Chapter I

Hofmannsthal and Strauss

The miracle of the collaboration between Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss is not that these two artists should have produced six works of such consistently high quality, but that they could work together at all. Two individuals of differing nature and temperament, both as men and artists, could scarcely be imagined. Paradoxically, their dissimilarity proved to be the great strength of their relationship, for each man complemented the personality and professional genius of the other.

Strauss was one of the most gifted orchestral conductors of all time and had years of experience conducting in most of the European opera houses. He had grown up musically in the opera house, acquiring a practical understanding of the total range of opera production and a sensitivity to the elements of dramatic action that were essential to effective musical theater.

Hofmannsthal, who readily admitted that Strauss possessed the stronger dramatic instinct, had only limited experience with the practical side of the theater. While he knew a number of directors and actors and was interested in the problems of staging, he never attempted to direct or produce a play independently. His major efforts in this area were an unsuccessful attempt in 1904 to collaborate with Gordon Craig in designing the stage setting for a production of Hofmannsthal's drama, *Das gerettete Venedig,* and his assisting of Max Reinhardt in creating a production of another of his dramas, *Der Tor und der Tod,* in Berlin in 1908.[1] As a dramatist, Hofmannsthal only rarely overcame the lyrical orientation of his early works to produce a theatrically compelling work such as *Elektra.* Although Hofmannsthal was by no means the decadent aesthete critics often considered (and still consider) him to be, it is true that throughout his career he remained essentially a symbolic writer of extremely refined taste and high artistic standards. Rather than compromise his artistic integrity to achieve popular success, he was willing,

[1] Hofmannsthal regarded this episode in his life as an important phase in his development as a dramatist. To his father he wrote in May 1908: "Es scheint mir sehr möglich, daß man einmal von diesem oder von dem vorigen Sommer die Zeit meiner eigentlichen Theaterschriftstellerei wird datieren können." Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Briefe* II (Vienna, 1937), 324. Unless otherwise indicated, all works cited are by Hofmannsthal.

if necessary, to leave his works to the judgment of posterity. Strauss, conversely, was much more interested in texts that were theatrically effective, since he knew this ingredient was essential to his success as an opera composer.

The impact of each personality on the other occurred at a critical juncture in the life of both artists. Hofmannsthal, after a brilliant decade as a lyric poet and lyric dramatist was searching for a new artistic direction to follow. His experiments over several years in a wide variety of artistic forms, including classical tragedy, ballet, pantomime, and dance, attracted him increasingly to the rich possibilities of expression inherent in music. Strauss, who had grown bored with his own extensive exploration of symphonic forms in general and the tone poem in particular, needed a librettist who could provide him with appropriate texts to inspire his essentially word-oriented musical genius. Throughout the composer's career, he wrote his best music when led to tone through verbal concepts, whether they were words by Lenau to *Don Juan,* the humor and pathos of Cervantes's *Don Quixote,* or the sensuousness and depravity of Wilde's *Salome.* Strauss tried his own hand at writing a libretto for his first opera, *Guntram,* but quickly realized that he lacked literary talent.

Hofmannsthal originally approached Strauss in 1900 with a ballet scenario he had just completed, entitled *Der Triumph der Zeit.* The composer graciously declined the opportunity to set it to music on the grounds that he was currently working on a ballet of his own composition (which he never finished) and doubted he would wish to undertake a second ballet at that time. Contact between the two men was not renewed until 1906 when Strauss, who had just completed the opera *Salome,* took the initiative and asked Hofmannsthal for permission to use his drama *Elektra* as the basis for an opera. From this beginning the collaboration between these two men, who felt they had "been brought together by something higher, perhaps, than mere accident,"[2] continued in an unbroken line until Hofmannsthal's sudden and untimely death in 1929. The final item of correspondence in the published volume of their letters is a telegram from Strauss to Hofmannsthal dated 14 July 1929, conveying Strauss's thanks for the completed text to the first act of *Arabella.* Hofmannsthal died before the message reached him.

To have been approached by Strauss about one of his works must have impressed Hofmannsthal as an event of considerable magnitude. The years from 1899 to 1906, while productive in terms of quantity of ideas, drafts, and sketches, had been relatively lean in the number of completed and published works. Many of the projects attempted during

[2] *The Correspondence between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal,* ed. Franz and Alice Strauss, trans. Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers, arranged by Willi Schuh (London, 1961), p. 106. Hereafter cited in the text as *C.* followed by page number.

this period remained fragments.[3] Hofmannsthal himself later attributed the difficulties of this critical phase in his literary career, when his talent for lyric poetry had atrophied,[4] and when he had wearied of writing lyric dramas,[5] to the process of maturing.[6]

As a writer Hofmannsthal had reached the point where he wished to concern himself more actively with life in its broader social forms rather than remaining an introspective onlooker. He now realized that to comment on life in beautiful, melancholic lyric verse was neither a sufficient compensation nor an adequate substitute for living which, in his view, demanded social participation of the individual through commitment to others.[7] The contemplative, introverted existence, he discovered, was debilitating, and even a life devoted to beauty could be stifling. As he wrote in 1896 to his good friend Leopold von Andrian, another writer who was experiencing the same problem: "The beautiful

[3] A good case in point is Hofmannsthal's attempt in 1901 to adapt Robert Browning's epic, *The Ring and the Book,* into a Renaissance tragedy, entitled *Die Gräfin Pompilia.* Although he worked on this project for over two years (1901-1903), the manuscript was never completed and has never been published. For a detailed discussion, see Hanna B. Lewis, "Hofmannsthal and Browning," *Comparative Literature,* 19 (1967), 142-59.

[4] In a letter to the German poet Richard Dehmel on 1 December 1901, Hofmannsthal stated: "Sonderbar ist es mir selber, daß in vielen Monaten, und Monaten von glücklicher Konzentration, nicht mehr ein einziges Gedicht entstehen will. Das tut mir innerlich recht leid." *Briefe* II, 61. Only a few poems were written after 1900, and these are generally not ranked with Hofmannsthal's best efforts.

[5] In a letter written in early 1899 to Hermann Bahr, Hofmannsthal commented: ". . . jetzt wird's immer ernsthafter, ich bin schon gar nicht mehr so jung, ich verlange mir die Bühne doch viel stärker als früher, . . ." *Briefe* I, 276-77. For additional comments by Hofmannsthal in the same vein see his letter to Otto Brahm in *Briefe* I, 324, and his letter to Schnitzler in *Briefe* II, 53.

[6] A most revealing letter to his close friend R. A. Schröder, dated 14 February 1902 shows Hofmannsthal's understanding of his problem and his optimism for the future: "Es war mein 28ter Geburtstag, und ich glaube die beängstigende nun seit fast zwei Jahren—mit gewissen trügerischen Unterbrechungen—anhaltende Erstarrung meiner produktiven Kräfte auch so auffassen zu sollen: als den mühsamen Übergang von der Produktion des Jünglingsalters zu der männlichen; als einen tiefen, nach außen nur durch Schmerz und Dumpfheit fühlbaren Prozeß der inneren Umwandlung." *Briefe* II, 67.

[7] Hofmannsthal confessed to his confidant Bodenhausen that the majority of his poems were written during the loneliest period of his life. "Meine Gedichte sind fast alle aus *einer* Zeit meines Lebens, aus der allereinsamsten: der zwischen meinem achtzehnten und einundzwanzigsten Jahr. Mitten aus dieser Einsamkeit heraus, die merkwürdig stark war und immer wie außen war, sind diese Gedichte entstanden—sie rufen ihre Liebe an das Dasein über diesen Gürtel von Einsamkeit hinüber—jetzt aber ist diese Zone von Einsamkeit nicht mehr da, es ist überall die Liebe verteilt, wenn auch noch in sehr unzulänglicher Weise, aber doch verteilt—und ich bin um vieles, unvergleichlich, glücklicher als damals. Aus dieser Verfassung heraus könnten vielleicht wieder Gedichte entstehen, ebenso reine und starke, aber ganz anders als die damaligen, und solche werden vielleicht auch noch entstehen, aber wahrscheinlich bin ich für diese noch nicht reif." Hugo von Hofmannsthal—Eberhard von Bodenhausen: *Briefe der Freundschaft,* ed. Dora Freifrau von Bodenhausen (Düsseldorf, 1953), p. 128. Actually, Hofmannsthal never regained his gift for lyric poetry per se, although all of his later works continue to be suffused with lyricism.

life impoverishes one. If one could always live as one desired, one would lose all his strength."[8] Hofmannsthal's acceptance of his own awareness that life demanded the involvement of deeds, not just words, led him to the theater and particularly to the comedy as his major form. Drama enabled him to show people engaged in social interaction and provided the means of presenting his life ethic in plastic, visual terms.

