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LIVING STEREO



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JOHANN STRAUSS, JR. (1825-1899)

- 1 Morning Papers, Op. 279 8:10
- 2 Emperor Waltz, Op. 437 7:42
- 3 On the Beautiful Blue Danube, Op. 314 8:12

CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786-1826)

- 4 Invitation to the Dance, Op. 65 8:57

JOSEF STRAUSS (1827-1870)

- 5 Village Swallows, Op. 164 7:36



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RICHARD STRAUSS (1864-1949)

- 6 Der Rosenkavalier: Waltzes 8:41
(arr. Fritz Reiner)
(Tracks 1-6 recorded April 15 & 16, 1957)

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR. (1825-1899)

- 7 Vienna Blood, Op. 354 8:56
- 8 Roses from the South, Op. 388 (from The Queen's Lace Handkerchief) 8:41
- 9 Treasure Waltz, Op. 418 (from The Gypsy Baron) 8:07
- 10 Thunder and Lightning, Op. 324 2:57
(Tracks 7-10 recorded April 25 & 26, 1960)

Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Fritz Reiner, conductor
(Recorded Orchestra Hall, Chicago)

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NOTES BY JOSEPH WECHSBERG (1958)

Vienna and the waltz have long been synonymous. The first waltzes were played at Vienna's Imperial Court balls around 1660 and ever since Vienna has been best known to most people as the world's waltz capital, though it justly is proud of some other achievements. For three centuries the waltz has dominated the city's musical, social and emotional life. The Viennese listen to waltzes not only when they are happy but even in their more frequent, melancholy moods. And Johann Strauss' *Blue Danube* has always been Austria's true if unofficial national anthem. Nothing is certain any more but death, taxes, and the Viennese waltz which will go on forever.

Johann Strauss's greatest waltzes were created in the suburbs of Vienna—in Heiligenstadt, Nussdorf, Neuwaldegg, Sievering, Grinzing—where there was always music in the air. In the small inns at the foot of the Vienna Woods innumerable people have sat during the past two

hundred years, drinking the year's new wine, singing or just listening to music. Each of the small inns had its own band. Sometimes there were two violinists, a guitar player and a clarinetist, a combination made famous by the fiddling brothers Schrammel. Sometimes there would be just a singer with an inexhaustible repertory of waltz songs. You just couldn't avoid music in Vienna—it was everywhere. The rich people would go to the opera and the poor listened to the band that played during the change of the guards in the inner courtyard of the Imperial Palace. The city's quaint squares bordered by baroque palaces, have always reverberated with music and just around the corner there's always a house where Beethoven slept, or Haydn, or Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, or other great composers who were magically attracted by this feminine, soft, musical city. For centuries, bands have performed in Vienna's Stadtpark—where a statue of

Johann Strauss stands, showing the Waltz King with bow and fiddle, a dashing, exciting figure—in the Volksgarten and in the squares and parks or the suburbs. Even during the coldest winter days retired musicians who can get no other jobs perform at street corners while a dejected-looking woman asks passers-by to contribute a *schilling* (\$0.04). Few refuse. The Viennese have always spent money on music, especially on waltz music. There are many in this city who have never been to the opera house but no one who hasn't danced to, whistled or hummed the *Blue Danube*.

The ancestry of the waltz is somewhat lost in the haze of the medieval German dances and the French *carmagnole*. Some think the waltz comes from the German *ländler*, literally "country-style" dance. Nobody "created" the waltz; it grew out of Vienna's musical landscape, the sounds in the air, the Danube, the flower-covered

meadows in the Vienna Woods where Haydn found inspiration for his *Seasons*, Beethoven for his "Pastoral," Richard Strauss for his *Rosenkavalier*. Some people claim that even the birds there sing in three-quarter-time.

The waltz was no sudden, overwhelming success. It was danced in suburban inns—but people in what is sometimes referred to as Society would have no part of it. The chronicler Vigée wrote, "I can well understand that mothers are fond of the waltz but I don't think they should let their daughters dance it." Fortunately, a good thing can't be killed and the waltz was just too good. Johann Sebastian Bach wrote a rustic waltz into his *Bauernkantate*. Mozart was so excited by the dance that he wrote waltzlike rhythms which he called "contre-dances," probably from the English "country dance." Haydn wrote three-quarter-time *ländlers*. Schubert composed

his *Valses nobles* and *Valses sentimentales* which took the waltz out of the popular dance music into Art. He caught the nostalgic undertone in his waltzes which Johann Strauss half a century later painted so beautifully in the romantic, haunted, "sorrow-without-pain" codas of his great waltzes. The great waltzes contain all universal emotions, love and passion and suffering, sadness and resignation and hope. There is something in them for everybody—perhaps one reason for the waltz's universal appeal. Another contemporary of Schubert, Carl Maria von Weber, expressed this beautifully in his *Invitation to the Dance*.

The golden epoch of the *Wiener Walzer* was ushered in by Josef Lanner, the Wiener Kapellmeister who composed his own waltzes and performed them—for the first time—in concert halls as well as in ballrooms. When Lanner conducted his *Schönbrunner* waltzes, people stopped

dancing and began to listen. One night Lanner said to his viola-player, Johann Strauss, "I'm tired, haven't you got an idea for a couple of waltzes?" Strauss (Father) had—and became famous. (He played in London during the coronation of Queen Victoria.)

Strauss was twenty-one when his son Johann was born in 1825. That was nine years after the Congress of Vienna when the waltz had been generally accepted (though some die-hards still called it immoral). Young "Schani" wasn't concerned with such questions; he wrote waltzes. He wrote his first when he was six. He played and conducted a program which contained *Lorelei-Rhein-Klänge*, one of the older Strauss's waltzes, in deference to his father, when he was nineteen. The people were not fooled though and the music critic Wiese wrote, "Good night, Lanner. Good evening, Father Strauss. Good morning, Son Strauss."

