, that, too, being a somewhat bloated fairy-tale of such horrible pink-sky blue pomposity that is unbearable by today's standards; but as was often the case in the history of opera, Thuille seemed to be excited by the opportunity of applying bright musical colours, and that is what he did, and if the delightful overture to this opera was from Richard Strauss, it would be continuously present in repertoires.

Finally Thuille was ahead of his friend Strauss for once, and he ungrudgingly recognised this. Following the first performance in Karlsruhe in 1898 under Felix Mottl, within a few years the opera was repeated in Zürich, Vienna, Strasbourg and elsewhere, and even some time later at the Met in New York, which Thuille, who died in 1907, did not live to witness. So the opera was a success, and one which Thuille did not succeed in repeating with



Gugeline, his next opera, once again a “serious-light” fairy tale, once again based on an unspeakable text by Bierbaum. Gugeline was premiered in Bremen in 1901.

For the situation of German music history at that time and for the personal relationship of the friends to each other it is important to bear in mind that at the point in time that although Strauss was nationally and internationally famous as a conductor, and that he had a position of power as a composer of symphonic poems in what was a very progressive manner for the time and as a composer of extremely successful, marketable lieder, but yet as an opera composer. *Guntram* was buried, *Feuersnot* was a musical joke without great success, *Salome* had not yet been written.

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As of 1 October 1898 Strauss was appointed First Prussian Conductor at the Court Opera in Berlin, and so he left Munich again. The duties that went with this musical office were extensive. Added to which, in 1901 Strauss took over the leadership of the Berlin Tonkünstlerocherster and gave numerous guest concerts throughout Europe. At was also the time when Strauss began to concern himself with the copyright affairs of composers, certainly in his own interest, but it also brought about the foundation of what today is GEMA (Gesellschaft für musikalische Aufführungs- und mechanische Vervielfältigungsrechte), the German organisation supervising music copyright, and especially the statutory regulation of the protection of intellectual property, is a service for which Strauss cannot be praised highly enough. This is not the time or place to go into the complicated and interesting details; it should simply be remembered that Strauss was able to rely on the specialist support from the Munich lawyer and composer Friedrich Rösch, to whom *Tod und Verklärung* is dedicated. On the fringe of the Strauss Days I would like to take this opportunity of suggesting a sample of the compositions of this close friend of Strauss, who by the way was according the posthumous honour in that in 1925 Strauss, who only very reluctantly held public speeches, spoke at Rösch’s grave-side, the only time Strauss did this.

Back to the first Berlin period. The above-mentioned activities and duties and the at that time more wearisome and – without aircraft – time-consuming concert tours impeded Strauss’ composing. Occasionally added to this was troublesome eye problem. In April 1902 Strauss wrote to his parents that he was “slowly starting to compose a little again,” namely a ballad for choir, soloists and orchestra (thus the unusual and certainly not unintentional sequence concerning the score), and Strauss had selected a poem by Uhland for it, *Taillefer*. In the Middle Ages, *Taillefer* was occasional used as a decorative epithet for noble gentlemen with a particular taste for fighting, whereby *taille* (“waist”) not only referred to the middle of the body in the closest sense of the word but also, *pars pro toto*, representing the whole person, thus *Taillefer* (“iron man”). However Uhland’s *Taillefer* is not historical. The ballad tells the story of a peasant who at every opportunity sing particularly beautifully and apparently also very loudly, which caught the attention of Duke William of Normandy who then made him a knight, whereupon *Taillefer* wins the heart of the sister of the duke, and then performs particularly bravely during the conquest of England – what is meant here naturally is the Battle of Hastings in 1066. In the last verse, the duke, now King of England, declares that although he always enjoyed *Taillefer*’s singing, he will never forget the music that *Taillefer* played with his sword on the helmets and head of the English.

