

STRAUSS

Thus Spoke Zarathustra



***Also Sprach Zarathustra* by Richard Strauss**

Stage 5 & 6 Teaching Resource

Sydney Symphony Orchestra

Acknowledgements

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Syllabus links

NSW Curriculum

Also Sprach Zarathustra by Richard Strauss covers a range of topics from the NSW syllabus.

Years 7-10 Elective

Art Music

Music 1 Preliminary and HSC

Music of the 19th century

Music for large Ensembles

Music 2 Preliminary

Music 1600-1900

Music 2 HSC

Music of the 19th century

Syllabus Outcomes

The activities included in this kit cover a range of outcomes across the NSW Music Syllabus stages, as mapped below:

Stage 4/5 Elective Music

Activities	Syllabus Outcomes	Ideas for assessment
1. Performance	4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6	Performance ensemble
2: Aural and Musicology	4.7, 4.8, 4.9 5.7, 5.8, 5.9	Discussion responses Short written responses
3: Aural, musicology and performance	4.1, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9	Notation responses Analysis responses
4. Aural and Musicology	4.7, 4.8, 4.9 5.7, 5.8, 5.9	Discussion Performance
5. Composition	4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6	Composition planning ideas Peer evaluation responses
6. Aural (Task 1 only)	5.7, 5.8, 5.11, 5.12	Creative response

Stage 6 Music 1

Activities	Syllabus Outcomes	Ideas for assessment
1. Performance	P1, P2, H1, H2	Short written response Extended written responses
2. Aural and Musicology	P2, P4 H2, H4	Short notated and written responses
3. Aural, Musicology and Performance	P3, P4, P6 H3, H4, H6	Short written response
4. Aural and Musicology	P2, P6 H2, H6	Discussion Oral or written report Viva voce
5. Composition and Performance	P1, P3, P7, P9 H1, H3, H7, H9	Composition Portfolio Performance Evaluation
6. Aural (Task 1 only)	P4, P10 H4, H10	Creative response

Stage 6 Music 2

Activities	Syllabus Outcomes	Ideas for assessment
1. Performance	P1, P2, P7, P8 H1, H2, H7, H8	Ensemble skills
2. Aural and Musicology	P2, P5 H2, H5	Short notated and written responses
3. Aural, Musicology and Performance	P1, P6, P7 H1, H6, H7	Short written responses Discussion
4. Aural and Musicology	P2, P7, P8 H2, H7, H8	Discussion Extended written response
5. Composition	P3, P8, P9 H3, H8, H9	Composition Portfolio Peer Evaluation
6. Musicology	P2, P5, P6, P7 H2, H5, P6, P7	Extended response

Work: *Also Sprach Zarathustra* by Richard Strauss

Composer background

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Strauss was a German composer of the late romantic period, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His symphonic poems of the 1890s and operas of the early 20th century have remained significant in the standard repertoire. He came from a musical family and began composing at age six and studied many instruments. Strauss established his reputation through his orchestral tone poems including *Death and Transfiguration* (1889), *Til Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks* (1895), *Thus Sprach Zarathustra* (1895) and *a Hero's Life* (1898). Richard Strauss's musical style is characterised by its rich orchestration, melodic beauty, and expressive power.

Work Background

The Symphonic Poem

The German romantic movement encouraged linking music with non-musical ideas and personalities. In this rise of program music, a new type of musical structure which became known as tone or symphonic poem emerged. The structure of a symphonic poem was determined by its program and motifs became the unifying technique as composers moved away from traditional musical forms. By manipulating the concepts of music and relying upon his masterful orchestration abilities, Strauss took the symphonic poem to new heights writing more than 15 during his life.

***Thus Sprach Zarathustra* (1896)**

Zarathustra was an Iranian religious reformer, philosopher and prophet, who challenged Ancient Iranian religion, becoming the spiritual founder of Zoroastrianism. Nietzsche, a famous German philosopher was inspired by Zarathustra and wrote a text with this simple plot: when Zarathustra was 30 years old, he left his birthplace home by a lake and took to the mountains. There he enjoyed a life of loneliness for 10 years, contemplating the meaning of life and the perils of the human condition. One morning he arose with the dawn and turned to the sun and cried out to the sun his new philosophy regarding the universe and mankind and went back to mankind to share his insights. These are outlined in Nietzsche's novel.

