

ALTERNATIVE BIOGRAPHIES OF THE TITANS



GUSTAV MAHLER — conducting genius, idol of Expressionism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Born in a Moravian village in the Czech Republic to a large Jewish family. Just like Michael Jackson, hailed as a "miracle child", since he was trying to play the piano as a four-year-old. His symphonies marked a new era in music, alike the songs of Kurt Cobain and Nirvana a century later. During his best years as a musician, Mahler toured the entire Europe. His tournée embraced Vienna, Berlin, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Rome, Warsaw, Lviv and St. Petersburg. Gustav has also conquered the American music scene — the last concert in his life was organized in the Carnegie Hall in New York. He frequently performed at festivals, for instance in Strasbourg, which at that time attracted crowds as large as those attending the Glastonbury and Open'er festivals today. The artist was capricious and moody. Being at the height of his fame and success, he

became involved with nearly twenty years younger and as beautiful as unfaithful Alma Schindler. Her numerous affairs plunged him into clinical depression, which he treated in the course of psychotherapy sessions with Sigmund Freud. Biographies of Mahler and Michael Jackson have one more thing in common: both artists died prematurely at the age of 51.



JOHANNES BRAHMS — German musician of the Romantic Period of the second half of the nineteenth century. Alike Jimi Hendrix, he suffered poverty as a child. To earn money for bread, he played the piano in Hamburg's nightclubs and brothels. The artist spent his most successful years in Vienna — the contemporary world's music capital. His work, drawing on classical and baroque music, triggered extreme emotions in music lovers (now the critics would call it the "oldschool"). Outside Austro-Hungarian Empire, he had fans all over Europe, including Scandinavia and Great Britain. In 1887 he received the gold medal of the London Philharmonic Society — the equivalent of prestigious modern Grammy Awards and Brit Awards. Brahms had a long ZZ Top style beard — the inherent element of his scenic image, which he grew in his forties

to look more mature. He was also famous for his difficult character. He would easily beat Mick Jagger with his arrogance and selfishness, as well as Sting, with his perfectionism. The perpetual loner had a complicated love life. His long-lasting relationship with Robert Schumann's widow Clara still remains shrouded in mystery.



RICHARD STRAUSS — the greatest German composer of the first half of the twentieth century. Like the lead singer of Aerosmith, Steven Tyler, he grew up in a musically gifted family and wrote his first song at the age of six. Although he lived in turbulent times, his musical career lasted longer than the Rolling Stones'. Just as all rock giants, Strauss was not afraid to break the moral taboos. His opera Salome, inspired by Oscar Wilde's controversial piece of art caused a scandal, but also secured his financial success and a stately villa in the mountain resort of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. In addition, the artist composed vocals, which would surely occupy top positions on today's charts. He performed in Europe, USA and South America. His anthem for Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936 subjected him to criticism for collaborating with the Nazi

regime, which he exercised to protect his Jewish relatives. Unlike many other celebrities, Strauss was a devoted lover (alike the notable lead singer of Coldplay named Chris Martin). His relationship with soprano singer Pauline de Ahna endured for over 50 years!



FERENC LISZT — the most colourful figure among classical musicians. Hungarian Romantic composer and pianist. He played his first concert at the age of 9. Liszt's mature performances triggered incredibly strong, positive emotions, similar to those triggered by the Beatles in the 1970s. Women adored him, and his concerts attracted crowds of music lovers. The so-called "Lisztomania" was in no way different from the admiration of John Lennon and Paul McCartney, which aroused a hundred years later. Danube idol admirers could even fight for the butt of his cigarette. Their devotion was so great that Ferenc's wife Marie d'Agoult Liszt, with whom he had three children, asked for a divorce. After the divorce, Liszt fell in love again, this time with Princess

Carolina Sayn-Wittgenstein. Unfortunately, this romance could not be attested by a wedding. The desperate composer, seeking answers to the unkindness of fate, decided to become an ordained priest.



KAROL SZYMANOWSKI — leader of the Polish avant-garde music of the early twentieth century. Like Czeslaw Niemen half a century later, Szymanowski set a new tone in his music. Together with his friends, he established a company which gathered young Polish composers (Spółka Nakładowa Młodych Kompozytorów Polskich). The company may be compared to today's record labels promoting alternative music. In 1912 in Vienna, Szymanowski signed a ten-year contract with Universal Edition. He travelled across Europe, and visited the United States and North Africa. After each journey, he would expand his postcard collection. Strongly associated with the Young Poland movement, he belonged to the circles of artistic bohemia. He was photographed by prominent European photographers, and portrayed by

Witkacy, Olga Boznanska and many others. Emotionally, he resembled today's George Michael and Freddie Mercury. He spent the last years of his life in Zakopane, suffering from progressive tuberculosis. Like all Szymanowski's concerts, his funeral also gathered thousands of fans on the streets of Warsaw and Krakow.

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