Thus, although he remained a writer, Hofmannsthal's works underwent a change of focus from the I to the Thou, a shift of emphasis that was as much for his own benefit and guidance as for that of the public. His view was most concisely stated in the autobiographical comments contained in *Ad me Ipsum:* "The way to the social as the way to the higher self: the non-mystical way: a) through the deed, b) through the [literary] work, c) through the child."[9] His personal way of attaining human contact in life or what he called "das Soziale" was through his comedies.[10] The change of artistic direction was also partly motivated by his desire to achieve genuine popular success instead of merely the *succès d'estime* of his early lyrical writings. Hofmannsthal was eager to reach the people and not only a small circle of connoisseurs. In Austria, perhaps the most theater-going nation in the world, drama represented the most direct route to the general public, to recognition, and, not an unimportant consideration, to financial success. Despite his reputation, Hofmannsthal was never financially secure.

The transition was not easy. But the severity of the experience proved ultimately beneficial, for it made Hofmannsthal receptive to new forms and led him eventually into the promising fields of comedy and opera. His experiments during this period with pantomime[11] and ballet benefited his later dramas and operas which involve greater reliance on gesture, dance, and mimicry. Because these forms represent the basic ingredients of drama, such experimentation demonstrates Hofmannsthal's willingness to return to the beginnings of dramatic tradition in order to attain the technical proficiency necessary to create successful theater. Following these experiments, and to sharpen his understanding of dramatic form, Hofmannsthal began a series of adaptations of famous dramas, including Otway's *Venice Preserved* and Sophocles's *Elektra,* the tragedy that attracted Strauss's attention in 1906.

Richard Strauss was by this time internationally famous both as conductor and composer. More than any other composer writing in the final years of the nineteenth century, Strauss dominated the long and

[8] *Hugo von Hofmannsthal—Leopold von Andrian: Briefwechsel,* ed. Walter Perl (Frankfurt am Main, 1968), p. 64. All translations in the text were made by the authors unless otherwise indicated.

[9] *Aufzeichnungen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1959), p. 217.

[10] "*Das erreichte Soziale, die Komödien,*" ibid., p. 226.

[11] For a discussion of Hofmannsthal's work in pantomime as well as an analysis of one example, see Donald G. Daviau, "Hugo von Hofmannsthal's Pantomime: *Der Schüler,*" *Modern Austrian Literature,* 1/1 (1968), 4-30.

inevitable decline of Romantic music. With this domination he shared the tragic fate of German Romantic art in its ultimate destruction during the forties of our century. Strauss, who was born in Munich on 11 June 1864, came upon the world when the musical events of the nineteenth century had produced an outpouring of genius rare in the history of the art. Richard Wagner, Johannes Brahms, Anton Bruckner, Giuseppe Verdi, Gustav Mahler, Claude Debussy, were but a few of the many great musical personalities of the period.

Strauss was born into a family of outspokenly conservative musicians. His father, Franz Strauss, was first hornist in the Royal Bavarian Court Opera orchestra and, in addition, taught at the Royal Conservatory in Munich. He protected his son with a fierce passion from what he thought were the perverted scores of Wagner. In his opinion Mozart and Beethoven were the only true geniuses of music, and with strict musical discipline he permitted his son to discover few lesser gods than von Weber, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Spohr. Only later, when he became more independent and followed his own judgment and inclination, did Strauss's musical world become saturated with Wagner's music.

Strauss's mother, Josephine Pschorr Strauss, daughter of the wealthy Munich brewery family, gave her son his first piano instruction. He also quickly learned violin and the rudiments of music theory. Although he never formally attended a conservatory of music, he had mastered harmony, counterpoint, the study of form, and instrumentation by the age of sixteen.

His early career as a composer was largely overshadowed by a singular determination to be a conductor, and he had the good fortune to become the protégé of Hans von Bülow, one of the most influential musicians of the later nineteenth century. Bülow, a superb concert pianist, teacher, and conductor, was a prime force in the early recognition of the music of Wagner and Brahms, and it was his interest in Strauss that led to the latter's employment as Bülow's assistant at the court orchestra of Meiningen in 1885-1886. This initial position, Strauss's first success as a professional musician, led to a lifetime of conducting activity that often dominated his career as a composer. After a series of engagements at the opera houses in Weimar and Munich, Strauss obtained the most coveted of all conducting posts, the directorship of the Berlin Philharmonic, which he retained from 1898 to 1910. During these years, Strauss not only conducted in Berlin but led an incredibly active life as guest conductor of nearly every major symphony orchestra and opera company in Europe, amassing a total number of engagements in excess of seven hundred performances.

Even before gaining the high honor of the Berlin position, Strauss, at the age of twenty-four, achieved international fame with the publication of his remarkably vital and original symphonic poem, *Don Juan*. In rapid succession, he found time between conducting engagements to compose a series of major symphonic works that gave him a meteoric

career. As both conductor and composer Strauss piled one success upon another. Following *Don Juan* (1888), he wrote *Tod und Verklärung* (1889), *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (1894-1895), *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1895-1896), *Don Quixote, Phantastische Variationen über ein Thema ritterlichen Charakters* (1897), *Ein Heldenleben* (1898), and *Sinfonia domestica* (1903).

Interspersed between this series of massive orchestral works were Strauss's first two attempts in the field of opera, *Guntram* (written to his own libretto), completed in 1894, and *Feuersnot* (text by Ernst von Wolzogen), in 1901. Although both are works of powerful and splendid music, neither achieved any real success. Strauss had reached an impasse in his career, and he seemed destined to rest on the laurels of his orchestral works written before he was forty years old.

Then in 1902 he saw Hedwig Lachmann's translation of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* in the Berlin staging by Max Reinhardt. The impact of this performance led to his second career, as one of the most successful opera composers of the early twentieth century. The notoriety of his operatic setting for *Salome* spread quickly following its premiere in 1905. The score was exceedingly complex and dissonant for the time, and audiences were both shocked and overwhelmed by the musical portrayal of the psycho-sexuality of Princess Salome. Strauss himself related that the setting of Wilde's tale, the oriental background, "inspired me with truly exotic harmonies, which sparkled like taffeta particularly in the strange cadences. The wish to characterize the *dramatis personae* as clearly as possible led me to bitonality, since the purely rhythmic characterization Mozart uses so ingeniously did not appear to me sufficient to express the antithesis between Herod and the Nazarene."[12]

The combination of masterful orchestral virtuosity, a libretto of shock-value for the staid bourgeois audiences of a disintegrating Victorian society, and tonal magnificence, unheard before in quite such an exotic context, brought Strauss the ultimate measure of fame and, not least important to him, considerable wealth in royalties. Therefore, at this fateful moment when Strauss and Hofmannsthal were about to draw together in their artistic collaboration, Richard Strauss seemed again to have reached the zenith of his career. Yet, he was eager to continue writing operas, provided he could find a poet who could produce librettos of a quality and style to stimulate his creative imagination.

From his very first experience with *Elektra,* which he saw performed in Reinhardt's theater in Berlin, Strauss recognized the potential quality of Hofmannsthal as a librettist. This is evident from his letter of 11 March 1906: "In any case, I would ask you urgently to give me first refusal with anything composable that you write. Your manner has so much in common with mine; we were born for one another and are certain to do fine things together if you remain faithful to me" (*C.*, 3). Just

[12] Richard Strauss, *Recollections* (London, 1953), p. 150.

how prophetic this statement would turn out to be, Strauss himself could not even have dreamed at this time.

The correspondence dramatizes the opposite personalities of the two men. Hofmannsthal's letters are generally lengthy and written in a formal, broadly flowing style. Strauss's letters are inclined to be short and to the point, more informal, colloquial, and conversational in tone. Hofmannsthal feels compelled to philosophize in broad generalities about the moral and aesthetic significance of their work. He also likes to dwell on their obligation as leading artists to the world and to their art. Strauss displays no such concern in his letters, not because he was actually less interested in general artistic questions, but simply because he was more inclined to accept these things as self-evident. Hofmannsthal, by nature introspective, methodical, logical, and uncompromising, never took anything to do with art for granted.

