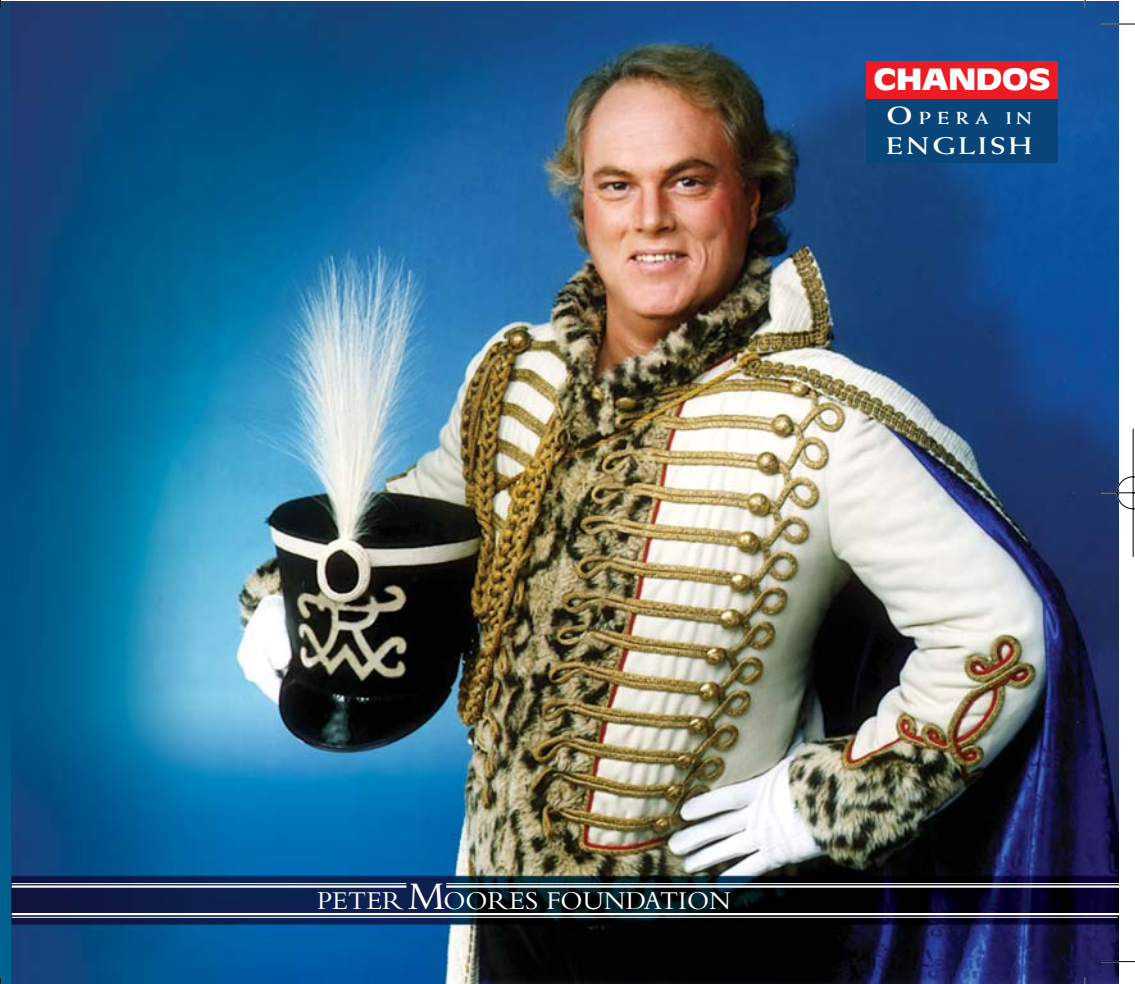


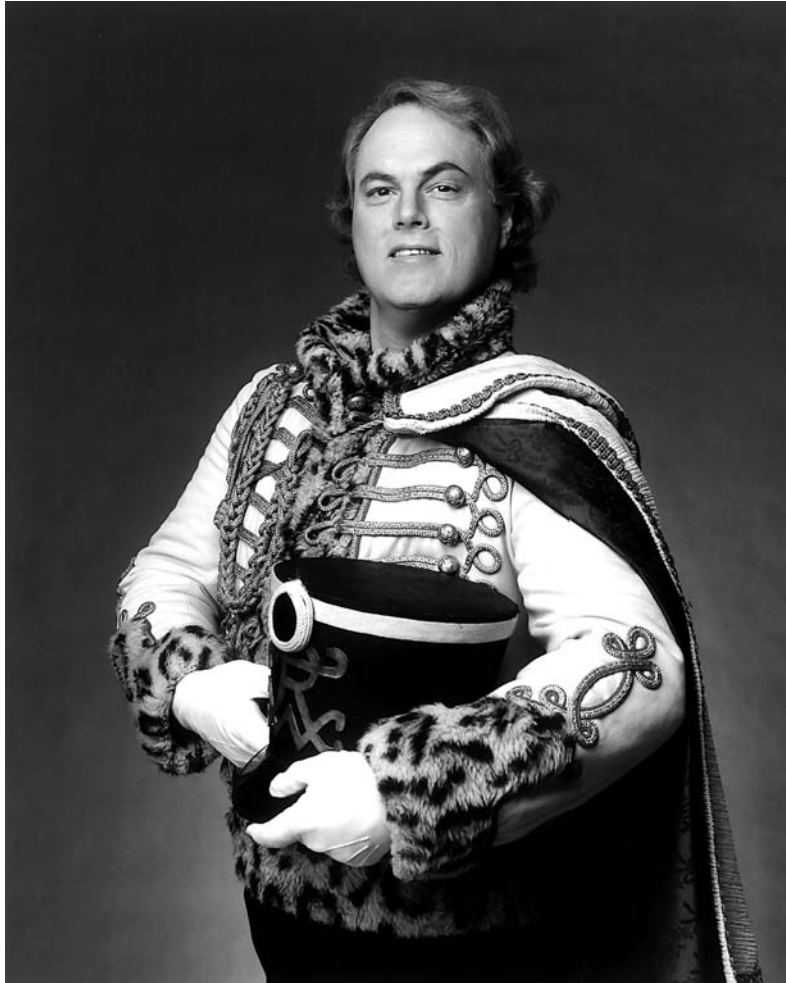
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ENGLISH



PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



Bruce
Ford

Bill Cooper

Bruce Ford

sings

Viennese Operetta

	Time	Page
Franz Lehár (1870–1948)		
<i>from The Land of Smiles</i>		
[1] ‘You are my heart’s delight’ (Dein ist mein ganzes Herz) Pieter Schoeman violin solo	3:53	[p. 48]
Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880)		
<i>from La Belle Hélène</i>		
[2] ‘On Mount Ida’ (Au Mont Ida)	3:47	[p. 48]
Johann Strauss II (1825–1899)		
<i>from The Gipsy Baron</i>		
[3] ‘Who made us one?’ (Wer uns getraut?) with Helen Williams soprano and Geoffrey Mitchell Choir	3:55	[p. 49]
Emmerich Kálmán (1882–1953)		
<i>from Countess Maritza</i>		
[4] ‘Play, gipsy’ (Komm, Zigan)	5:41	[p. 50]
Johann Strauss II		
<i>from A Night in Venice</i>		
[5] ‘Love is a delicate flower’ (Ach, wie so herrlich zu schaun)	3:14	[p. 51]

	Time	Page
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[6] ‘Patiently smiling’ (Immer nur lächeln)	5:20	[p. 52]
Johann Strauss II		
<i>from The Gipsy Baron</i>		
[7] ‘Since I was left an orphan lad’ (Als flotter Geist, doch früh verwaist) with Geoffrey Mitchell Choir	2:58	[p. 52]
Carl Zeller (1842–1898)		
<i>from The Birdseller</i>		
[8] ‘My old father years ago’ (Wie mein Ahn’l zwanzig Jahr) with Geoffrey Mitchell Choir	4:17	[p. 53]
Robert Stolz (1880–1975)		
<i>from The Song is Done</i>		
[9] ‘Don’t ask me why I’m leaving’ (Frag’ nicht, warum ich gehe)	4:41	[p. 53]
Oscar Straus (1870–1954)		
<i>from A Waltz Dream</i>		
[10] ‘Softly, so softly’ (Leise, ganz leise) with Alan Opie baritone	4:53	[p. 54]

Franz Lehár

from Giuditta

- [11] 'Comrades, this life is the life for me!'
(Freunde, das Leben is lebenswert!)
with **Geoffrey Mitchell Choir** and **Pieter Schoeman** violin solo

from The Czarevitch

- [12] 'Alone, always alone' (Volga Song)
(Allein, immer allein)

Emmerich Kálmán

from Countess Maritza

- [13] 'Heavens, what's happ'ning to me?'
(Herrgott, was ist denn heut' los?)
with **Helen Williams** soprano
- [14] 'Vienna mine'
(Grüss mir mein Wien)

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Franz Lehár

from The Land of Smiles

- [15] 'Love! What has given you this magic pow'r?'
(Wer hat die Liebe uns ins Herz geschenkt?)
with **Helen Williams** soprano and **Pieter Schoeman** violin solo

Robert Stolz

- [16] 'We met in Vienna, my true love and I'
(In Wien hab' ich einmal ein Mäd'el geliebt)

Franz Lehár

from The Merry Widow

- [17] 'Words forbidden'
(Lippen schweigen)
with **Helen Williams** soprano

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TT 74:45

Bruce Ford tenor
London Philharmonic Orchestra
Pieter Schoeman leader
Walter Weller

Great Operetta Arias

In the world of opera one of the most frequently debated questions is that of the language in which performances should be given – is it better to sing in the original language, or in that of the audience? There are cogent arguments on both sides and by now they are somewhat over-familiar, but in the case of operetta the situation is different. Writing as one who has had the pleasure of appearing in a wide range of Viennese operettas in several different countries, sometimes in German and sometimes in translation, I am convinced that stage productions can only be truly effective in the language of the audience. For one thing, in classical operetta the story usually unfolds via extensive scenes of spoken dialogue, often involving verbal comedy, and for another it is essential that the leading singers should build up a very direct personal contact with audiences – something which is hard to achieve if they can understand neither what one is saying nor what one is singing.

The current Bruce Ford recital consists almost exclusively of operetta of the Viennese brand, the one exception being a number by

the real progenitor of Viennese operetta, who happened to be a Parisian of German origin, namely Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880). After his all-conquering triumph with *Orpheus in the Underworld* (1858) he returned to the send-up of Greek mythology with *La Belle Hélène* (*The Beautiful Helen*) (1864), a hilarious rewrite of the story of the Trojan War. In his entrance song ‘On Mount Ida’ (track [2]) Paris, who started all the trouble, tells the familiar story, in distinctly unhomeric terms, of the three goddesses and their beauty contest.

So successful were the *opéras bouffes* of Jacques Offenbach when they started to appear in pirated versions in Vienna in the late 1850s that various Viennese composers, observing that there was money in this operetta business, decided to try their hands at it too. In the vanguard was Franz von Suppé (1819–1895), whose *Die schöne Galathée* is generally regarded as the first really successful Viennese operetta, and hard on his heels came the still more brilliantly talented Johann Strauss II (1825–1899).

Though Strauss never trumped the success of *Die Fledermaus* (1874) he wrote several

other operettas which have held their place in the repertoire, at least in continental Europe. *A Night in Venice* (*Eine Nacht in Venedig*) (1883) suffers from a sprawling libretto which various subsequent hands have attempted to knock into shape, but musically it contains many delightful numbers of which ‘Love is a delicate flower’ (track [5]) is a typical example. Caramello, lackey and personal barber to the philandering Duke of Urbino, mistakenly believes that his master’s latest conquest is Caramello’s own fiancée. With bitter irony he muses on the unreliability of the fair sex, even going so far as to borrow from the Duke in *Rigoletto* that familiar phrase ‘La donna è mobile’ (‘Woman is fickle’).

With *The Gipsy Baron* (*Der Zigeunerbaron*) (1885) Strauss registered his greatest success apart from *Die Fledermaus*. It was his secret hope that with its brilliant scoring, its double choruses, and its wonderfully constructed finales to Acts I and II, quite apart from its general glorification of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it might open the doors of Europe’s opera houses. In this he was disappointed, though the piece certainly requires fully fledged operatic singing if justice is to be done to it. The title-hero, Sandor Barinkay, comes back to his native Hungary after years of

wandering in foreign parts, in order to claim the estate which his father had been forced to relinquish when he had been banished years before for allegedly collaborating with the invading Turks. With his entrance song ‘Since I was left an orphan lad’ (track [7]) Barinkay, one of life’s irrepressible extroverts, entertains the locals with an imaginative account of how he has spent the intervening years. He subsequently scandalises the Royal Commissioner for the area by taking a gipsy bride. ‘Who performed the service?’ asks this formidable dignitary, ‘and who were your witnesses?’ In the duet ‘Who made us one?’ (track [3]) Barinkay, assisted by his bride Saffi, explains that they were married according to gipsy custom, with the birds of the air officiating and a nightingale acting as the choir.

Suppé, Strauss and a third composer, Karl Millöcker (1842–1899) were the leading lights of what came to be known as the Golden Age of Viennese operetta, but many successful pieces also flowed from other pens, such as *The Birdseller* (*Der Vogelhändler*) (1891) by Carl Zeller (1842–1898), a brilliantly gifted amateur who, in his professional persona, was a civil servant in the Ministry of Arts and Education. This time our hero is Adam, a

simple birdseller from the Tyrol, who, through a chain of misunderstandings, becomes romantically embroiled with a Rhineland princess. His most popular solo, 'My old father years ago' (track [8]), in fact has nothing to do with the plot; it is simply a number in folk-song style which he sings to entertain the guests at a party.

By the end of the nineteenth century Suppé, Strauss and Millöcker had all died and the craze for operetta, which had become so much part of social life in Vienna, appeared to be running out of steam. On 28 December 1905, however, an event occurred which put this trend into reverse and which inaugurated the so-called Silver Age of Viennese operetta. This was the opening night of **The Merry Widow**, (*Die lustige Witwe*), by Franz Lehár (1870–1948), a piece which created an international sensation unprecedented even by *Fledermaus* standards. In the same way that the Italian verismo composers were writing operas about ordinary people rather than kings, queens and high priests, *The Merry Widow* introduced real flesh-and-blood characters into operetta, abandoning the kind of theatrical convention which allowed, say, Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus* not to recognise his own wife at a masked ball. The leading couple in *The Merry Widow* are Hanna

and Danilo, a romantic pair who, somewhat like Beatrice and Benedict, bicker their way to the final happy ending. In a fit of pique Danilo has declared that he will never allow the words 'I love you' to pass his lips, and even to one of Lehár's most perfect melodies – 'Words forbidden' (track [7]) – he still just manages to restrain himself.

