

***Till Eulenspiegel Einmal Anders!* for horn, violin, clarinet, cello & double bass, arranged by Franz Hasenöhrl, after Richard Strauss.**

Description by Joseph Stevenson

This is an astonishing adaptation of the popular favorite among Richard Strauss' large-scale tone poems, *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks), Op. 28 (1894 - 1895). The original piece is one of the cornerstones of late-Romantic era orchestral music. Scored for a very large orchestra that can present powerful outbursts and massive, lush sound, it tells of a favorite character in German folklore. Apparently based on a real medieval person, Till Eulenspiegel is a flagrantly insubordinate youth who mocks all ecclesiastical and secular authority and the rigid conventions of social custom. His pranks, some of which are quite cruel, are generally aimed at putting the rich and powerful in embarrassing positions. Strauss did not leave a program for the work, though there is no mistaking the conclusion: The snare drum rolls, the authoritative judgment of the trombones, and the pitiful squeak of the E flat clarinet convey that Till went too far and was executed, though Strauss provides a coda where his theme reappears, signifying that he lives in legend.

Franz Hasenöhrl (the real name of a composer who signed himself Franz Höhrl) was an Austrian who lived from 1885 to 1970, both of these dates being exactly 21 years later than Strauss' own. He was a music professor at the University of Vienna and a prolific composer, though virtually unknown outside Vienna. In this piece, he showed an amazing mastery of the possibilities of a small instrumental ensemble, for here he does nothing less than create an entirely convincing arrangement of *Till Eulenspiegel* for just five instruments instead of Strauss' 100-piece orchestra. This is an amazing feat of orchestration and the conclusion is unmistakable that Hasenöhrl was a master of instrumental scoring. Whatever his own original output is like, it is certain that it is beautifully orchestrated.

In his version, Hasenöhrl keeps the two main solo voices of Richard Strauss' original concept: The horn, to play one of the most famous solo horn calls in all orchestral music, and the violin, which represents the trickster Till's poetic side. (Till is, after all, a metaphor for the familiar Romantic archetype of the misunderstood, nonconformist artist.) The rest of the work is carried out by clarinet, bassoon, and double bass. The writing for the double bass is particularly striking, for Hasenöhrl entrusts to that instrument the bass foundation of the piece that allows it to recapture a measure of the rich sound of the original, plus making it imitate many of the percussion effects from Strauss' score. Wisely realizing that his illusion can be carried on only so far, Hasenöhrl also wisely condenses the roughly 15-minute original to eight minutes by cutting out some repetition and transitional features, focusing in on the favorite melodies and episodes of the beloved original. It is, it should be obvious, a work that requires absolutely first-rate players on all five parts.