Not surprisingly for a Viennese contemporary of Sigmund Freud, Hofmannsthal was deeply interested in psychology and was constantly analyzing himself and the world about him. He was rarely as self-assured and self-possessed as Strauss. One reason for his long letters was the opportunity they provided him to work out ideas for himself as well as for Strauss. While Strauss's letters are frequently charged with his ebullient sense of humor, most of Hofmannsthal's letters are serious. Although Hofmannsthal possessed a keen sense of humor and considerable self-irony, these were facets of his personality seldom surfacing in this correspondence, which suggests that the poet never really felt relaxed with Strauss.

Hugo von Hofmannsthal was born in Vienna on 1 February 1874. The patent of nobility had been bestowed upon his great-grandfather, Isaak Löw, in 1830 by Emperor Ferdinand in recognition of the high esteem in which he was held by his community and his country. Löw, who was a well-known Talmudic scholar as well as a successful businessman, had thirteen children. One of his five sons, August Emil, the grandfather of the poet, managed a branch office of the family firm in Lombardy, where he was baptized and married an Italian girl, Petronilla Cecilia Ordoni, daughter of an old, aristocratic family. Hofmannsthal held this grandmother in high esteem because of her vital and practical nature and commemorated her in his play, *Der weiße Fächer* (1897).

When the Austrian rule of Upper Italy collapsed, so did the firm in Italy and most of the family fortune. Hofmannsthal's grandparents moved to Krems in Austria where they lived in modest circumstances. Their son, Hugo, the father of the poet, became a lawyer and served as director of the legal bureau of the Central Bank. He married Anna Maria Fohleutner in 1873, the year of a major stock market crash in Austria. Although the family no longer possessed its former wealth, Hofmannsthal's father earned a good salary and supported his family in more than ample circumstances.

Through the combined heritage of the various bloodlines—Bohemian, Swabian, Italian, Austrian, and Jewish—contributing to his personality, Hofmannsthal was as cosmopolitan as the city of Vienna in which he was raised; although he was one of the most universal writers of his generation, he remained, nevertheless, unmistakably Viennese. With few exceptions his works, regardless of setting, betray their author's Viennese heritage in atmosphere, tone, and outlook.

After being tutored at home, Hofmannsthal attended the famous Akademisches Gymnasium in Vienna from 1884 until 1892, where he received a thorough background in humanistic studies. He was an extremely precocious child and by the age of twelve his mind was already as developed and receptive as that of a normal twenty-year-old. Although he enjoyed sports such as bicycling, sailing, tennis, and hiking, he also read avidly, a habit that remained with him throughout his life. It was his contention, shared by other writers of his generation, that no man could become a truly great author without reading. Hofmannsthal was reputed to be able to write in five languages and could read in eight.

The genius of Hofmannsthal mirrors the potential of Vienna at this time. The Austrian capital during the last decade of the nineteenth century enjoyed a true renaissance in all of the arts and became a Mecca for creative talent. In addition to the older, established writers such as Ferdinand von Saar, Peter Rosegger, Richard Kralik, and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, a new generation of writers, artists, and musicians had appeared. Hermann Bahr described the situation in retrospect:

> [It was] the time when Hugo Wolf was still alive; when Burckhardt was rejuvenating the Burgtheater and Mahler the Opera; when Hofmannsthal and Schnitzler were young; Klimt maturing: when the secessionist art movement was beginning; when Otto Wagner founded his school; Roller, the 'malerische Theater'; when Olbrich, Hoffmann, and Moser created the Austrian school of Applied Art; when Adolf Loos and Arnold Schönberg appeared; Reinhardt dreamed, unknown, among the quiet byways of the future; when Kainz returned; Weininger went out in flames; Ernst Mach held his popular scientific readings; Joseph Popper wrote his *Phantasies of a Realist;* and Chamberlain fleeing from the distractions of the world, came to our kindly city and here wrote his *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. . . . Those must have been wonderful days in Vienna![13]

Hofmannsthal quickly distinguished himself among his peers on the basis of his first verses, and in true admiration was readily acknowledged as a genius. At sixteen he was accepted as a regular member at the Café Griensteidl, one of the most prominent gathering places for writers in Vienna. His early works, published under the pseudonyms Theophil Morren or more commonly Loris, earned Hofmannsthal a European reputation by the age of nineteen, making him one of the most remarkable writers in German and Austrian literary history.

[13] Hermann Bahr, *Expressionism* (London, 1925), pp. 55-56.

At the University of Vienna, Hofmannsthal studied law in conformity with his father's wishes. This profession, however, attracted him so little that after taking his first state examination and after spending a required year of military service in the Dragoons (1894-1895), he returned to the University to study romance languages. Hofmannsthal completed his dissertation entitled "Über den Sprachgebrauch bei den Dichtern der Plejade" in 1898 and received the degree Doctor of Philosophy the following year.

Still uncertain as to his future career, Hofmannsthal decided to apply for a position teaching French literature at the University of Vienna. In order to qualify for this post, he completed the so-called Habilitationsschrift or *venia legendi,* on the subject of Victor Hugo.[14] For reasons that are still not clear—possibly he feared rejection or experienced a change of heart—Hofmannsthal withdrew his candidacy pleading personal reasons.[15]

The period 1900-1903 marked a major turning point in Hofmannsthal's life. The difficulties he experienced in attempting to change from lyric poet to dramatist, the failure to attain a teaching post at the University, and the general uncertainty of his financial condition and future earning capacity, caused him considerable nervous strain, which was reflected in his inability to complete many works. Although this was perhaps the longest and severest "crisis"[16] which Hofmannsthal ex-

[14] This essay was later published under the appropriately academic-sounding title "Studie über die Entwicklung des Dichters Victor Hugo." Now included in *Prosa* I (Berlin, 1950), 367-463.

[15] In a letter to Dean Theodor Gomperz, Hofmannsthal stated: "In der Angelegenheit meiner Habilitation Schritte zu tun, verbieten mir innere Gründe von zwingender Eindringlichkeit: diese Gründe haben mich veranlaßt, in einem respektvollen Schreiben an das Professorenkollegium mein Gesuch um Zulassung zur Dozentur zurückzuziehen." *Briefe* I, 338. However, in a later letter to Gomperz, Hofmannsthal admitted his disappointment at the time, although he felt then that things had worked out for the best. *Briefe* II, 73.

[16] Karl J. Naef, whose book *Hugo von Hofmannsthals Wesen und Werk* (Zürich, 1938) is still the most comprehensive work on Hofmannsthal to date, entitles the chapter containing the discussion of the Chandos letter (see below) as "Die Krisis," pp. 70 ff. Most critics tend to attribute the "crisis" of these years to a purported loss of faith in words by Hofmannsthal, citing the now famous *Ein Brief* (1902), an imaginary letter by Lord Chandos to Francis Bacon, as evidence. See Richard Brinkmann, "Hofmannsthal und die Sprache," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift,* 35 (1961), 59-65. Also Paul Requadt, "Sprachverleugnung und Mantelsymbolik im Werke Hofmannsthals," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift,* 29 (1955), 255-83.

There is unquestionably a personal basis to this work, for in a letter to Andrian, Hofmannsthal describes how he had used his own experience as a basis for *Ein Brief* (*Briefe* II, 99-100). However, it is an error to judge this work as a literal biographical document. *Ein Brief* is a symbolic portrayal of Hofmannsthal's own experiences carried to a theoretical extreme. It is also possible that Hofmannsthal is portraying the fate of Andrian, who wrote one book in 1895, *Der Garten der Erkenntnis,* and then lost his talent. See Donald G. Daviau, "Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the Chandos Letter," *Modern Austrian Literature,* 4/2 (1971), 28-44.

perienced, it was not an isolated occurrence. Periods of despondency and extreme nervousness afflicted Hofmannsthal all through his life from 1892 on. In 1907, for example, he experienced a loss of his ability to write, stating that even his notes made no sense to him.[17] A similar crisis occurred in 1908-1909 because of nervous anxiety.[18] Even with his dispostion to hypochondria he hardly had reason to be downcast in 1901, for his financial problems were resolved,[19] he married Gertrud Schlesinger, leased an attractive rococo mansion in Rodaun, a village located about fifteen miles from Vienna, and settled down in comfort and moderate security to a career as a writer.

