

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
2017-2018 Mellon Grand Classics Season

November 24 and 26, 2017

MANFRED HONECK, CONDUCTOR
NOA WILDSCHUT, VIOLIN

FRANZ VON SUPPÉ *Overture to Light Cavalry*

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR. *Emperor Waltzes, Opus 437*

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR. *Hail to Hungary!, Polka, Opus 332*

MAURICE RAVEL *Tzigane for Violin and Orchestra*
Ms. Wildschut

Intermission

FRANZ LEHÁR *Gold and Silver Waltz, Opus 79*

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR. *Im Sturmschritt! (At the Double!), Polka Schnell, Opus 348*

ERNEST CHAUSSON *Poème for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 25*
Ms. Wildschut

GEORGE GERSHWIN “It Ain’t Necessarily So” from *Porgy and Bess*
ARR. ZIMMERMAN for Violin and Orchestra
Ms. Wildschut

LEROY ANDERSON *Plink, Plank, Plunk!*

LEROY ANDERSON *The Typewriter*

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR. *Bandits’ Gallop, Polka Schnell, Opus 378*

PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

FRANZ VON SUPPÉ

Born April 18, 1819 in Spalato, Dalmatia [now Split, Croatia]; died May 21, 1895 in Vienna

Overture to *Light Cavalry* (1866)

Just as Jacques Offenbach, the great innovator of French comic opera, was an immigrant from Germany, so one of the seminal figures in the development of Viennese operetta came from what is now Croatia. Francesco Suppé Demelli was born in 1819 on a ship off the Adriatic coast city of Spalato, Dalmatia (now Split, Croatia) to Austrian parents, sent to Italy to study law, and moved with his mother after his father's death in 1835 to Vienna, where he became Franz von Suppé and took up music in earnest as a student of Ignaz Seyfried and Simon Sechter (also remembered as the counterpoint teacher of both Schubert and Bruckner). Seyfried helped him get a job — initially unpaid — as Third Kapellmeister at the Josefstadt Theater, where his first stage work appeared in 1841. More than twenty theater scores followed in the next five years. He moved on to other, more lucrative, positions in Vienna's light-opera theaters, and continued to conduct until 1883, all the while turning out a steady stream of well-received musical farces. *Das Pensionat* of 1860, the first successful Viennese response to the growing local popularity of Offenbach's operettas, established the form with which Johann Strauss, Franz Lehár and others were to charm the world in later decades. In addition to nearly 200 operettas and other stage pieces, Suppé also wrote two grand operas, a symphony, several still-popular concert overtures, songs, three Masses, a Requiem and some sacred music. He died in Vienna in 1895.

The Overture to *Light Cavalry* was composed for the comic operetta that Suppé premiered at Vienna's Carl Theater in March 1866. The piece took its title and delightfully descriptive nature from the elaborately uniformed Hussars, the skilled horsemen who were lightly armed to promote their agility in battle, who figure in the plot.

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.

Born October 25, 1825 in Vienna; died there June 3, 1899

Kaiser Walzer ("Emperor Waltzes"), Opus 437 (1888)

In October 1889, Strauss was invited to give a series of five concerts at the newly opened concert hall in the Berlin Königsbau, the magnificent complex housing the court of the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II. Strauss composed a new waltz for his appearances that he originally titled *Hand in Hand*, a reference to Austrian Emperor Franz Josef's visit to Wilhelm in August, when he extended "the hand of friendship" to Germany. By the time of the work's premiere, however, on October 21, 1889, it had become the *Kaiser Walzer* — *Emperor Waltzes* — a shrewd bit of politicking suggested by Strauss' publisher, Fritz Simrock, that obviated the need to dedicate the piece to one monarch or the other while satisfying the vanity of both. The *Emperor Waltzes* is the last of the great works in the form composed by Johann, Jr., "the most beautiful flower that the incredible tree of Strauss music had produced in 75 years," according to the French writer Guillaume Ritter.

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.

