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HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

Sphärenklänge, Walzer (Music of the Spheres, Waltz), Op. 235 For the medical association ball of the year 1868, held on 21 January in the Sofiensaal, Josef Strauss wrote a traditional dedication waltz. Since the 1830s it had been the custom for the music director whose orchestra performed dance music at the major Viennese balls, to dedicate a new composition to the ball committee. At the medical ball for the year 1868, Josef Strauss was again the ball director. And so he wrote the waltz expected of him. As a rule the ball sponsors determined the title of the work which was to be dedicated to them, but in this case the composer well may have selected the name, because Sphärenklänge did not really fit the ballroom, much less the medical association ball. And indeed the report in the Fremden-Blatt on the ball of 21 January 1868 in the Sofiensaal noted disapprovingly that "the melodies of this waltz were better than their title since it gave the odd impression of being reminded of the hereafter at the medical society ball, of all places."

Josef Strauss did not react to this complaint. The title Sphärenklänge had stimulated in him a vision in triple time that is among the most impressive tone poems in all of Viennese music. The composer may have felt closer to the hereafter as he wrote this set of waltzes than he wanted to admit. That may have led to his setting down the sequence of chords at the beginning of the introduction of the work, the melodies of which well can qualify as 'music of the spheres'. But in the waltz itself, 'Pepi' Strauss, as a true Viennese dance-band leader, set out with that sweep and élan which dancers expected.

In the waltz Sphärenklänge, however, the melodies and harmonies of Josef Strauss were grounded in realms of feeling which, for the time being, were closed to his brother 'Jean', who above all wanted to be a man of 'eternal youth'. Knowledge of irrevocable parting can be heard in it, but also the conviction of a comforting harmony of those spheres which we call 'the hereafter.'

Eduard Strauss (1835-1916) Doctrinen Waltz, Op. 79

Legend has it that Eduard Strauss composed a waltz that would embrace – or parody – the many philosophical speculations of the period, including the rise of Transcendentalism and the flowering "Nihilism" coming out of Russia. He quipped that his new waltz "meant nothing at all."

Waltzes by the Strauss Family

FRITZ REINER
CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ARTHUR FIEDLER
BOSTON POPS



Insofar as the line of Austro-Hungarian music is concerned, the Strauss family perfectly suits the Fritz Reiner temperament; and in this he is not alone – other Hungarian conductors: Fricsay, Ormandy, Dorati, Szell, and Solti – have found the marvels of these polished salon and ballroom dances to be natural vehicles for orchestral discipline. While Johann Strauss I (1804-1849) established himself as “the Father of the Waltz,” it was his son Johann Strauss II (1825-1899) who set himself up as “the Waltz King,” composing some 500 waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, marches, and mazurkas, as well as numerous operettas and concert overtures. Josef Strauss (1827-1870), the second son of Johann I, tuned to full-time music-making in 1853. Josef composed some 300 marches, polkas, and waltzes. His brother Johann claimed Josef is “the more talented of us two. I am merely the more popular.” Josef’s originality lies in his use of minor keys for many of his most popular tunes. Eduard Strauss (1835-1916) left the diplomatic service to become a conductor and composer, having created 320 dances and marches. Each of the respective Strauss family members is honored as a master of orchestral color, melodic beauty, and rhythmic energy, as inventive in their own genre as Mozart or Bach were in their chosen musical forms.

Johann Strauss II

An der schönen blauen Donau (By the Beautiful Blue Danube) Waltz, Op.314

The Blue Danube waltz is not only the last word in flattery - the Danube is a muddy brown in most lights - but also the ultimate example of the concert waltz. In company with some of the most distinguished examples of its kind, it consists of many as five distinct waltz-time sections, each one of them based on two different themes. Written for the Vienna Men’s Choral Association in 1867, this most familiar of Viennese waltzes was originally scored for chorus and orchestra and in that form it has achieved something like the status of a national anthem. The choral version, however, doesn’t have the splendid coda which in the orchestral version recalls and briefly develops the main themes of four of the five sections, referring back to the leisurely introduction and effortlessly completing a perfectly integrated construction. It flows just as easily as the Danube itself, and is far more colorful

