



Gustav Meier
Music Director
60th Season
1st Subscription Concert
Klein Memorial Auditorium
Saturday, October 1, 2005
8:00 p.m.

Gustav Meier, Conductor
Tiffany Jackson, Soprano

J. STRAUSS Overture to Die Fledermaus

SCHUBERT Symphony no. 8 (“Unfinished”)
Allegro moderato
Andante con moto

INTERMISSION

J. STRAUSS Overture to The Gypsy Baron

MOZART “Come Scoglie” from *Così fan tutte*
R. STRAUSS “Cäcilie”
Tiffany Jackson, Soprano

J. STRAUSS Blue Danube Waltz

R. STRAUSS Four Last Songs
“September”
“Beim Schlafengehen”

J. STRAUSS “Czardas” from *Die Fledermaus*
Tiffany Jackson, Soprano

*Tonight's concert is made possible in part by generous grants from
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PROGRAM NOTES

“Vienna, City of My Dreams” and all similar songs might never have been written, or at least not in the same way, if the Austrians hadn’t turned back the Ottoman Turks from the city’s gates in 1683, thereby possibly saving the rest of Europe from eventually being overrun as well. Within fifty years of this watershed battle Bach was writing his High Baroque masterpieces in Leipzig, while by 100 years later the philosophes of the Enlightenment had made their case for the primacy of reason as the means of solving social/political/scientific problems and Haydn and Mozart had begun composing at their High-Classic best. By 132 years later (1815) the Napoleonic Wars were over, the repressive Congress of Vienna was mostly restoring the pre-French-Revolutionary order, Joseph Laner and Johann Strauss Sr. were writing waltzes and as one wit observed, “the Congress doesn’t march, it dances.” By 1848, a new, European-wide round of common-folk rebellions was followed by such industrial expansion in Austria that a dizzying speculative bubble resulted, one which summarily burst in 1873, just as *Die Fledermaus* was about to be first performed. Its composer, Johann Strauss, Jr., died in 1899, a convenient date for recognizing that the 19th century was the time when the waltz was “King.”

Vienna was always a melting pot where North German seriousness, Italian sunniness, Hungarian volatility and many, many more influences coalesced. The city’s “astounding ability to live with and survive disaster attracted people from everywhere,” as Joseph Wechsberg observed in “The Waltz Emperors.” The waltz as a dance expressed this collective soul in all its ramifications. The name itself is derived from the Latin *volvere* “to rotate, to roll, to turn.” Danced by couples, rather than in sets, it started as a lower class entertainment in contrast to the somewhat stiff minuet of the upper class. “Word soon got around among the blasé aristocrats that the waltz was a very erotic dance. On the large estates, some noblemen began slipping away to the balls of their servants” (Wechsberg).

In the mid-19th-century-reign of Vienna as the “Imperial City”, the Strauss family employed as many as 200 people to meet the demands of all the extravagant public and private dance parties. When Johann, Jr. took up his violin to lead the orchestra, “all eyes were turned on him; it was a moment of worship.” The “desert storm of his waltz” rode on top of all the possible vicissitudes of fortune that might actually be happening and has stood ever since for a halcyon social ideal, dominated by sentiment, pleasure and grace, even though it was once considered immoral as well.

Incidentally, Schubert, who died when Johann Jr. was 3, is also Viennese and wrote

hundreds of short, charming waltzes that could be danced to or played in the parlor. Richard Strauss (no relation to Johann) was born close by in Bavaria. He called Strauss Jr., whom he admired, the “laughing genius of Vienna.”

OVERTURE TO DIE FLEDERMAUS OVERTURE TO THE GYPSY BARON BLUE DANUBE WALTZ “CZARDAS” FROM DIE FLEDERMAUS

Johann Strauss Jr. (1825 - 1899)

No greater musical paean to the charms of sentiment and indulgence exists than the *Overture to Die Fledermaus*. Dominated by its lilting waltz refrain, it is a pot pourri of tunes from the opera. The story involves characters touched by dissoluteness, boredom, vindictiveness, adultery, deception, dereliction of duty and other questionable traits, but with light, deft strokes, this music can convince one that the plot’s satiric intrigues were, indeed, passing fancies of human nature and that the final ‘champagne’ chorus in which the wine is made to bear the blame “for all the characters went through” has some truth in it. Strauss was inspired by the libretto and wrote the music for this greatest of all operettas in 46 days.

The Gypsy Baron (Zigunerbaron) is based on a Hungarian novel, *Saffi*, carefully adapted as an operetta libretto by Ignaz Schnitzer. A “romantic story with fiery, patriotic overtones”, it is a “dashing tuneful Hungarian-gypsy piece” which starts out in Hungary after the Turks were thrown out in the 18th century and ends in the Baroque splendor of the Empress Maria Teresa’s court in Vienna. Strauss’s second most popular operetta after *Die Fledermaus*, its 1885 premiere had political resonance; the plot popularized the Dual (Austro-Hungarian) Monarchy which was to come to an end with the First World War. The *Overture* starts in a mood of gypsy melancholy and foreboding and moves inevitably on to a scintillating waltz.