By the mid-1920s Lehár's style had undergone a radical change. He had started writing all his leading tenor roles for the great operatic tenor Richard Tauber, and though Tauber's voice was a bewitchingly romantic instrument, in his physical appearance he was by no means the conventional matinee idol. Instead of the usual 'boy gets girl at final curtain' dénouement the tradition arose for unhappy endings, with Tauber heroically renouncing the path of love for that of duty. In **The Czarevitch** (*Der Zarewitsch*) (1927) Tauber appeared as the heir to the throne of Russia, a moody young man who is initially more interested in military matters than in amorous adventures. In his opening solo 'Alone, always alone' (track [12]) he equates himself with a sentry standing guard on the banks of the Volga, a frame of mind which is to alter remarkably when he encounters the lovely Sonja.

In **The Land of Smiles** (*Das Land des Lächelns*) (1929) Tauber became Prince Sou-Chong, Chinese ambassador to Vienna, who falls in love with the young countess Lisa. Arriving at a ball given for her by her parents he expresses his trepidation; can she possibly love someone as different as himself, or will he have to fall back on the traditional Chinese solution of smiling at grief? 'Patiently smiling' (track [6]). To his delight Lisa returns his love, and they travel together to Peking, where they become man and wife. All is apparently serene – 'Love! What has given you this magic pow'r?' (track [16]) – but in due course it emerges that East is still East and West is still West, though luckily not before Sou has sung the most celebrated of all the so-called *Tauberlieder* 'You are my heart's delight' (track [1]).

With his last stage work, **Giuditta** (1934), Lehár succeeded where Strauss had failed: its world premiere was given in the Vienna State Opera. Almost a *Spieloper* rather than an operetta, it tells a *Carmen*-like story about a young soldier brought low by a *femme fatale*. In his entrance song, however, Octavio has no presentiment of the catastrophe which lies in wait. Life is for living, he tells his friends, and such is his exuberance that he goes so far as to

open his role on a high A natural: 'Comrades, this life is the life for me!' (track [11]).

Lehár's exact contemporary, Oscar Straus (1870–1954), wrote **A Waltz Dream** (*Ein Walzertraum*) (1907) with the express intention of rivaling the record initial run of *The Merry Widow*, which, in Vienna at least, it succeeded in doing. The piece is really a hymn to the memory of the old romantic Vienna which by then was slipping irretrievably into the past; indeed one or two of the characters in *A Waltz Dream* could almost have stepped out of the plays and short stories of that great chronicler of Viennese social life Arthur Schnitzler. Before the operetta opens the fun-loving Lieutenant Niki had been appointed attendant to Helene, daughter of the ruler of Flausenthurn, a provincial principality in Germany, while her father was on an official visit to Vienna. She fell in love with Niki, and in Act I he has just become her husband, without having fully realised what a mind-blowingly boring place Flausenthurn would turn out to be. He should be in the bridal chamber attending to his dynastic duties, but, as he tells his best man, he has just heard, floating through the window of his apartment from the public park below, the sound of a real Viennese band playing a real Viennese

waltz. Might they not surrender to its dreamy charm and go down together for one last breath of freedom? They do so, but with disturbing results... 'Softly, so softly' (track [10]).

As a composer and conductor whose active career spanned no less than seventy-five years, Robert Stolz (1880–1975) occupies a unique position in the annals of Viennese light music. Though he wrote well over sixty operettas and *Singspiele* he remains perhaps best known as the composer of literally hundreds of individual songs, many of which, such as 'Don't ask me why I'm leaving' (track [9]), first saw the light of day via the Berlin film industry – in this instance in a film entitled **The Song is Done** (*Das Lied ist aus*). Another genre of which Stolz was a master was the so-called *Wienerlied*, simply 'Viennese Song', and 'We met in Vienna, my true love and I' (track [16]) is a much-loved example. Simple as they may sound, the best *Wienerlieder* depend for their effect on the art that conceals art, and they were basically written to be sung in the *Heuriger*, the wine-gardens on the outskirts of Vienna, accompanied, as is the present recording, by the classic Schrammel Quartet, consisting of two fiddles, accordion and guitar.

The special contribution which Emmerich Kálmán (1882–1953) made to operetta, apart

from his inexhaustible strength as a melodist, was the degree to which he combined Viennese sophistication with the panache and exuberance of his native Hungary. In **Countess Maritza** (*Gräfin Mariza*) (1924) our hero is Count Tassilo Endrödy-Wittenburg, a Viennese aristocrat who has been impoverished by the debacle of the First World War and has taken employment under an assumed name as manager of the vast Hungarian estate of an absentee owner, the mega-rich Countess Maritza. Tassilo's affairs in Vienna have been wound up for him by an old army friend, to whom Tassilo confides that, though he has basically made a tolerable new life for himself, he does undeniably suffer the pangs of homesickness. 'Vienna mine' (track [14]).

Life becomes distinctly more complicated when Maritza makes a surprise reappearance accompanied by numerous wealthy hangers-on. While they carouse within the house Tassilo is obliged to enjoy his lonely glass of wine out on the terrace, and in an untypical mood of self-pity he calls on the gipsy violinist to help him assuage his feelings of bitterness. 'Play, gipsy' (track [4]). All, however, is not lost. Unlike Lehár, Kálmán was still writing operettas with happy endings, and after many

ingeniously contrived vicissitudes soprano and tenor end up doing exactly what sopranos and tenors are supposed to do – singing an ecstatic love duet and dancing an intoxicating waltz. 'Heavens, what's happ'ning to me?' (track [13]).

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Bill Cooper



style, and technical prowess, as well as for his expressive acting ability. He is a regular guest in major houses throughout North America and Europe, where he specialises in highly demanding works of Mozart and the *bel canto* composers. For more than a decade Bruce Ford has been instrumental in the re-evaluation of many *bel canto* operas, both on

American tenor **Bruce Ford** is firmly established as one of today's most outstanding singers. He has earned high praise for his extraordinary vocal beauty and range, textual vividness, authoritative

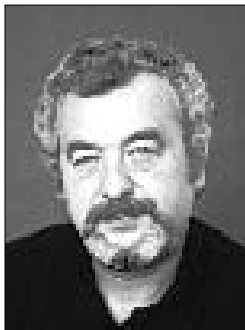
disc and in live performances. Many venues have revived unjustly neglected operas especially for him, including The Royal Opera (Rossini's *Otello*) and the festivals of Glyndebourne (*Ermione*) and Pesaro (Zelmira, Rossini's *Otello*). He has also appeared at La Scala, the opera houses of Naples, Florence, and Bologna; and Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and the Salzburg Festival. Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* – the role he has performed most frequently in his career to date – was the vehicle for his debuts at The Royal Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera and Dallas Opera.

His concert appearances have included performances in such renowned venues as La Scala, the Edinburgh Festival, Carnegie Hall and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, and he is a sought-after recitalist. Conductors he has worked with include Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti, Sir Charles Mackerras, Richard Bonyngue, Sir Roger Norrington, Sir Colin Davis and David Parry, to name but a few.

Bruce Ford has documented much of his repertoire on disc, with performances including the original version of *Lucia di Lammermoor* under Sir Charles Mackerras; three solo operatic recitals (Romantic Heroes and Serious Rossini on Opera Rara and Great

Operatic Arias for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation); and Opera Rara's releases of rare operas of Mayr, Donizetti, Pacini, and Rossini, for which he receives consistently favourable reviews. Bruce Ford's triumphant portrayals of Mozart's Mitridate (The Royal Opera) and Oreste in *Ermione* (Glyndebourne) can be seen on video/DVD. After nearly two decades on stage, the tenor's repertoire is still expanding, and he has recently added the title roles in Mozart's operas *La clemenza di Tito* and *Idomeneo*.

In recording this disc of operetta arias, Bruce Ford had a chance to go back to the earliest part of his career in Germany where he appeared in many of the works featured here.



Walter Weller was Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra between January 1992 and July 1997 and is now Conductor Emeritus. He also holds the title of

Artistic Advisor and Principal Guest Conductor of the National Orchestra of Spain. He was Artistic Director of the Allgemeine Musikgesellschaft Basel, General Music Director of the Basel Theatre and Chief Conductor of the Basel Symphony Orchestra from September 1994 until July 1997, Principal Conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra from 1980 to 1985, and Music Director and Artistic Director to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic from 1977 to 1980. At the age of twenty-one he was appointed leader of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, an orchestra he went on to conduct.

He is regularly invited as guest conductor by major orchestras throughout the world and has worked with the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Dresden Staatskapelle, RSO Berlin, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Philharmonie Hamburg, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre National de France, Orchestra del Teatro alla Scala Milan, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Radio Philharmonic Orchestra Holland, Tonhalle Zürich, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Swedish Radio, Stockholm Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic and Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestras. In North

America, he has worked with such orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, Minnesota, San Francisco, Houston, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Cincinnati and Toronto Symphony Orchestras, and the National Arts Centre Orchestra, Ottawa.

Operatic engagements have included *Der fliegende Holländer* at La Scala, *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Der fliegende Holländer* for English National Opera, *Der Freischütz* at Teatro Comunale, Bologna, *Prince Igor* for Berlin Staatskapelle, and *Fidelio* and *Der Rosenkavalier* for Scottish Opera. He has also undertaken concert performances at the Tivoli Festival. In his opening season with Basel, he

conducted a highly successful production of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Other operas in concert have included *Fidelio* with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, *Elektra* and *Der fliegende Holländer* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and *Eugene Onegin* in Copenhagen.

Recordings include cycles of the Prokofiev and Rachmaninov Symphonies, Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, Janáček's *Lachian Dances*, Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 1 Bruckner's Symphony No. 4, and, for Chandos the Beethoven Symphonies and piano concertos (with John Lill), and the Mendelssohn symphonies.

Photo: Private collection



Bruce Ford as
Tassilo in Kálman's
Countess Maritza



Mary Evans Picture Library

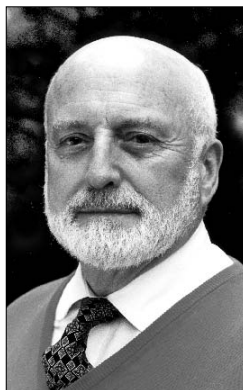
Illustration by Talbot Hughes of
Danilo and the widowed Sonia,
from the souvenir programme of
the first British production of
Lehár's *The Merry Widow*, 1907

PETER MOORES, CBE, DL

Peter Moores was born in Lancashire, the son of Sir John Moores, founder of the giant Littlewoods mail order, chain store and football pools group. He was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, where he read modern languages – he was already fluent in German and Italian. It was opera, however, which was his great love. He had worked at Glyndebourne Festival Opera before going up to university, and after Oxford he became a production student at the Vienna State Opera, combining this with a three-year course at the Vienna Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.

By the end of his third year at the Academy Moores had produced the Vienna premiere of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, had worked as Assistant Producer at the San Carlo Opera House, Naples, the Geneva Festival and Rome Opera, and seemed set for a successful operatic career. At this point he received a letter from his father asking him to come home as he was needed in the firm. Family loyalty being paramount, he returned to Liverpool.

From 1981 to 1983 he was a Governor of the BBC, and a Trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1978 until 1985; from 1988 to 1992 he was a director of Scottish Opera. He received the Gold Medal of the Italian Republic in 1974, an Honorary MA from Christ Church, Oxford, in 1975, and was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Northern College of Music in 1985. In May 1992 he became Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire, and in the New Year's Honours List for 1991, he was made a CBE for his charitable services to the Arts.



Bill Cooper/PMF

Peter Moores, CBE, DL

Whilst still in his early twenties, Peter Moores had started giving financial support to various young artists, several of whom – Joan Sutherland, Colin Davis and the late Geraint Evans amongst them – were to become world-famous. In 1964 he set aside a substantial part of his inheritance to establish the Peter Moores Foundation, a charity designed to support those causes dear to his heart: to make music and the arts more accessible to more people; to give encouragement to the young and to improve race relations.

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

In the field of music, the main areas supported by the Peter Moores Foundation are:

- the recording of operas from the core repertory sung in English translation; the recording or staging of rare Italian opera from the *bel canto* era of the early nineteenth century (repertoire which would otherwise only be accessible to scholars); the nurturing of promising young opera singers; new operatic work.

The Foundation awards scholarships annually to students and post-graduates for furthering their vocal studies at the Royal Northern College of Music. In addition, project awards may be given to facilitate language tuition in the appropriate country, attendance at masterclasses or summer courses, specialised repertoire study with an acknowledged expert in the field, or post-graduate performance training.

The Foundation encourages new operatic work by contributing to recordings, the publication of scores and stage productions.

Since 1964 the Foundation has supported the recording of more than forty operas, many of these sung in English, in translation. It has always been Peter Moores's belief that to enjoy opera to the full, there must be no language barrier, particularly for newcomers and particularly in the popular repertoire – hence the *Opera in English* series launched with Chandos in 1995. This includes many of the English language recordings funded by the Foundation in the 1970s and 1980s, and is now the largest recorded collection of operas sung in English.



Poster for a production of
Countess Maritza, Paris, 1930



Große Operettenarien

Eine der meistdiskutierten Fragen der Opernwelt ist die, in welcher Sprache man die Werke am Besten aufführt – sollte man in der Originalsprache singen oder in der, die das Publikum versteht? Es gibt auf beiden Seiten dieser Auseinandersetzung stichhaltige Argumente, die inzwischen allzu vertraut sind, aber im Bereich der Operette liegt der Fall etwas anders. Als jemand, der die Freude gehabt hat, in den verschiedensten Ländern in zahlreichen Wiener Operetten singend manchmal auf Deutsch, und manchmal mit einer Übersetzung, aufgetreten zu sein, bin ich zu der Überzeugung gelangt, dass Bühnenaufführungen nur in der Sprache des Publikums ihre volle Wirkung entfalten können. Einerseits entwickelt sich die Fabel in der klassischen Operette im Allgemeinen mittels ausgedehnter gesprochener Dialoge, die oft vom Sprachwitz leben, und andererseits ist es für die Sängern in die Hauptrollen unerlässlich, ganz direkt Kontakt zum Publikum aufzunehmen – was nur schwer zu bewältigen ist, wenn es weder den gesprochenen noch den gesungenen Text versteht.

Bruce Fords vorliegendes Recital setzt sich fast ausnahmslos aus Operetten der Wiener Art zusammen – die einzige Ausnahme ist eine Nummer von dem wahren Vorläufer der Wiener Operette, einem Pariser deutscher Herkunft, nämlich Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880). Nach seinem überwältigenden Triumph mit *Orpheus in der Unterwelt* (1858) kehrte er mit *La Belle Hélène* (*The Beautiful Helen*) (1864), einer urkomischen Neuinterpretation den Trojanischen Kriegs, zur Persiflage griechischer Mythologie zurück. In seinem Auftrittslied “On Mount Ida” (Band [2]) erzählt Paris, der den ganzen Ärger ausgelöst hat, in ausgesprochen unhomerischer Sprache die bekannte Geschichte von den drei Göttinnen und ihrem Schönheitswettbewerb.

So erfolgreich waren Jacques Offenbachs *opéras bouffés*, als sie in Raubdrucken gegen Ende der 1850er-Jahre in Wien aufzutauchen begannen, dass verschiedene Wiener Komponisten meinten, mit diesen so genannten Operetten ließe sich Geld machen, und sich selbst daran versuchten. Einer der ersten von ihnen war Franz von Suppé (1819–1895), dessen Werk *Die schöne*

Galathée allgemein als erste wirklich erfolgreiche Wiener Operette gilt, und dicht auf den Fersen folgte ihm der noch begabtere Johann Strauß (Sohn; 1825–1899).