Éljen a Magyar! ("Hail to Hungary!"), Polka, Opus 332 (1869)

The Hungarian cities of Buda and Pest, straddling opposite banks of the Danube 150 miles downriver from Vienna, were the birthplace of the insurrection that erupted against Habsburg rule in 1848. That revolt was put down, but it sparked an awareness in Emperor Franz Joseph that a change in the governance of his provinces was inevitable. The Dual Monarchy, making Vienna and Budapest the twin capitals of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was enacted in 1867. (Buda and Pest were formally unified in 1873.) Two years later a magnificent new Redoutensaal was opened as the main concert hall in Pest,

and all three Strauss brothers — Eduard, Josef and Johann, Jr. — were invited to bring their famed orchestra for two of the inaugural series of concerts. (The hall, like a similar facility at the Hofburg in Vienna, was named for the “Redouten,” the fancy dress balls that were held there.) To mark the occasion, Johann composed the infectious fast polka *Éljen a Magyar! — Hail to Hungary!* — and conducted its premiere at the Pest Redoutensaal on March 16, 1869. Strauss, always alert to engage the musical sympathies of his audiences, planted in the coda a tiny snippet of the stirring *Rákóczy March*, a patriotic song written in 1809 by John Bihari to honor the Rákóczys, a noble family long active in the Hungarian struggle for freedom from Austria, which Berlioz had also inserted into his *Damnation of Faust* two decades earlier for its Hungarian performances.

MAURICE RAVEL

Born March 7, 1875 in Ciboure, France; died December 28, 1937 in Paris

Tzigane, Rapsodie de Concert for Violin and Orchestra (1924)

While in England in July 1922, Ravel was a guest at a *soirée* at which the Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Aranyi participated in a performance of his Sonata for Violin and Cello. When the formal part of the evening's entertainment had been accomplished, Ravel asked Mlle. d'Aranyi to play some Gypsy melodies from her native land, and she filled the night until dawn with music that enthralled the composer. Ravel, though captivated by the passionate Hungarian music and determined to compose a new work of Gypsy cast for Mlle. d'Aranyi, had been mired in a fallow period since the end of World War I, and it was almost two years before he was able to compose *Tzigane*.

Tzigane, which follows in the tradition of the Gypsy-inspired compositions of Liszt and Enesco, comprises several structural sections played without pause following an extended introduction for unaccompanied violin. Each section is a virtual miniature dance movement which reaches its own climax before making way for the next dance-section. The tempo of the last section goes from faster to fastest, and *Tzigane* ends in the bedazzling whirl of the soloist's *moto perpetuo* pyrotechnics..

FRANZ LEHÁR

Born April 30, 1870, in Komáron, Hungary; died October 24, 1948, in Bad Ischl, Austria

Gold and Silver Waltz, Opus 79 (1902)

Franz Lehár, son of a horn player and military bandmaster, was born in Komáron, midway between Graz and Budapest, on April 30, 1870. Young Franz was tutored in music by his father, and entered the Prague Conservatory at the age of twelve to study violin and theory. In 1888, Lehár got a position as a violinist with a theater orchestra in Barmen-Elberfeld in Germany, but he was soon called up for military service and joined his father's band in the 50th Austrian Infantry Regiment. The promotion of the younger Lehár to bandmaster in 1890 coincided with the beginning of his career as a composer; he began his first stage work, the opera *Kukuska*, the following year. He resigned his military post when the opera was accepted for production by the Leipzig Municipal Theater in 1896, but the work's failure forced him to resume his old vocation, first in Trieste and later in Budapest, where he took over the 3rd Bosnian-Herzegovinian Infantry Band upon his father's retirement from that position. In 1899, he was transferred to Vienna, where some of his early orchestral works, including the *Gold and Silver Waltz*, established his reputation as a composer. In that same year, he finally left military service for good, assuming conducting posts at the Venedig Summer Theater in the Prater and at the Theater-an-der-Wien. The earliest of Lehár's 38 operettas, *Fräulein Leutnant*, dates from 1901. The following year he enjoyed successes with *Wiener Frauen* (“Viennese Women”) and *Der Rastelbinder* (“The Tinker”). Their immediate successors, however, *Der Göttergatte* (“The Gods Married”) and *Die Juxheirat* (“The Phony Marriage”), flopped. It was his next operetta, *Die Lustige Witwe* (“The Merry Widow,” 1905), that won him immense, international fame. He produced some two-dozen operettas in the twenty years following *The Merry Widow*, but none matched that work's enormous acclaim. Lehár enjoyed a late flowering of creativity when the beloved tenor Richard Tauber sang the title role in *Paganini* (1925), inspiring from him the scores for *Der Zarewitsch* (1927), *Das Land des Lächelns* of 1929 (“The Land of Smiles,” a revision of the unsuccessful

Die gelbe Jacke of 1923 to which Lehár added one of his finest melodies — *Dein ist mein ganzes Herz*) and *Giuditta* (1934), his last operetta.

