

Issue #21

*Issue # 21: created to benefit
Opera Carolina's May 2008
production of the
Johann Strauss II operetta*



An
Irreverent
Guide[©] for
ENJOYING:

*Johann
Strauss'*
(II)

*Die
Fledermaus*

(The Bat or if you prefer, The Flutter Mouse)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In developing *Irreverent Guide*® materials and an occasional pre-performance discussion for the Opera Carolina 2007-2008 season, the support, comments and patient toleration of Maestro James Meena, Jaimee Evans (Director of Marketing & Corporate Sponsorships) and Teresa Robertson (Director of Education and Community Relations) are greatly appreciated. They significantly improved the accuracy and educational "mission" of the material. Unfortunately, they could do little about the author's senses of humor or taste. Some things are probably beyond help----but there is always a chance tomorrow or, "blame it on the (Viennese) champagne!"

J P Cooney

Constructive criticism of *Irreverent Guides*® will be accepted, but --- probably not graciously.



Johann Strauss'

Die Fledermaus

Premiere:
April 5, 1874
Theater an der Wien,
Vienna



Libretto:
C. Haffner and
F.F.R. Greene,
based on a play by
Meilhac and Halevy
that was "borrowed" from
another play by Benedix.

**Original
Language:**
German

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*In response to an earlier special request, **Operatic Cliff Notes** has been begrudgingly designed for two potential sub-classes of our **Irreverent Guides** audience: 1. those who have short spans of attention AND/OR 2. those who spent their educational years (and perhaps beyond) only reading only synopses of assigned materials and even then, at the last moments before a critical confrontation with reality like "the final exam" OR later in life, the stockholders' meeting.

Act I: The Friend, places the pieces of his plot in place;

Setting:

Generally, the long-ago Vienna of "wine, women and song."

Specifically, the Viennese villa of a well-to-do, definitively very upper-middle class but cavorting-prone couple.

Time:

- **Specifically**, slightly more than twenty-four hours of a vacuous Viennese day.
- **Generally**---, probably the late 19th century portion (let's say circa 1880) of the Emperor Franz-Joseph's Austro-Hungarian Empire reign (1848-1916).

Not really relevant to plot-pushing though, as long as your designated date of choice still has waltzing in Wien.

The Plot:

- In a vanished Vienna, there lived “a wealthy man of independent means.” Coincidentally, he is our semi-hapless Hero, According to an available Austro-Hungarian census, his household consisted of his lovely but vivaciously vocal wife (our Prime Heroine) and their equally lovely, but messily maneuvering maid (our Apprentice Heroine).¹
- The Hero was conveniently and happily married to our Principal Heroine (PH). However, in the course of this former French farce now leavened à la Deutsch mode, with Viennese schlag, champagne and a three-quarter time tempo, the happiness quotient of their union will be tunefully tested.
- Our operatic opus often opens to an empty stage. As our musical morality play plays forward, an anonymous but unseen, tacky tenor is heard serenading our PH from an ambivalent somewhere. It is later let out that he was an “acquaintance” of hers from a pre-marital romp at a Bohemian spa.² For the moment, suffice to say, when he sings, she semi-swoons.
- Our first Plot Spin enters in the form of the maneuvering Maid. This merry Miss via her sibling sister she thinks,³ has received an invitation to a very posh party put on by a Prince. There there will be plenty of polkas and “other” plutocratic pastimes.
- To party participate, our Apprentice Principal (AP) pleads to the now appearing PH to be pardoned from the rest of today’s parlor preening and repast preparing. Her strained cover story is her necessity

¹ Or Sub-prime Heroine, if you prefer.

² More of that later. We are getting ahead our story.

³ We will get into that mail fraud maneuver and sibling sister later.

as Niece, to consol a convenient, but apparently continuously croup-cursed Auntie. “No dice,” says the diva of the domicile. Damn!

- The “no dice!” decision descended from our second Plot Spin. Our Hero on the bad news side of the ledger, has anger management problems. These have caused him to be sentenced to five days in durance vile for insulting the local constabulary. Unknown to our PH, that sentence was subsequently supersized to eight, as our hero carelessly continued to caterwaul at the constabulary.⁴ Today is the day he is due at the Viennese Bastille!