Obwohl Strauß den Erfolg seiner *Fledermaus* (1874) nie übertreffen konnte, schrieb er mehrere andere Operetten, die zumindest in Kontinentaleuropa ihren Platz im Repertoire behaupteten. *A Night in Venice* (*Eine Nacht in Venedig*) (1883) leidet unter einem ausufernden Libretto, das mehrere nachfolgende Bearbeiter in geeignetere Form zu bringen versuchten, aber von der Musik her enthält es viele wunderbare Nummern, für die “Love is a delicate flower” (Band [5]) typisch ist. Caramello, Lakei und Leibbarbier des als Verführer bekannten Herzogs von Urbino, meint irrtümlicherweise, die neueste Eroberung seines Herrn sei Caramellos eigene Verlobte. Mit bitterer Ironie sinniert er über die Unzuverlässigkeit des schönen Geschlechts nach und geht sogar so weit, vom Herzog aus *Rigoletto* jene bekannte Floskel zu entleihen: “La donna è mobile” (“Das Weib ist wankelmütig”).

Mit *The Gipsy Baron* (*Der Zigeunerbaron*) (1885) errang Strauß seinen größten Erfolg neben der *Fledermaus*. Insgeheim hoffte er, das Werk könne ihm mit seiner brillanten

Instrumentierung, den Doppelchören und den großartig gestalteten Finales zum ersten und zweiten Akt (ganz abgesehen von seiner generellen Verherrlichung des österreichisch-ungarischen Kaiserreichs) Zugang zu den Opernhäusern Europas verschaffen. In dieser Hinsicht wurde er enttäuscht, obwohl das Werk zweifellos echte Opernsänger braucht, wenn man ihm gerecht werden will. Der Titelheld Sandor Barinkay kehrt nach jahrelanger Wanderschaft in der Fremde in seine ungarische Heimat zurück, um Anspruch auf den Besitz zu erheben, den sein Vater hatte aufgeben müssen, als er viele Jahre zuvor wegen angeblicher Kollaboration mit den türkischen Eindringlingen verbannt worden war. In seiner Auftrittsnummer “Since I was left an orphan lad” (Band [7]) unterhält der unerschütterlich extravertierte Barinkay die Einheimischen mit einer phantasievollen Darstellung seiner Abenteuer der vergangenen Jahre. Danach brüskiert er den königlichen Kommissär des Bezirks, indem er eine Zigeunerbraut freit. “Wer hat euch denn getraut?”, fragt der formidable Würdenträger, “Und wer war Zeuge dabei?”. In dem Duett “Who made us one?” (Band [8]) erklärt Barinkay mit Hilfe seiner Braut Saffi, dass sie nach Zigeunerart getraut wurden, mit den

Vögeln der Lüfte als Trauungsbehörde und einer Nachtigall als Chor.

Suppé, Strauß und ein dritter Komponist, Karl Millöcker (1842–1899), waren die führenden Persönlichkeiten des später so genannten Goldenen Zeitalters der Wiener Operette, aber auch aus manch anderer Feder flossen erfolgreiche Werke, z.B. **The Birdseller** (*Der Vogelhändler*) (1891) von Carl Zeller (1842–1898), einem hoch begabten Amateur, der im Hauptberuf als Beamter im Ministerium für Unterricht und Kultus tätig war. Unser Held ist diesmal Adam, ein schlichter Vogelhändler aus Tirol, der durch eine Verkettung von Missverständnissen in romantische Verstrickungen mit der pfälzischen Kurfürstin gerät. Sein beliebtestes Solo, “My old father years ago” (Band [8]) hat an sich nichts mit der Handlung zu tun; es handelt sich lediglich um eine Nummer im volkstümlichen Stil, die er bei einem Fest zur Unterhaltung der Gäste singt.

Am Ende des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts waren Suppé, Strauß und Millöcker alle gestorben, und die Begeisterung für Operetten, die zu einem so wichtigen Bestandteil des Wiener Gesellschaftslebens geworden war, schien allmählich zu verebben. Am 28. Dezember 1905 kam es jedoch zu

einem Ereignis, das diesen Trend umkehrte und das so genannte Silberne Zeitalter der Wiener Operette einleitete. Dies war die Premiere der **Merry Widow** (*Die lustige Witwe*) von Franz Lehár (1870–1948), ein Werk, dessen sensationeller Erfolg in aller Welt sogar die *Fledermaus* in den Schatten stellte. Ebenso, wie italienische Komponisten des *Verismo* Opern über einfache Leute statt über Könige, Königinnen und Hohepriester schrieben, so führte *The Merry Widow* Figuren aus Fleisch und Blut in die Operette ein und verzichtete dabei auf jene Bühnenkonventionen, die es beispielsweise dem Gabriel von Eisenstein in der *Fledermaus* gestatteten, bei einem *Maskenball* seine eigene Frau nicht zu erkennen. Die Hauptfiguren in *The Merry Widow* sind Hanna und Danilo, ein romantisch verknüpften Paar, die sich in der Manier von Shakespeares Beatrice und Benedict auf ein Happy End hin zanken. In einem Anfall von Verärgerung hat Danilo erklärt, niemals würden ihm die Worte “ich liebe dich” über die Lippen kommen, und selbst zu einer von Lehárs berühmtesten Melodien – “Words forbidden” (Band [17]) – kann er sich gerade noch beherrschen.

Um die Mitte der 1920er-Jahre hatte sich Lehárs Stil radikal gewandelt. Er hatte

begonnen, all seine Tenor-Hauptrollen für den großen Operntenor Richard Tauber zu schreiben, und obwohl Taubers Stimme ein romantisch bezauberndes Instrument war, entsprach seine äußere Erscheinung nicht gerade der eines jugendlichen Helden. Statt der üblichen Auflösung “Junge kriegt Mädchen, wenn der letzte Vorhang fällt” wurden unglückliche Schlüsse immer üblicher, bei denen Tauber ob der Pflichterfüllung heldenhaft der Liebe entsagt. In **The Czarevitch** (*Der Zarewitsch*) (1927) spielte Tauber den russischen Thronerben, einen launenhaften jungen Mann, der anfangs mehr an Militärischem als an Liebesabenteuern interessiert ist. In seinem einleitenden Solo “Alone, always alone” (Band [12]) identifiziert er sich mit dem Soldaten, der am Flussufer Wache steht, doch wird sich diese Einstellung bemerkenswert ändern, wenn er der lieblichen Sonja begegnet.

The Land of Smiles (*Das Land des Lächelns*) (1929) verwandelte sich Tauber in den Prinzen Sou-Chong, der sich als chinesischer Gesandter in Wien in die junge Gräfin Lisa verliebt. Als er bei einem Ball eintrifft, den ihre Eltern für sie geben, bringt er seine Zweifel zum Ausdruck; kann sie denn jemanden lieben, der ihr so fremdartig ist wie er, oder wird er den traditionellen chinesischen

Ausweg wählen müssen, angesichts seines Kummers immer nur zu lächeln? “Patiently smiling” (Band [6]). Zu seiner Freude erwidert sie seine Liebe, und sie reisen zusammen nach Peking, wo sie Hochzeit halten. Scheinbar ist alles in bester Ordnung – “Love! What has given you this magic pow’r?” (Band [15]) –, aber im weiteren Verlauf wird deutlich: Ost bleibt Ost und West bleibt West, aber das erweist sich glücklicherweise erst, nachdem Sou das berühmteste aller so genannten Tauberlieder gesungen hat, “You are my heart’s delight” (Band [1]).

Mit seinem letzten Bühnenwerk **Giuditta** (1934) hatte Lehár Erfolg, wo Strauß gescheitert war: Die Uraufführung wurde an der Wiener Staatsoper gegeben. Einer Spieloper ähnlicher als einer Operette, erzählt das Werk die an *Carmen* gemahnende Geschichte eines jungen Soldaten, der von einer Femme fatale zugrunde gerichtet wird. Doch in seinem Auftrittslied plagt Ocatavio keine Vorahnung der Katastrophe, die ihn erwartet. “Freunde, das Leben ist lebenswert”, erklärt er seinen Freunden, und sein Überschwang verleitet ihn sogar dazu, seinen Part auf einem hohen A anzustimmen: “Comrades, this life is the life for me!” (Band [11]).

Lehárs gleichaltriger Zeitgenosse Oscar Straus (1870–1954) schrieb die Operette **A Waltz Dream** (*Ein Walzertraum*) 1907 in der ausdrücklichen Absicht, es mit der Rekordzahl von Aufführungen der ursprünglichen Produktion der *Merry Widow* aufzunehmen, was ihm zumindest in Wien auch gelang. Das Werk ist im Grunde eine Hymne an das alte romantische Wien, das zu jener Zeit unwiderruflich verging; in der Tat könnte die eine oder andere Figur aus dem Walzertraum direkt den Theaterstücken und Erzählungen Arthur Schnitzlers, jenes großen Chronisten des Wiener Gesellschaftslebens, entsprungen sein. Vor dem Einsetzen der Handlung ist der lebenslustige Leutnant Niki zum Begleiter der Prinzessin Helene bestimmt worden, während ihr Vater, der Herrscher des deutschen Duodezfürstentums Flausenthurn, sich zu einem Staatsbesuch in Wien aufhielt. Sie hat sich in Niki verliebt, und im ersten Akt hat er gerade mit ihr Hochzeit gefeiert, ohne sich so recht bewusst gewesen zu sein, als welcher unglaublich langweiliger Ort sich Flausenthurn erweisen würde. Er sollte eigentlich im Brautgemach sein, um seinen dynastischen Pflichten nachzukommen, aber wie er seinem Kameraden und Trauzeugen mitteilt, hat er gerade aus dem Restaurationspark unter dem

Fenster seines Appartements den Klang einer echten Wiener Kapelle vernommen, die einen echten Wiener Walzer spielt. Sollen sie sich dessen träumerischem Charme hingeben und gemeinsam hinuntergehen, um einen letzten Hauch von Freiheit zu genießen? Sie tun es, doch mit beunruhigenden Folgen ... “Softly, so softly” (Band [10]).

Als Komponist und Dirigent, dessen Berufslaufbahn nicht weniger als fünfundsechzig Jahre umspannte, gebührt Robert Stolz (1880–1975) eine einzigartige Position in den Annalen der Wiener Unterhaltungsmusik. Obwohl er weit über sechzig Operetten und Singspiele schrieb, ist er heute wohl am bekanntesten als Verfasser von buchstäblich hunderten von einzelnen Liedern, von denen viele, wie “Don’t ask me why I’m leaving” (Band [9]) das Licht der Welt vermittels der Berliner Filmindustrie erblickten – im vorliegenden Fall in einem Streifen namens *Das Lied ist aus*. Ein weiteres Genre, das Stolz meisterhaft beherrschte, war das so genannte Wienerlied, und “We met in Vienna, my true love and I” (Band [16]) ist dafür ein vielgeliebtes Beispiel. So unkompliziert sie auch klingen mögen, beruht die Wirkung der besten Wienerlieder doch auf ihrer kunstvoll gestalteten Kunstlosigkeit, und sie wurden im

Grunde geschrieben, um in den Heurigenwirtschaften der Wiener Vorstädte gesungen zu werden, wie in der vorliegenden Aufnahme begleitet vom klassischen Schrammelquartett, das aus zwei Geigen, Akkordeon und Gitarre besteht.

Der besondere Beitrag, den Emmerich Kálmán (1882–1953) zur Operettengattung leistete, ist neben seiner grenzenlosen melodischen Schöpferkraft das Maß, in dem er Wiener Kultiviertheit mit dem Elan und Überschwang seiner ungarischen Heimat zu verbinden wusste. Der Held der Operette **Countess Maritza** (*Gräfin Mariza*) (1924) ist Graf Tassilo Endrödy-Wittenburg, ein Wiener Adliger, den das Debakel des Ersten Weltkriegs seines Vermögens beraubt hat, so dass er unter falschem Namen eine Stelle als Verwalter der riesigen ungarischen Güter der meist abwesenden, schwerreichen Gräfin Mariza annehmen musste. Tassilos Wiener Angelegenheiten werden für ihn von einem alten Freund aus der Militärzeit wahrgenommen, und ihm vertraut Tassilo an, dass er nun zwar ein halbwegs erträgliches Auskommen hat, aber heftig unter Heimweh leidet: “Vienna mine” (Band [14]).

Das Leben wird erheblich komplizierter, als die Gräfin Mariza sich unvermutet einstellt, begleitet von zahlreichen wohlhabenden

Anhängern. Während sie im Hause zechen, ist Tassilo zu einem einsamen Glas Wein auf der Terrasse verdammt, und in untypisch selbstmitleidiger Stimmung fordert er den Zigeunergeiger auf, ihm beim Lindern seiner Verbitterung zu helfen: “Play, gipsy” (Band [4]). Doch noch ist nicht alles verloren. Im Gegensatz zu Lehár schrieb Kálmán nach wie vor Operetten mit Happy End, und nach vielen ausgeklügelte ersonnenen Wechselfällen finden Sopran und Tenor zusammen, um das zu tun, wozu Soprane und Tenöre ausersehen sind – sie singen ein ekstatisches Liebesduett und tanzen einen berausenden Walzer: “Heavens, what’s happen’g to me?” (Band [13]).

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Übersetzung: Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller

Der amerikanische Tenor **Bruce Ford** ist zweifellos einer der herausragenden Sänger unserer Zeit. Die außergewöhnliche Schönheit und der Umfang seiner Stimme, sein lebhafter Textausdruck und souveräner Stil, sein hohes technisches und schauspielerisches Können haben die Kritik zu größtem Lob veranlasst. An den berühmten Opernhäusern Nordamerikas und Europas gastiert er

regelmäßig in den anspruchsvollen Rollen Mozarts und der *Belcanto*-Komponisten. Seit über einem Jahrzehnt hat Bruce Ford maßgeblich zu einer Neubewertung zahlreicher *Belcanto*-Opern beigetragen, sowohl auf Schallplatte als auch in Livedarbietungen. Vielerorts sind zu Unrecht vernachlässigte Opern speziell für ihn inszeniert worden, so etwa an der Royal Opera Covent Garden (Rossinis *Otello*) und bei den Festspielen von Glyndebourne (*Ermione*) und Pesaro (Zelmira, Rossinis *Otello*). Er ist auch an der Scala, den Opernhäusern von Neapel, Florenz und Bologna, beim Maggio Musicale Fiorentino und bei den Salzburger Festspielen aufgetreten. Als Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (die von ihm am häufigsten verkörperte Rolle) debütierte er an der Royal Opera, Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera und Dallas Opera.

Bruce Ford hat Konzerte an der Scala, bei den Edinburgher Festspielen, in der Carnegie Hall und dem Concertgebouw Amsterdam gegeben und ist als Recitalkünstler vielgefragt. Dirigenten wie Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti, Sir Charles Mackerras, Richard Bonynghe, Sir Roger Norrington, Sir Colin Davis und David Parry haben mit ihm zusammengearbeitet.