During these years Hofmannsthal experimented with wordless forms such as pantomime and dance, not because he had lost faith in language, but because he had recognized the limitations of what could be expressed by words alone. He decided to break away from the relatively exclusive forms of lyric poetry and drama with appeal only to a limited audience, in order to work in more immediate art forms that would reach a wider public on a more direct, intuitive level.[20]

Hofmannsthal's progression to musical reinforcement of his texts was a natural development, for music was implicit in his writing from the

[17] In a letter to Bodenhausen he stated: "Ich war diese Wochen in einer sonderbaren Lage—und dafür hätte ich mir die Fahrt nach Degenershausen zu Euch nicht versagen brauchen: durch volle 5 Wochen ging ich herum, in einer solchen absoluten Senkung des dichterischen Vermögens—wie sie mir kaum je begegnet ist: ich verstand (mitten in der Arbeit, nach vollendetem ersten Aufzug) meine eigenen Notizen nicht. . . ." *Briefe* II, 292.

[18] To Schröder he wrote in January 1909: "Über meine Gesundheit, diese ganze, fast bizarre Erregbarkeit meiner Nerven, mach' Dir keine Gedanken. Es ging mir abscheulich, es geht mir wieder recht gut, es wird mir gelegentlich wieder abscheulich gehen, aber ich habe unendlich viel Gutes und mein Dasein ist übermäßig begünstigt unter menschlichen Existenzen." *Briefe* II, 349.—To his father he wrote in the same year: "Bei mir natürlich vollständige Stockung. Ich verstehe meine Notizen nicht einmal! Gottlob, kenn' ich das Werkel so vollständig, habe das so oft erlebt, daß es mich nicht mehr als nötig ärgert. Es gehört einmal zu meinem Metier und meiner Natur. D.h. das Metier paßt nicht zu der Natur, die Natur nicht zum Klima. Trotzdem bin ich ja aber im ganzen ganz vergnügt und schreibe schließlich eben so viel als ein anderer." *Briefe* II, 372-73.

[19] Hofmannsthal had signed a contract with the Insel publishing company which guaranteed him 1,500 Marks a year. He also had received other royalties from his published and performed works. See *Briefe* II, 32.

[20] As the critic Hanns Hammelmann aptly comments in his perceptive study of Hofmannsthal: "It was the attempt to express himself in a medium more direct, more fluent and more telling than words which led Hofmannsthal to pantomime and ballet, to drama and to the opera. The stage, which in mime and gesture reveals the unspoken and deeply hidden, and music, which makes directly felt that which is 'too vast, too true to be encompassed in words'—these were the means he wished to invoke to touch the imagination, the receptive and creative instincts of his fellow men." *Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (London, 1957), pp. 24-25.

beginning, as he himself later acknowledged in a letter to Strauss, written in 1924:

> For it strikes me as something great and at the same time necessary in my life that, eighteen years ago, you approached me with your wishes and needs. There pre-existed within me something which enabled me to fulfil—within the limits of my gifts—these wishes and made this fulfilment in turn satisfy a most profound need of my own. Much of what I had produced in all the loneliness of youth, entirely for myself, hardly thinking of readers, were phantastic little operas and Singspiele—without music. Your wishes, subsequently, supplied a purpose without restricting my freedom. (*C.* 384-85)

Thus Hofmannsthal's decision to write opera texts represented not so much a shift in direction as a logical development and expansion of tendencies inherent in his unique artistic talent. The union of his poetic texts with music can be regarded as the inevitable fulfilment of a creative gift which had always been primarily lyrical in nature. The inner necessity that impelled this final step to music is evident in the following self-assessment by Hofmannsthal:

> One speaks of the poet and the musician who come together for mutual endeavor. Corneille with Lully, Calzabigi with Gluck, da Ponte and Schikaneder with Mozart. But aside from the fact that this exists—one can scarcely imagine how necessarily *I* came to this form. I find this statement in the section of Nadler's literary history dealing with me: my very first dramas had already betrayed an unconscious desire for music, a condition indicated only imprecisely by the word "lyrical." He is absolutely correct; but the word, for my feeling, is sufficiently precise. The French call an opera a lyric drama, and perhaps in doing so, they were always instinctively closer to classical antiquity than we; they never forgot completely that classical tragedy was sung.[21]

Clearly, Hofmannsthal recognized and accepted as fact the essential lyric unity of his work. Equally revealing and important are the last lines of the quotation, which indicate that by adding music to his words he was also consciously (and conscientiously) striving to return to the classical origins of drama, the same purpose that had motivated his interest in pantomime and dance. Moreover, this turning to the past also represented the natural and consistent final goal of Hofmannsthal's tendency toward traditionalism in his writings, one important phase of which found expression in his emphasis on the Austro-Bavarian baroque tradition. There will be more to say about this later in connection with his participation in founding the Salzburg Festival.

In order to keep Hofmannsthal's work as a librettist for Richard Strauss in proper perspective, it must be remembered that his opera librettos represent but one aspect of his career as a writer. It should also

[21] *Prosa* IV, 441-42.

be noted that his decision was motivated by practical as well as artistic reasons, for actually he regarded comedy as the particular form he wished to master. The earnings from his librettos for Strauss helped to alleviate his constant financial needs so that he could find the freedom and peace of mind to create his comedies.[22]

Viewed as a totality, Hofmannsthal's writings reveal an overall stylistic and thematic unity. Only his focus shifted from the negative stance in his early works to a positive approach after 1900; that is, his condemnation of the decadent, aesthetic philosophy of the nineties evolved naturally into the attitude of responsible social commitment found in his mature works. Hofmannsthal's dedicated concern for improving society led him to an interest in politics, in pedagogy, and above all in the use of literature in general and the theater in particular as a means of moral and educational guidance. His many essays written for newspapers and journals, and his series of great Austrian books collected under the title *Österreichische Bibliothek,* assembled to remind Austrians of their literary heritage, are examples of his sincere desire to speak to as wide an audience as possible. Throughout his later works tradition is emphasized as an important unifying factor in Austrian life. Hofmannsthal's major role in establishing the Salzburg Festival, together with Strauss and Max Reinhardt, is further evidence of his genuine commitment to the idea of serving and uniting his countrymen.

As will be seen, Hofmannsthal considered the fragmented nature of existence in Austria, the isolation of the individual, to be one of the major problems of his day. He knew this problem from personal experience, for he too had felt isolated in his youth. His enormous correspondence was one means he adopted to combat loneliness. By his own admission, he had been a difficult person to get along with.[23] Initially, writing had been a substitute for life, a tendency that he later recognized and overcame. The lyric beginnings of his poetry are a reflection of his early introversion. The basic hurdle in his life was the shift from the subjective, almost narcissistic orientation of his youth to the social, outward direction of his life and works after 1900. This change of outlook that motivated the shift from lyricism to drama and opera took years of development. As early as 1893 Hofmannsthal indicated his desire to change: "I am very tired of everything fine, subtle,

[22] In a letter to his father he stated in 1909: "Ich bin jetzt doch überzeugt, daß ich das eigentliche Metier (speziell der Komödie) ganz gewiß und sicherlich erlernen und schließlich Komödien schreiben werde, die ebensosehr mich befriedigen als auch auf dem Theater wirken werden. Neue Stoffe strömen mir immerfort zu, ich weiß nicht einmal, welchen ich als den nächsten anpacken werde. Daß ich mit diesen Dingen durch die äußerst glückliche Kombination mit Strauss für absehbare Zeit auf den materiellen, augenblicklichen Erfolg nicht angewiesen bin, ist ein großes Glück und eine große Entlastung und erleichtert mir diese Phase meiner Produktion sehr." *Briefe* II, 376-77.

[23] "Ich kann kaum begreifen, daß Sie [i.e., Richard Beer-Hofmann] mich in früheren Jahren haben vertragen können: denn ich habe doch eine schwer erträgliche Art gehabt, und auch eine gewisse Schlechtigkeit, kommt mir vor." *Briefe* I, 304.

closely analyzed, impressionistic, and psychological and am waiting for the naive joys of life to fall upon me from the trees crudely and fragrantly like pine cones. Unfortunately the tree of life is enormously headstrong and cannot be shaken."[24]

Hofmannsthal died in 1929 at the early age of fifty-five. The cause of his death was a stroke, possibly induced by grief over the suicide of his twenty-six-year-old eldest son Franz. Hofmannsthal was a deeply religious Catholic (though never a Catholic writer in the strict sense of the term) and, in accordance with his wish, he was buried in the habit of a Franciscan monk.[25]

To adequately describe Hofmannsthal the man is a difficult if not an impossible task because of his enormous complexity. Erika Brecht, one of his greatest admirers and an early biographer, has left perhaps the warmest account of the poet as a compassionate human being, while stressing the complications involved in portraying him: "It is only an attempt, that will perhaps remain fruitless, for to capture his essence was as good as impossible even during the years of our friendship; his friends called him 'Ariel' or compared him to a butterfly that perched for a moment on a friendly hand but, unearthly and shy, immediately flew away again."[26]

Hofmannsthal preferred to live a withdrawn life devoted to his work, and his more even-tempered, capable wife Gerty devoted herself to sheltering him as much as possible from the ordinary annoyances of life and unwanted intrusions. Extremely sensitive, with his moods frequently dependent upon the season and the weather,[27] Hofmannsthal did not encourage uninvited guests to come to his home in Rodaun, not even his closest friends. He preferred to deal with Strauss by letter rather than in personal meetings. He did not accept Strauss's frequent invitations, nor did he invite the musician to visit him. On one occasion Strauss and his wife dropped in unexpectedly while passing through Vienna on their

[24] *Briefe* I, 84-85.