Young Germans of the era including Strauss keenly read Nietzsche's philosophical book, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The hero seemed to exemplify the artistic ideals of the time: a "super-person" who is a free spirit longing after higher aspirations than his world seems to offer. For its premiere in December 1896, Strauss wrote:

I did not intend to write philosophical music or portray Nietzsche's great work musically. I meant rather to convey in music an idea of the evolution of humanity from its origin, through the various phases of development, religious as well as scientific, up to Nietzsche's idea of the super-person.

Strauss' genius as an orchestrator, and choice of this text as the non-musical inspiration for his symphonic poem ensured great success. He inherited the orchestra of Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner at a time when it was ready to be transformed into a mammoth virtuosic ensemble. And Strauss was a forerunner in its development. His extensive orchestration skills used all the instruments equally. Even instruments that traditionally had a supporting role such as double bass, trombone, tuba and timpani had soloistic prominence.

Instrumentation of work

Woodwind	Brass	Percussion	Strings
3 Flutes	6 Horns	Timpani	Violin I
Piccolo	4 Trumpets	Bass drum	Violin II
3 Oboes	3 Trombones	Cymbals	Violas
English horn	2 Tubas	Triangle	Celli
2 Clarinets in B flat		Glockenspiel	Double basses
E flat clarinet		Tubular Bell on low E	2 Harps
Bass clarinet		organ	
3 Bassoons			
Contra bassoon			

Listening guide


Overview




The piece is divided into nine musical episodes, played with only three definite pauses. Strauss named the nine sections after selected chapters of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. Strauss claimed the relationship of his work to Nietzsche's was very general as Nietzsche's work had 80 chapter headings, while he referred to only eight and they occur in a different order.



Musical Episodes


1. "Sonnenaufgang" (Sunrise)
2. "Von den Hinterweltlern" (Of the Backwoodsmen)
3. "Von der großen Sehnsucht" (Of Great Longing)
4. "Von den Freuden und Leidenschaften" (Of Joy and Passion)
5. "Das Grablied" (Funeral Song)
6. "Von der Wissenschaft" (Of Science)
7. "Der Genesende" (The Convalescent)
8. "Das Tanzlied" (The Dance Song)
9. "Nachtwandlerlied" (The Night Wanderer Song)

These selected chapters from Nietzsche's novel create a cohesive tale highlighting Strauss's interpretation of major moments of Zarathustra's philosophical journey. The general storylines and ideas in these chapters were the inspiration used to build the tone poem's structure.

Episode	Features
Dawn	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Zarathustra emerges from his cave at sunrise, enlightened after 10 years of solitude and ready to rejoin humanity and share his wisdom. The music begins with low stirrings in the basses, contrabassoon, organ and bass drum. From this darkness sunrise occurs and four trumpets grandly intone the “Nature” theme, a strong three-note rising motif (C, G, C) like a fanfare.</p>  <p>Based on the perfect intervals of a 5th and 8th, this motive is part of the harmonic system, a natural overtone series. The texture, dynamics and tension build as the pitch continues up the harmonic series to an E natural. But the major third is immediately changed to a minor third, which is the first note played in the work (E flat) that is not part of the overtone series.</p> <p>On the third repetition of this fanfare figure the orchestral presentation of a Great Spirit follows, and then two horns quote from the Gregorian chant <i>Credo</i>, “I Believe in One God.” A slower section reflects the weakness of mankind, and this ultimately grows into a vibrant climax. After the presentation, the movement closes with organ and bass drum holding on after the rest of the orchestra has stopped.</p>