Bruce Ford hat einen großen Teil seines Repertoires auf Schallplatte festgehalten, so etwa *Lucia di Lammermoor* in der Originalversion unter Sir Charles Mackerras, drei Solo-Opernrecitals ("Romantische Helden" und "Rossini serio" auf Opera Rara und "Große Opernarien" für die Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation) sowie auf Opera Rara selten aufgeführte Opern von Mayr, Donizetti, Pacini und Rossini. Diese Aufnahmen werden immer wieder von der Kritik gewürdigt. Seine Triumphe als Mozarts Mitridate (Royal Opera) und Oreste in *Ermione* (Glyndebourne) sind auf Video/DVD zu sehen. Selbst nach zwei Jahrzehnten auf der Bühne erweitert er ständig sein Repertoire, so etwa kürzlich durch die Titelrollen in den Mozart-Opern *La clemenza di Tito* und *Idomeneo*.

Mit der vorliegenden Aufnahme von Operettenarien weckt Ford Erinnerungen an den Beginn seiner Karriere in Deutschland, wo er in vielen dieser Werke aufgetreten ist.

Walter Weller war von Januar 1992 bis Juli 1997 Musikdirektor und Chefdirigent des Royal Scottish National Orchestra, von dem er zum "Conductor Emeritus" ernannt wurde. Außerdem ist er Künstlerischer Berater und Chefstadtdirigent des Orquesta Nacional de

España. Er war bei der Allgemeinen Musikgesellschaft Basel Generalmusikdirektor an der Oper und Musikdirektor des Orchesters (September 1994 bis Juli 1997), Chefdirigent des Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (1980–1985) sowie Musikdirektor und Künstlerischer Leiter beim Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (1977–1980). Bereits mit 21 Jahren wurde er zum 1. Konzertmeister der Wiener Philharmoniker ernannt, die er später auch dirigierte.

Walter Weller tritt regelmäßig als Gastdirigent mit den großen Orchestern der Welt auf und hat zahlreiche Orchester geleitet: London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Staatskapelle Dresden, RSO Berlin, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Philharmonie Hamburg, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre National de France, Orchestra del Teatro alla Scala Milan, Concertgebouw Orkest, Radio Filharmonisch Orkest, Tonhalle Zürich, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Sveriges Radios Symfoniorkester, Kungliga Filharmonikerna, Stockholm sowie die Philharmoniker von Oslo und von Helsinki. In Nordamerika hat er mit Orchestern wie den New York

Philharmonikern, den Sinfonieorchestern von Minnesota, San Francisco, Houston, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Cincinnati und Toronto sowie dem National Arts Centre Orchestra von Ottawa gearbeitet.

Zu seinen Opernverpflichtungen gehörten *Der fliegende Holländer* (Scala), *Ariadne auf Naxos* und *Der fliegende Holländer* (English National Opera), *Der Freischütz* (Teatro Comunale, Bologna), *Prince Igor* (Berliner Staatskapelle) sowie *Fidelio* und *Der Rosenkavalier* (Scottish Opera). Außerdem hat er Konzertaufführungen beim Tivoli Festival geleitet. In seiner Eröffnungssaison in Basel dirigierte er eine hocheffolgreiche Inszenierung von *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Andere konzertante Opernaufführungen waren *Fidelio* mit dem City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, *Elektra* und *Der fliegende Holländer* mit dem Royal Scottish National Orchestra sowie *Eugene Onegin* in Kopenhagen.

Neben Gesamtaufnahmen der Sinfonien von Prokofjew und Rachmaninow hat Walter Weller Bartoks Konzert für Orchester, die *Lachischen Tänze* von Janáček's, Bruckners Sinfonie Nr. 4 und für Chandos die zehn Sinfonien Beethovens und dessen Klavierkonzerte (mit John Lill) sowie die Mendelssohn-Sinfonien eingespielt.

Grands airs d'opérette

Dans le monde de l'opéra, l'un des sujets les plus souvent controversés est celui de la langue dans laquelle doivent être données les représentations – vaut-il mieux chanter dans la langue originale ou dans celle de l'auditoire? Il y a des arguments convaincants des deux côtés et, de nos jours, ils sont un peu trop connus, mais, dans le cas de l'opérette, la situation est différente. Ayant eu le plaisir de me produire dans un large éventail d'opérettes viennoises en différents pays, chantant quelques fois en Allemand et quelques fois à la traduction, je suis convaincu que les productions scéniques ne peuvent vraiment parvenir à leur effet que dans la langue du public. D'une part, dans l'opérette classique, l'histoire se déroule généralement au travers de longues scènes de dialogue parlé, qui impliquent souvent un élément comique verbal; d'autre part, il est essentiel que les chanteurs qui tiennent les rôles principaux établissent un contact personnel très direct avec l'auditoire – ce qui est difficile à réaliser si ce dernier ne peut comprendre ni ce qui se dit ni ce qui se chante.

Le présent récital de Bruce Ford se compose presque exclusivement d'airs d'opérettes

viennoises, à l'exception d'un numéro signé du véritable père de ladite opérette viennoise, qui se trouve être un Parisien d'origine allemande, à savoir Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880). Après le total triomphe d'*Orphée aux Enfers* (1858), il retourna à la parodie de la mythologie grecque avec *La Belle Hélène* (*The Beautiful Helen*) (1864), version réécrite et désopilante de l'histoire de la Guerre de Troie. Dans son air d'entrée "On Mount Ida" (page 32), Pâris, qui est à l'origine de tous les problèmes, raconte l'histoire bien connue des trois déesses et de leur concours de beauté, en des termes sans aucun rapport avec Homère.

Lorsqu'ils commencèrent à être représentés à Vienne dans des versions piratées, à la fin des années 1850, les opéras bouffes de Jacques Offenbach remportèrent un tel succès que plusieurs compositeurs viennois, constatant qu'il y avait pas mal d'argent à gagner dans le domaine de l'opérette, décidèrent de s'y essayer à leur tour. À l'avant-garde, il y eut Franz von Suppé (1819–1895), dont *Die schöne Galathée* est généralement considérée comme la première opérette viennoise qui ait remporté un réel succès, et, sur ses talons, vint Johann

Strauss II (1825–1899) au talent encore plus brillant.

Même si Strauss ne parvint jamais à dépasser le succès de *Die Fledermaus* (1874), il écrivit plusieurs autres opérettes qui conservent leur place au répertoire, au moins en Europe continentale. *A Night in Venice* (*Eine Nacht in Venedig*) (1883) souffre d'un livret interminable auquel diverses plumes ont tenté de donner forme, mais, sur le plan musical, cet ouvrage contient plusieurs numéros charmants dont "Love is a delicate flower" (page 33) constitue un exemple typique. Caramello, laquais et barbier personnel du Duc d'Urbino, coureur de jupons, croit à tort que la dernière conquête de son maître est sa propre fiancée. Avec une ironie amère, il songe au manque de sérieux du beau sexe allant jusqu'à emprunter au Duc de Mantoue dans Rigoletto cette phrase bien connue "La donna è mobile" ("Femme est inconstante").

Avec *The Gipsy Baron* (*Der Zigeunerbaron*) (1885), Strauss remporta son plus grand succès en dehors de celui de *Die Fledermaus*. Il nourrissait l'espoir secret que cet ouvrage, avec son orchestration brillante, ses doubles chœurs et ses finales des deux premiers actes merveilleusement construits, hormis sa glorification générale de l'Empire austro-

hongrois, pourrait lui ouvrir les portes des théâtres lyriques européens. À cet égard, il fut déçu, bien que la pièce requiert sans aucun doute un chant lyrique à part entière pour lui rendre justice. Le héros du rôle-titre, Sandor Barinkay, revient dans sa Hongrie natale, après des années d'errance dans des pays étrangers, afin de revendiquer le domaine que son père avait été contraint de céder des années auparavant après avoir été banni en raison d'une prétendue collaboration avec les envahisseurs turcs. Dans son air d'entrée "Since I was left an orphan lad" (page 34), Barinkay se montre comme un irrépressible extraverti et divertit les gens du pays avec un récit imaginaire de la vie qu'il a menée au cours des dernières années. Il scandalise ensuite le commissaire aux mœurs de la région en prenant pour épouse une tzigane. "Qui donc vous a uni?" demande ce redoutable dignitaire, "et qui furent les témoins?". Dans le duo "Who made us one?" (page 35), Barinkay, assisté de sa femme Saffi, explique qu'ils ont été mariés selon la coutume tzigane, les oiseaux de l'air officiant et un rossignol jouant le rôle du chœur.

Suppé, Strauss et un troisième compositeur, Karl Millöcker (1842–1899) comptent parmi les protagonistes les plus actifs de ce que l'on

appelle l'âge d'or de l'opérette viennoise, mais beaucoup d'autres bonnes pièces virent le jour sous d'autres plumes, notamment **The Birdseller** (*Der Vogelhändler*) (1891) de Carl Zeller (1842–1898), un amateur de grand talent qui, dans sa vie professionnelle, était fonctionnaire au ministère des Arts et de l'Éducation. Cette fois, notre héros est Adam, simple oiseleur du Tyrol, qui, au travers d'une succession de malentendus, se laisse entraîner dans une aventure romantique avec une princesse rhénane. Son air le plus populaire, "My old father years ago" (page [8]), n'a en fait rien à voir avec l'intrigue; il s'agit simplement d'un numéro dans le style de la chanson traditionnelle qu'il chante pour divertir les invités à une fête.

À la fin du XIXe siècle, Suppé, Strauss et Millöcker étaient tous morts et la vogue de l'opérette, qui faisait alors entièrement partie de la vie sociale viennoise, sembla s'essouffler. Toutefois, le 28 décembre 1905, un événement se produisit qui inversa cette tendance et inaugura l'âge d'argent de l'opérette viennoise. Cet événement fut la création de **The Merry Widow** (*Die lustige Witwe*), de Franz Lehár (1870–1948), ouvrage qui remporta un succès sans précédent sur le plan international, même si l'on se réfère à

celui de *Die Fledermaus*. De même que les compositeurs du vérisme italien écrivaient des opéras mettant en scène des gens ordinaires plutôt que des rois, des reines et des grands-prêtres, de même *The Merry Widow* introduisit dans l'opérette des personnages réels, de chair et de sang, renonçant au genre de convention théâtrale qui permettait, par exemple, à Eisenstein dans *Die Fledermaus* de ne pas reconnaître sa propre femme à un bal masqué. Le couple principal dans *The Merry Widow* est formé de Missia (Hanna dans les versions allemande et anglaise) et de Danilo, couple romantique qui, un peu à la manière de Béatrice et Bénédict, ne cesse de se chamailler jusqu'à l'heureux dénouement. Dans un accès de dépit, Danilo s'est juré de ne jamais laisser les mots "Je vous aime" franchir ses lèvres et, même sur l'une des mélodies les plus parfaites de Lehár – "Words forbidden" (page [17]) –, il parvient encore à se retenir.

Dès le milieu des années 1920, le style de Lehár avait subi un changement radical. Il avait commencé à écrire tous ses principaux rôles de ténor pour le grand ténor lyrique Richard Tauber, et, même si la voix de Tauber était un instrument d'une beauté romantique ensorcelante, son apparence physique ne correspondait pas du tout à l'idéal du chanteur

idolâtré par les femmes. Le dénouement habituel selon lequel "l'homme finit par conquérir sa belle au rideau final" céda la place à une tradition de fins malheureuses, Tauber renonçant avec héroïsme à la voie de l'amour pour suivre celle du devoir. Dans **The Czarevitch** (*Der Zarewitsch*) (1927), Tauber était l'héritier du trône de Russie, un jeune homme lunatique davantage intéressé, dans un premier temps, par les affaires militaires que par les aventures amoureuses. Dans son air d'entrée "Alone, always alone" (page [12]), il se compare à une sentinelle en faction sur les rives de la Volga, état d'esprit qui va évoluer de façon remarquable lorsqu'il rencontrera la belle Sonja.

Dans **The Land of Smiles** (*Das Land des Lächelns*) (1929), Tauber devint le Prince Sou-Chong, ambassadeur de Chine à Vienne, qui tombe amoureux de la jeune comtesse Lisa. En arrivant à un bal donné à l'intention de Lisa par ses parents, il exprime son appréhension; pourra-t-elle vraisemblablement aimer quelqu'un d'aussi différent que lui ou devra-t-il se replier sur la solution chinoise traditionnelle qui consiste à sourire au chagrin? "Patiently smiling" (page [6]). À sa plus grande joie, Lisa répond à son amour et ils partent ensemble pour Pékin, où ils

deviennent mari et femme. Tout semble apparemment serein – "Love! What has given you this magic pow'r?" (page [15]) – mais le moment venu il s'avère que l'Orient est toujours l'Orient et l'Occident toujours l'Occident, ce qui n'arrive heureusement qu'après que Sou ait chanté le plus célèbre de tous les *Tauberlieder* "You are my heart's delight" (page [1]).

Avec sa dernière œuvre scénique, **Giuditta** (1934), Lehár réussit là où Strauss avait échoué: la création mondiale eut lieu à l'Opéra d'État de Vienne. Cet ouvrage s'apparente davantage au *Spieloper* qu'à l'opérette; il raconte une histoire dans le style de *Carmen*, celle d'un jeune soldat tombé très bas à cause d'une femme fatale. Toutefois, dans son air d'entrée, Octavio n'a aucun pressentiment de la catastrophe qui l'attend. Il vit pour vivre, dit-il à ses amis, et son exubérance est telle qu'il va même d'emblée jusqu'au contre-la dans sa première apparition: "Comrades, this life is the life for me!" (page [11]).

L'exact contemporain de Lehár, Oscar Straus (1870–1954), composa **A Waltz Dream** (*Ein Walzertraum*) (1907) dans la ferme intention de rivaliser avec le nombre record des représentations initiales de *The Merry Widow*; et cet ouvrage y parvint, tout au moins à

Vienne. Il s'agit vraiment d'un hymne à la mémoire de l'ancienne Vienne romantique qui semblait alors irrémédiablement dans le passé; en fait, un ou deux personnages de *A Waltz Dream* pourraient presque sortir des pièces de théâtre et des nouvelles du grand chroniqueur de la vie sociale viennoise Arthur Schnitzler. Avant le début de l'opérette, le Lieutenant Niki, qui aime s'amuser, a été attaché à la personne d'Hélène, fille d'un notable de Flausenthurn, principauté de province allemande, pendant que son père était en visite officielle à Vienne. Elle tombe amoureuse de Niki et, à l'Acte I, il vient de l'épouser, sans avoir tout à fait réalisé à quel point Flausenthurn est un endroit où l'on s'ennuie à périr. Il devrait avoir rejoint la chambre nuptiale pour remplir ses devoirs dynastiques, mais, comme il le confie à son témoin, il vient d'entendre un son qui entrainait en flottant par la fenêtre de son appartement en provenance du jardin public situé juste au-dessous, le son d'un véritable orchestre viennois jouant une véritable valse viennoise. Et s'ils s'abandonnaient à son charme séduisant et descendaient ensemble respirer une dernière fois la liberté ? C'est ce qu'ils font, mais le résultat est troublant... "Softly, so softly" (page [10]).

