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Strauss: *Also sprach Zarathustra*

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John Williamson  
*University of Liverpool*



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*for Roger and Eleanor*

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## Acknowledgements

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At least one reviewer of earlier titles in this series has claimed that it is specifically devoted to ‘musical masterpieces’. *Also sprach Zarathustra* may sit a little awkwardly in such company, since its mastery is hardly uncontested; nor is it necessarily the most popular of Strauss’s tone poems. A handbook about it runs the risk of being at least as much a study of a ‘case’ as of a masterpiece. I have not avoided the former aspect, for *Zarathustra* has its place in several discussions, about programme music, about theories of form, and about the nature of tonality in the late nineteenth century. Perhaps when such debates are finally understood in their full complexity, the ‘mastery’ of *Zarathustra* will be settled one way or the other. That it is of great importance in Strauss’s development is hardly to be questioned. Ultimately, *Zarathustra* seems worthy of study for its place in the whole area of ‘words and music’, and for the manner in which it has overcome critical hostility to win new audiences in the last quarter of a century.

Of the various people who have contributed to this book, I should like to thank Dr Franz Trenner and Dr Robert Münster of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, who made it possible for me to examine photocopies of Strauss’s sketches for *Zarathustra*. Dr Eveline Nikkels kindly sent me a copy of an as yet unpublished article on Strauss and Nietzsche. Julian Rushton provided numerous valuable suggestions and encouragements, and Penny Souster also was invaluable in urging me on to complete the book. Traditionally at this point one thanks also one’s family; in the present case two of them insisted that the book be dedicated to them.

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## Abbreviations

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References to Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* in translation are always to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (rev. edn, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969).

The following abbreviations are used in referring to Nietzsche's work in translation:

*FW* (= *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*) *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974).

*EH* (= *Ecce Homo*) *On the Genealogy of Morals* and *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1967).

References to pages are by Arabic numerals; references to sections or aphorisms are by Arabic numeral preceded by §.

Unless stated, all translations are my own.