Episode	Features
Of the Backwoods Men	<p>These are the people of simple religious faith whom Zarathustra viewed as inadequate, silly, even naive in their effort to please God. Zarathustra has descended the mountain and wants to explain the meaning of life to humanity – the backwoodsmen.</p> <p>The organ's pedals and muted tremolo celli and double basses play the first theme:</p>  <p>The Theme of Man motif is then heard for the first time in <i>pizzicato</i> violin 1 and cello:</p>  <p>Then the music changes into a lyrical passage for the entire section. This melody has the structure and contour of a hymn tune, reflecting the backwoodsmen following traditional systemic worship:</p>  <p>It is derived from the Gregorian chant <i>Credo</i>, which is heard in the muted horns. In the second section, the organ quotes a Gregorian chant while, simultaneously, the horns re-state the <i>Credo</i> motive statement. The key of B (minor and later major), which represents humankind is introduced in this movement. This key relationship is an intended paradox, since B is next to C but only very distantly related to it in sound. A large climax rises and sinks before the next section.</p>
Of Great Longing	<p>This episode introduces motifs that are more chromatic in nature, signifying the struggle that while mankind's religious faith cannot dominate nature, it cannot get rid of its desire to be close to God. It opens softly yet confidently with the Theme of Man motif spread across the strings, and the music grows into stunning, intense lyricism. The organ sings a statement from the <i>Magnificat</i> and the horns again state the <i>Credo</i>. A series of rushing figures in the strings, winds and harps leads to the subsequent section.</p>

Episode	Features
Of Joy and Passion	<p>Exposition</p> <p>The exposition starts here in C minor, marking the first subject theme of the exposition proper. "All thy passions in the end become virtues...man is something that hath to be surpassed and therefore shalt thou love thy virtues – for you will succumb through them," Zarathustra commented.</p> <p>Turbulent, twisting figures project the tempestuous emotions associated with joy and yearning.</p>  <p>Two contrasting themes (above), one coiling around on itself and the other leaping to great heights and then crashing downward provide a dramatic projection of unsettled, boiling emotions.</p>
The Grave Song	<p>When one loses one's own personal ideas, there is a death.</p> <p>A second subject theme in the key of B minor is introduced on the oboe which has grown out of the first twisting motifs heard in <i>Of Joy and Passion</i>:</p>  <p>The oboe's mournful tune, echoed by the cor anglais, intensifies the sorrowful mood. Extensive use of chromatic figures suggests restlessness. Themes from other movements re-appear, sometimes in combination with the theme from <i>Of Great Longing</i>.</p>

Episode	Features
Of Science and Sound	<p>Development</p> <p>Here Zarathustra decides that answers might be found in science and the human brain. The music now has an intellectual fugal texture (indicating an objective and scientific handling of musical material) thus, the texture corresponds with the title. The subject germinates from the earlier three-note motif from the first section into an expanded subject utilising all twelve notes of the scale.</p> <p>The following portion of the piece can be analysed as a large development section.</p> <p><i>Of Science</i> features a fugue beginning at bar 201 in the double basses and cellos, which consists of all 12 notes of the chromatic scale. Possibly the academic nature of fugue composition and the covering of all 12 tones suggests that science and academia has looked far and wide to the answer of the meaning of life. Thus, Strauss has used an intellectual fugal texture to reflect the episode title. The subject grows out of the opening three-note motif from the first section into an expanded subject utilising all 12 notes of the scale in five parts. Remember this was composed about 10 years before the Schoenberg school started exploring 12 tone music.</p>  <p>NB: Bar 223 contains one of the few and earliest sections in the orchestral literature where the basses play a contra B (the lowest B on a piano), which is only possible on a 5-string bass or on a 4-string bass with a low-B extension. (Look to see what the SSO bassists are doing!)</p>