Lehár wrote his *Gold and Silver Waltz* at the request of the socialite, fashion trend-setter and arts patron (of Wagner and Smetana, among others) Princess Pauline von Metternich for the eponymous ball she gave at Vienna's Sophiensäle on January 27, 1902. She asked for "something especially fine" and was rewarded with one of the masterworks of the twilight years of the Viennese waltz.

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.

Im Sturmschritt! ("At the Double!"), Polka Schnell, Opus 348 (1871)

Johann Strauss was famed throughout the world for his waltzes for many years before he decided to write his first operetta. In 1871, after much cajoling from his wife, Jetty, an ex-opera singer whose fortune allowed him to give up the drudgery of conducting that had worn out his father, Strauss completed *Indigo und die vierzig Räuber* ("*Indigo and the Forty Thieves*"), which appeared just as Offenbach's popularity in Vienna was starting to wane. Strauss' irresistible music made *Indigo* a success at its premiere on February 10, 1871 at the Theater-an-der-Wien — the date usually cited as beginning the "Golden Age" of Viennese operetta — but Maximilian Steiner's nearly impenetrable libretto eventually forced the piece from the stage. In 1906, seven years after Strauss' death, Ernest Reiterer adapted *Indigo's* music to a completely revised text by Leo Stein and Carl Lindau, and the new work was premiered at the Volksoper in Vienna on October 27, 1907 as *1,001 Nights*. The exotic story deals with themes reminiscent of the Arabian Nights — harems, tales spun by alluringly veiled maidens, dreams of brave deeds, and sacrifice out of love. Strauss assembled the vivacious polka *Im Sturmschritt!* ("*At the Double!*") from four of the operetta's quick-tempo episodes.

ERNEST CHAUSSON

Born January 20, 1855 in Paris; died June 10, 1899 in Limay (near Mantes-la-Jolie), France

Poème for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 25 (1896)

Ernest Chausson was the only surviving child of a wealthy Parisian building contractor who made a fortune in Haussmann's massive mid-19th-century renovations of the city. Young Ernest was tutored privately at home in a world of books and quiet where he had little contact with children of his own age, a circumstance that seems to have instilled an introspective disposition in the youngster. He was eventually sent off to law school, from which he graduated in 1877, but he never lost his interest in art, literature and music, and in 1879 he enrolled as a music student at the Paris Conservatoire. He began his studies with Massenet but soon gravitated to Franck, whose devoted pupil he became. By 1883, Chausson's musical studies were finished and he married Jeanne Escudier, who bore him five children during the course of their happy, settled life together. Chausson's inherited wealth relieved him of worry about making a living from his compositions, though that advantage did not mean that he took his creative work lightly. If anything, he was perhaps too self-critical, and always took umbrage at being called an "amateur composer." His money allowed him to travel, and he was especially fond of spending the hot summer months in various country retreats that provided the peace he found conducive to composing. It was on one of those rustic sojourns to Limay, forty miles west of Paris on the Seine, that he met his untimely death at the age of 44 when his speeding bicycle crashed into a wall, killing him instantly.

The *Poème* for Violin and Orchestra is one of Chausson's most successful works, and the touching story of its publication is worth recounting. Isaac Albéniz, the Spanish composer, had been unhappy and bewildered during his student days in Paris. Chausson befriended, encouraged and supported him at the time, and Albéniz was determined to repay the favor. After Chausson finished *Poème* in 1896, he had difficulty in having it accepted for publication. While touring Germany in the spring of the following year, Albéniz presented himself, with the manuscript of the still un-issued *Poème* tucked under his arm, to a representative of the eminent music publishing firm of Breitkopf und Härtel in Leipzig. Breitkopf refused to publish the score unless Albéniz offered to underwrite the cost of the venture, which he gladly did. In addition, Albéniz provided 300 marks that Breitkopf was to pass on to his mentor as a royalty. Chausson

never discovered the scheme. Chausson, who had never been treated kindly by publishers, was overwhelmed when Albéniz informed him of his good fortune.