- As if things were not already complicated, the tacky tenor having terminated his tune, appears on-stage. Objective: rekindling an old flame. The PH though scandalized, after all she is now married, agrees to let the fellow back in ASAP after her husband departs for his designated dungeon.(Spin #3) The tenor exits stage left, still singing.

- Who should now come on via stage right? The hoosegow-bound husband, that’s who!. It is apparent he is having an anger-management attack again; a fearful phonic-fight with his Lawyer is producing a fine fettle of fireworks.⁵ The subject though directly undefined, we are soon to discover is the increase in the interval of incarceration.

- The PH assumes Condi Rice-like actions to pacify the puerile pair. As a consequence, our curmudgeonly Counsel is coerced to cede the scene.

- The Defender’s dour, but doughty and definitely not permanent, departure dovetails with a drop-in by our Hero’s favorite Friend.

⁴ We also might add that our Hero is a tenor like our unseen serenader. That really does not help his behavioral situation.

⁵ The Lawyer has a stammer. Not politically correct, but evently good for a few laughs auf deutsch.

- The Friend pushing our next Plot Spin into play, produces a pass (fur zwei) to the same plutocratic party as our merry Maid mentioned. Just the jaunt to enjoy before journeying into jail! Our hero is hooked!
- During the denouement of the dining, dancing and “dating” to be, it is let slip that many moons ago the Friend and Hero overly-indulged at a Masquerade where Hero was a Butterfly and Friend, a Bat! A “capital joke” was concocted by one onto the other. Today, that joke’s still jolly to our Hero, but not to the Friend.⁶
- Swiftly the Friend departs, our Hero to follow shortly bringing with him at Friend’s suggestion, a chiming watch usually used handily by our Hero to lure the ladies.⁷
- The Hero now notes, to “protest” his prison performance, he will dress in white tie and tails! The PH is puzzled, but her husband’s harried hie to “hence” has handed her some household crowd control problems. The Maid must be dismissed until dawn, so the Tenor can troop in and later out, unobserved.
- She manages magnificently and spur-of-the-momentarily, When the in-house crowd decamps, the Tenor troops in.⁸
- The former lovers having the Haus delectably deserted, they desperately dig into the dinner that had been designated for our Hero and PH.⁹ Also, our now at-home Tenor has dressed himself in the hoosegow-headed Husband’s robe and slippers.

⁶ Our Hero in typical tenorish tenor, misses the recall’s mean meaning to the still fairly furious Friend. Payment on that score will soon come due!

⁷ Watch the watch!

⁸ This guy so promptly pops in-haus as others pop out-haus, he must live in the household’s front hedge.

⁹ Talk about recycling!

- Unfortunately,¹⁰ the Prison Governor glides it unbidden to escort his distinguished detainee-to-be to his dungeon. Oh my!
- Well, PH preferring reputation to romance, pawns off the protesting Tenor as her Hero, the Husband. The Tenor always clueless but an adequate pseudo-husband, is hastened hurriedly to the hoosegow.
- Cue the curtain!

Act II: The pieces play out, complicated by or possibly, aided and abetted by collateral serendipity.

Setting: Auf Wien, the Ballroom (and/or Environs) of a Princely Pied-à-Terre.

Time: Elapsed between Acts I and II? A sufficient amount to permit our PH to compose herself after the Act I husband hustle and then, bedeck herself in the de rigueur high fashion for those who are Viennese Ball bound.¹¹

The Plot:

- The Ball is in full $\frac{3}{4}$ swing when our merry Maid waltzes in wearing one of her mistresses' (our PH) elegant ensembles. She and her semi-snobbish sister already seated, soon see they are being fooled by some not-so-funny fellow(s). The sister did NOT initiate the merry Maid's invitation. Who could it be?

¹⁰ Or fortunately, depending on your sense of poetic justice.

¹¹ How did she get invited?

