

FAMOUS OPERETTA OVERTURES

Die Fledermaus • The Gypsy Baron

Morning, Noon & Night in Vienna • The Beautiful Galatea

Light Cavalry • Poet & Peasant • Orpheus in the Underworld

CSR Symphony Orchestra

(Bratislava)

Martin Sieghart



1987 Recording | Playing Time : 57'53"

Famous Operetta Overtures

Johann Strauss (1825 - 1899)

Die Fiedermaus

The Gypsy Baron

Franz von Suppè (1819 - 1895)

Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna

The Beautiful Galatea

Light Cavalry

Poet and Peasant

Jacques Offenbach (1819 - 1880)

Orpheus in the Underworld

Operetta was essentially a development of the second half of the nineteenth century, a product of Paris, where Jacques Offenbach achieved enormous success with a form of music-theatre that Opéra-Comique and popular vaudeville. From France the genre was taken up elsewhere, and most notably in Vienna, with the work of Milloecker, von Suppè and Johann Strauss, leading to Kalman, Lehár, Robert Stolz and others. Fashions were to change and operetta suffered a gradual decline, while the works of its heyday retained their popularity. Johann Strauss and Jacques Offenbach at least still hold the stage, although Suppè may now be better known for the overtures that introduced his music for the theatre.

Jacques Offenbach was of German Jewish origin. His father, Isaac Juda Eberst, came from Offenbach-am-Main, moving to Cologne, where he carried on his trade as a bookbinder and served as cantor in a synagogue. It was in Cologne that his second son, Jakob, was born in 1819, and in that city that he began playing the cello in a trio with one of his brothers and a sister. In 1833 he moved with his brother Julius, a violinist, to Paris, studied briefly at the Conservatoire, and then violinist, to Paris studied briefly at the Conservatoire, and then embarked on a career as a cellist with the orchestra of the Opéra-Comique. By 1838 he was able to leave the orchestra to earn a living by his compositions and by his performances

in the salons of the French capital, and by an increasingly busy career as a virtuoso cellist, appearing with some of the most distinguished musicians of the day.

It was not until the year of the Great Exhibition, 1855, that Offenbach was able to begin to make a success of his stage works and three years later he put on the operetta that was to make his name, Orpheus in the Underworld, a parody of Gluck's famous opera. His operettas were to dominate Paris and to lead to pirated versions of his work elsewhere, before he was able to direct performances for himself in Vienna, in London and in the United States of America. Towards the end of his life he showed particular concern for another work, which was to become a valued part of operatic repertoire. This was The Tales of Hoffmann, which was left incomplete at the composer's death in Paris in 1880.

Franz von Suppè was born in Dalmatia in the town of Spalato, now known as Split, in 1819, the son of a Belgian father in the service of the Austrian government, and a mother from Vienna. He was christened, with a certain extravagance, Francesco Ezechiele Ermenegildo and bore the title Cavaliere and the surnames Suppè Demelli. In Vienna, where he moved with his mother after his father's death in 1835, he was to be known more simply as Franz von Suppè. There he studied music, taking lessons from Mozart's pupil Ignaz von Seyfried, who found him a position at the Josefstadt Theatre, for which he wrote score after score, later moving as Kapellmeister to the Theater an der Wien.

It was through the influence of Offenbach that true Viennese operetta was created, an early example being Suppè's Das Pensionat in 1860. By 1865 Suppè had established himself at the Carltheater, the old Leopoldstadt Theatre of Mozart's time, and it was there that he had some of his greatest successes, that were to bring him the freedom of the city of Vienna and enough money to buy a comfortable country estate.

Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna, remembered for its sparkling overture, was a play with songs, mounted at the Josefstadt in 1844. Poet and Peasant, a comedy with songs, followed at the Theater an der Wien two years later. The Beautiful Glatea, described as a comic-mythological operetta, had its first performance in Berlin in 1865, while Light Cavalry was one of the first of Suppè's operettas to be

mounted at the Carltheater. These overtures have remained popular favourites in various versions.

Johann Strauss, the son of a father who had established the position of the family in light music in Vienna, was the principal figure in the world of the Viennese waltz, with which his name will always be associated. He turned to the theatre relatively late in his career, partly through the persuasion of his second wife and the example of Franz von Suppè. *Indigo and the Forty Thieves* appeared in 1871 and the most famous of all operettas, *Die Fledermaus*, in 1874. *Fledermaus* was based on a French vaudeville, derived in turn from a play by the Leipzig singer and theatre-director Roderich Benedix. Its light-hearted comedy seems to epitomise Vienna of the period, with the brilliant overture deftly capturing the spirit of the whole piece.

The *Gypsy Baron*, based on a Hungarian story, was staged in Vienna in 1885 to tumultuous applause. Even during the Overture each new melody was greeted with audible enthusiasm, and there were to be so many encores that the whole operetta was extended to three times its length. The work marked the climax of Strauss's career as a composer for the stage, with a happy choice of libretto and a setting that did much to soothe relations between the Austrian and Hungarian elements of the Habsburg Empire. Strauss retained his unassailable position as the *Waltz King*, but never repeated the triumph of *The Gypsy Baron*, a work that retains a popular position in current operetta repertoire.

Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra (Bratislava)

The Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra (Bratislava), the oldest symphonic ensemble in Slovakia, was founded in 1929 at the instance of Milos Ruppeldt and Oskar Nedbal, prominent personalities in the sphere of music. The orchestra was first conducted by the Prague conductor František Dyk and in the course of the past fifty years of its existence has worked under the batons of several prominent Czech and Slovak conductors. Ondrej Lenard was appointed its conductor in 1970 and in 1977 its conductor-in-chief. The orchestra has recently given a number of successful concerts both at home and abroad, in West and East Germany, Russia, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Spain, Italy, and Great Britain.

Martin Sieghart

Martin Sieghart was born in Vienna, where he studied at the Academy of Music before joining the Vienna Symphony Orchestra as a principal cellist. He was a member of the Vienna Instrumental Soloists and of the Concentus Musicus of Nicolaus Harnoncourt and Die Reihe Ensemble under Friedrich Cerha. He founded a chamber orchestra based on the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and his own choir, with which he directed many performances.

In 1979 Martin Sieghart conducted the Vienna Symphony Orchestra for the first time at the opening of the Bregenz Festival and was from 1984 to 1986 the orchestra's Assistant Conductor. He has more recently extended his activities to appearances with other European orchestras in a wide repertoire ranging from the Baroque to the avant-garde.



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DDD

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JOHANN STRAUSS

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|--------|
| 1 | Die Fledermaus | (8:27) |
| 2 | The Gypsy Baron | (8:12) |

FRANZ VON SUPPE

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--------|
| 3 | Morning, Noon & Night in Vienna | (8:17) |
| 4 | The Beautiful Galatea | (7:23) |
| 5 | Light Cavalry | (7:11) |
| 6 | Poet & Peasant | (9:10) |

JACQUES OFFENBACH

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|--------|
| 7 | Orpheus in the Underworld | (9:13) |
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