Episode	Features
The Convalescent	<p>The development continues in <i>The Convalescent</i> (or <i>Ill and Recovering One</i>). By the end of this section, there is a prolonged retransition over the dominant of C major. In this episode, Zarathustra realise that science and learning do not have the answers to the meaning of life. The fugal material in <i>Of Science</i> is revived, compressed and stacked into a tightened structure using <i>stretto</i> technique. This builds to a huge climax followed by a stunning silence, unravels into a single voice for solo cello. Twittering winds, piercing trumpet calls, building chaos and ultimate loss of energy create a vivid impression as the solo cello closes the section.</p> <p>Musicologists suggest that in this episode Zarathustra, realising he has not found the meaning of life, retreats to his cave and has an existential breakdown. He collapses (the opening three- note motif is heard in unison against sustained pedal notes across the whole orchestra), slowly regains consciousness, rises and breaks out laughing and starts to dance a Bavarian waltz.</p>
The Dance Song	<p>Recapitulation</p> <p>Back in C major, <i>The Dance Song</i> starts the recapitulation. It features a prominent violin solo throughout the section. This episode opens with bird like call s played by flute and clarinet. The opening three-note motif is heard in various settings in a question-and-answer passage between trumpet and solo violin.</p> <p>Later in this section, elements from <i>The Grave Song</i> (the second subject theme) are heard in the work's original key. A gypsy-like waltz emerges, built on the moods and styles of Johann Strauss, Jr. Fragments of earlier themes can be heard throughout this episode. Zarathustra sings to the dancing maidens of the capricious nature of wisdom and the caprice of life. A glockenspiel playing along with strings and harps adds a special touch of merriment in a section noting man's striving for earthly and sensual pleasures.</p>

Episode	Features
Song of the Night Wanderer	<p>Coda</p> <p><i>Song of the Night Wanderer</i> (or <i>Sleepwalker</i>) starts the coda of the tone poem. It begins with a low E bell marking the 12 strikes of midnight. Steadily, the music moves toward its quiet conclusion, ending with the famous “unresolved question”: high flutes, piccolos and violins repeatedly stating a B major chord in an unresolved harmonic statement. Underneath the basses quietly <i>pizzicato</i> a low C, referencing the opening tonality. Symbolically, perhaps, the whole cycle could indeed begin again. The combination of C and B symbolically indicate an irreconcilable relationship between man and nature.</p> <p>The lack of harmonic resolution of this dissonance perhaps means Strauss was not convinced by Nietzsche's solution in his novel <i>Thus Sprach Zarathustra</i>.</p> <p>Some musicologists use the term "world riddle" for this ending. It concerns the nature of the universe and the meaning of life i.e. “what is the purpose of our existence?” The two conflicting keys in the final section therefore represent the “world riddle” (C–G–C B–F#–B^{8va}), with the unresolved harmonic progression being an unfinished or unsolved riddle: the melody does not conclude with a clear tonal centre of either C or B, implying the riddle is unsolvable. Others call it the Fate motif.</p>

Additional Media Resources

Below is a curated selection of additional third-party media resources teachers might choose to use in supporting their students to engage in concert preparation.

Full score with embedded audio: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j79XrCDogp0>

Audio Excerpts

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFPwm0e_K98&t=1640s

Excerpt	Bar No.	Time	Activity	Page
1	1-27	0.15' - 2.53'	Activity 1	16
			Activity 2	18
2	939-987	27.14' - end	Activity 4	27
3	239-286	12.50' - 14.16'	Activity 6	

Score Excerpts

Score excerpts are from Public Domain, IMSLP: *Strauss Zarathustra (Eulenberg edition)*

Excerpt	Section	Bars	Activity	Page
1	Dawn	1-20	Activity 2.3	20
2	Of the Backwoodsmen	34-39	Activity 3.3	24
3	Of Joy and Passion	167-169	Activity 3.3	24
4	Of Science and Learning	201-212	Activity 3.3	25
5	The Convalescent	312-315	Activity 3.3	25
6	The Convalescent	329-340	Activity 3.3	26
7	The Dancing Song	439-434	Activity 3.3	26
8	Coda	939-987	Activity 4	27

Learning Activities

Activity 1: Performance

This exercise introduces you to the main theme from *Zarathustra*.

Listen to the opening of *Zarathustra* (Audio Excerpt 1) following your assigned line. Add dynamics and articulation then perform the class arrangement.

$\text{♩} = 64$ VERY BROADLY

7

C

B FLAT

Kbd 1

Kbd 2

Bass 1

Bass 2

13 2

C

B_{FLAT}

K₈₀ 1

K₈₀ 2

B_{ASS} 1.

B_{ASS} 2

17

C

B_{FLAT}

K₈₀ 1

K₈₀ 2

B_{ASS} 1.