- Speak of the devil! Our invitation-penning Friend dashes in and quickly corners the merry Maid. She is to play the part of an actress in a Friend-produced play. If she plays the part to perfection, the Friend will manage the merry Maid into future stagey success. Now she is hooked!
- Our princely Host appears in all his snobbish and bored behavioral glory. Friend relates to the royal, the revenge play now going into production; from the sidelines he shows our blue-blood, the dramatis personae as they unknowingly play their parts in Friend's revenge revue. He also regales the royal with those folks' roles in real life.
- Shortly, our merry Maid and Hero intersect. Despite recognition, the Maid manages to make the Hero play their pseudo-parts.
- As we are resolving one farcical finagle, another flops on-board. The Prison Governor appears, but also in a Friend assigned pseudo-part.
- Then--- a masked Hungarian Countess appears. The Friend has been fooling with facts again. The mysterious Magyar is our Hero's wife and also, our PH.
- She swiftly spies her not-in-jail husband in his full playboy preening. Could things get worse? Probably?
- Our pseudo-Magyar makes some moves on the man she married. However, that clueless Clod does not get the big picture, but our manipulating Magyar manages to pocket the Clod's cute and chiming pocket-clock.¹²
- The chimes remind our Hero and Friend they are very late for a date with a dungeon. They dash for the door, as all else dance to something or other about the Danube. **Cue the Curtain!**

**Act III: The Bat's denouement (a.k.a. revenge) does its duty,
And the opera's drops in too.**

¹² Remember, watch the watch!

Setting: From the royally and sublimely plutocratic to the downright dark, dingy and dirty. The Governor's Office (with cellblocks in sight) at the Vienna Kerker, Ringstrasse Branch.

Time: Shortly after 6 a.m., a.k.a. the end of Act II. We know it's "shortly," because the party's pooped participants will shortly begin to arrive at this dreary dive, still in their moth-balled mufti.

The Plot:

- You think you know convoluted? You ain't seen nothin' yet!
- Let in by the deaf and none too bright Jailer, the Governor returns much the worse for wear from the Plutocratic Party. Shortly thereafter, the merry Maid with snobbish sister in tow, troop in. They have come to make confessions of flimflamming their identities and occupations. More importantly, the merry Maid is intent on persuading the Governor to "govern" her future stage career.
- Before that bit of blackmailing byplay can be booked, our Hero appears to do his duty to society. Confusion ensues, "Hero" is already in a cell, placed there by the Governor! Unfortunately, the Governor also gives up to our (real) Hero, all the gamey details of dragging our hapless (pseudo) Hero (the Tenor) to Durance Vile.
- As the above character chaos continues, another character comes on--- the Counsel from our Hero's Act I duplicitous defense. Remember him! It seems our pseudo-Hero has sent for counsel to create a "get-out-of-jail" card. Our true Hero, too late smart but beginning to see the light, convinces the Counsel to quickly exchange costumes. The Counsel's wig and judicial garb grandly hides our Hero's heroic mien.

- Now, the PH appears from the party and the pseudo-hero from his prison pallet. Both appear and seem--- happily reunited? Into that reunion, the entering Counsel (a.k.a. Our Hero--- remember?) cuts in. Untrue confessions follow. Finally pushed to ballistic behavior, the Hero dumps the Counsel cover and confronts the erring-couple.
- However, his confrontation is countered and cleverly checkmated by our PH. She produces the chiming pocket-clock.
- *The Bat's Revenge* denouement is swiftly served. All was an elaborately engineered endeavor by the Bat/Friend to best the Butterfly. Moreover, mightily was that Butterfly bested!
- As a bonus, the merry Maid is launched into a colorful career but not “buy” the Governor, but by the now un-bored and very amused Prince.
- Only the Tenor seems to notice that although he was not part of the plot, but got to play lovingly with the leading lady. Wink, wink, nudge, nudge!
- Whatever! All is blamed on the champagne. Can a concluding waltz and concurrent curtain be far behind?



Miscellany to Munch On



The Bat's Revenge: **An Advisory to the Audience.**¹³

Three years before our present plot begins to play, two Viennese playboys (one our Hero; the other, his best Friend) meandered into a Masquerade. The Hero disguised as a butterfly, the Friend, a bat. As boys will be boys, beaucoup bottles of the bubbly were bested. Our Hero then bound for his billet jokingly, parked his comatose Friend in the Prater. The next morning, the Friend found himself still in fine, full bat fettle, flat on the fertile Park's flora and fungi. He also found himself the focus of fauna, in the persona of pedestrians pausing in the passing. to poke pointedly at his batty behavior. For many miles (kilometers if you prefer), amidst a plethora of promenading persons, the bedraggled bat beat it for his billet, zu Fuss.