La carrière de compositeur et de chef d'orchestre de Robert Stolz (1880–1975) s'est étendue sur au moins soixante-quinze ans et il occupe une place unique dans les annales de la musique légère viennoise. Bien qu'il ait écrit bien plus de soixante opérettes et *Singspiele*, peut-être reste-t-il surtout connu comme le compositeur de centaines de chansons isolées, dont un grand nombre, notamment "Don't ask me why I'm leaving" (page [9]), vit le jour grâce à l'industrie cinématographique berlinoise – dans ce cas précis, dans un film intitulé *Das Lied ist aus*. Stolz s'illustra également, dans un autre genre, comme maître du *Wienerlied*, qui n'est autre qu'une mélodie viennoise, et "We met in Vienna, my true love and I" (page [16]) en est un exemple très apprécié. Aussi simples qu'ils puissent paraître, c'est l'art de dissimuler l'art qui permet aux meilleurs Wienerlieder de produire de l'effet; ils étaient en fait écrits pour être chantés dans les Heuriger, les bars à vin dans des jardins situés à la périphérie de Vienne, accompagnés, comme sur ce disque, par le classique Quatuor Schrammel, qui se composait de deux violons, un accordéon et une guitare.

En dehors de son talent inépuisable de mélodiste, Emmerich Kálmán (1882–1953) apporta une contribution toute particulière à

l'opérette, en mêlant le raffinement viennois au panache et à l'exubérance de sa Hongrie natale. Dans *Countess Maritza* (*Gräfin Maritza*) (1924), notre héros est le Comte Tassilo Endrödy-Wittenburg, aristocrate viennois ruiné par la débacle de la Première Guerre mondiale et qui, sous un nom d'emprunt, a pris un emploi de régisseur d'un vaste domaine hongrois dont la propriétaire, la très riche Comtesse Maritza, est absente. Tassilo a fait liquider ses affaires à Vienne par un vieux camarade de régiment, auquel il confie que, même si, tout compte fait, sa nouvelle vie est tolérable, il souffre indéniablement du mal du pays: "Vienna mine" (page [14]).

La vie devient nettement plus compliquée lorsque Maritza lui fait la surprise de réparaître en compagnie de nombreux riches parasites. Pendant qu'ils font la noce dans la maison, Tassilo ne peut que déguster seul son verre de vin, dehors sur la terrasse, et dans un mouvement inhabituel d'apitoiement sur lui-même, il demande au violoniste tzigane de l'aider à apaiser son sentiment d'amertume. "Play, gipsy" (page [4]). Néanmoins, tout n'est pas perdu. Contrairement à Lehár, Kálmán composait encore des opérettes au dénouement heureux et, après de nombreuses vicissitudes

inventées avec ingéniosité, soprano et ténor finissent par faire exactement ce que les sopranos et les ténors sont supposés faire: chanter un duo d'amour extatique et danser une valse grisante. "Heavens, what's happen'g to me?" (page [13]).

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Traduction: Marie-Stella Pâris

Le ténor américain **Bruce Ford** est sans conteste l'un des chanteurs les plus remarquables de notre temps. On ne tarit pas d'éloges sur la beauté et l'étendue de sa voix, la façon dont il vit un texte, sa maîtrise stylistique et sa virtuosité technique ainsi que ses talents d'acteur. Il est invité régulièrement à se produire dans les plus grands théâtres d'Amérique du Nord et d'Europe, où il se spécialise dans les œuvres les plus difficiles de Mozart et du répertoire *bel canto*. Depuis plus de dix ans, Bruce Ford joue un rôle majeur dans la revalorisation de nombreux opéras *bel canto*, autant au disque qu'en concert. Bien des théâtres ont repris exprès pour lui des opéras jusque-là négligés à tort, entre autres The Royal Opera (l'*Otello* de Rossini) ainsi que les festivals de Glyndebourne (*Ermione*) et Pesaro (Zelmira et l'*Otello* de Rossini). Il a également chanté à La Scala, dans les théâtres lyriques de

Naples, Florence et Bologne ainsi que dans le cadre du Mai Musical de Florence et du Festival de Salzbourg. C'est en tant qu'Almaviva dans *Il barbiere di Siviglia* – le rôle qu'il a le plus souvent interprété dans sa carrière à ce jour – qu'il a fait ses débuts au Royal Opera, au Metropolitan Opera, au Los Angeles Opera ainsi qu'au Dallas Opera.

En concert, il s'est produit dans des lieux aussi prestigieux que La Scala, Carnegie Hall et le Concertgebouw d'Amsterdam ainsi que dans le cadre du Festival d'Edimbourg. Il est très demandé comme récitaliste. Il a travaillé avec de nombreux chefs d'orchestre dont Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti, Sir Charles Mackerras, Richard Bonyngue, Sir Roger Norrington, Sir Colin Davis et David Parry, pour n'en citer que quelques-uns.

Bruce Ford a confié une grande partie de son répertoire au disque. On notera entre autres la version originale de *Lucia di Lammermoor* sous Sir Charles Mackerras, trois récitals d'airs d'opéra en soliste ("Héros romantiques" et "Rossini sérieux" pour Opera Rara ainsi que "Grands airs d'opéra" pour Chandos en association avec la Peter Moores Foundation), et les enregistrements pour Opera Rara d'opéras rares de Mayr, Donizetti, Pacini et Rossini, enregistrements fort prisés par la

critique. Ses interprétations superbes de héros mozartiens, Mitridate (The Royal Opera) et Oreste dans *Ermione* (à Glyndebourne) sont disponibles sur vidéo/DVD. Malgré ses quelque vingt ans de scène, son répertoire du ténor ne cesse de s'élargir et il vient d'ajouter à sa discographie le rôle-titre de *La clemenza di Tito* et celui d'*Idomeneo* de Mozart.

Avec ce disque d'airs d'opérettes, Ford saisit l'occasion de revivre ses débuts en Allemagne, lorsqu'il chanta dans plusieurs des œuvres évoquées.

Après avoir été directeur musical et chef principal du Royal Scottish National Orchestra de janvier 1992 à juillet 1997, **Walter Weller** est aujourd'hui chef honoraire de cet ensemble. Il est également conseiller artistique et chef invité principal de l'Orchestre National d'Espagne. Il fut directeur artistique de l'Allgemeine Musikgesellschaft de Bâle, directeur musical de l'Opéra de Bâle et chef principal de l'Orchestre symphonique de Bâle de septembre 1994 à juillet 1997, chef principal du Royal Philharmonic Orchestra de 1980 à 1985 ainsi que directeur musical et artistique du Royal Liverpool Philharmonic de 1977 à 1980. A l'âge de vingt et un ans, il fut nommé premier violon de l'Orchestre

Philharmonique de Vienne, une formation qu'il dirigea par la suite.

Il est invité régulièrement à diriger les plus grands orchestres du monde et a travaillé avec le London Symphony Orchestra, le London Philharmonic Orchestra, le Philharmonia Orchestra, le Staatskapelle de Dresde, l'Orchestre Symphonique de Berlin, le Gewandhaus de Leipzig, la Philharmonie de Hambourg, l'Orchestre Philharmonique d'Israël, l'Orchestre de Paris, l'Orchestre National de France, l'Orchestre du Théâtre de La Scala à Milan, l'Orchestre Royal du Concertgebouw, l'Orchestre Philharmonique de la Radio Néerlandaise, l'Orchestre de la Tonhalle de Zürich, l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, l'Orchestre de la Radio Suédoise, l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Stockholm, ceux d'Oslo et d'Helsinki. En Amérique du Nord, il a collaboré avec des ensembles tels le New York Philharmonic Orchestra, les Orchestres Symphoniques du Minnesota, de San Francisco, Houston, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Cincinnati et Toronto ainsi qu'avec le National Arts Centre Orchestra à Ottawa.

Sur la scène lyrique, il a dirigé entre autres *Der fliegende Holländer* à La Scala, *Ariadne auf Naxos* et *Der fliegende Holländer* pour l'English National Opera, *Der Freischütz* au Teatro Comunale de Bologne, *Prince Igor* pour le Staatskapelle de Berlin et *Fidelio* ainsi que *Der Rosenkavalier* pour Scottish Opera. Il s'est également produit en concert dans le cadre du Festival de Tivoli. Durant sa première saison à Bâle, il a dirigé une version extrêmement réussie de *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Parmi les autres opéras qu'il donna en concert, notons *Fidelio* avec le City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, *Elektra* et *Der fliegende Holländer* avec le Royal Scottish National Orchestra ainsi qu'*Eugene Onegin* à Copenhague.

Sa discographie comprend des cycles des Symphonies de Prokofiev et de Rachmaninov, le Concert pour orchestre de Bartok, les *Dances valaques* de Janáček, la Symphonie no 1 de Rachmaninov, la Symphonie no 4 de Bruckner et, pour Chandos, les Symphonies et les Concertos pour piano (avec John Lill) de Beethoven ainsi que les Symphonies de Mendelssohn.

Grandi arie da operetta

Nel mondo dell'opera spesso si discute sulla lingua delle rappresentazioni. Sono preferibili allestimenti nella lingua originale o in quella del pubblico? Entrambe le tesi hanno validi difensori con argomentazioni ormai anche troppo note, ma nel caso dell'operetta la situazione è diversa. Chi scrive ha avuto il piacere di interpretare numerose operette viennesi in diversi paesi, qualche volta nella lingua tedesca, qualche volta nella traduzione, e ritiene che gli allestimenti teatrali possano essere efficaci solo nella lingua del pubblico. Per cominciare, nell'operetta classica la vicenda normalmente comprende ampie scene di dialogo parlato; poi, è indispensabile che i principali cantanti stabiliscano un contatto personale molto diretto con il pubblico e questo è difficile da ottenere se il pubblico non capisce né quello che si dice né quello che si canta.

Il recital di Bruce Ford di questo disco consiste quasi esclusivamente in operette viennesi, fatta eccezione per un brano del vero progenitore dell'operetta viennese, un parigino di origine tedesca, e cioè Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880). Dopo il suo straordinario

trionfo con *Orphée aux Enfers* (1858), Offenbach ritornò alla parodia della mitologia greca con *La Belle Hélène* (*The Beautiful Helen*) (1864), una divertente rielaborazione della storia della guerra di Troia. Nel suo motivo di ingresso, “On Mount Ida”, (traccia [2]) Paride, causa del conflitto, narra in termini molto poco omerici, la storia delle tre dee e la loro gara di bellezza.

Quando si diffusero a Vienna in versioni pirata alla fine del decennio del 1850, le *opéras bouffes* di Jacques Offenbach ebbero tanto successo che diversi compositori viennesi si resero conto delle possibili fonti di reddito che offriva il nuovo genere e decisero di seguire le sue orme. In prima linea fu Franz von Suppé (1819–1895) – *Die schöne Galathée* viene generalmente considerata la prima operetta viennese di vero successo – tallonato dal talento ancora più pirotecnico di Johann Strauss II (1825–1899).

Per quanto non riuscisse mai a superare il successo di *Die Fledermaus* (1874), Strauss compose molte altre operette che si sono conquistate un posto di diritto nel repertorio, per lo meno in Europa. *A Night in Venice*

(*Eine Nacht in Venedig*) (1883) risente di un libretto lunghissimo a cui diverse mani successive hanno tentato di dare forma, ma musicalmente contiene molti numeri deliziosi di cui “Love is a delicate flower” (traccia [5]) è un esempio tipico. Caramello, lacchè e barbiere personale del donnaiolo duca d'Urbino, per errore ritiene che l'ultima conquista del padrone sia la propria fidanzata. Con amara ironia medita sull'incostanza del bel sesso e addirittura arriva a prendere in prestito dal Duca del Rigoletto la famosa frase “La donna è mobile”.

The Gipsy Baron (*Der Zigeunerbaron*) (1885) segnò il più grande successo di Strauss dopo *Die Fledermaus*. Il compositore sperava segretamente che con la sua brillante partitura, i doppi cori e i finali meravigliosamente costruiti per gli atti I e II, al di là della generale glorificazione dell'impero austro-ungarico, l'opera gli aprisse le porte dei teatri lirici europei. Rimase deluso, anche se per renderle giustizia l'opera richiede senza dubbio un'esecuzione lirica di alto livello. Il protagonista, Sandor Barinkay, fa ritorno nella natia Ungheria dopo anni di vagabondaggi, per rivendicare la proprietà che il padre era stato costretto ad abbandonare anni prima, dopo essere stato messo al bando per la sua

presunta collaborazione con i turchi invasori. Con il suo brano di ingresso “Since I was left an orphan lad” (traccia [7]) Barinkay, incorreggibile estroverso, intrattiene gli abitanti del posto con una narrazione fantasiosa delle sue vicissitudini negli anni successivi. In seguito scandalizza il Commissario reale della regione prendendo in sposa una zingara. “Chi ha celebrato la cerimonia?” chiede il temibile dignitario, “e chi sono stati i testimoni?” Nel duetto “Who made us one?” (traccia [3]) Barinkay, con la sposa Saffi, spiega che le nozze si sono svolte secondo la tradizione zingara, celebrate dagli uccelli dell'aria e accompagnate dal canto di un usignolo.

Suppé, Strauss e un terzo compositore, Karl Millöcker (1842–1899) furono i principali rappresentanti della cosiddetta Età aurea dell'operetta viennese, ma molti brani di successo furono firmati da altri nomi, come *The Birdseller* (*Der Vogelhändler*) (1891) di Carl Zeller (1842–1898), un dilettante dalle doti straordinarie che, per vivere, lavorava presso il ministero dell'Arte e dell'Istruzione. Questa volta il nostro eroe è Adam, un semplice venditore di uccelli tirolese che, dopo una serie di malintesi, finisce per essere coinvolto in una relazione amorosa con una

principessa della Renania. Il suo assolo più famoso, “My old father years ago” (traccia [8]), in realtà non ha nulla a che vedere con l’argomento, ma è un brano in stile folcloristico eseguito per intrattenere gli ospiti a una festa.

Alla fine dell’Ottocento Suppé, Strauss e Millöcker erano scomparsi e la passione per l’operetta, che era diventata tanta parte della vita sociale di Vienna, sembrava affievolirsi. Il 28 dicembre 1905, tuttavia, si verificò un evento che segnò un’inversione di tendenza, inaugurando la cosiddetta Età argentea dell’operetta viennese. Si trattava della prima de **The Merry Widow**, (*Die lustige Witwe*), di Franz Lehár (1870–1948), che riscosse un sensazionale successo internazionale, senza precedenti persino rispetto a *Die Fledermaus*. Come le opere liriche del verismo italiano, incentrate sulle vicende della gente comune e non più sui monarchi e gli alti sacerdoti, *The Merry Widow* introdusse nell’operetta personaggi in carne e ossa, abbandonando la convenzione teatrale che aveva consentito, per esempio, ad Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus* di non riconoscere la propria consorte a *Un ballo in maschera*. I protagonisti della *Merry Widow* sono Anna e Danilo, una coppia romantica che, un po’ come Beatrice e

Benedict, litiga continuamente fino al lieto fine. In un attacco di dispetto, Danilo ha giurato di non pronunciare mai le parole “Ti amo” e persino su una delle più perfette melodie di Lehár – “Words forbidden” (traccia [17]) – riesce a padroneggiarsi.

