

**Vienna – City of Dreams**

**Thursday, May 16 – 8 pm**

**Robert Bernhardt**, conductor

**Virginie Gagné**, violin

**Ewald Cheung**, violin

**Rafael Hoekman**, cello

**LEHÁR**

***Gold and Silver Waltzes, Op.79***

(8')\*

**SCHUBERT** (arr. Dragon)

***Serenade***

(4')\*

**BEETHOVEN** (arr. Busoni)

***Missa Solemnis, Op.: Benedictus***

(9')

**BEETHOVEN** (arr. Schulhoff)

***Rondo a carpiccio, Op.129 “Rage Over a Lost Penny”***

(7')\*

**J. STRAUSS II**

***Romance for Cello, Op.283 “Dolci Pianti” (“Sweet Tears”)***

(4')\*

**J. STRAUSS II**

***Tritsch-Tratsch Polka, Op.214***

(3')\*

**INTERMISSION** (20 minutes)

**J. STRAUSS II**

***Bandit’s Galop – Polka Schnell, Op.378***

(2')\*

**R. STRAUSS**

***Der Rosenkavalier, Op.59: Act III Second Waltz Sequence***

(8')\*

**KORNGOLD** (arr. van der Heide)

***Die tote Stadt: Mariettas Lied***

(5')\*

**J. STRAUSS II**

***Kaiser-Walzer (“Emperor Waltzes”), Op.437***

(10')\*

**LEHÁR** (arr. Gamley)

***The Merry Widow: Overture***

(8')\*

program subject to change

\*indicates approximate film duration

### **Vienna – City of Dreams Program Notes**

Inheriting the Viennese operetta tradition of Johann Strauss II, **Franz Lehár** (1870-1948) strove to keep that tradition alive into the new century. With his 1905 operetta *The Merry Widow* (see below), Lehár created the most popular such work ever written. While not known for his instrumental-only compositions, an exception to that is the ***Gold and Silver Waltzes***. “Gold and Silver” was the theme of a Viennese ball which took place on January 27, 1902, given by the Princess Pauline Metternich. Lehár was commissioned to write a suitably enchanting waltz for the occasion.

**Franz Schubert** (1797-1828) was Viennese through and through. He was born there, died there (tragically young, at only 31), and had whatever musical success he did during his life there. While he wrote in many different forms, his greatest achievements were his songs – nearly 800 of them for voice and piano. A number of them have the title *Standchen* (“Serenade”), but the one forever known as Schubert’s **Serenade** was written in a flash of inspiration one Sunday afternoon in 1826. Spying a poem in a book a friend had open at a café, Schubert was seized with an idea. Another friend scribbled a crude music staff on a napkin, and Schubert, it is said, composed the lovely melody then and there. Carmen Dragon, one of the great orchestrators of the 20th century, arranged the version we hear this evening.

Born 27 years before Schubert, it was **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770-1827) who really proved true the idea that if you could make it in Vienna, you could make it anywhere. It was inevitable that the young musical hero from Bonn would make his way to the Austrian city, where he ruled and revolutionized music. Tonight, we hear two orchestrations of works originally written for other musical forces. Beethoven’s ***Missa solemnis*** (“Solemn Mass”) was his greatest religious work, and was intended for the solemn occasion of the installation of Archduke Rudolph, but by the time he completed it four years later, it was far too late. The **“Benedictus”** is part of the *Sanctus* portion of the mass, and is here presented in a version for solo violin and orchestra, an arrangement by the great 20th-century composer Ferruccio Busoni.

Every portrait of Beethoven shows a serious man, and the stories of his temper and despair tend to overshadow the fact that he did, in fact, have a sense of humour – even a self-deprecating one. No better example exists than a work he wrote poking fun at his own miserly reputation. Written originally for solo piano, the Rondo subtitled ***“Rage Over a Lost Penny”*** dates from Beethoven’s early days in Bonn, though it was not published until much later in life. Composer and critic Robert Schumann

summed up the work perfectly: “it would be difficult to find anything merrier than this whim... It is the most amiable, harmless anger, similar to that felt when one cannot pull a shoe off one’s foot.” The work is a favourite piano encore; we’ll hear it in an orchestration done by the early 20th-century Czech composer and pianist Erwin Schulhoff.