He was not amused then and is still not amused now. So, now is finally payback time! Hence, the subtle subtitle of our operatic opus is “*The Bat's Revenge.*” Let the action begin!

¹³ Before advancing our action, you should know something. It will help you comprehend what is coming.

Meilhac and Halevy: Why do Their Names Seem Familiar?

Copyright laws only began to exist towards the end of the 19th century. Up until then, for the protection of literature and music it was, “Hannah bar the door!” The word “plagiarism” did not exist. While outright uncredited theft was not involved in every artistic borrowing and at least occasional acknowledgement of original work of others received a tip of the hat, they proved more frequently the exception than the rule.

One such exception however occurred in the case of *Die Fledermaus*. A play, *Le Reveillon* penned in 1872 by a pair of successful Parisian playwrights (Halevy and Meilhac) is credited as a source of the *Bat*'s birth.¹⁴ However for us, those gentlemen's names seem to echo from another context? Ludociv Halevy one of our tandem men in question here was a nephew of Fromental Halevy composer of *La Juive*. Good genes!

Better yet, these two are noted as probably the most successful librettists of later 19th century Parisian opera. Two of their products were *Carmen* and *Mignon*. However, their tie to Strauss and his *Bat* are closer than a generic musical environment. They assisted Jacques

¹⁴ We are just going to ignore the fact that *Le Reveillon* was actually based on an earlier German play. Its genealogy seems lost in history's dustbin .

Offenbach in the birth of operetta.¹⁵ Halevy was Offenbach's librettist for his first major success, *Orphee aux enfers*. Subsequently, in partnership with Meilhac the pair authored most of Offenbach's most successful works including: *La Belle Helene*, *La Vie Parisienne*, *La Grand-Duchesse Gerolstein* and *La Pericole*. Good genes seem infectious and occasionally between species, like with bats!



¹⁵ See Footnote # 38 for a possible challenge to the correctness of that conclusion.



HOW AND WHY FLEDERMAUS WALTZED IN WIEN.

A Century of Strausses.

Chronologically and geographically, the combined life spans and Wien residenz stadt of Johann Strauss the father (1804-1848) and Johann Strauss the son (1825-1899)¹⁶ encompass the whole of 19th century Vienna .

Would their fame and musical gifts to us have emerged in another place and time? Perhaps not, but they in fact did emerge strongly influenced by where they were and when they were there. Their music principally centered on creating the waltz and promoting its international popularity. However, their abilities also touched on other

¹⁶ In the options used to separate their identities from their similar names (not to mention their identical professions), the Strausses were both Germanically dogmatic and "c'est la vie" permissive. Consequently, Papa Strauss is found labeled as Johann Strauss (period), or Johann Strauss I, or Johann Strauss Sr. The son emerges as Johann Strauss Jr., or Johann Strauss sohn, or Johann Strauss the Younger, or Johann Strauss II. For our purposes, we will point out Papa as simply Johann Strauss; his oldest offspring as Johann Strauss II.

forms of “light” melodies and at least one operatic variation: the operetta, albeit briefly.

The Influence of “Where” and “When.” Quite simply and certainly since the 18th century, Vienna has been noted for as the European “center” of *gemütlichkeit*, with music and dancing as major contributors to that pervading and persistent public sense of well-being. That atmosphere permeated the principality and its population before the Strauss family came to the stadt, but also, more emphatically afterwards.

Europe was ushered into the 19th century as were the Strausses, with the French Revolution, then the subsequent era of the Napoleonic Wars, the Revolution(s) of 1848 and the rise of European nationalism. As traumatic as these events were, by in large, their results and serendipitous byproducts were socially beneficial. Specifically, despite the reactionary and restrictive Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the Viennese environment benefited from the multi-national changes. For the purposes of our current tale, the rise of the bourgeoisie¹⁷ coupled with the rise of leisure time were certainly seized upon and sweetly savored by Strauss Papa and Sohn.¹⁸ However, we are both

¹⁷ In the positive sense of that term.

¹⁸ Not by a long shot is this a learned treatise. Therefore let's just accept the upheavals of the 19th century and their social consequences, an move on without

beginning to meander and get ahead of our tale of the Strauss-ian cooptation of tuneful $\frac{3}{4}$ time.