[25] Leopold von Andrian, however, disputes the widely held notion that Hofmannsthal died a Catholic and was buried in a habit. See "Erinnerungen an meinen Freund," Helmut A. Fiechtner, ed., *Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (Vienna, 1949), pp. 62 f.

[26] Erika Brecht, *Erinnerungen an Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (Innsbruck, 1946), p. 5.

[27] See *Hugo von Hofmannsthal—Eberhard von Bodenhausen: Briefe der Freundschaft*, p. 153. One of Hofmannsthal's eccentricities was his belief that he could only write when the sun was shining. Rainy and dull weather depressed him. Jakob Wassermann, a close personal friend and great admirer of Hofmannsthal reported in *Hofmannsthal der Freund* (Berlin, 1920), p. 29: "Durch seine Abhängigkeit von Klima und Bewölkung, von Feuchtigkeit und Luftdruck, Einflüssen, die gewöhnlichen Sinnen kaum zugänglich waren, erschien er so kreatürlich und so wehrlos leidend, daß man innig wünschte, er möchte nicht bloß mehr Gewalt über seinen eigenen preisgegebenen Körper haben, sondern auch über die Gestirne und Elemente, deren Feindseligkeit ihn zu bitteren Klagen hinriß und von paradiesischen Ländern träumen ließ, wo Atmen, Denken, Bilden selbstverständliche Lust war, nicht dem Zufall der günstigen Stunde abgetrotzt werden mußte. Er hatte bei heißem Wind, der über das Südgebirge kam, Tage der Niedergeschlagenheit, in denen kein Zuspruch ihn aufmunterte, alles Tun wurde wertlos."

way to Italy. Although Hofmannsthal made the best of the situation, he later wrote to Strauss, begging him never to impose in that fashion again. The two men did, of course, meet periodically to discuss their work with the lamentable result of gaps in the correspondence. The loss is all the more regrettable, for these meetings were generally held when the artists were at an impasse over particularly complex problems.

The two men, so dissimilar in tastes, background and outlook, had little in common on the personal level. Hofmannsthal's wife once mentioned to her husband that Strauss had complained to her about never seeing his collaborator. To this well-meant form of flattery, Hofmannsthal replied in his next letter to Strauss: "Besides, between two men like us there is nothing but our joint work and, properly speaking, no other common topic."[28] This statement seems almost ironic considering that it is Hofmannsthal who throughout the correspondence engages in self-revelations, self-analysis, and self-justification, while Strauss only occasionally introduces a personal element.

In another letter to his confidant, Eberhard von Bodenhausen, a close personal friend who administered Hofmannsthal's estate for him and one of the few people to whom he entrusted his innermost thoughts, Hofmannsthal reported: "My personal relationship with Strauss, as always, casual but charming. In his dealings with me he is a fine, really delightful fellow."[29] At the same time he made it clear that his judgment of Strauss, the man, did not influence his opinion of Strauss, the musician. He states that his hair stood on end when Bodenhausen in his letter compared Strauss to Beethoven.[30] Later, Hofmannsthal wrote several letters to Strauss attesting to the genuine friendship that had developed between them. It is notable that Strauss, who initially referred to his partner as "My Dear Herr von Hofmannsthal," began in 1916 to call him "My Dear Friend and Poet," and thereafter most often simply "Dear Friend." Hofmannsthal, however, with few exceptions,

[28] *C.*, 361. In an earlier letter Hofmannsthal had explained to Strauss himself why a closer personal relationship between them was impossible: "I am always, and each time anew, pleased to see you. But we are spoilt; we have shared the best men can share; being united in creative production. Every hour we have spent together was connected with our joint work; the transition to an ordinary social relationship would now be almost impossible. And I *wish* to remain united with the creative artist in you, in a serving, participating capacity, always. If the collaboration with Kerr were to materialize, I might dovetail myself into it in an assistant, advisory capacity (unnamed, even without Kerr's knowledge); nothing I would like more. Take me as I am: you have no better friend." *C.*, 342-43.

[29] *Hugo von Hofmannsthal—Eberhard von Bodenhausen: Briefe der Freundschaft,* p. 161.

[30] Ibid. Hofmannsthal revealed his candid opinion of Strauss also in a letter (June 1909) to his good friend Harry Kessler: "Wenn ich einen raffinierten künstlerischen Componisten hätte. Alles was er sagt, was er sich wünscht, wonach er tendiert, degoutiert mich ziemlich stark." *Hofmannsthal—Kessler Briefwechsel 1884-1929* (Frankfurt am Main, 1968) p. 244.

continued to address the composer as "Dear Dr. Strauss" throughout the entire period of their friendship.

The correspondence affords a vivid insight into the character of the two men. For example, depending on his mood, Hofmannsthal exhibits a wide range of characteristics from warm friendship to almost hysterical excitability and petulance to outspoken hostility and aggressiveness. Strauss, who enjoyed enormous self-confidence as well as great patience and forebearance, displays a much narrower emotional range and provides the stabilizing influence for the partnership. Despite his prominence as a writer, Hofmannsthal was often unsure of himself, resulting in temperamental outbursts and severe attacks of despondency. The slightest upset to his routine could put him into a nervous state that would virtually incapacitate him for weeks. He required constant encouragement, and whenever Strauss was not sufficiently prompt with the appropriate praise for texts received from Hofmannsthal, showing that he understood and appreciated them, the latter, with equal measures of annoyance and patient resignation, called attention to his oversight with lengthy, explanatory letters, lecturing Strauss on the quality of his work. The often quoted *Ariadne* letter (see pp. 124-25) in which the poet analyzed his own libretto for the benefit of the musician represents one such outburst. Strauss's casual, almost indifferent acknowledgement of the completed manuscript of *Ariadne* provoked Hofmannsthal into a detailed account of the merits of his work and the reasons why he deserved a considerably more enthusiastic response from the musician.

Hofmannsthal possessed a formal, dignified, rather unbending nature, and there is little in the personal information about him as an adult that indicates spontaneity or casualness. The writer Jakob Wassermann considered him the most aristocratic person he had ever met, and this quality was reflected in the punctilious and meticulous correctness of his social behavior. Yet, he also displayed great warmth, compassion, and even a good sense of humor in his letters to such close friends as Arthur Schnitzler, Eberhard von Bodenhausen, and Edgar Karg von Bebenburg. No doubt his early introduction into the adult world because of his genius influenced his outlook. He grew up under fairly protective circumstances, and, although he had a number of friends his own age, he associated for the most part with talented men considerably older than himself. His closest friends in the circle of writers known as Young Vienna—for instance, Schnitzler, Beer-Hofmann and Bahr—were all a dozen years his senior. Although a brilliant conversationalist, according to every account of him,[31] Hofmannsthal was virtually incapable of small talk. He lived almost exclusively for his work, and judging from his letters to Strauss, he seems to have measured his happiness primarily in terms of his literary accomplishments.

[31] See. R. A. Schröder, "Hofmannsthal im Gespräch," pp. 343 ff. and E. Buschbeck, "Bahr und Hofmannsthal im Gespräch," pp. 222 ff. Both in Fiechtner, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal.*

The main quality of Hofmannsthal's writing, refined thought rendered in polished, controlled imagistic language, is a further reflection of his personal character. Although he could be practical and even tough-minded if necessary, he was basically anti-materialistic in life and anti-naturalistic in art. Not only in his writings but even in conversation, he avoided terms like *reality*. His work and his interests approached life as a multi-dimensional unity[32] in which the invisible aspects were as real as the visible and tangible. As a writer his aim was not to imitate the recognized forms of existence, but rather to use phenomena as symbols to express the intangible connections between all forms of life. By this means he attempted to mediate between this world and the transcendental world, to make comprehensible the unseen unity and harmony of existence.[33] The very nature of his artistic ambition eventually led him to music as the best means of achieving these goals.