B_{ASS} 2

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system contains measures 13 through 16, and the second system contains measure 17. The parts are arranged vertically: C (top), B_{FLAT}, K₈₀ 1, K₈₀ 2, B_{ASS} 1., and B_{ASS} 2. (bottom). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score ends with a double bar line at the end of measure 17.

Activity 2: Aural and Musicology

Watch this introduction to Zarathustra: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VMxtM7IXdg>

Task 1

Listen to Audio Excerpt 1 bars 1-21 and answer the questions below.

1. How does Strauss establish the tonal centre of C?
2. Which instruments can you hear playing a tonic pedal note?
3. What type of ensemble is playing this piece?
4. Describe the tone colour of this piece.
5. What instruments play exactly the same pitch (i.e. in the same octave)?
6. The performance direction is *sehr breit*. This means very
 - a) briskly b) boldly c) bashfully
7. The tonic is C major. Identify the chord at the end of bar 5 and the chord at bar 6.
8. This music is programmatic and represents the sun rising. How is this depicted in music?

Task 2

Class discussion question:

This opening piece – even though it is only 20 bars long – is one of the most famous classical music excerpts. Due to its use in the 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the opening theme of the tone poem became well-known, and was often used to announce a significant or epic events or space-related scenes.

The BBC used the theme in their coverage of the Apollo space missions. It has been quoted in many films, used at sporting events and in performing arts occasions, even in an episode of *Sesame Street* and *The Simpsons*.

What is it about this excerpt of music that has made it such a part of our popular culture over 125 years later?

Task 3

Use the score of the opening to answer the questions below. (Score Excerpt 1)

1. What instrument(s) is missing from the standard orchestration of the late 19th century?
2. Which instrument is not usually in an orchestra?
3. Which of the instruments playing are transposing instruments?
4. What is the first note played by horn 1?
5. Which instrument will be the lowest sounding pitch?
6. Identify two composition devices used in this excerpt.
7. What clef is used in bassoon 1 in bar 5? What note does bassoon 1 play?
8. The grosse trommel part is to be played with a paukenschlägel. What is that?
9. What clues do you find to indicate this is a late 19th century orchestra? Comment on instrumentation and how the instruments are used in your answer.
10. Describe the structure of the excerpt bars 1 – 20.

Score Excerpt 1

[illegible]

1. 2.
Pos.
3.
Btb.
Pk.
gr. Tr.
Bck.
Orgel.
1. VI.
2. VI.
Br.
Vlc.
Cb.

p *f* *cresc.* *ff* *p* *ff* *p* *cresc.* *volles Werk* *immer breiter* *(nicht geteilt)* *cresc.* *ff* *cresc.*

E. E. 3506. 67

Activity 3: Musicology and Performance

Task 1: The motif

Complete the opening trumpet motif in the stave below listening to Audio Excerpt 1:



What are the musical characteristics of this motif?

Task 2

Play through the other motifs from *Also Sprach Zarathustra* below for familiarisation:

- a) Hymn-like setting excerpt representing traditional religion



- b) Theme of Man



- c) Science fugue theme covering all 12 notes of the scale



- d) Yearning and passing of man (2 ideas)



- e) The unanswered question: A C chord against a B major chord.

Task 3

The development of the opening motif is the main unifying technique used by Strauss in his tone poem.

For each of the excerpts identify where the motif has been used and any ideas that have sprung from it by marking the score. Then explain how it has been used in the excerpts following.

a) Of the Backwoodsmen – bars 34-45

pp

Dämpfer 3 pizz. 3

arco

3 pizz. 3

p

34 Dämpfer weg Mäßig langsam, mit Andacht. (♩ = 72.)

dim.

pp

espress.

espress.

mit Dämpfer

p

b) Of Joy and Passion – bars 167-169

ohne Dämpfer

ausdrucksvoll

ohne Dämpfer

espr.

2. Vl.

Br.

mit Dämpfer

ppp

Solo.

Vlc.

mit Dämpfer

ausdrucksvoll

hervortretend

mit Dämpfer

espress.