Written on commission for a festival concert of the Vienna Men’s Choral Society, the **Blue Danube Waltz** originally had words. Only a moderate success at its first performance in February 1867, it was a sensation when played later that year in Paris and London. By this 1860-70 decade Strauss intended his waltzes as concert pieces, not just for dancing. In the extensive introduction to the **Blue Danube**, tremolo strings create an effect of lights playing on the waves of the river and in the coda a bittersweet nostalgia lingers. The influential critic, Hanslick, said of this work that “we now have a popular hymn that sings the glory of our country to stand beside the national anthem that Haydn wrote.”

At Prince Orlovsky's masked ball in *Die Fledermaus* Rosalinda is disguised as a Hungarian Countess. Her husband flirts with her unknowingly (and seriously!). Challenged to prove that she is Hungarian, she sings this *Czardas* with its slow, brooding *lassu* followed by a fast, volatile *friska* - Strauss had written here a memorable example of the national dance of Hungary.

SYMPHONY NO. 8 (Unfinished)

Franz Schubert (1797 - 1828)

The *Unfinished Symphony* remains one of the marvels of music; it seems to have been inspired from first note to last, there are no patchwork connections or thematic lapses and even the sudden fortes or extended phrases have an inevitability about them. Schubert was already a master and even inventor of the German Art Song (*Lied*) and had written hundreds when the "Unfinished" was composed in 1822, but the distance between this miniature Song form with its lyric intensity and a large orchestral work was forbidding and actually Schubert only gradually traversed it. Also being traversed at this time was a change of direction in the purpose of large-scale musical works themselves; from a public, heroic intention to one geared to inward "matters of personal identity" as Taruskin called them in the 2005 *Oxford History of Western Music*. This was the romantic viewpoint and Schubert was its first great representative.

Opening low in the strings with a quiet phrase of intrinsic melancholy and mystery (already a new departure) which is later powerfully developed, the first movement goes on to the poignant first theme in the woodwinds and the gentle, *ländler*-like second theme in the cellos, one of the most famous in music. Outbursts in the full orchestra interject a note of despair between hushed explorations of the first theme and the assuaging lilt of the second. The second movement is then calmer, but still dissonant, disturbed and touched by "unresolved mystery." (Steinberg).

"My productions came about through my understanding of music and through my pain." Schubert wrote in his diary, "and those that are produced by pain alone seem to please the world least." Michael Steinberg's words are apt when he said that the two movements of the "Unfinished" are "altogether new in melodic style, the bold mixture of breadth and concision in their structure, and the warm glow of their orchestral sound is music like no other heard before." Schubert sketched a third movement scherzo, but even he at this time couldn't add to the depth of what he had already written.

"COME SCOGLIO" FROM COSI FAN TUTTI

Wolfgang A. Mozart (1756 - 1791)

In Mozart's 1790 opera buffa, *Così fan Tutti*

(Thus Do They All) Fiordiligi and her sister Dora-bella are tempted by their lovers in disguise as visiting foreign noblemen while the sisters believe their real fiancés are off to war. Their cynical friend Don Alfonso has set this ruse in motion to test the faithfulness of the two sisters. Fiordiligi sings "Come scolio" (As the rock remains unmoved) in outrage at the mere mention of a possible liaison. It is a show piece aria, but quite to the point. The subject of the opera was considered scandalous in the 19th century, but as Virgil Thomson wrote, "Mozart was pleading for tenderness...and for an enlightened and philosophic toleration of human weakness."

"CÄCILIE"

"SEPTEMBER" AND

"BEIM SCHLAFENGEGEHEN"

FROM FOUR LAST SONGS

Richard Strauss (1864 - 1949)

Richard Strauss grew up in Munich in the last decades of Empire in neighboring Austria. Believing that great art had to have "direct contact with life and civilization," he considered it "a legitimate artistic method to create a correspondingly new form for every subject." Under the influence of Wagner and Liszt, he gradually subscribed to their "music of the future" ideas which called for expansion in all directions - of orchestral size, melodic length, harmonic rhythm and color, among others.

"*Cäcilie*", written for his wife, a fine singer, at the time of their wedding, is one of Strauss' most sensuous songs. With youthful ardor he sets the words, "if you knew what it is to dream of kisses, to want comfort on lonely nights - in short, to love, you would come to me." The soundscape is vast; even a miniature form can be sweeping.

His son Franz suggested to Strauss at the end of his life (56 years of marriage later!) that it would be better to write one more significant work than to spend too much time dealing with publishers and official functions. The result was the "Four Last Songs" cycle completed a few months before his death. They are not sad or tortured; contentment and fulfillment shine through this leave-taking. Still recognizably Straussian by a soaring vocal line and rich orchestral support, the music is at the same time shorn of some of the glamour and immediacy of earlier songs such as "*Cäcilie*" in favor of an elegaic simplicity. Only great composers achieve such a consistent development of style, balancing idiom with message over a whole career.

In "*September*" summer looks on smiling, but with "tired eyes," as a garden becomes pale and wan. In "*Beim Schlafengehen*" (*Time to Sleep*), the poet, wearied at day's end, seeks rest and peace in sleep. Without morbidity Strauss documented his own "fade out" from life in these songs.

-Burton Hatheway