Like many major artists, Hofmannsthal inclined toward myth and allegory as the best means of capturing what he termed "the world behind the world." His usual technique was to cast over his poetic world an aura of unreality as a means of disguising, or at least muting, surface reality so that its deeper meaning could be perceived. He once

[32] In a jesting note to Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal indicated not only his belief in the unity of the world but pointed out the unity of his own writings: "Wenn ich an der Bretterwand hinflieg' und mir das Genick brech' (unwahrscheinlich, aber möglich), sollt Ihr meine vielen Notizen auf Zetteln herausgeben, in Gedankengruppen geordnet, mit einem sehr einfachen, die Assoziationen aufdeckenden Kommentar. Denn meine Gedanken gehören alle zusammen, weil ich von der Einheit der Welt sehr stark durchdrungen bin. Ich glaub' sogar, ein Dichter ist eben ein Mensch, dem in guten Stunden die Gedanken 'ausgehen,' wie man beim Patiencelegen sagt." *Briefe* I, 165. In another letter to his father, he shows that his sense of the unity of nature led him to become a writer rather than a philosopher: "Wenn mir, was Du Philosophie nennst, so sehr am Herzen läge, das abstrake Erkennen des Daseins, wär' ich wohl Theolog geworden, und mit der Zeit vielleicht Schismatiker. So aber steh' ich ja ganz auf dem Goetheschen: Natur hat weder Kern noch Schale—alles ist sie mit einem Male." Ibid., 168.

[33] For Hofmannsthal's clearest statement concerning the role of the poet, see "Der Dichter und diese Zeit," *Prosa* II (Berlin, 1951), 264-98. Here he states: "Er [der Dichter] ist es, der in sich die Elemente der Zeit verknüpft. In ihm oder nirgends ist Gegenwart" (p. 282). He also defines the poet's mission, stating that poets exist ". . . die Unendlichkeit der Erscheinungen leidend zu genießen und aus leidendem Genießen heraus die Vision zu schaffen; zu schaffen in jeder Sekunde, mit jedem Pulsschlag, unter einem Druck, als liege der Ozean über ihnen, zu schaffen, von keinem Licht angeleuchtet, auch von keinem Grubenlämpchen, zu schaffen, umtost von höhnenden, verwirrenden Stimmen; zu schaffen aus keinem anderen Antrieb heraus als aus dem Grundtrieb ihres Wesens, zu schaffen den Zusammenhang des Erlebten, den erträglichen Einklang der Erscheinungen, zu schaffen wie die Ameisen, wieder verstört, wieder schaffend, zu schaffen wie die Spinne, aus dem eigenen Leib den Faden hervorspinnend, der über den Abgrund des Daseins sie trägt." Ibid., pp. 290-91. In *Jupiter und Semele,* he wrote: "Des Dichters eigentliches Gebiet: das Verhältnis von Geist zu Körper, von Idee zum Ausdruck, Mensch zum Tier . . ." *Dramen* II, 504.

reported that his works generally took form in his mind first as an atmosphere.[34] At the same time he established distance in his works (long before Brecht conceived of his technique of estrangement) by setting them in the past, so that people could come to the essential meaning that lay behind the surface details. For this reason, he felt that opera was his form, stating: "It is quite certainly so—that in opera, that is, of course, particularly in my opera, I can have the 'significant,' that which matters, the essential, emerge not from a custom, but from the purely felt deeper condition of things—it always becomes a matter of purity—this drama, as I intend it, can also bring the tragic inherent in things to appearance without a break."[35]

Hofmannsthal, working in terms of this principle of "precise vision," tried to create a timeless, mythical atmosphere, occasionally even devising, as in *Der Rosenkavalier,* his own artificial language that is simultaneously synthetic and analytic.[36] He often invoked an oriental atmosphere, for he loved the fairy tale aura and mystery of the East. Both *Ariadne auf Naxos,* although based on a classical legend, and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* possess poetic elements of orientalism.

Despite his preference for symbolism over realism, for poetry over prose, and for the visionary realm of the imagination to the world of

[34] In answer to a questionnaire, inquiring how his works took shape, Hofmannsthal replied as follows: "Ich glaube: mich reizt vag eine gewisse Vorstellung, Vorstellungsgruppe, vorgestellte Atmosphäre, die in ihrer Vagheit unendlich inhaltreich und auch gegen andere Vorstellungsgruppen ganz scharf abgegrenzt ist—aber sie selbst ist begrifflich gar nicht faßbar: sie selbst ist z.B. heroische Atmosphäre, patriarchalische Atmosphäre, bürgerlich-eingeschränkt-idyllische Atmosphäre—alle diese Bezeichnungen sind aber viel zu begriffsmäßig, zugleich zu eng und zu weit. Denn die Atmosphäre ist viel nebelhafter, ist nicht etwa Landschaft, nicht etwa Vision menschlicher Zustände, nicht etwa zeitlich-historisch gefärbt—sie enthält ein schwebendes Durcheinander aller dieser Elemente. Andererseits ist sie viel bestimmter als alle diese Worte, ist ganz einheitlich von einem bestimmten Duft durchsetzt, von einem bestimmten Lebensrhythmus beherrscht, sie ist eine Möglichkeit ganz bestimmter Gestaltungen, die miteinander ganz bestimmte Rhythmen bilden können und keine andern—dann tritt, oft nach Tagen oder Wochen, aus dieser Atmosphäre ein Einzelnes heraus, wie die Fichte am Bergeshang, wenn der Morgennebel sich klärt: dieses Einzelne ist dann eine Gestalt mit bestimmter Gebärde, ein Ton (Ton eines Monologs, Ton einer Unterredung, einer Massenszene) oder eine ganz kleine Anekdote, mit deutlich scharfgesehenen Details.
Diese präzise Vision läßt sich dann verstehen. Sie ist immer Symbol, wie alles im Leben, wenn man es in einem günstigen Augenblick tief genug erblickt. Dann verzweigt sich das Begriffliche, formt den Stoff in seinen Teilen, und aus jener vagen schwelenden Atmosphäre, in die der Gedanke immer wieder taucht, holt er sich seine ihn völlig umhüllende Metaphorik, worunter ich Gestalten, Hintergründe, Rede und Gegenrede und alles verstehe." *Briefe* I, 336-37.

[35] Fiechtner, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal,* p. 339.

[36] In discussing *Der Rosenkavalier,* the writer Walther Brecht commented on the musicality of the language, to which Hofmannsthal replied: "Es liegt vor allem in der Sprache. In der Sprache liegt überhaupt alles. So wie der ganze 'Rosenkavalier' in dieser fiktiven Halbmundart liegt, die nie so gesprochen worden ist. Was darin vorkommt, ist ja ganz gleichgültig, die Geschichte, die Fabel." Fiechtner, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal,* p. 340.

everyday life, Hofmannsthal was no ivory tower aesthete. Rather, he was a man of practical sense and humor, totally dedicated to improving the world in which he lived. His life displays a spirit of *noblesse oblige* thoroughly in keeping with his aristocratic nature. The record of his commitment to men and causes expands in ever broadening circles from his efforts on behalf of individual friends to his efforts to promote European unity.

Strauss was almost the exact opposite of Hofmannsthal's type, although, as in Hofmannsthal's case, a detailed portrait of the man is difficult to formulate and remains still to be written.[37] His personality was rooted in two contradictory heritages: the rough, simple coarseness of the upper Bavarian peasant lineage of his father, and the suave, aristocratic self-confidence and refinement of the wealthy city merchant, the Pschorr family of his mother. Physically Strauss was thin and very tall, and he made an imposing figure on the podium, quite in contrast to almost all the famous musicians of his time. His personality affected those who knew him in various ways. The French author, Romain Rolland, though a devoted friend of Strauss, found reflected in him much that he disliked in Germans as a race. Rolland met the composer in 1899 and recorded the following impressions in his diary:

> Very young face: dark hair receding, very little hair on the forehead, which is rounded, full and rather handsome: very pale eyes: the moustache so fair as to be almost white. Speaks French with difficulty, but sufficiently. Tall, but holds himself with extreme lassitude. Childish and involuntary shyness in his smile and gestures: but one feels underneath a pride which is cold, self-willed, indifferent or contemptuous of the majority of things and people, and which must blame itself, when alone, for not having asserted itself more, for having given in yet once more in conversation to social conventions.[38]

Several years later, Rolland returned to his diary to record another description of Strauss:

> Just now, looking at the big portrait of Strauss which I have at home and which Strauss gave me, I was thinking: it's very idealized; they've created him with a character which he does not possess. Strauss, in real life, hasn't that vigour of expression; the impression he gives is pale, uncertain, eternally youngish, a little inconsistent. —But when seeing him close to, at the concert, conducting his or-

[37] In the large Strauss literature, few authors have attempted to give more than a superficial examination to Strauss the man, despite the ample insight into his character available from his enormous correspondence. The best biographical portrait, which we shall refer to, is by Otto Erhardt, *Richard Strauss, Leben, Wirken, Schaffen* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1953).