Poème shows the lyricism, advanced harmonic style presaging the Impressionists and soulful melancholy that mark Chausson's best works. Though unified through melodic reiteration, the score does not follow any traditional Classical formal model, but is rather constructed around lines of rising and falling tension. Wrote the British critic and composer Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, "The prevailing mood of Chausson's music is an entrancing melancholy, tender and twilit, a melancholy free from whine or morbid sentiment, [which] is expressed in the terms of the utmost sensitive refinement, subtle beauty and aristocratic distinction of manner."

GEORGE GERSHWIN

Born September 26, 1898 in Brooklyn, New York; died July 12, 1937 in Hollywood, California

It Ain't Necessarily So from *Porgy and Bess* for Violin and Orchestra (1935)

Arranged by Bob Zimmerman

Gershwin's music drama about the crippled Porgy and his determined love for Bess, set in the 1930s in Catfish Row, a Negro tenement in Charleston, South Carolina, is among the best-loved and widely performed of all American operas. "This, Gershwin's last serious work," wrote David Ewen, "possesses that richness, vitality and variety of melody, that vigor of rhythm, that spontaneity and freshness we associate with Gershwin's best music. Of all Gershwin's serious works, it is the only one to reveal compassion, humanity and a profound dramatic instinct. Its roots are in the soil of the Negro people, whom it interprets with humor, tragedy, penetrating characterizations, dramatic power and sympathy." Beside its musical significance, *Porgy and Bess* also occupies an important place in the social evolution of our land — its premieres in Charleston, where the story is set, and Washington, D.C. were desegregated on the stage and in the audience for the first time in the histories of those cities. Gershwin, who spent an entire summer in a Negro community near Charleston collecting material and ideas for his work, would have been proud to know that *Porgy and Bess* was the cause for such a significant step in our national life. In *It Ain't Necessarily So*, Sportin' Life, the local dope peddler, describes his cynical attitude toward religion. The arrangement for violin and orchestra, based the version Jascha Heifetz prepared in 1944 for his own performances, is by composer and arranger Bob Zimmerman, well known in his native Holland for his theater and film scores.

LEROY ANDERSON

Born June 29, 1908 in Cambridge, Massachusetts; died May 18, 1975 in Woodbury, Connecticut

Plink, Plank, Plunk! (1951)

Leroy Anderson earned undergraduate and master's degrees in music from Harvard University, taught briefly at Radcliffe College, and in 1931 became music director and arranger of the Harvard University Band. In 1936, George Judd, manager of the Boston Symphony, asked Anderson to make a symphonic setting of some traditional Harvard songs for the 25th reunion of Mr. Judd's class and to conduct the number at a special performance of the Boston Pops. Arthur Fiedler, music director of the Pops, was impressed with Anderson's work, and he encouraged him to write some original compositions for the orchestra. The first of those pieces, *Jazz Pizzicato*, was an immediate hit when it was premiered in 1937, and Anderson was appointed chief arranger and pianist for the Boston Pops, a position he held for the next quarter-century.

Anderson recalled, "Although I started my career as an organist, later on I played mainly bass in orchestras. As a bass player I got first hand knowledge of the resources of a string orchestra and became particularly interested in the use of the pizzicato. As an example of how one can use the pizzicato, I wrote a little piece with the title *Plink, Plank, Plunk!*" Anderson composed *Plink, Plank, Plunk!* for the second album of his compositions recorded by Decca, in late June 1951, and conducted its public premiere with the Kansas City Philharmonic on November 11th.

LEROY ANDERSON

The Typewriter (1950)

Anderson's ingenuity as an orchestral colorist is evident in *The Typewriter* of 1950, which takes as its unlikely solo instrument the quintessential office machine of the days before word processors and cell phones. So sure was the composer that this delightful novelty would score a hit that he recorded it for Decca a full month before its public premiere in Boston on October 9, 1950.

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.

Banditen Galop ("Bandits' Gallop"), Polka Schnell, Opus 378 (1876)

One of Strauss' stage works that did not fare as well as *Die Fledermaus* or *The Gypsy Baron* was *Prince Methusalem*, first given at the Carl Theater in Vienna on January 3, 1877. As was usual for his operettas, Strauss wrote this piece in a great hurry, giving little heed to dramatic motivations and continuity of plot. In addition, the libretto, supplied to him by two Frenchmen, Wilder and Delacour, was of the pointedly cynical variety at which Offenbach and Lecocq excelled but which lent itself poorly to Strauss' easy-going, gentle humor. One of the selections from the operetta still heard in the concert hall is the *Banditen Galop*.

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