Johann Strauss, Jr.'s greatest waltz was a depression baby. He wrote the *Blue Danube* waltz in 1867 when Austria had been defeated by the Russians, a lot of people had lost their money and everybody worried about inflation. The waltz was originally composed for a men's chorus, not for orchestra. The text was idiotic and a bad performance by the local *Männergesangsverein* didn't help. The world's greatest waltz was a resounding flop. A little later, Strauss and his orchestra performed the *Blue Danube* in Paris, where it was a smash hit. It has remained a hit ever since, surviving even the worst performances by inept amateurs and hand-organ grinders.

Strauss wrote the *Blue Danube* in five days. Some of the other great waltzes he wrote in a couple of hours in the morning, rehearsed them with his band in the afternoon, and performed them at night. He wrote 479 known works.

Even the weaker ones contain sudden, revealing touches of genius. His finest waltzes have the timeless beauty of a Mozart string quartet or of a Schubert *lied*. Take the introduction and the coda of the *Blue Danube*, with their magical contrasts, and fast-changing moods; the rhythms, excitement and beauty of the *Emperor Waltz*, or *Morning Papers*. These waltzes are symphonic tone poems that must not be played through at the same speed. The Viennese know there must be a slight buoyancy on the second beat, an almost inaudible accent after an almost inaudible pause. To bring off such almost inaudible tricks—the Viennese claim you must be a sixth-generation Viennese whose great-grandmother danced to the fiddle of the great "Schani," at the Apollo Halls where Strauss had a monopoly, running three orchestras and a whole battalion of assistant conductors, copyists, singers,



publicity men, business managers, cashiers. The Master would rush from one ballroom to the next, play one waltz, take a few bows, and rush on. Waltzing was big business and there was always demand for more Strauss waltzes. Strauss was the great success of the Paris World's Fair, spent twelve summers in Russia, and in 1872 went to America. In Boston he conducted a giant production of the *Blue Danube* waltz with 20,000 singers and an orchestra of 1,087 men under 20 assistant conductors, for an audience of over 100,000 people.

In the past 150 years the Vienna waltz has become extremely respectable. Today, great orchestras perform it and great conductors perform it happily. They know that the *Blue Danube* or the *Emperor Waltz* will never fail them. This is as true on the Continent as it is in the United States, where the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, under Fritz Reiner, performs

the waltzes of the Straussses—Johann, Richard and Josef—with all the authenticity and élan of a Viennese string ensemble itself.

No accident, this. Fritz Reiner's early career as an opera and symphony conductor in Europe had Dresden as its background, but he was conducting in Vienna as early as 1915. There is no question that the Viennese stamp of genuineness has remained indelibly in Reiner's readings of the music of Vienna. And it is no coincidence that in Chicago, where the orchestra was founded by Theodore Thomas and led for many years by Frederick Stock, the spirit of Vienna is perpetuated by several Viennese-trained members of the orchestra.



Fritz Reiner was internationally recognized as one of the foremost conductors of his time. Born in 1888 in Budapest, he received his musical education at the Academy of Music there. At the age of 23 he became conductor of the Budapest Volksoper and two years later was appointed principal conductor of the Royal Opera in Dresden; while there he worked with Richard Strauss on productions of his early operas and conducted the German premiere of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. In 1922 Reiner became conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; nine years later he went to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia to head the orchestral department. After a decade (1938-48) as music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, he joined the Metropolitan Opera. Then in 1953 he became music director of the Chicago

Symphony Orchestra, which he built into one of the world's great ensembles. Ill health forced him to resign his post in 1962, and he died the following year. Reiner was extraordinary not only as an orchestra builder but also for his broad range of repertoire, both symphonic and operatic. He was equally the master of the delicately balanced sonorities of Mozart and the massive richness of Richard Strauss; he was a champion of 20th-century music, and he could give incomparably lilting performances of the waltzes of Johann Strauss.

THE HISTORY OF LIVING STEREO

On October 6, 1953, RCA Victor made its first experimental "binaural" recordings. At New York's Manhattan Center, Leopold Stokowski conducted a pick-up orchestra in Enesco's *Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1* and Tchaikovsky's Waltz from *Eugene Onegin*. In December RCA continued stereo tests in Manhattan Center with Pierre Monteux and members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Then, in February 1954, RCA took equipment to Boston's Symphony Hall, where Charles Munch and the Boston Symphony were recording Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*. For the first time, RCA engineers captured the performance on both mono and two track tape. These experiments, combined with further technological refinements employed in Chicago's Orchestra Hall in March 1954, were the first forays into the world of stereo.

At the time that RCA initiated multi-track sessions, disc mastering and consumer playback technology were monaural. RCA Victor proceeded to use two- and three-track equipment to record the world's greatest artists—Heifetz, Piatigorsky, Reiner, Munch, Rubinstein, Fiedler—in anticipation that home technology would catch up to stereo sound. Finally, in 1955, 1/4" 7 1/2ips stereophonic tape players arrived on the consumer market, and RCA released its first Stereo Orthophonic tapes.

Stereo Orthophonic tapes redefined high fidelity. In 1958, the Western Electric Company produced the breakthrough Westrex stereo disc cutter, thereby revolutionizing master disc production. Stereo playback equipment was developed to coincide with the new disc cutting technology. The same year, Living Stereo LP records were launched, ushering in the golden age of stereo high fidelity.