If any composer can lay claim to being the face of Viennese music, it is **Johann Strauss II** (1825-1899). The famous violin-playing bronze statue in Vienna’s City Park is of Strauss, known as “The Waltz King,” the most famous member of a musical family empire that had the whole city dancing in the last half of the 19th century. But it was more than waltzes – Strauss balls featured quadrilles, polkas, and other elegant dances in addition to the more than 400 waltzes that Johann Jr. wrote.

In August, 1862, the 37-year-old Strauss married opera singer Henrietta Chalupetzky, and shortly after, wrote a song for her, in the style of Verdi, Strauss said. It was called “**Dolci Pianti**” (“Sweet Tears”), and premiered in a version for voice, cello, harp, and orchestra on August 18, 1863 in Pavolvsk. That original version has been lost, but the song has been performed in various instrumentations since. The orchestral version we will hear, for solo cello and orchestra, was prepared for a Viennese performance by an unknown member of the Strauss orchestra.

With his charming and humorous ***Tritsch-Tratsch Polka***, Johann Strauss II had one of his biggest and most instant hits. Named for a German colloquialism similar to our term “chit-chat,” the brisk polka skips and scampers like idle chatter does. Having been performed at a number of concerts since its 1858 premiere, the work was already a sensation by the time of its printing, necessitating its publisher to begin second and third printings before the first had even been completed.

As if the many dance tunes composed by the Strauss family were not enough, there were also stage works – particularly operettas. *Prinz Methusalem* (“Prince Methusalem”) was an 1877 operetta by Johann Strauss II which ran for 80 performances at the Carltheater in Vienna. In Act III, a group of bandits appears, intent on overthrowing the title character. Strauss took the main melody from this scene, and from it fashioned a ballroom dance – the ***Bandit’s Galop***. A galop is a dance in duple time which originated in Paris in the 1820s, and became one of the many dances popular throughout Europe.

Early in his career, **Richard Strauss** (1864-1949) wrote operas that were on the very cutting edge of modernity and daring. He mellowed as he got older, and among his more mature stage works was the charming and deliberately anachronistic ***Der Rosenkavalier***, first performed in 1911, and based in part on a Molière comedy. It has been a success from its premiere, and is everywhere filled with music less from the 20th century than from ages past. Waltzes are a common feature (it’s worth noting that, despite his last name, Richard Strauss was unrelated to the family of the Waltz King, Johann Strauss Jr.), and the recollection of Vienna’s bygone days has kept this opera a favourite in Vienna.

While better known for his Hollywood film scores, Moravian-born **Erich Wolfgang Korngold** (1897-1957) began his music career in Europe, before he fled the Nazi encroachment and headed to America in 1934. His expressionist opera ***Die tote Stadt*** (“The Dead City”) premiered in Hamburg in 1920. “**Glück das mir**

**verblieb**" is an aria (also known as **Mariettas Lied**, or "Marietta's Song") sung in a hallucinatory sequence in the second act by a vision of the protagonist's dead wife. Tonight, we hear it in a version for violin and orchestra arranged by Petra van der Heide.

It would be almost criminal to present music by Johann Strauss II and not include a waltz. "There is a master of the orchestra," said no less than Johannes Brahms, "so great a master that one never fails to hear a single note of any instrument." Like his father had, the younger Johann Strauss became the head of the Strauss music-making empire, supplying orchestras and music for the balls which dominated the night life of Vienna in the second half of the 19th century. He also became fabulously rich, and had success at virtually every kind of music he wrote, from operettas to dance music of all kinds. As in the best tradition of courtly Viennese waltz music, the famous melodies so instantly recognizable in the **Emperor Waltzes** are preceded by an extended slow introduction – ideally suited to allow dancers to find partners on their way to the dance floor.

Just as Beethoven arrived from Bonn, and Mozart from Salzburg, composers great and small came to Vienna to create their art in the heart of the German-speaking musical world. Originally from a town in the Hungarian part of Austria-Hungary, **Franz Lehár** (1870-1948) came to Vienna in 1888, after time spent at the Prague Conservatory. His 1905 operetta **The Merry Widow** revitalized the tradition that Johann Strauss II had begun the generation before, and its success even reached across the Atlantic, laying the seeds for what would eventually become the Broadway musical. We end tonight's salute to Vienna with music by Lehár, the composer with which our concert began – and the overture to his most famous work, *The Merry Widow*.

Program notes © 2019 by D.T. Baker