Johann Strauss II (1825-1899) Kaiser-Walzer (Emperor Waltz) Op 437

The Kaiser-Walzer represents one of the high points in Johann Strauss’s own treatment of the waltz as a concert-hall piece rather than ballroom item. It was written to celebrate the historic state visit made by Kaiser Franz Joseph I of Austria to Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany in Berlin in 1889, its grand but neutral title chosen in a diplomatic effort to offend neither emperor and at the same time to flatter them both. Imperial in inspiration, it is also imperial in stature. The introduction takes the form of a delicately scored march, while the first of the waltz tunes – briefly anticipated in march time before its definitive introduction in waltz time on horn and violins – must be the most dignified of its kind. Although none of the following three waltzes is quite as stately, trumpets and trombones certainly make an imposing entry in the last but one of them. Not satisfied with a

recapitulation of almost symphonic proportions, recalling the second and third waltzes as well as the main theme itself, Strauss adds an epilogue featuring a thoughtful solo cello and a brilliantly ceremonial ending. Johann Strauss II *Morgenblätter*, Op. 279

During the course of a working visit to Vienna in late autumn 1863, Jacques Offenbach (1819-80) presented the Vienna Authors’ and Journalists’ Association, ‘Concordia,’ with an un-named waltz dedication for their ball in the Sofienbad-Saal to be held on 12 January of the following year. Since the Strauss Orchestra was engaged for the ‘Concordia’ Ball, Johann was also obliged to provide a dedication composition of his own. Aware of Offenbach’s involvement, he likewise left it to the Association to provide an appropriate name for his waltz. When the committee chose to entitle Offenbach’s work *Abendblätter* (Evening Papers) and Strauss’s *Morgenblätter* (Morning Papers) an element of friendly rivalry was assured on the evening of the ball. Offenbach, however, was not present at the festivity, and Johann conducted the premières of both waltzes. In the event, the first night press did not pronounce in favour of either work, but subsequent performances of the excellent *Abendblätter* found little favour in Vienna, whereas *Morgenblätter* has retained its popularity in orchestral repertoire.

Johann Strauss II *Rosen aus dem Süden* (Roses from the South) Waltz Op 388

All of Johann Strauss’s operettas – only one of which, *Die Fledermaus*, is set in the Vienna of his day – depended for their success on a generous allocation of songs and other numbers in waltz time, however incongruous they might have been in their context. To take on extreme example, *Das Spitzentuch der Königin* (The Queen’s Lace Handkerchief) is set in sixteenth-century Portugal and yet includes so many high quality nineteenth-century Viennese waltzes that the composer was able to extract no fewer than four of them and put them together in one of the most successful of his concert pieces. *Rosen aus dem Süden*, as he called the new waltz sequence, is unusual in that, although he anticipates its most distinguished melody at the very beginning of the slow introduction, he avoids presenting it as the main theme – it appears on violins and horn with harp accompaniment as the second of the four waltzes – and he doesn’t recall it in the otherwise comprehensive, contrapuntally exuberant coda.

Josef Strauss (1827-1870) *Village Swallows from Austria* (*Dorfschwalben aus Österreich*) Waltz, Op.164 (1863)

Like Johann II’s *Bauern-Polka*, his brother Josef’s *Dorfschwalben aus Österreich* offered Viennese good-time society a pleasure trip to the countryside – where, since it originated there as the *Ländler* folk dance, the waltz is not entirely out of place. Having set the scene in the opening bars with bagpipe drones on the strings and a yodelling clarinet, Josef introduces not only his first main theme but also, with the help of a bird whistle in the orchestra, his twittering swallows. Some of the tunes are more sophisticated than others but there are regular yodelling or droning reminders of the rustic setting. The swallows and the graceful tune, so characteristic of Josef, that goes with them are recalled just before the end.

continued

Waltzes by the Strauss Family

Fritz Reiner / Chicago Symphony

1. Johann Strauss, Jr. / Emperor Waltz
2. Johann Strauss, Jr. / On the Beautiful Blue Danube
3. Johann Strauss, Jr. / Morning Papers
4. Josef Strauss / Village Swallows

Arthur Fiedler / Boston Pops Orchestra

5. Edward Strauss / Doctrines
6. Josef Strauss / Music of the Spheres
7. Johann Strauss, Jr. / Roses from the South

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