K-B.

d) The Convalescent – bars 312-315

This is a page from a musical score, labeled '86 87' in the top left corner. The page number '312' is written above the first staff. The score is for a large ensemble, with parts for various instruments and voices. The instruments listed on the left are: 2. Fl. (Flute), 2. Ob. (Oboe), Englb. (English Horn), 1. Fl. (Flute), 2. Kl. (R) (Clarinet in B-flat), Kl. (R) (Clarinet in B-flat), Fag. (Bassoon), Fag. (Bassoon), Fag. (Bassoon), 1. Tr. (Trumpet), 3. Tr. (Trumpet), and 4. Tr. (Trumpet). The score is written in common time (C) and features a variety of musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as 'f' (forte) and 'ff' (fortissimo). The music is arranged in a complex, multi-staff format, with some parts featuring triplets and other rhythmic patterns. The overall style is that of a classical or romantic-era orchestral score.

e) The Convalescent – bars 329-340

1.2.3. Fag. *fff* *marcato*
K. Fag. *fff* *marcato*
Hörner (F.) *fff* *marcato*
1.2. *fff* *marcato*
3.4. *fff* *marcato*
5.6. *fff* *marcato*
1.2. Trp. (C) *fff* *marcato*
3.4. Trp. (C) *fff* *marcato*
1.2.3. Pos. *fff* *marcato*
1.2. Bb. *fff* *marcato*
Pk. *fff*
gr. Tr. *fff*
Orgel. *volles Werk*

f) The Dancing Song – bars 429-434

429 *etwas zurückhaltend* *im Zeitmaß* *etwas zurückhaltend*
1. Trp. (C) *pp*
1. Hfe. *p*
2. Hfe. *p*
1. Pult. *p*
1. Vl. *p*
die übrig. *p*
2. Vl. *p*
1. Pult. *p*
Br. *pizz.* *arco*
die übrig. *pp* *pizz.* *p*

948 215

1. 2.
Hörner (E)

3. 4.

5. 6.

1. Hfe.

1. Pult
1. Vl.
die übrig

2. Vl.

953 55

B-Kl.
(B)

1. Fag.

1. 2.
Hörner (E)

3. 4.

5. 6.

1. Hfe.

1. Pult
1. Vl.
die übrig

2. Vl.

Br.

Vlc.

Kb.

molto dim. ppp

geteilt

pp

pp

pizz

ppp

E. E. 3506.

[illegible]

972 immer langsamer 217

2. kl. Fl. 2. 2. pp

2. gr. Fl. p dim. pp 1.

2. 3. Ob. pp pp pp

Kl. (Es) pp pp pp

1. 2. Kl. (B) dim. ppp pp

1. Hfe. pp pp pp

1. pp pp pp

2. 3. 4. dim. pp pp

5. 6. 7. dim. pp pp

Pult. dim. pp pp

980 noch langsamer

2. kl. Fl. dim. ppp ppp

2. gr. Fl. dim. ppp ppp

1. 2. 3. Ob. ppp ppp ppp

2. 3. Pos. ppp ppp ppp

1. Hfe. ppp ppp ppp

Solo Vl. dim. ppp ppp

1. 2. 3. 4. ppp ppp ppp

1. Vi. ppp ppp ppp

5. 6. 7. ppp ppp ppp

Pult. ppp ppp ppp

Vle. alle pizz. pp ppp

Kb. pizz. pp ppp

E.E. 3506

This is a piece of program music, i.e. a piece of music describing something non-musical.

The piece tries to answer the question “what is the meaning of life?”

- a) Listen to the excerpt through twice with your eyes closed and reflect on what you think the music is suggesting.
- b) Has Strauss provided an answer to this question in his descriptive musical score?
- c) After pondering this for a few minutes and listening through the excerpt a couple of times, discuss the thoughts as a class.

NB. It is important to ask the students to back up their ideas with reference to the concepts of music. It is an opinion question, so there is no right or wrong – just a chance to describe in musical terminology what they hear at the end of the piece.

Task 2

Use the Score Excerpt to answer the following questions.