[38] The diary, which was not published in Rolland's lifetime, is included in *Richard Strauss & Romain Rolland: Correspondence, Diary, & Essays*, ed. Rollo Myers (Berkeley, 1968), p. 112.

chestra, I was struck by the *other* Strauss: his face is aging, hardening, shrinking; it is acquiring and retaining an intense seriousness, which not the slightest gleam of gaiety illumines for an instant. In profile, with his thick crown of hair, set very high up, and framing a monk's tonsure, with his enormous bulging forehead, his nose which appears small and short, and his sulky mouth, he looks like a barbarian from Asia, one of those Huns who founded a family in Germany. —But there is one thing which his portraits do not convey at all: that is the pale blondness of hair and complexion.[39]

Another Frenchman, composer Claude Debussy, in observing Strauss on the podium commented: "He has . . . the head of a musician; but his eyes and gestures are those of a Superman, to quote Nietzsche, from whose teaching he must have imbibed his energy. From Nietzsche too he must have learned his lofty scorn of feeble sentimentalities and his desire that music should not go on forever providing a more or less satisfactory illumination for our nights, but that it should shine like the sun. I can assure you that there is sunshine in the music of Strauss. . . . I say again that it is not possible to withstand his irresistible domination."[40]

Just as Strauss was the opposite physical type to Hofmannsthal, he also reflected a totally opposite viewpoint in his relation to the world around him. Unlike Hofmannsthal, he remained for most of his career almost oblivious of everyday politics.[41] His early life developed in a world of monarchy, and Strauss never seemed to have changed his outlook that all governments were autocratic and were to be cultivated to serve his art. He neither understood the menace of Nazism nor paid heed, until it was too late, to ample warnings of the impending tragedy that would result from its rise to power. As an old man he witnessed the collapse of his whole cultural world, found his own family in dire threat of a concentration camp (his daughter-in-law, Alice Strauss, was Jewish), and found Stefan Zweig, his only satisfactory substitute for Hofmannsthal, officially blacklisted because of his Jewish heritage.[42]

[39] Ibid., p. 141.

[40] Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche, the Dilettante Hater,* trans. B. N. Langdon Davies (New York, 1948), pp. 123-24.

[41] Because Strauss did not repudiate the Nazi Government, he has been accused by George Marek in his book *Richard Strauss: The Life of a Non-Hero* (New York, 1967) of ruthless opportunism. That Strauss exercised bad judgment is true, but Marek's charge is biased and unfounded. Strauss was politically naive. His error, not to be overlooked or minimized, was lack of concern. However, he considered only his work to be important, feeling that good art is an enduring value, while governments come and go.

[42] What Zweig as well as Hofmannsthal meant to the composer and how Strauss tried to protect his new librettist is shown in the following letter from Strauss to Zweig: "Denn glauben Sie mir, den Dichter, der mir ein brauchbares Opernbuch schreiben kann, gibt es nicht, auch wenn Sie ihm großmütig und uneigennützig 'helfen' wollen. Seien Sie herzlich bedankt für Ihren hochherzigen Vorschlag! Ich habe sowohl Minister Goebbels wie Göring, wiederholt erklärt, daß ich seit 50 Jahren nach einem Librettisten suche, viele Dutzende von Operntexten wurden mir zugeschickt, mit allen deutschen Dichtern

Finally, Strauss himself became *persona non grata* to the Nazi regime. The party headquarters sent the following telegram to all members on 24 January 1944: "RE: Richard Strauss. The personal association of our leading men with Dr. Richard Strauss is to cease. However, as the Führer specified to Dr. Goebbels, no difficulties are to be placed in the way of performance of his works. Bormann."[43]

Strauss lived almost entirely in an isolated world of music. He had no apparent interest in religion of any kind and always remained disinterested in the type of philosophical theorizing and analyses of self, life, and the world that fascinated Hofmannsthal. Strauss possessed few personal weaknesses or eccentricities and was not often subject to temperamental behavior. Yet Strauss was certainly not a simple man. The characteristic of his inner personality, as Erhardt aptly summarizes,

> . . . is its ambiguity, which, parallel to the contrasting themes of his music, allows the extreme contrasts of the man to exist organically along side one another.
>
> His bearing: rather unpathetic and that of a "Grandseigneur." His dress: casual and meticulously groomed. His character: naive and refined, altruistic and egotistical, generous and miserly. His intellect: intuitive and rationally controlled. His appearance: determined and modest.
>
> He is simple and complicated, receptive to feelings and thinker, dreamer and formalist, outdoorsman and man of the world, gourmand and gourmet—but he has always remained the type, about which Schopenhauer said: "Whoever does not to a certain extent, remain a big child throughout his life, but becomes a serious, prosaic, thoroughly settled man, can be a very useful and virtuous citizen of his world, only never a genius."[44]

Throughout his life Strauss cultivated a fine sense of self-irony, and not infrequently he chose to disparage his own work. Humor was an important primary force in his life and in his work. His two great obsessions were his work and playing the card game Skat. The outdoors and nature also meant a great deal to him as his magnificent country home in the rugged Bavarian Alps attests. His gregarious, extroverted,

(Gerhart Hauptmann, Bahr, Wolzogen, etc.) habe ich verhandelt. Ein Glücksfall war der Salome-Fund, die 'Elektra' leitete mein Beziehungen zu dem einzigen Hofmannsthal ein, nach seinem Tode glaubte ich endgültig verzichten zu müssen, ein Zufall (kann man es so nennen?) führte mich zu Ihnen. Ich gebe Sie auch nicht auf, auch nicht, weil wir jetzt gerade eine antisemitische Regierung haben." *Die Welt um Richard Strauss in Briefen*, ed. Franz Grasberger (Tutzing, 1967), p. 363.

[43] See Walter Panofsky, *Richard Strauss—Partitur eines Lebens* (Munich, 1965), pp. 326-36, for an excellent account of Strauss's relationship to and his difficulties with the Nazis during the war years. Also see pp. 281-99 for Panofsky's perceptive review of Strauss's confrontation with the Nazis in regard to the premiere performance of *Die schweigsame Frau* with libretto by Stefan Zweig.

[44] Erhardt, *Richard Strauss*, p. 64.

spontaneous , and impulsive behavior was foreign to Hofmannsthal who considered Strauss to be without nerves. Strauss suffered from none of the extreme artistic sensitivity that ruled Hofmannsthal's personality, and he cared little for the poet's rarified approach to art. In a word, Strauss epitomized the bourgeois man of culture in pre-World War I Germany.[45]

Strauss readily made compromises to achieve his goals, while Hofmannsthal both as artist and man was incapable of compromise. He made the highest demands on himself and on everyone around him. He had unimpeachable integrity, and if at times this made him seem cold or callous, there was no acceptable alternative for him. To make concessions out of convenience or even out of friendship was unthinkable to him. When, for example, Strauss was willing to have *Ariadne* performed without Reinhardt as director, because of scheduling difficulties, Hofmannsthal exploded with anger, threatening to withdraw the work rather than to see it jeopardized for the sake of expediency. Since he was writing for posterity, Hofmannsthal was not concerned primarily with the immediate public success of his works, a viewpoint that he frequently tried to impress upon Strauss.

Strangely enough, however, in another of the many paradoxes existing in this collaboration, Strauss, who is renowned for his love of money, never mentions the subject, while Hofmannsthal brings up the topic repeatedly. This reflects the difference in financial status between the two men as well as the fact that Strauss acted generally as the business agent, handling the contracts and the financial arrangements for their works. Hofmannsthal always received less money than Strauss for all of their joint works.