Uhland’s poem is extremely bloodthirsty, and the English are joyously hacked down in hordes. I ask myself how the decidedly pacifist Strauss, who in the admittedly unfortunate *Guntram* delivered a text with an unambiguous avowal of peaceful attitude of mind, whose hero in *Heldenleben* performs explicitly heroic works of peace, could choose such a text. Perhaps the reason should be sought in quite a different context.

We know that Richard Strauss was fastidious in his choice of texts, and his taste regarding literature was highly sensitive. And here he has chosen a text just because the radiant hero of this ballad is called *Wilhelm*? And sails against “Engeland”? Is that not food for thought?

Since 1890 Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II had been



building up a battle fleet, his favourite toy, as part of his world power and colonial plans directed against England. Fleet and colonial societies prevailed, and “perfidious Albion” was stylised as prime enemy of the “Zweite Reich”. Did Strauss, who was certainly not averse to opportunism if it did not go too much against the grain, want to cut a good figure with his employer? One can say a lot against “Willy with the head prosthetic”, as I like to call him, but unmusical he was not – he even composed himself. However, referring to the work *Sang an Ägir*, whose first edition I keep as a curiosity (and whose revival I do not recommend to the Strauss Days) it can be seen that Willy’s musical taste, and as is also known from later utterances of the emperor concerning *Elektra*, did not conform with that of Strauss. Did Strauss want to collect plus points?

Whatever he intended, Strauss worked on the ballad for almost a year, it was completed in May 1903, and the first performance was conducted by Strauss personally on 26 October 1903 in Heidelberg at the music festival on the occasion of the consecration of the new civic hall.

The extravagance was enormous, including nine tympani and drums, eight horns, six trumpets, eight-voice choir. The score is preceded by the note that the piece (opus number 52) is “... is conceived for performance in large halls ...”, and that the choir should be “as numerous as possible ...”. From letters it can be seen that was annoyed over some of the performances following the premiere, as the choir was too small, or the hall not spacious enough. But Strauss did not need to stay annoyed for long, as the work quickly disappeared from the repertoire – until the present day.

On 14 November 1903 the work was performed in Munich under Bernhard Stavenhagen, and Bierbaum then picked up his pen and published a review of it on 19 November in the *Allgemeinen Zeitung*. It is a long and detailed criticism, and it cannot reasonably be called unjournalistic or spiteful, for Bierbaum took the trouble to carefully justify his objections to the work. The criticism is too long to quote in its entirety. But it is printed in full in the appendix to the Strauss-Thuille correspondence (publication of the Richard Strauss Society, volume 4, publisher Franz Trenner).

Bierbaum compared Strauss’ *Taillefer* with the result of an excessively refined culinary art whereby a simple, honest piece of beef (namely Uhland’s poem) is deformed the “sauces and essences and extracts and condiments and acids” to unrecognisability “à la maître d’hôtel”, so that finally one does not know what one is eating. What today would be called “nouvelle cuisine”. But in addition to this more ironic objection Bierbaum criticised extravagance for extravagance’s sake, which in his opinion Strauss is pursuing here, and that not a word of the poem can be under the din that Strauss’ batteries are causing. Bierbaum asks himself why Strauss needs text at all? He then explains that he thoroughly admires Strauss’ orchestration skills, but here in *Taillefer* it seems to him to be a senseless end in itself, and he admires it at the very most like an artist who can juggle three burning paraffin lamps with his left hand and balance a piano with his right hand.

Richard Strauss, who was otherwise – quite rightly – little bothered by the utterance in reviews, was raging. In a letter to his parents he called Bierbaum a dilettante and asked why no-one in Munich had taken the trouble to explain to the critics that the poor impression was simply and solely attributable to the choir and the hall which were both too small. But then there follows a puzzling sentence in the letter: “Or - well? Hey! Hey! Life is really interesting when viewed from above” – Strauss suspected an intrigue against him. Is this aimed at Thuille, for whom Bierbaum had now written the second opera text? I think that Strauss’ anger was due to the fact that in the criticism by Bierbaum, who it is clear was certainly no dilettante, there was more than just a grain of truth. Not only that Strauss took the verse lines at their face value, when it can be assumed that *Taillefer* particularly loudly sings when the “Fräulein” to whom *Taillefer* sings says:

“... He sings, what a wonderful joy!