1. What key does the *langsam* section start in (bar 946)?
2. What impact does the German direction *langsam* have on the tempo of the music?
3. What does *mit damfer* mean and what is the musical effect of doing this?
4. What is the common interval between the violin lines from the start of the *langsamer* section?
5. Describe the composer’s use of texture in this excerpt.
6. The clarinets reference the hymn-like tune in this excerpt. Where do they do this and why do you think Strauss chose to include this motif here?
7. Which instrument is playing the highest note in the last bars?
8. What is the last chord played by the harp?
9. What motifs can you find from those you played in Activity 3 in this passage?
10. Consider the difference between the opening and ending of this work.
What similarities and differences can you see?

Activity 5 Composition

At the end of this activity, you too will have explored composing program music using an excerpt from the text by Nietzsche.

Strauss had a gift for sonic description and musical storytelling. So descriptive was his ability to create aural impressions of non-musical things, listening to works like *Til Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks* could easily be mistaken today for a cartoon score even though it was written about 75 years before such things came to be.

I want to be able to depict in music so accurately a glass of beer that every listener can tell whether it is a lager or a pilsner! (Strauss)

Task 1

Below is an excerpt from Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* that Strauss did not include in his tone poem. Read it then have a class discussion about what it means.

XXIX. THE TARANTULAS.

Lo, this is the tarantula's den! Would you see the tarantula itself?

Here hangs its web: touch it, so that it may tremble.

There comes the tarantula willingly: Welcome, tarantula!

Black on your back is the triangle and symbol; and I know also what is in your mind.

Revenge: wherever you bite, there is a black scab; with revenge, your poison upsets the soul.

So I speak to you in parable, you who make the soul giddy, ye preachers of EQUALITY!

Tarantulas are ye unto me, and secretly revengeful ones!

But I will soon bring your hiding-places to the light:

So I laugh in your face, I tear at your web, that your rage may lure you from your den of lies.

a) Plan:

- What is this part of the text about?
- What does "I speak to you in parable" mean? Who are the human tarantulas?
- What is the mood of the text? Angry, sombre, menacing or....?
- If you were Strauss and setting this to music which words or phrases might you try to capture in sound?

b) Sketch your ideas

- What sorts of instrumental sounds (tone colours) might you use?
- How would you use tonality?
- What pitch and rhythm techniques would you use and why?
- What would the musical plan (structure) of your piece be?

- c) Use available technology to create short piece of program music that develops these musical ideas.
- d) Play your composition for peer evaluation and as a class identify the programmatic techniques used to reflect the text musically in each work.

Activity 6 Musicology

Task 1

Without telling the class where this excerpt is from in *Zarathustra*, play the Audio Excerpt 3 (bars 239-286)

Ask the students to imagine what the music might be depicting. Don't give them any framework – introduce the excerpt as a piece of program music and ask them what the program might be, but ask them to keep the answer to themselves.

Play the excerpt a number of times whilst the students respond to the excerpt using one of the following media:

- Drawing
- Doodling
- Short descriptive text
- Movement

Extension

This piece is quite extraordinary but can be extremely difficult to follow. If the class has sufficient score reading skills, follow the YouTube link to listen to the work while following the score in its entirety before answering the following extended response.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j79XrCDogp0>

Task 2

Extended response

Richard Strauss' symphonic poems are interesting, but they're like Marvel comic movies: there's a lot of action but little real substance.

Choose one of the episodes from *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and discuss the statement above.

Suggested Answers and Teaching Notes

Activity 1

Task 1

Student led.

Activity 2

Task 1

Dawn score analysis answers

1. The tonality of C is established through key sig of C, use of a tonic pedal note throughout the opening, the first “melodic” notes from the trumpets are C-G-C suggesting a C chord – but omitting the E.
2. The C pedal is played by contra bassoon, bass drum, organ, double basses.
3. The use of bass clarinet and contra bassoon, the large number of winds and brass used, percussion instruments included besides timpani, organ is used as part of the orchestra not as a solo instrument.
4. The trumpet is marked in C and the parts have no accidentals indicating a different key
5. G about middle C.
6. Oboe 3, Trumpet 2, Violin 2 play the same pitch in the same octave.
7. *sehr breit* means always boldly.
8. Identify the chord at the end of bar 5 and the chord at bar 6 C Maj then C min

Task 2

This music is programmatic and represents the sun rising. How is this depicted in music? Essentially by building up to something glorious – so any answers that suggest a rising in pitch, build-up of texture as instruments are added, extreme increase in dynamics, starting from a mysterious dark low pitch. Some might say that the tone colours change which reflects the colours changing at sunrise.

