



**100 women in
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**Special Invitation for 100WHF Members:
New York City Opera Performance and Cast Reception**

Thursday, September 30 7:30 pm

The New York City Opera Company has graciously offered to host an evening of opera and a unique networking opportunity for 75 of our members. We are invited to the September 30th performance of *Daphne* by Richard Strauss. Directed by Stephen Lawless and starring the stunning soprano Elizabeth Futral, this is a new production and the New York Stage premiere of this lush, late romantic opera which is being heralded as one of the "un-missable" arts events this fall season.

The evening begins with the performance at 7:30 p.m. at the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center. We have reserved 75 excellent seats in the Orchestra for members. Following the performance at 9:15 p.m. (the opera runs for 1h. 45min. with no intermission.) we are invited to a private dessert and champagne reception on the Grand Promenade of the State Theater with members of the cast.

The cost is \$185 per person. The reception will be catered by Restaurant Associates who do a beautiful job with these events. We will be in a privately screened section of the Promenade. There will be wine, passed champagne and sparkling water and a small bar. And there will be a colorful display of desserts including a selection of tarts, miniature opera cakes, cookies, chocolate dipped strawberries, and coffee and teas.

This is a wonderful opportunity to network and experience the opera. It is an unusually short work -- perfect on a weeknight for working people.

Event Details

Date: Thursday, September 30, 2004
Time: 7:30 pm
Location: Lincoln Center ♦ New York State Theater
Cost: \$185
RSVP: 212-870-4291 / special number at NYC Opera for this function
Registration will have to be first come, first served. Please call quickly if you are interested.

Please do not reply to this email or contact 100 Women in Hedge Funds to register.

The cost of this event is paid directly to the NYC Opera. 100 Women in Hedge Funds appreciates the opportunity to offer this unique networking opportunity.

Below is an article by Michael Kennedy, the music critic of the London Telegraph. For more information on the opera (cast, composer and synopsis) please go to <http://www.nycopera.com/productions/article.aspx?id=12&src=l>

DAPHNE'S TRANSFORMATION

Richard Strauss' *Daphne* is no mere escape from the storm clouds of 1930s Germany.
by Michael Kennedy

Since 1892, when he was only twenty-eight, Richard Strauss had been in love with ancient Greece. In his travel diary he wrote of his visit to Olympia: "The free sense of beauty, the religion of nature, pure visual perception!" He read Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Plato. And his interest in Greek mythology would later bear fruit in his operas *Elektra*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Die ägyptische Helena*, *Daphne* and *Die Liebe der Danae*.

For a German musician living during the Nazi era, an obsession with Greek antiquity might seem escapist. Yet Strauss found timely resonances in it. The mythical character of Daphne perhaps symbolized for Strauss the German culture he loved, now threatened with barbaric destruction and in need of rebirth and rejuvenation. Of Daphne, Strauss wrote, "Only through death does she become the eternal work of art". Her (quasi-Nazi) destroyer is Apollo, until he learns compassion from Daphne's response to the death of Leukippos during a Bacchanalian orgy.

For Strauss, 1935 was an *annus horribilis*. Because of the tightening anti-Jewish laws and policies of the Nazi régime, his collaboration with his librettist, the Austrian novelist Stefan Zweig, came under severe pressure, particularly as, since November 1933, Strauss had been president of the Reich Music Chamber. Zweig knew their working together would no longer be tolerated, even though Hitler had sanctioned the Dresden première of their opera *Die schweigsame Frau*. Strauss had suggested to Zweig that they should continue to collaborate in secret, but Zweig rejected the idea as impracticable as well as preposterous and offered to find him other acceptable collaborators. Strauss was furious about this and wrote a letter to Zweig in which he referred to "aping" the presidency of the Reich Music Chamber because he hoped to "do good and prevent greater mischief....Under any régime I would have taken on these pestiferous honorary positions." This letter was intercepted by the Gestapo, who must have been watching Strauss, and sent to Hitler. On July 6, 1935, Strauss was ordered to resign his presidency and further performances of *Die schweigsame Frau* were banned in Germany.

By ironic coincidence, Strauss had arranged to meet, the next day, the theatre historian and playwright Joseph Gregor, whom Zweig had proposed as a librettist with the promise that he would look over everything Gregor wrote. Strauss grudgingly kept the appointment and took away drafts of librettos which would later become his operas *Friedenstag*, *Daphne*, and *Die Liebe der Danae*. Strauss returned to his home in Garmisch deeply depressed and set three Rückert poems for men's chorus. A fourth, not completed, contained the significant lines:

Down with deception, down with lies,
Away with all the stratagems
So that what's known as politics
And feeds pathetically on them
Misleads none other than itself
Not its opponent, spiritual life.