The Spanish Connection. The part that waltzed of the large Austrian Strauss family, had not always been Viennese. In fact Papa Johann's wife (Anna) was the daughter of a Spanish Grandee who became an Austrian innkeeper via a *Sound of Music* play-out with Iberian flavoring.

The tale of her family's social and geographic conversions sounds more like the stuff of operetta librettos, than real life. However, we take our tales wherever we find them. Johann I's father-in-law was originally a wealthy but liberal member of the Spanish royal court. He unfortunately killed the Crown Prince (not a liberal) in a duel. Wisely, the good grandee headed for the French border with his wife and five children in tow. Making their way slowly and surreptitiously to Vienna, the family finally came under the protection of friend, fortunately an Austro-Hungarian Duke. However, the family's fortune and property were purloined by the Spanish peerage; their aristocratic name and lineage were declared defamed and most certainly, they were out of Burke's Peerage. In place of all that

delving into details. The essential point is that Vienna, more so than any other major European city loved fun. It historically is, a "fun town." In another time and place, the Strauss "effect" quite possibly would have been more muted.

“stuff” though, emerged an industrious family of respected Austrian innkeepers.

Strauss I. Papa Strauss was largely a self-taught musician and composer. During his late teens, large orchestras playing in public inns cum dancehalls had become all the rage. Strauss I joined forces with the orchestra of Joseph Lanner also a composer/musician.¹⁹

The popularity of orchestra grew, as did their engagements. These became sufficient and lucrative enough to develop a second orchestra under Johann I’s baton. Subsequently, he also became sufficiently popular to form his own orchestra, which he toured almost continuously and internationally. The result of all this was quite conducive to developing a family fortune and brought immense popularity to himself and Vienna. So much so, the Emperor²⁰ created and awarded Johann I the title of “Director of Music for the Imperial-Royal Court Balls.”²¹

Papa Strauss was also a composer, although never of the stature of his sons. The one piece he penned that is permanently lodged in posterity’s memory is the *Radetzsky March*.

¹⁹ It was actually Lanner and Strauss I that popularized the waltz more than Strauss II who usually gets all the credit.

²⁰ Most likely, Franz Joseph I, although archives are a little vague on the point.

²¹ This title was to become somewhat later, a speed-bump several times for Johann II.

By his innkeeper (nee Spanish grandee) wife, Strauss I produced six children. Three of them were the Strauss brothers: Johann II, Joseph and Eduard. All of them were very talented composers and musicians.²²

Johann I evidently had a very wandering eye.²³ As evidence of which I submit, he fathered seven “out-of-wedlock” children and several years before he died, Strauss I abandoned his family in favor of one of his several mistresses.²⁴ Ironically, he died from Scarlet Fever contracted from one of his illegitimate offspring.

Strauss II. Young Johann’s musical ability began to emerge while he was still quite young. However, Papa decreed Johann II would become a banker.²⁵ Historians assure us, Papa’s career choice for his son was not to avoid musical completion with the son,²⁶ but to protect him from the rigors of a musician’s life.²⁷

²² Johann II frequently remarked that his two brothers were far better composers and musicians than he was; however, he (Johann II) unfortunately, was better known.

²³ A “talent” which Johann II would somewhat inherit. Read on! In their defense however, it should be noted that these orchestral conductors then were the equivalent of rock idols today--- and with all the fringe benefits!

²⁴ As dysfunctional as that event sounds, the rupture did allow Johann II (age 17) to actively develop his music career.

²⁵ This was before Papa began to play out all his personal passions.

²⁶ Although that competition was to subsequently emerge, big time!

²⁷ Pardon me if I am somewhat skeptical on that point, Papa’s musician’s life rtainly sounds more romantic than rigorous.

To duck Strauss I's decree, Strauss II took his musical training in secret, but from members of Papa's orchestra. Murder will out! Papa eventually caught on and there was a major melee. However, it conveniently occurred at about the same point Papa decided to pull out of his household in favor of one of his mistress. Johann II at the age of seventeen was home free!

Johann II with the active support and encouragement of Mama, then formed his own orchestra.²⁸ Now Vienna was blessed with two Strauss orchestras and the press had a field day! To reduce the competitive air, Johann II took his orchestra on travels away from home.²⁹

The outbreak of the Viennese-version of the Revolution of 1848 drove a permanent wedge between the two Strausses. Papa was definitely on the side of the monarchy and his orchestra played his Radetzky March. Whereas the sohn was defiantly, liberal and his orchestra played "La Marseillaise." Fortunately, the feud fizzled out with Papa's passing in 1849.³⁰

²⁸ Does some of this remind you of the Eddie Duchin band/orchestral dynasty, except mucho dysfunctional?