A metà degli anni Venti, Lehár aveva radicalmente modificato il suo stile. Aveva iniziato a comporre tutti i suoi ruoli di protagonista per il grande tenore lirico Richard Tauber, che aveva una voce di grande fascino romantico, ma un aspetto poco adatto al ruolo di tradizionale idolo delle platee. Al posto del normale lieto fine, si sviluppò una tradizione per conclusioni in cui Tauber eroicamente rinunciava all’amore per il dovere. In **The Czarevitch** (*Der Zarewitsch*) (1927) Tauber era l’erede al trono di Russia, un giovane incostante inizialmente più interessato alle questioni militari che alle avventure amorose. Nel suo assolo iniziale “Alone, always alone” (traccia [12]) si paragona a una sentinella di guardia sulle rive del Volga, uno stato d’animo che sarà notevolmente modificato dopo il suo incontro con la bella Sonja.

Nel **Land of Smiles** (*Das Land des Lächelns*) (1929) Tauber fu il principe Sou-Chong, ambasciatore cinese a Vienna, innamorato

della contessina Lisa. Arrivando a un ballo organizzato dai genitori di lei, esprime la propria trepidazione; può la donna amare una persona diversa come lui, o dovrà ripiegare sulla soluzione cinese tradizionale di sorridere al dolore? “Patiently smiling” (traccia [6]). Con sua grande felicità, Lisa ricambia il suo amore e lo segue a Pechino per diventare sua moglie. Tutto sembra andare per il meglio – “Love! What has given you this magic pow’r?” (traccia [16]) – ma con il tempo emergono le differenze tra Oriente e Occidente. Per fortuna, questo non impedisce a Sou di cantare il più famoso dei cosiddetti *Tauberlieder* “You are my heart’s delight” (traccia [1]).

Con la sua ultima opera teatrale, **Giuditta** (1934), Lehár ebbe successo dove Strauss aveva fallito: la sua prima mondiale fu allestita all’Opera di Vienna. Quasi una *Spieloper* più che un’operetta, narra una storia alla *Carmen*; un giovane soldato portato alla rovina da una *femme fatale*. Nel suo brano di esordio, però, Ottavio non ha alcun presentimento della catastrofe che lo attende. La vita va vissuta, dice ai suoi amici, e la sua esuberanza è tale che arriva ad aprire il suo ruolo su un la naturale alto: “Comrades, this life is the life for me!” (traccia [11]).

Oscar Straus (1870–1954), contemporaneo di Lehár, compose **A Waltz Dream** (*Ein Walzertraum*) (1907) con l’intenzione di fare concorrenza al record delle rappresentazioni iniziali della *Mreey Widow* e, almeno a Vienna, ci riuscì. L’opera è in realtà un inno al ricordo della vecchia Vienna romantica che allora già cominciava a scivolare inesorabilmente nel passato. Alcuni personaggi potrebbero addirittura essere usciti dai drammi o dalle novelle di un grande cronista della vita sociale viennese: Arthur Schnitzler. Prima dell’inizio dell’operetta, l’allegro luogotenente Niki è stato nominato attendente di Helene, figlia del governatore del Flausenthurn, principato provinciale della Germania, mentre il padre di lei è in visita ufficiale a Vienna. La ragazza si è innamorata di Niki e nel primo atto l’uomo è appena diventato suo marito, senza essersi reso conto completamente di quanto si sarebbe rivelato noioso il Flausenthurn. Dovrebbe essere nella camera nuziale a preoccuparsi dei propri doveri dinastici ma, come dice al proprio testimone di nozze, ha appena sentito arrivare dalla finestra del suo appartamento dal parco pubblico il suono di una vera banda viennese che esegue un vero valzer viennese. Perché non cedere al suo fascino sognante e scendere insieme per un ultimo respiro di

libertà? Così è, ma i risultati sono allarmanti... “Softly, so softly” (traccia [10]).

Come compositore e direttore d'orchestra, con una carriera di ben 75 anni, Robert Stolz (1880–1975) occupa una posizione esclusiva negli annali della musica leggera viennese. Nonostante avesse composto più di sessanta operette e *Singspiel* rimane più noto forse come compositore di letteralmente centinaia di canzoni, molte delle quali, come “Don't ask me why I'm leaving” (traccia [9]), videro la luce per la prima volta attraverso l'industria cinematografica di Berlino – in questo caso, in un film intitolato *Das Lied is aus*. Un altro genere di cui Stolz fu maestro era il cosiddetto *Wienerlied*, semplicemente “canto Viennese” e “We met in Vienna, my true love and I” (traccia [16]) è un esempio molto amato. Per quanto possano apparire semplici, i migliori *Wienerlieder* dipendono per la loro efficacia dall'arte che nasconde l'arte e furono composti sostanzialmente per essere cantati negli *Heuriger*, locali di degustazione del vino alla periferia di Vienna, accompagnati, come questa registrazione, dal classico quartetto Schrammel, due violini, fisarmonica e chitarra.

Il contributo speciale di Emmerich Kálmán (1882–1953) all'operetta, a parte la sua inesauribile forza di melodista, fu il grado con

cui abbinò la sofisticatezza viennese con la vivacità ed esuberanza della sua nativa Ungheria. Nella *Countess Maritza* (*Gräfin Maritza*) (1924) il nostro eroe è il conte Tassilo Endrödy-Wittenburg, un aristocratico viennese impoverito dal tracollo della prima Guerra mondiale e impiegato sotto falso nome come direttore della vasta proprietà ungherese di un proprietario abitualmente assente, la contessa Maritza, favolosamente ricca. Gli affari di Tassilo sono stati conclusi a Vienna da un vecchio amico dell'esercito, a cui Tassilo confida che, per quanto si sia creato una vita tollerabile, soffre di nostalgia. “Vienna mine” (traccia [14]).

La vita si complica nettamente con l'apparizione improvvisa della contessa Maritza, accompagnata da ricchi spasimanti. Mentre fanno baldoria in casa, Tassilo è costretto a bere da solo un bicchiere di vino sulla terrazza e in uno slancio poco consueto di autocommiserazione chiede al violinista zingaro di aiutarlo ad alleviare la sua amarezza. “Play, gipsy” (traccia [4]). Ma non tutto è perduto. A differenza di Lehár, Kálmán componeva ancora operette a lieto fine e, dopo numerose vicissitudini ingegnosamente costruite, soprano e tenore finiscono per fare esattamente quello che i soprani e i tenori

fanno: cantano un estatico duetto d'amore e danzano un valzer inebriante, “Heavens, what's happ'ning to me?” (traccia [13]).

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Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Il tenore americano **Bruce Ford** è considerato uno dei più importanti cantanti di oggi ed è particolarmente apprezzato per la sua voce straordinaria, la sua vivacità, il suo stile sicuro e la sua perizia tecnica, oltre che per la sua recitazione espressiva. È regolarmente ospite dei più importanti teatri del Nordamerica e dell'Europa ed è specializzato nelle opere più difficili del repertorio mozartiano e del belcanto. Da oltre dieci anni svolge un ruolo significativo nella rivalutazione di molte opere del belcanto, attraverso registrazioni e rappresentazioni dal vivo. Molti teatri hanno riproposto proprio per lui delle opere meno note, per esempio la Royal Opera (*Otello* di Rossini) e i festival di Glyndebourne (*Ermione*) e Pesaro (Zelmira, *Otello* di Rossini). È comparso alla Scala e nei teatri lirici di Napoli, Firenze e Bologna ed è intervenuto al Maggio Musicale Fiorentino e al festival di Salisburgo. Il suo esordio è legato al ruolo del conte di Almaviva nel *Barbiere di*

Siviglia – quello da lui più spesso interpretato in seguito – alla Royal Opera, Metropolitan Opera e nei teatri lirici di Los Angeles e Dallas.

L'attività concertistica di Bruce Ford lo ha visto comparire alla Scala, al festival di Edimburgo, al Carnegie Hall e al Concertgebouw di Amsterdam, e i suoi recital sono molto richiesti. Ha lavorato, tra l'altro, con Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti, sir Charles Mackerras, Richard Bonyngue, sir Roger Norrington, sir Colin Davis e David Parry.

Bruce Ford ha registrato gran parte del suo repertorio e la sua discografia include la versione originale della *Lucia di Lammermoor* diretta da sir Charles Mackerras, tre recital operistici da solista (Romantic Heroes e Serious Rossini per Opera Rara e Great Operatic Arias per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation). Inoltre ha partecipato a diverse registrazioni di opere dimenticate di Mayr, Donizetti, Pacini e Rossini per Opera rara, molto apprezzate dalla critica. Le splendide interpretazioni del *Mitridate* di Mozart (Royal Opera) e Oreste in *Ermione* (Glyndebourne) sono disponibili su video/DVD. Dopo quasi vent'anni di carriera teatrale, il suo repertorio continua ad ampliarsi; le ultime aggiunte sono

i ruoli di protagonista di due opere mozartiane, *La clemenza di Tito* e *Idomeneo*.

Questa registrazione di arie da operetta ha rappresentato per Bruce Ford un modo per ricordare gli inizi della sua carriera in Germania, dove è stato interprete di molte delle opere registrate.

Walter Weller è stato Direttore musicale e Direttore stabile della Royal Scottish National Orchestra tra il gennaio del 1992 e il luglio del 1997 e oggi è il suo Direttore Emerito. Inoltre è Consulente artistico e Direttore ospite dell'Orchestra nazionale di Spagna. È stato Direttore artistico della Allgemeine Musikgesellschaft di Basilea, Direttore musicale del Teatro di Basilea e Direttore principale dell'Orchestra sinfonica di Basilea dal settembre 1994 fino al luglio 1997, Direttore stabile della Royal Philharmonic Orchestra dal 1980 al 1985 e Direttore Musicale e artistico della Royal Liverpool Philharmonic dal 1977 al 1980. All'età di ventuno anni è stato nominato primo violino dell'Orchestra filarmonica di Vienna, di cui in seguito sarebbe diventato direttore.

Walter Weller viene regolarmente invitato come direttore ospite da importanti orchestre di

tutto il mondo e ha lavorato con la London Symphony Orchestra, la London Philharmonic, la Philharmonia Orchestra, la Staatskapelle di Dresda, la RSO di Berlino, l'orchestra del Gewandhaus di Lipsia, la Philharmonie di Amburgo, la Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, l'Orchestre de Paris, l'Orchestre National de France, l'Orchestra del Teatro alla Scala di Milano, l'Orchestra del Concertgebouw, l'Orchestra filarmonica della radio olandese, la Tonhalle-Orchester di Zurigo, l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, l'orchestra della radio svedese, la Filarmonica di Stoccolma e le Filarmoniche di Oslo e di Helsinki. Nell'America del nord ha lavorato con la New York Philharmonic, le orchestre sinfoniche del Minnesota, di San Francisco, Houston, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Cincinnati e Toronto e l'Orchestra del National Arts Centre di Ottawa.

In teatro Walter Weller ha diretto tra l'altro *Der fliegende Holländer* alla Scala, *Ariadne auf Naxos* e *Der fliegende Holländer* per la English National Opera, *Der Freischütz* al Teatro Comunale di Bologna, *Il principe Igor* per la Staatskapelle di Berlino, *Fidelio* e *Der Rosenkavalier* per la Scottish Opera. Ha diretto concerti al festival di Tivoli. Nella sua prima stagione a Basilea, ha diretto un allestimento di grande successo della *Frau*

ohne Schatten. Altre opere in concerto comprendono *Fidelio* con la City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, *Elektra* e *Der fliegende Holländer* con la Royal Scottish National Orchestra ed *Eugenio Onieghin* a Copenaghen.

La discografia comprende le sinfonie di

Prokof'ev e Rachmaninov, il Concerto per Orchestra di Bartók, le *Danze di Lachi* di Janáček, la Sinfonia n. 1 di Rachmaninov, a Sinfonia n. 4 di Bruckner e, per Chandos, le Sinfonie e i concerti per pianoforte di Beethoven (con John Lill) e le sinfonie di Mendelssohn.



Session photo

Bill Cooper



Bruce Ford as
the Student Prince



AKG London

Image from the
title page of the
1929 voice and
piano score of
*The Land of
Smiles*

from The Land of Smiles
You are my heart's delight

Sou-Chong

- [1] You are my heart's delight,
and where you are I long to be!
You make my darkness bright
when like a star you shine on me!
Shine, then, my whole night through,
your light divine bids me hope anew
that dreams of mine may perchance come true
and I shall hear you whisper 'I love you!'
In dreams, when night is falling,
I seem to hear you calling!
For you have cast a net around me,
and 'neath a magic spell have bound me.
Yours, yours alone!
How wondrous fair
is your beautiful hair!
Bright as the summer skies
is the light in your eyes.
Soft as the turtle dove's
is the voice of my love.
You are my heart's delight,
and where you are I long to be!
You make my darkness bright
when like a star you shine on me!
Shine, then, my whole night through,
your light divine bids me hope anew
that dreams of mine may perchance come true
and I shall hear you murmur 'I love you!'

translation by Harry Graham
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from La Belle Hélène
On Mount Ida

Paris

- [2] On Mount Ida three great ladies
came to blows beneath a tree.
Their dispute was 'Who in Hades
is best looking of us three?'
Evohé! Goddesses merely want
to show that they're divine;
Evohé! Goddesses really take
a most eccentric line,
yes, a most eccentric line!
By this tree a bright young fellow
passed a little way below,
with an apple russet yellow
as the best old masters show. Ah!
Handsome boy! We pray you tarry,
handsome boy, come up and see!
Give the apple that you carry
to the loveliest of us three!
Evohé! Goddesses clearly would
seduce a shepherd lad.
Evohé! Goddesses really are
a tiny bit too bad,
yes, they really are too bad!
Said the first, the chaste preserver
of the modest and the wise:
'Give the apple to Minerva.
I alone deserve the prize!'
Evohé! A Goddess dearly loves
to tease and tantalise!

Said the second 'I am Juno;
I've my peacock and my pride;
if you really truly do know,
it's on me that you'll decide!'
Evohé! A goddess really can
be hardly justified,
meaning more than is implied!

But the third, ah, the third one never
never spoke a single word.
Yet she won the prize however.
Yes, you should have seen the third!
Evohé! Goddesses nearly led
astray a shepherd lad.
Evohé! Goddesses really are
a tiny bit too bad,
yes, they really are too bad!

translation by Nigel Douglas
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from The Gipsy Baron
Who made us one?

Barinkay

- [3] Who made us one?, you say.

Saffi

No, you!

Barinkay

The blackbird that warbles up there.

Chorus

The blackbird, he married the pair.

Barinkay

Beneath a dome of crystal blue.

Saffi

On green boughs around us
there perched our forest choir!

Barinkay

When all was done the setting sun
went down as red as fire!