It was in this mood that Strauss started to compose his one-act pacifist opera *Friedenstag*. Most of its libretto had been outlined by Zweig, who continued to supervise Gregor's work. Gregor conceived *Friedenstag* and *Daphne* as two halves of a double bill. While Strauss worked on *Friedenstag*, Gregor revised (with Zweig) the libretto of *Daphne*, which had already been savagely criticized by Strauss, for whom Gregor could seemingly do little right. Strauss also altered Gregor's original scenario, set near the slopes of Mount Olympus, to its final form as follows:

Daphne, daughter of Peneios, a fisherman, and Gaea, is an innocent girl, preferring flowers and trees to worldly pleasures. She regards her childhood friend Leukippos as a brother and is shocked when he declares his love. Her friends vow to help him win her. The god Apollo arrives in the village disguised as a shepherd and also falls in love with Daphne, again to her alarm. At the feast of Dionysus, Leukippos is disguised as a girl and Daphne dances with him, regarding him as "a sister". But the jealous Apollo reveals Leukippos's identity and kills him. Daphne realizes she loved Leukippos. The remorseful Apollo asks for Zeus's forgiveness and for him to grant Daphne non-human form. She is transformed into a laurel tree.

It is curious how Strauss warmed to the libretto of *Daphne* after at first being indifferent (he had been the same about the Prologue to *Ariadne auf Naxos*). He had at one point told Zweig that “there is no interesting spiritual conflict. Daphne (especially colorless), Apollo, and Leukippos should clash in some scene....Instead of remaining that boring virgin, she should fall in love with them both, the god and the man.”

The libretto for *Daphne* was revised and reshaped three times before Strauss appeared to be satisfied. Gregor still clung to the idea of a double bill (which Strauss always regarded as impracticable) with choral finales for both operas. Much to Gregor's annoyance, Strauss now began to consult the conductor Clemens Krauss and the producer Lothar Wallerstein, both of whom made suggestions for changes in *Daphne*. In the spring of 1937, Strauss told Krauss he could not make progress with the final scene. Krauss told him that “the idea of bringing people on the stage to sing to the tree after the transformation is absurd.” Strauss then saw the solution and told Gregor — poor man! — that he and Krauss had agreed that “after Daphne's farewell song, other than Daphne no one should appear on the stage — no Peneios, no solo voices, no chorus. In short, no oratorio....In the moonlight, but still fully visible, the miracle of transformation is slowly worked upon Daphne — but *with the orchestra alone*....Right at the end, when the tree stands complete, she should sing without words, only as a nature sound, eight more bars of laurel motif!”

And that is just how it is. One of the most entrancing endings of any Strauss opera, it is composed in F-sharp major, the key of the protagonist's dream of knightly chivalry in Strauss' tone poem *Don Quixote*, the Presentation of the Rose in *Der Rosenkavalier*, and the Empress's Act I aria in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, in which she sings of dreaming about transforming herself into a gazelle.

But the whole of *Daphne*, which begins Strauss' late “Indian Summer” period, is in his most lyrical, tender, and luminous vein. The score's many highlights include the pastoral oboe theme with which the opera opens, the silvery harmonies throughout, and the excitement of the choral writing in the Feast of Dionysus. Also unforgettable are the glorious and flexible writing for Daphne herself (Strauss took endless trouble with her long opening aria, which was his instigation), and the sympathetic writing for the two tenors, Leukippos and Apollo (thus giving the lie to the myth that Strauss hated and took revenge on the tenor voice) and for the bass-baritone Peneios and the Erda-like *contralto profondo* of Gaea.

Another striking moment is the kiss which ends the ecstatic love duet for Apollo and Daphne, which Strauss, thinking of the play *Amphitryon* (1807) by the German dramatist Heinrich von Kleist, insisted should be a “Kleistian” moment. He wrote to Gregor:

“It is too cheap for Daphne's feelings to turn to hate immediately after Apollo's kiss. Even if she has no knowledge of human love-desire, or abhors it, the kiss of the god must awaken in her other feelings than simply those of hate....She senses the falsehood in his kiss and since she is a pure creature of nature and instinct, she recoils from the unclean god even while in her trembling she senses who he is, though without full recognition . . .”

Strauss began sketching the music in for *Daphne* in January 1936 and completed the score (which contains parts for such uncommon instruments as the basset horn and alphorn) at the end of 1937. *Daphne* was first performed in Dresden on October 15, 1938, conducted by its dedicatee, Karl Böhm. But World War II held back the opera's progress. After the war, Erich Kleiber conducted it in Buenos Aires in 1948. Its first North American performance was in concert in New York in October 1960, followed by a staging at the Santa Fe Opera in 1964. It was not staged in Britain until 1987 and has still not been staged in London. But *Daphne* now shows signs of working its way steadily into the repertory, and it is about time.

The staging of Daphne's metamorphosis has always posed a challenge for directors and designers, but one which has often been effectively solved. It is poignant to remember that in the last year of his life, the 85-year-old composer regularly played Daphne's transformation music on the piano as a comfort to his wife and himself.

Michael Kennedy is music critic of the London Sunday Telegraph. His books include two studies of the life and music of Richard Strauss.