The difference in the two artists' outlook is emphasized in another letter to Bodenhausen during the writing of *Die Frau ohne Schatten:*

> I have finished writing the third act of the opera in the past few days—I think it is very nice, and if I had a composer who was less famous but closer to my heart, to my way of thinking, I would feel much better. In the "fairy tale," in which I now want to bury myself with all my strength, I am alone—must master the beautiful, truly limitless subject completely and in all its depth—naturally I will not succeed in representing its content completely—but something beautiful perhaps at any rate—of course even then not directly, but through the mysterious study of character and through analogy . . .[46]

The contrasting personalities and conflicting outlooks of the two men led naturally to misunderstandings about the aim of their works. Hof-

[45] See Barbara Tuchmann, *The Proud Tower* (New York, 1966) in which she chooses Richard Strauss as the most characteristic artistic personality in Germany during the period leading to World War I.

[46] *Hugo von Hofmannsthal—Eberhard von Bodenhausen*, p. 167.

mannsthal, especially in connection with the works *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten,* was distressed by Strauss's apparent inability to understand the meaning of his texts. Strauss's insistence that the libretto for *Ariadne* was too subtle and not clear enough for comprehension by opera audiences touched Hofmannsthal where he was most vulnerable, and defensively he was quick to inform the composer of his disagreement. Finally, the normally patient Strauss snapped back in annoyance: "Why do you always get so bitterly angry if for once we don't understand each other straight away?" (*C.*, 243). At other times Strauss put Hofmannsthal in his place, telling him not to be concerned with a musical problem, but to depend on the musician to solve it to the best advantage. Obviously, to blend their ideas together into a meaningful, cohesive union, it was necessary for these two artists to question and to criticize each other freely and candidly. Only because each man was receptive to the ideas of the other and yet refused to yield beyond a given point could they come to any final mutual understanding on the consistently high level that they achieved in six operas.

Hofmannsthal readily recognized that he was not a born librettist. His feeling for music was derived purely from intuition and an instinctive artistic comprehension of the form. He did attempt to learn something about musical styles and forms, and whenever Strauss mentioned a specific type of aria he intended to use, Hofmannsthal would study the models suggested by Strauss to illustrate the idea. Subsequently, in writing *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *Arabella,* Hofmannsthal's confidence in his musical knowledge grew to such an extent that he began blocking out the text in terms of set numbers. He knew very clearly his value to Strauss as a librettist as well as the path he was following in his librettos, as this letter to Strauss concerning *Ariadne* shows:

> It is certainly not chance which made two men like us meet at the same period in history. And I would ask you not to ascribe to a mere freak of creative fancy any single step along the road which we have to travel together, nor any one step which I have taken and which you have had to take with me. What, between ourselves, I would wish you to appreciate above all as a high merit of mine, and one earned with loving care, is not my libretti as such, but that which is implied in them. After *Salome* and *Elektra* had made it obvious to me that certain things, once done, were not to be repeated—for in art everything can only be done once—I set out in another direction with *Rosenkavalier,* which on the one hand required an unprecedented degree of pithiness and animation in the conversational style, while it re-admitted on the other, through the back-door, so to speak, a seemingly remote stylistic method, the method of set numbers. Now I have felt compelled to probe to their very limits these set numbers and the formal and intellectual possibilities which they offer. Hence the choice of a subject of almost contrapuntal severity; hence the stylizing of emotion and—to make this possible, palatable and, in a higher sense,

> true—the idea of this archaistic setting; all of them rather intricate, by no means obvious propositions. I know where I now am, yet I had rather not demonstrate it in words, but by deeds—that is through a work of art which possesses complete and pure operatic form. I hope this work, when compared with da Ponte's, Goethe's, Wagner's output, will prove itself true and genuine, not excogitated and entirely uncontrived. (*C.*, 154-55)

Although Hofmannsthal at the beginning of the collaboration felt that he could work alongside of Strauss as an equal and independent partner, he gradually understood and willingly accepted his secondary position in the relationship. He came to recognize that the music was the most important aspect of an operatic work, and he always deferred to Strauss's judgment in matters of musical technique and craftmanship. However, he regarded himself as the keeper of style for both men and protector against lapses of taste to which he felt Strauss was prone. Such concerns led to his temporarily assuming the dominant role in their relationship during the work on *Ariadne*.

In judging the impact and influence of each man upon the other, it is evident that each benefited as much as he gave. Strauss's insistence on clarity and theatrical effectiveness enabled Hofmannsthal to produce librettos of literary quality that at the same time possess wide audience appeal. Similarly, through Hofmannsthal's guidance, Strauss was forced to change the direction of his musical style and to achieve greater artistic success than he had ever attained before.[47] These exhortations, combined with imaginative texts of superior poetic quality, provided the stimulation that brought out the finest in Strauss's artistry in both *Ariadne* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*.

[47] In a letter to Strauss in 1912, Hofmannsthal wrote: "It does me good to think that I, who hardly consider myself as standing even at the extreme periphery of your art, should have found—with that instinct which is the common bond between all creative artists, over the heads, so to speak, of the rest of the crowd—the right thing to do in producing this particular work which literally forced upon you a definite style, only to give you back your freedom more fully on a higher plane." *C.*, 132-33. Later, in 1916, Strauss, in one of his most revealing letters to Hofmannsthal, stated: ". . . thanks to our highly beneficial conversation, I have become so uncertain that I no longer know what's successful and what's bad. And that's a good thing, for at my age one gets all too easily into the rut of mere routine and that is the death of true art. Your *cri-de-coeur* against Wagnerian 'note-spinning' has deeply touched my heart and has thrust open a door to an entirely new landscape where, guided by *Ariadne* and in particular the new Vorspiel, I hope to move forward wholly into the realm of un-Wagnerian emotional and human comic opera. I now see my way clearly before me and am grateful to you for opening my eyes—but now you go ahead and make me the necessary libretti à la *Domino Noir, Maurer und Schlosser, Wildschütz, Zar und Zimmermann, La Part du Diable* à la Offenbach—but peopled by human beings à la Hofmannsthal instead of puppets. An amusing, interesting plot, with dialogue, arias, duets, ensembles, or what you will, woven by real composable human beings à la Marschallin, Ochs, Barak. In any form you like! I promise you that I have now definitely stripped off the Wagnerian musical armor." *C.*, 262.

Despite their accomplishments and the success of their works, Hofmannsthal, who never permitted himself any illusions and who always strove for perfection almost impossible to attain, continued to look ahead to the potential fulfillment of their work together in the perfect fusion of forms that he envisioned.

The uniqueness of Hofmannsthal's contribution can be shown by Strauss's works after the poet's death. Despite the collaboration with Stefan Zweig, Clemens Krauss, and Joseph Gregor, Strauss never again found another writer with whom he could work as closely and as successfully. His letter of condolence to Hofmannsthal's widow appropriately summarizes his true opinion and his appreciation of his friend and collaborator:

> This genius, this great poet, this sensitive collaborator, this kind friend, this unique talent! No musician ever found such a helper and supporter.—No one will ever replace him for me or the world of music! Posterity will set up to him a monument that is worthy of him and which he has always possessed in my heart—ineffaceable gratitude in the heart of his truest friend will be the feeling that I shall preserve for him in admiration to the end of my days. (*C.*, 537)

There could be no more fitting conclusion to this chapter, describing these two gifted men, their foibles and aspirations, than the following letter, in which Hofmannsthal expresses the full meaning of this collaboration to him and his hopes for the works that resulted:

> Imbued with the idea, which growing insight has but served to confirm, that the individual can produce nothing of lasting value unless it be linked to tradition, I have learnt far more from what I was able to gather from the features of older, still living works of similar literature than from any "demands of our time" which might seem to be in the air. As a result nothing of what I have done for you possessed at first sight any great appeal to our contemporaries and their spokesmen; what I had created was dismissed as nothing out of the ordinary, my humor was set aside as not humorous, my sentiment as not moving, my imaginations as not imaginative. Everything was precisely not what, in the judgment of these oracles of wisdom and good taste, it should have tried to be. Invariably the essence has been missed, never did the marksman hit the mark—invariably it is the libretto which bears the full brunt of the scorn of all those who are forever longing for beauty, but will die rather than see it. The only person who always recognized whatever there was, who received it with real joy, received it productively and translated it into higher reality, was you.
>
> This is how you have rewarded me, as richly as any artist can reward another—the rest our works did for themselves and I believe that they, not all of them, but nearly all of them with their inseparable fusion of poetry and music, will continue to live for some considerable time and will give pleasure to several generations. (*C.*, 385)