²⁹ His first appointed musical post was "Kapelmeister of the 2nd Vienna Citizens' Regiment." Well, he had to start somewhere!

³⁰ Unfortunately, the memories at the Royal Court lasted long when it came to young Johann's liberal behavior. Despite many applications, he was denied his father's title (now empty) of "Music Director of the Royal Court Balls" until 1863.

In addition to his compositional and conducting gifts, Johann II was an effective businessman and public relations genius. His self-promotion of the orchestra and his family was the stuff of legends.³¹ He toured extensively throughout Europe, Russia and there was one wildly successful session in the United States.

While all this lucrative musical traveling was occurring, Johann II was also mending fences. Learning from Papa, he began to produce a series of pieces dedicated to various royals of the Austro-Hungarian Court. Additionally, he became quite adept at adapting his existing music to current times, places and artistic requirements.³² What played in Vienna could reappear in Russia under a different name and perhaps adjusted tempo. Recycling lucratively was his forte!

Marital Merry-Go-Rounds. As noted previously, Johann II like Papa also appeared to have marital adventures, but of a much more modest and motivated nature. The major difference though between the two men's "style" was all of Papa's considerable liaisons were ex-officio (save one); Johann II's were serial monogamy and very modest in number.

³¹ After Papa's death, Johann II combined their two orchestras.

³² Not unlike the 18th and 19th century operatic composers adjusting their arias and ensembles to available artists and related musical forces.

He was married three times. His first wife (1862), Hetty Treffz was an accomplished operatic singer with her own successful artistic reputation.³³ Post-marriage, she (probably most advisedly) traveled with the orchestra and they gave joint performances. While a decade older than Strauss, their marriage was quite successful for at least a decade. She was a major force in his continued social and professional success. As will shortly be seen she was the major mover that brought about *Die Fledermaus*.

The age difference between the couple soon began to take a toll. Hetty became content to play the hausfrau as well as career and business manager for Strauss II. He though, wanted still an attractive young wife. In the middle of this emerging *sturm und drang*, a young man appeared. It was subsequently discovered by Strauss II, the man was Hefty's illegitimate son. Blackmail was his intent and the stress of his proposed exposures, traumatized his mother into a fatal stroke (1877).

Strauss's second marriage in 1878 was to an actress. In a certain sense, the couple's relationship was the reverse of the first marriage. Frau Strauss II was considerably younger than Johann II, did not care for his music and

³³ Prior to the Strauss marriage, she had been the mistress of a member of the nobility and had several children by him.

was flagrantly indiscrete in extramarital romantic liaisons. Divorce followed in 1883.

Strauss's marriages were somewhat akin to Goldilock's opinions as she sampled her way through the Three Bears lair. His last legal union (1887) was in Goldilock's words, "Just right!" Their ages were similar and she encouraged his music.³⁴ The only trauma in their relationship appeared pre-ceremony. There was no Catholic divorce in Austria, so Strauss could not legally remarry. Hence, he decisively changed religions and nationality (Saxe-Coburg-Gotha). As an honored Austrian citizen, the nationality shift was not without raised eyebrows. However, the couple were as happily married as his career was productive until his death in 1899.



³⁴ She is credited similar to her predecessor Hetty, with *Fledermaus*, with the development of Strauss's successful operetta *Zigeunerbaron*.

Weaning the Waltz.

Without the Strausses would there have been a Wienese waltz? Or without the Wienese waltz, would we have known the Strausses?

To those “profound” questions, let us give the edge to the waltz. It appears at least in origins, to outdate the Austrian branch of the dancing equivalent to the von Trapp family.

Anthropologically-speaking, the evolution of dance forms reflects societal evolutions. Dance in its earliest two-step, was strictly confined to warriors whirling in a post-battle victory stomp. Women were generally non-combatants and consequently, out of the dance picture and off the dance floor, even if there was one.

