

TIDBITS – 19/01/2008

Suppé: Light Cavalry Overture

Francesco Ezechiele Ermenegildo Cavaliere Suppé-Demelli was born a Dalmatian, and after moving to Vienna he conducted the opera orchestra for *no pay*. Some things don't change! But he then had the opportunity to try out his operas. Including the Light Cavalry. Despite being thought of as depicting cavalry riding into battle, there is actually no cavalry in the opera at all! But there is a group of somewhat overweight dancers who are jokingly referred to as 'The Light Cavalry'!

Schubert: Unfinished Symphony

Richard Branson was given a ticket for a performance of Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony." He was unable to go, so he gave the ticket to his Efficiency Manager. The next morning, Branson asked the manager how he had enjoyed the concert. He was handed a note which read as follows:

Notes on the symphony which Schubert was unable to finish:

1. For a considerable period, the trombone players had nothing to do. Their number should be reduced, and their notes spread across the whole orchestra, thus reducing inactivity.
2. The violins, in two groups, each played identical notes. This seems unnecessary duplication, and the staff in these sections should be drastically cut. If a large volume of sound is really required, this could be obtained through the use of an amplifier.
3. Much effort was involved in playing demi-semiquavers. This seems an excessive refinement, and it is recommended that all notes should be rounded up to the nearest semiquaver. If this were done, it would be possible to use amateurs instead of professionals, drastically reducing costs.
4. No useful purpose is served by repeating with horns the passage that has already been handled by the strings. If all such redundant passages were eliminated, the piece could be reduced to a fraction of its length.

In light of the above, one can only conclude that had Schubert given attention to these matters, he probably would have had the time to finish his symphony

Strauss: Wine, Women & Song

Kreisler: Schön Rosmarin

When I was about 6 I remember pretending at school that my dad was a policeman. Have you ever pretended – and got away with it? Fritz Kreisler was a very famous violin player. Part of his popularity was the fact that he had rediscovered many 'lost classics' by famous composers. He explained that he had found these works tucked away in various libraries and monasteries throughout Europe. But on his 60th birthday

he admitted that he had written them himself, and had pretended they were by famous old composers!

Tonight we are playing one of Kreisler's pieces that involves no pretence at all!

Tritsch Tratsch Polka

Tritsch Tratsch probably means 'chit-chat'. Nowadays people in concert halls are very quiet. But it hasn't always been like that. If you went to a big event like an opera or a dance in 19th century Vienna you went partly to see you friends and to have a chat! So let's try. I want you to chat while we play this polka ...

Pizzicato Polka

How many ways can you get a sound out of a violin (no it's not a joke!!)?

Champagne Polka

Listen out for the popping of the champagne corks. Can you work out what instrument is making the sound?

Orlovsky Aria

Now we have two arias from Strauss's opera "Die Fledermaus". Aria, by the way, is just a posh word for a song with orchestral accompaniment. In the first we are introduced to the eccentric and fabulously rich Prince Orlovsky. Orlovsky has everything that money can buy, but suffers from the tragic affliction of chronic boredom, which the endless round of parties and balls can do nothing to relieve. But if someone comes to his party and doesn't join in fully with all the drinking and fun, he calls his bouncers who throw out the offending person.

Czardas

Now in operas there is often a lot of pretending (I wonder if Kreisler liked opera ...). We're now in the middle of Orlovsky's party. Among the guests is a mysterious Hungarian Countess (the party is a masked ball, so no one knows who she is). In actual fact she is the disguised wife of another of his guests, Eisenstein, who is supposed to be in prison. The "Countess" charms the entire company (including her oblivious husband!) with her beauty and a song about the beauty of her native land, Hungary.

Blue Danube

Johann Strauss (II) was one of the world's first international celebrities, known well in both Europe and America. On one memorable occasion in Boston in America, he conducted *The Blue Danube* with 20,000 singers, an orchestra of over 1000 and 20 assistant conductors, to an audience of more than 100,000.

Can I have 2 volunteers? One to conduct the cellos and double basses, one to conduct the violins. I'll conduct the wind.

Radetsky March

Clapping practice.