Task 3

1. Flute and piccolo
2. Organ
3. Clarinets, horns. Note the trumpet is in C so not transposing.
4. Double bass and organ sound an octave lower than written.
5. Pedal note (organ, basses, bass drum, contra bassoon, repetition (timpani), doubling (trumpets).

6. Tenor clef E natural.
7. The *grosse trommel* part is to be played with a timpani mallet.
8. The use of three of the woodwind instruments instead of the usual pair and inclusion of E flat clarinet, contra bassoon, four trumpets which are not found in a Classical or early Romantic orchestra. Having the lowest sound open on a sustained note. The timpani solo in bar 8, the lack of string prominence, hearing the lowest pitches in the orchestra only for the first four bars all indicate a moving away from the traditional instrumental roles in an orchestra which was a feature of the Romantic period.

Activity 3

Task 1



Task 2

Student-led.

Task 3

- a) The ascending three-note motif is used with augmented intervals in the *pizzicato* strings e.g. G and D sharp, outlining an augmented triad rather than a perfect one. The rhythm of the ascending three notes is a triplet – so significantly diminished note values and has a skipping type of feel. The Perfect 5th and Perfect 8 are used vertically as chords in the strings.
- b) The three-note ascending pattern has the instruments harmonised, moving in perfect intervals and while it uses the long, short, long rhythm of Example A, the note values are longer. The motif is stated homophonically.
- c) The first bar of the motif is extended into a longer melodic phrase beginning with the same pitch as the opening motif, then continuing the three-note idea, either ascends or descends, initially repeating the crotchet, crotchet, minim idea but soon varying the rhythm with crotchet then minim triplets. All outline triads of different types. This idea is repeated in layers creating a homophonic texture which becomes more complex and fugal as the excerpt progresses.
- d) The motif is transformed into a three-note triad and appears in *ostinato* form in various layers of the texture. The flutes and violins have a triplet ascending and descending perpetually moving setting, the cor anglais has an ascending triplet setting which contrasts with the cellos descending setting.
- e) This is a dense, chordal setting of the motif in its original form, played by brass *fff* against the pedal notes sustained in low register instruments and organ. After a

pause the texture becomes sparsely and short ideas using the 5th or ascending 3 note shape are passed amongst the woodwinds and horns.

- f) The motif is in its original form in the trumpet with an added 5th. The violin 1 begins a type of hemiola statement of the pattern in bar 431 while the violas imitate the trumpets 2 bars later. From bar 433 the flute takes the extended motif accompanied by harp plucking the pattern in crotchets, starting one beat later. Some of the chords in this passage are built on 4ths and 5ths.

Activity 4

Task 1

Student-led.

Task 2

Possible answers include:

1. B major
2. The music is broader, slightly slower.
3. With the mute, make the sound softer and dampens the tone colour of the instrument
4. The violins play in parallel 3rds
5. The use of sustained and pedal notes at the start of the excerpt make it sound full even though it is soft and homophonic. At the *langsam* the fewer instruments make the texture initially less dense whilst still homophonic and one horn starts a slow countermelody against the moving violin lines. Followed by the bassoon. The pitch becomes higher as only the woodwind and strings remain and the texture becomes ethereal or transparent with fragments of solos heard
6. The clarinets reference the hymn like tune in this excerpt from bar 961. Strauss is probably showing that the concept of organised religion which is scorned in *Of the Backwoodsmen* episode is still possibly relevant to the question of the meaning of life.
7. The solo violin is playing the highest note in the last bars
8. B major is the last chord played by the harp
9. *The Dawn* motif, Traditional religion but not the yearning motif. Interestingly the 2 keys of C major and B major exist together in the final section of the piece.
10. The opening Dawn has full orchestra playing loudly gradually growing out of silence and rising in pitch and textural density. The end is the opposite – the effect is one of dying away to only very high pitches. Both use extremes of register and sustained pedal notes. The ending has reference to most of the main motifs from the work while the opening only references the C-G-C' motif.