Saffi

Then sweet sang the nightingale
her tuneful roundelay...
that love song, the same song
that stole my heart away!

Saffi and Barinkay

Then sweet sang the nightingale
her tuneful roundelay...
that love song, the same song
that stole my heart away!

Chorus

That love song, the same song,
that stole my heart away!

Barinkay

Who saw and heard us say...

Saffi

'I do.'

Barinkay

Two swallows who came from the wood.

Chorus

Two swallows as witnesses stood.

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Barinkay

They wished us luck and off they flew.

Saffi

And now we are hoping
to see them both again.

Barinkay

They promised they would come one day
before they leave for Spain.

Saffi

At dusk sang the nightingale
her tuneful roundelay...
that love song, the same song
that stole my heart away!

Saffi and Barinkay

Then sweet sang the nightingale
her tuneful roundelay...
that love song, the same song
that stole my heart away!

Chorus

That love song, the same song,
that stole my heart away!

translation by Geoffrey Dunn
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from Countess Maritza

Play, gipsy

Tassilo

- [4] I too was once a wealthy czardas cavalier,
with gipsies to amuse me,
like their lordships here;

seductive violins to serenade me
and the pow'r of gold to aid me,
like their lordships here.
Today your eyes flash proudly
while you drain your wine,
The wine you taste tomorrow
may not taste so fine.
The tune the violin strikes up tomorrow
could become a song of sorrow
deeper still than mine!

Play, gipsy, whisper some haunting refrain,
play 'til my aching heart is healed.
O come and play gipsy,
teach me to smile once again,
play 'til the stubborn senses yield.
A monarch's ransom I would pay
just to hear you play;
laugh with me, and cry with me
until the break of day.
Come! Come! Come!
Play, gipsy, play me that haunting refrain,
play 'til my heart forgets its pain!

I too was once a proud and elegant Hussar,
the nights were made for dancing,
as your lordships' are.
My heart untouched by other people's troubles,
viewing life through champagne bubbles
as your lordships are.
(*to the gipsy violinist*)
When your enchanted tones caress the midnight
air,

there is no king on earth whose wealth I'd wish
to share.

So play for me until your bow starts dancing,
fill the air with dreams entrancing
dreams beyond compare!

Play, gipsy, whisper some haunting refrain,
play 'til my aching heart is healed.
O come and play gipsy,
teach me to smile once again,
play 'til the stubborn senses yield.
A monarch's ransom I would pay
just to hear you play;
laugh with me, and cry with me
until the break of day.
Come! Come! Come!
Play, gipsy, play me that haunting refrain,
play 'til my heart forgets its pain!

translation by Nigel Douglas
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from A Night in Venice

Love is a delicate flower

Caramello

- [5] Love is a delicate flower,
hold on to every sweet hour.
You think it never will end,
then let me advise you, my friend:
never expect it to last,
one day it all will be past.
You can do nothing, my friend,
when it comes to the end.

You can threaten, you can flatter,
all your efforts do not matter.
She will leave you if she wants to,
for to change her mind is her prerogative.

Please don't think that I am bitter,
full of childish misconceptions.
Just remember it is true
that very rule has its exceptions.
If you're lucky and you find
the one that really can be faithful,
you are then a happy man. Ah!
Just find her if you can!

Then your days will fill with pleasure,
nights with rapture without measure.
Life will be a bed of roses,
you have found a hidden treasure.
Marry her then if you have to,
if she will not stay your mistress,
for, my friend you've found
the key to happiness.

Love is a delicate flower,
cherish each wonderful hour.
You hope it never will end,
then let me advise you, my friend:
never expect it to last,
one day it all will be past.
Think what the man in the opera sings:
'La donna è mobile!'

ENO translation by Murray Dickie
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from The Land of Smiles

Patiently smiling

Sou-Chong

- [6] I enter this room with a thrill in my heart,
knowing my loved one is near;
for though, alas, we are worlds apart,
I am quite close to her here!
O heart, beat less madly! Lie still in my breast!
For happiness vainly you yearn!
The sadness within must ne'er be confessed:
'tis a secret that none may learn!
His sorrows a Chinaman ne'er reveals,
and nobody knows how deeply he feels!
- Patiently smiling, whate'er may befall!
I'll go on smiling, in spite of it all!
Fortune may frown, but I keep smiling!
I may be sad at heart, but nobody knows!
- To her I'm a stranger, and ever must be
foreign in thought and in speech;
for her there's no danger in flirting with me
she is so far from my reach!
I dream ev'ry night of her beauty and grace;
I waken to learn, once again,
my love in her heart can ne'er find a place
I have dreamt of her all in vain!
And so, without hope, for my loved one I pine,
for though I am hers, she cannot be mine!
- Yet I keep smiling, in spite of it all!
Patiently smiling, whate'er may befall!
And if my heart is filled with sorrow,
that is the secret I hide 'neath a smile!

Patiently smiling, whate'er may befall!
Fortune may frown, but I keep smiling!
I may be sad at heart, but nobody knows!

translation by Harry Graham
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from The Gipsy Baron

Since I was left an orphan lad

Barinkay

- [7] Since I was left an orphan lad
long trips around the world I've had;
the first when I was young and poor,
with a menagerie on tour.
From killer whale to chimpanzee,
the livestock fairly took to me.
The rhino stroked my cheek politely.
The rattlesnake would rattle brightly.
The lion rolled me in the sand,
the tiger shook me by the hand,
I hugged the bears if they were Polars,
I brushed the alligator's molars;
and the elephant said a ballad
while he was mixing me a salad.
- Ah! Why be timid and shy?
How can you prophesy
that you're aiming too high
till you try, till you try?
- Chorus and Barinkay**
Why be timid and shy?
How can you prophesy
that you're aiming too high
till you try, till you try?

Barinkay

I travelled widely after that
as mountebank and acrobat,
and always got a good result
when I attempted the occult.
My incantations called up hosts
of very well connected ghosts.
Fire-eating was my next employment.
I swallowed swords with much enjoyment;
I frolicked on the high trapeze,
I juggled with the greatest ease,
I somersaulted fifty yards,
I was superb in tricks with cards
which I performed with fine perception
and absolutely no deception.

Ah! Why be timid and shy?
How can you prophesy
that you're aiming too high
till you try, till you try?

Chorus and Barinkay

Why be timid and shy
How can you prophesy
that you're aiming too high
till you try, till you try?

translation by Geoffrey Dunn
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from The Birdseller

My old father years ago

Adam

- [8] My old father years ago
had a maid who loved him so.

But their story went awry
so they kissed and said 'goodbye'.
Then a nightingale above
sang a melody of love.
Years went by but still it lingered
haunting night and day.
Once again, once again, once again,
sing, oh sing, nightingale.
For the sound of your song lingers on
when the joy and the laughter are gone.
For your song thro' the nights and the days
will be here in my heart always.

My old father loved, I'm told,
many maids when he was old.
He would watch them passing by
with a twinkle in his eyes.
But his heart was true, I know,
to his love of long ago.
When the nightingale was singing,
you could hear him sigh:
Once again, once again, once again,
sing, oh sing, nightingale.
For the sound of your song lingers on
when the joy and the laughter have gone.
For your song thro' the nights and the days
will be here in my heart always.

translation by Harry S. Pepper
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from The Song is Done

Don't ask me why I'm leaving

- [9] Don't ask me why I'm leaving... Don't ask me why!

Don't ask me why I'm grieving... Don't ask me why.

Those final words I'll whisper: 'I love you still. I'll love you forever, forget you never!' Once you and I have parted, don't ask me why. If I am broken-hearted, don't ask me why. A new love will possess you, another's hand caress you, then, dearest love, you won't ask me why.

The song now fades, the song of our devotion, its dying strain, a melody of pain. The song now fades, that song of deep devotion, and what was once a hymn of love becomes a distant echo!

My roses which you held so dear, their scent means nothing more to you... Our song is through...

Don't ask me why I'm leaving... Don't ask me why!

Don't ask me why I'm grieving... Don't ask me why.

Those final words I'll whisper: 'I love you still. I'll love you forever, forget you never!' Once you and I have parted, don't ask me why. If I am broken-hearted, don't ask me why. A new love will possess you, another's hand caress you, then, dearest love, you won't ask me why.

translation by Nigel Douglas

from A Waltz Dream
'Softly, so softly'

Niki

- [10] I wandered outside in the garden, refreshed by the cool evening breeze, and savoured with easy contentment the scent of the blossoming trees. When suddenly floating around me a magical sound caught my ear; a melody straight from Vienna, its message so sweet, so clear. A waltz serene and beguiling, seductive all others above. It spoke of tears and laughter, Vienna's own message of love! Softly, so softly, speak once again, waltz dream's enchantment, love's own refrain. Sweetest of suff'ring, tend'rest of joy, dearly cherished mem'ries none can destroy.

Niki and Montschi

Springtime's caresses, two hearts as one, starlight and moonbeams once day is done.

Montschi

When love is beck'ning why turn away?

Niki

One last adventure calls us today!

Niki and Montschi

When love is beck'ning why turn away?
One last adventure calls us today.

Niki

Come, let's bid farewell to discretion, abandon our cares for tonight. Surrender our pomp and our glory, succumb to the music's delight! Out there, where the wine flows like water, we'll drink to a new golden age. Where melody leads we shall follow, our longing for home we'll assuage.

Niki and Montschi

We'll dance as we danced in Vienna, Vienna, dear city of song. How could we ever forget her? 'Tis there our hearts still belong! Softly, so softly, speak once again, waltz dream's enchantment, love's own refrain. Sweetest of suff'ring, tend'rest of joy, dearly cherished mem'ries none can destroy! Springtime's caresses, two hearts as one, starlight and moonbeams once day is done.

Montschi

When love is beck'ning why turn away?

Niki

One last adventure calls us today!

Niki and Montschi

When love is beck'ning why turn away?
One last adventure calls us today.

translation by Nigel Douglas
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from Giuditta

Comrades, this life is the life for me!

Octavio

- [11] Comrades, this life is the life for me! Ev'ry single day is a pleasure. Ev'ry day brings moments to treasure. Ev'ry hour has the power to excite, to fill with delight, as the sun sets, blazing with fire, I know the morning will bring it again to climb yet higher in the sky! Comrades, this life is the life for me! As the night falls over the city there are moments not to be missed. There are girls seductive and pretty to be kissed. O signora, O signorina! Let me serenade you tonight. From your window there above me throw a rose to show you love me. O signora, Signorina, I adore you, my bambina. I could storm the highest heaven just to be with you tonight.

Chorus

O signora, O signorina! Let me serenade you tonight. O signora, Signorina, I adore you, my bambina.

Chorus and Octavio

Comrades, this life is the life for me!

translation by Adam Carstairs
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from The Czarevitch
Alone, always alone

Czarevitch

[12] Alone, always alone.

Lonely, as ever,
the prime of life is slipping past,
the die of loneliness is cast,
my whole life here is grey and drear,
with nobody to share my heart.

A soldier stands guard on the Volga-side.
He keeps his watch on the river wide.
The night is dark and full of fear.
No friendly stars or moonlight here.
Silent is the land around,
not a shred of comfort has he found.
And his heart cries out in his loneliness;
as he scans the misty sky,
hear him softly sigh;

Have you forgotten me, Lord, up above?
I stand here, forsaken by all I love.
Hear me, oh, hear me, and answer my plea.
Send an angel to comfort me.
Hear me, oh, hear me, and answer my plea.
Send an angel to comfort me.

translation by Adam Carstairs
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from Countess Maritza
'Heavens, what's happ'ning to me?'

Tassilo

[13] Heavens, what's happ'ning to me?
What can this sensation be?
What makes my heart beat like this,
upsetting my feet like this?
Heavens if I could say why I'm feeling this way!

Maritza

Some sort of electricity
seems to be running through me!
Heavens, Oh heavens, if only I knew
what a girl should do!

Tassilo and Maritza

Let's forget the world around us,
waltz our worries away.
How can worldly cares confound us
once the band starts to play?
Whirling round in seventh heaven
how can lovers be false?
So if your heart's afraid of loving
then don't strike up the waltz!

Maritza

Why can't I be quiet and demure?
Does this disease have a cure?
What causes my pulse to thud?
What causes this racing blood?
This constitutes a hazard I'm perfectly sure!

Tassilo

I know of a treatment sublime –
spinning in three quarter time!
You'll be alright if you hang on to me
counting 'One, two, three!'

Tassilo and Maritza

Let's forget the world around us,
waltz our worries away.
How can worldly cares confound us
once the band starts to play?
Clinging tightly to each other
how can lovers be false?
So let's just thank the Lord in heaven
for sending us the waltz!

translation by Nigel Douglas
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from Countess Maritza
Vienna mine

Tassilo

[14] When the sun goes down in the western sky,
and the evening air fills with mystery,
then my thoughts drift back as I sip my wine
to the easy old life that was mine.
When I see the moon floating overhead
smiling down on me, I have often said
'Dear old moon, would you pause in your flight?
I've a favour to ask you tonight.
Please give my love to that lovely old city,
Vienna mine!
Where all the girls are so dazzlingly pretty,
Vienna mine!

Smile on the wine and the waltz and the Danube
as you pass by.
Smile on the winding old streets where young
lovers kiss
in shadows soft and still.
Tell them that one lonely heart still remembers
them
and always always will!
Please give my love to that lovely old city,
Vienna mine!
Where all the girls are so dazzlingly pretty,
Vienna mine!
Please give my love to the waltz and the Danube
when you come home.
Greet all those winding old streets where young
lovers kiss
in shadows soft and still.
Tell them that one lonely heart still remembers
them
and always always will!

translation by Nigel Douglas
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from The Land of Smiles
Love, what has given you this magic power?

Sou-Chong

[15] Love never dies.
And there's love in your eyes!
Lotus Blossom!
Love! What has given you this magic pow'r?
As the sun above
wakens ev'ry budding passion-flow'r.

In a moment's bliss
you can stir desire,
with a single kiss
set two hearts on fire!

Lisa

Ah! We have found an earthly paradise
in this land afar!
All the world for love we sacrifice!

Sou-Chong

For the moon indeed,
we no longer sigh!

Lisa and Sou-Chong

We have all we need,
you and I!

Lisa

Best beloved! All the world to me!
My beloved you shall ever be!
Till the earth no more endures,
and the sun has ceased to shine,
I am now forever yours,
and I know that you are mine!

Sou-Chong

Best beloved! All the world to me!
My beloved you shall ever be!
Tell me that, where'er you go,
you'll be true, your whole life through!

Lisa

There's no need to tell you so,
for you know I love but you!

Sou-Chong

Ah! For well you know I love but you!

Lisa and Sou-Chong

Love! What has given you this magic pow'r?

As the sun above

wakens ev'ry budding passion-flow'r.

In a moment's bliss

you can stir desire,

with a single kiss

set two hearts on fire!

Ah! We have found an earthly paradise
in this land afar!

All the world for love we sacrifice!

For the moon indeed,

we no longer sigh!

We have all we need,

you and I!

Sou-Chong

Tell me that, where'er you go,
you'll be true, your whole life through!