The tower trembles and my heart trembles in my breast.”

In fact the complete work is over-instrumentalised, the musical flashes of wit are meagre, and it cannot be overlooked that helped it along with skilful instrumentation. The *Rolandslied*



resembles the Mendelssohn oratorio style held in such contempt by Strauss, the song of the warrior at the end is no better than a military march by Julius Fucik, and the complete composition suffers from the fact that one always knows what is going to happen ... do not get me wrong, at this point I must again emphasise that, if I have to count them, I count Richard Strauss among the twenty-four archangels of music, and that I cannot imagine a life without his music, but there were situations when his genius forsook him, the master copied himself, and he was never weaker than as his own epigone. I mean that with Taillefer, the lion was asleep.

Strauss' anger seems to me to be attributable to the fact that Bierbaum had hit the spot precisely, the gigantomaniacal weak spot with Strauss that, clever as he was, he could not be completely conscious of independently. I do not know if I am mistaken here: that following this criticism Strauss never made a racket for racket's sake, never shocked citizens just for the sake of shocking. And 1904 saw the beginning of the creative period of the great, mature, so to speak fully developed works.

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For a Tyrolean, Ludwig Thuille seemed to have had an unusually loose tongue. Under the influence of wine or beer he seems to have occasionally made fun of the same facets of Strauss' gigantomania as Max Steinitzer had done with the Otto Jägermeier parody in his first biography of Strauss and which Strauss had also laughed at. And in his teaching, Thuille often rebuked students who copied Strauss' musical gestures all too uncritically and without Strauss' genius with remarks such as "first write a decent counterpoint, then you can ...".

Cowardly people, particularly the disagreeable Max von Schillings (who later became a vociferous support of the National Socialists) inflated this beyond its real importance and secretly informed Strauss of it. For a long time Strauss did not take it seriously, but when Bierbaum's criticism appeared, his anger sought an outlet and found Thuille. Apparently Strauss believed that Thuille had commissioned Bierbaum's criticism, so to speak. Without another word he broke off contact to his friend. Thuille naturally noticed this and for his part

acted firstly sulkily and insulted, and when he decided to clarify the situation with Strauss, Strauss avoided him.

It seems that Thuille was more hurt by this than the emotionally more robust Strauss. Thuille, who following the extremely mediocre success of his third opera devoted himself with a vengeance to his own specific field, chamber music, so that with an astonishing creative surge in the years from 1901 to 1904 a notable series of chamber music works emerged, pulled himself together in January 1906 and wrote a long, cordial and sincere letter to Strauss, in which, not sparing himself, he attempted to clarify the dissonances and misunderstandings that had developed between them. Strauss replying more briefly, but with generosity and cordiality, explained in a few lines that with Thuille's letter everything was forgotten and settled, and from the few lines it can be seen how relieved Strauss was over this turn of events. And it is also touch to see that after one paragraph the old, amicable tone that previously existed between the friends is present once again. Strauss reported in his usual slightly ironic manner that he had become "Court and Personal Composer to His majesty the Emperor", and that he would shortly be conducting *Der faule Haus*, the opera by their mutual, fatherly friend Alexander Ritter. As Strauss knew only too well, the bit about the "Court and Personal Composer" was not true. But Strauss had composed an "Emperor March" which he (quite rightly) did not deem worthy of an opus number, but which was dedicated to Emperor Wilhelm II, who conferred upon him the Royal Prussian Order of the Crown – but only third class.

The two never met again. Almost a year to the day after Strauss' friendly, relieved letter, Thuille died of heart failure on 5 February 1907, suddenly and without prior symptoms of illness. The quality of Thuille's final chamber music works make me feel that we must deeply regret what remained unwritten due to Thuille's untimely death.

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