Lisa

There's no need to tell you so,
for you know I love but you!

Sou-Chong

I love but you!

translation by Harry Graham
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We met in Vienna, my true love and I

[16] Vienna is a city where the girls are sweet and kind,
as many a lucky man may find.

And if beneath her chestnut trees you've dreamt
the hours away
the dream lives on for many a day.
I still recall a small secluded courtyard there,
where I discovered happiness beyond compare.

We met in Vienna, my true love and I,
when we and the world were young.

Her cheeks were like roses, as none could deny,
her voice like a song sweetly sung.

Of course it was springtime as Cupid had planned,
Vienna and springtime, they go hand in hand.

We kissed in Vienna, my true love and I,
Vienna, dear city of dreams.

In Grinzing and in Sievering, where lakes and
vineyards meet,

we sipped our wine and life was sweet.

To gently sighing violins I won my true love's heart,
we swore that we would never part.

And now in dreams I visit still the courtyard there,
although my own true love now lives I know not
where.

We met in Vienna, my true love and I,
when we and the world were young.

Her cheeks were like roses, as none could deny,
her voice like a song sweetly sung.

Of course it was springtime as Cupid had planned,
Vienna and springtime, they go hand in hand.

And now that we've parted, my true love and I,
Vienna, still lives in my dreams!

translation by Nigel Douglas

from The Merry Widow
Words forbidden

Danilo

[17] Words forbidden, hope long hidden,
'Love, be mine!'

Strings are playing, softly saying
'Love be mine!'

Ev'ry glance revealing
thoughts I may not speak.

'Turn to me for I could be
the love you seek!'

Hanna

Each time I dance with you
my heart is dancing too,
when you are by my side,
this heart of mine won't be denied.
When I look into your eyes
how could I fail to realise
that this is love at last,
at long long last?

Hanna and Danilo

All the world around us,
all the stars above
whisper too 'It's true, it's true,
you've found your love!'

translation by Nigel Douglas
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Illustration by Talbot Hughes of Marsovian guests, from the souvenir programme of the first British production of Lehár's *The Merry Widow*, 1907

Mary Evans Picture Library



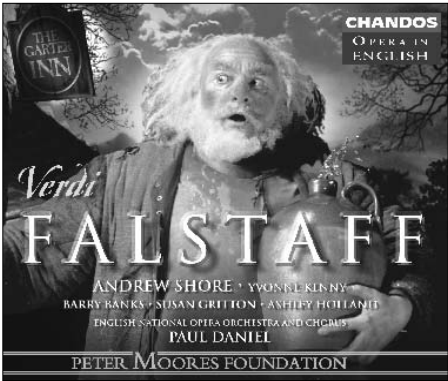
Bruce Ford as
Tassilo in Kálman's
Countess Maritza

Photo: Private collection

Opera in English on Chandos



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CHAN 3011(2)



CHAN 3017(2)

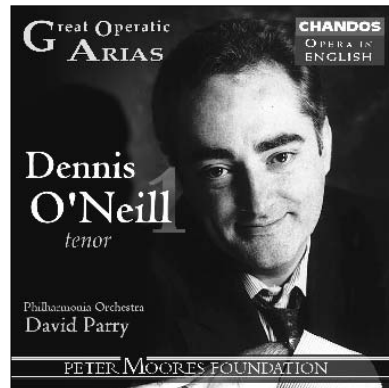


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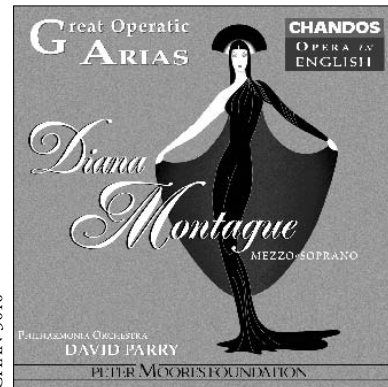
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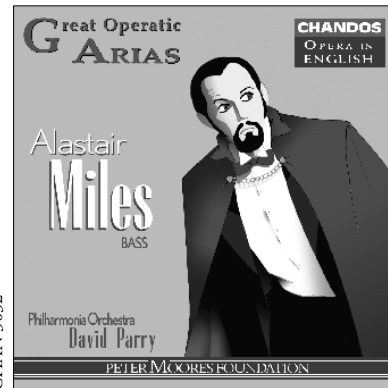
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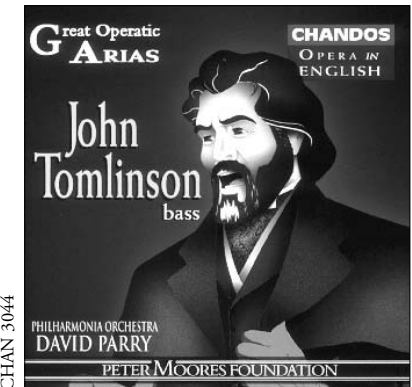
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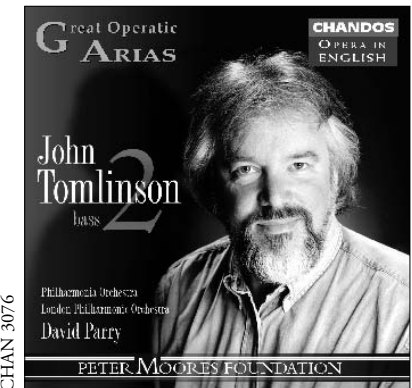
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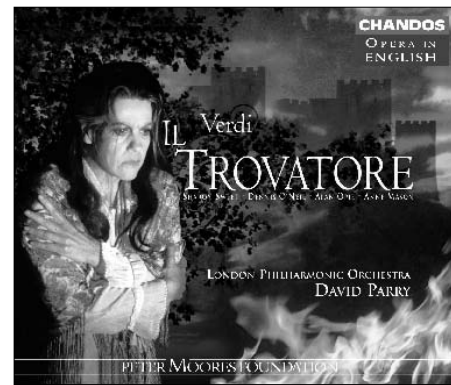


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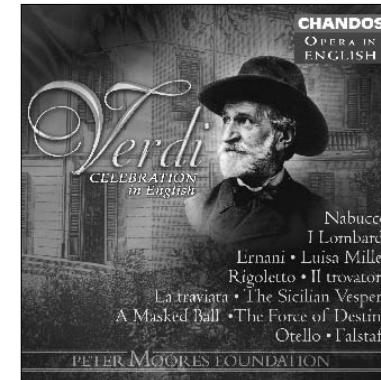
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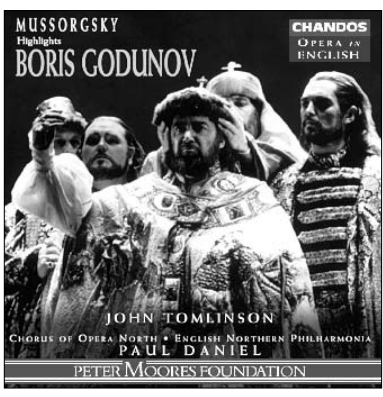


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CHAN 3007
CHAN 3014(3)



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CHAN 3019(3)



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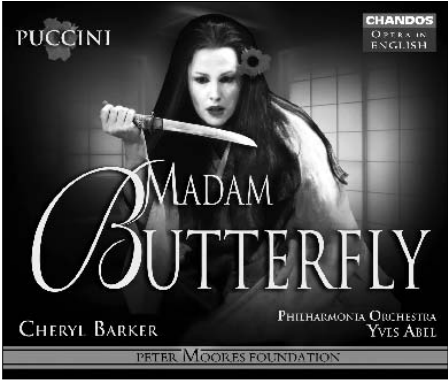
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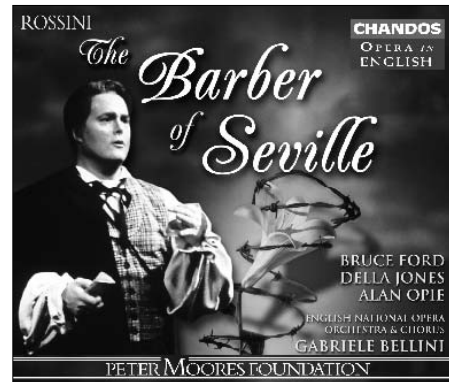


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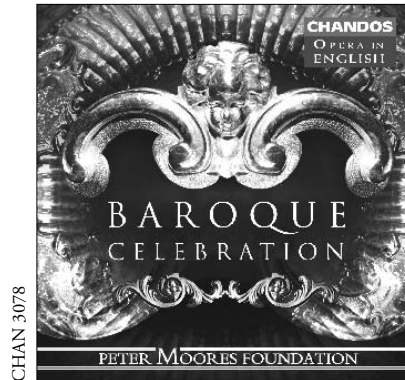
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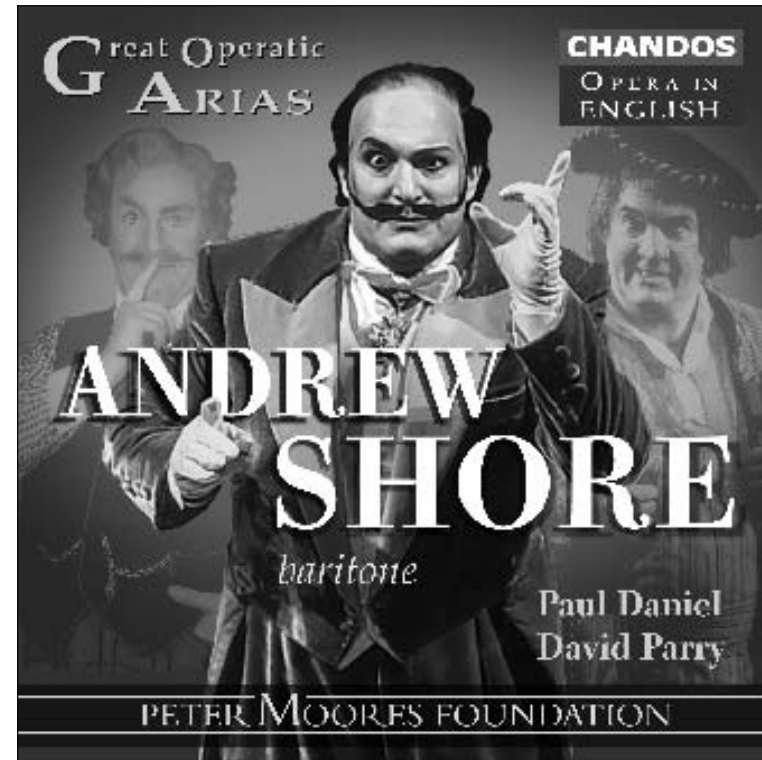


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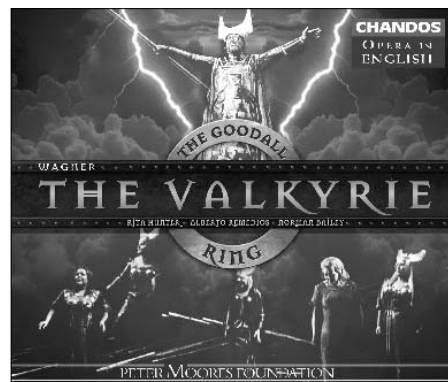


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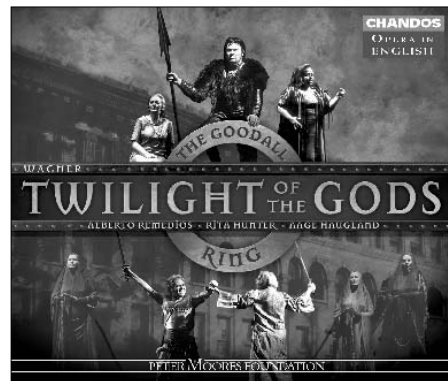
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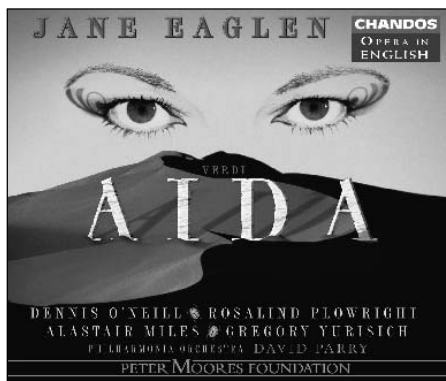


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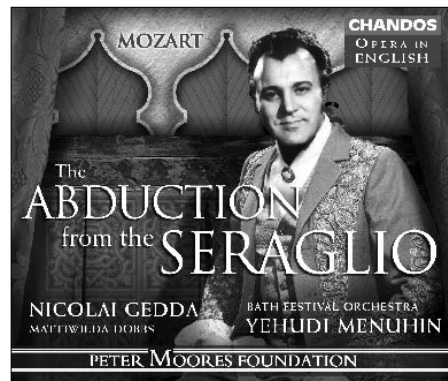
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CHAN 3081(2)



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Repertoire consultant: Nigel Douglas

Recording producer Brian Couzens

Sound engineer Ralph Couzens

Assistant engineers Christopher Brooke and Michael Common

Editor Jonathan Cooper

Operas administrator Sue Shortridge

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BRUCE FORD SINGS VIENNESE OPERETTA

BRUCE FORD

sings

VIENNESE OPERETTA

CHANDOS DIGITAL

CHAN 3088

- | | |
|---|------|
| Franz Lehár
<i>from The Land of Smiles</i> | |
| 1 'You are my heart's delight' | 3:53 |
| 6 'Patiently smiling' | 5:20 |
| 15 'Love! What has given you this magic pow'r?' | 6:15 |
| <i>from Giuditta</i> | |
| 11 'Comrades, this life is the life for me!' | 3:23 |
| <i>from The Czarevitch</i> | |
| 12 'Alone, always alone' | 5:21 |
| <i>from The Merry Widow</i> | |
| 17 'Words forbidden' | 3:20 |
| Jacques Offenbach
<i>from La Belle Hélène</i> | |
| 2 'On Mount Ida' | 3:47 |
| Johann Strauss II
<i>from The Gipsy Baron</i> | |
| 3 'Who made us one?' | 3:55 |
| 7 'Since I was left an orphan lad' | 2:58 |
| <i>from A Night in Venice</i> | |
| 5 'Love is a delicate flower' | 3:14 |

- | | |
|--|----------|
| Emmerich Kálmán
<i>from Countess Maritza</i> | |
| 4 'Play, gipsy' | 5:41 |
| 13 'Heavens, what's happ'ning to me?' | 3:27 |
| 14 'Vienna mine' | 4:19 |
| Carl Zeller
<i>from The Birdseller</i> | |
| 8 'My old father years ago' | 4:17 |
| Robert Stolz
<i>from The Song is Done</i> | |
| 16 'We met in Vienna, my true love and I' | 4:47 |
| 9 'Don't ask me why I'm leaving' | 4:41 |
| Oscar Straus
<i>from A Waltz Dream</i> | |
| 10 'Softly, so softly' | 4:53 |
| | TT 74:45 |

with Helen Williams
Alan Opie and
Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

Bruce Ford tenor
London Philharmonic Orchestra
Walter Weller

DDD

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