However, female equality at least on the dance floor emerged with the evolution of the formalistic minuet. That dance’s form and tempo were also dictated by women’s dress and formidable hair-styling. While paired, couples were placed far enough apart to allow for horrendous hoops, no sudden twinkle-toes movements could be mustered to muss milady’s mien. In addition, the Minuet’s cadence and performance locale dictated, the warriors become gentlemen. Swords albeit briefly, were checked in the cloakroom. Finally, in form, the

Minuet mimicked the geometric forms favored the a la mode formal garden geometry of especially, the 17th and 18th centuries.

The French Revolution seems to a put a sock in all of that Minuet merchandise. The battles of the bloody Revolution period usually included a bacchanalian bopping bash, both before the first shot and most certainly, after.

The major strategy of that time was usually circular---surround the Bastille for example, and attack! Consequently, the celebratory post-victory dance took a spontaneous form of a circle and in the name of “egalitae.” included women as performing partners.

That spontaneous post-victory celebration soon was formalized into a dance form (La Carmagnole),³⁵ and went indoors. It was now presented in “democratic” ballrooms. Because of its Third Estate origins, the Carmagnole was heavily populated with quick movements, crudely executed.. Stamp and whirl became the dance de rigeur.

In the Austro-Hungarian regions, the Carmagnole “form” emerged as the Ländler. Those regions still comparatively revolution-free, had both the Minuet and

³⁵ That dance as it evolved, unconsciously mimicked the round or Maypole dance of the Middle Ages

the Ländler in competition among consumers.³⁶ The Ländler became a concern of morality as it involved the whirling of women by men. The political correct constabulary stepped-in and in many areas, such whirling-based dance was outlawed.³⁷

Vienna as earlier noted was different from the rest of Europe and even from the whole of the Empire of which it was a part. Vienna was ground zero for *gemutlichkeit*. Their middle class with a least some portion of disposable income, was rapidly growing as was the concept of “leisure time”. Entertainment out of the home, was sought and where found, quite successful. Music, dance, food and potent potables³⁸ preferably in combination, were the keys to continual crowds and cash-crammed tills.

The evolving and public life-style of the city began to reflect itself in the blurring of class-distinctions. The rigidity of the Royal Court relaxed (a bit) and at the same time, the historical crude edges of the peasant and bourgeois classes began to smooth. Dance as a historical reflection of social forms and change, began both a

³⁶ Mozart in *Giovanni* brilliantly illustrates (parodies?) the inter-class clash of the two dance styles in the party sequence involving both the peasant wedding party and the aristocratic avengers.

³⁷ It is interesting to note that the word “waltz” in any language did not exist at least in connection with social matters until the late 18th century. Up to that point the word has strictly scientific or legal import.

³⁸ Always somewhat by tradition found in Viennese abundance.

mixing and modification of styles. The formalism of the Minuet and the “whoopie” of the Ländler melded; out of this process, the waltz was born. Serendipitously, the birth occurred at a time of emerging social freedoms from restrictive legal and religious mores. It raised its ribald head in a place, Vienna that was the European center of “let’s party.” Here we have favorable fertilizers for ferment. Fortuitously, the third necessary ingredient also was in Viennese residence--- the Strausses I and II with their rather magical $\frac{3}{4}$ time music.



Strauss

Opera to Operetta.³⁹

Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880) is generally credited as the Papa of operetta and its most effective practitioner.⁴⁰

As the French Second Empire rolled into action (circa 1852), certain conditions began to emerge and interrelate: the French royal dictatorship appeared to be lasting but was stable (so far)--- therefore, its permissiveness parameters were somewhat loosened. A growth and availability of financial capital was rapidly occurring; the economy was expanding internationally as was the international cultural centrality of Paris and

³⁹ The information on Offenbach and the development of operetta has been abridged from the author's **Irreverent Guide #16** (April, 2007): *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*.

⁴⁰ Perhaps somewhat erroneously at least in terms of inventing the genre. Most references do credit Offenbach as the "inventor" of the operetta. As appealing as that conclusion may be, it appears to be not true. What a surprise! Historically, the founder actually appears to be Florimond Ronger, nicknamed Hervé or more commonly "Le Compositeur Tocque" (The Crazy Composer).

A musician, he was appointed organist at the Parisian lunatic asylum Bicêtre. His mother happened to be in charge of the hospital's wardrobe--- talk about clout! In any event, Hervé organized concerts and musicals for the inmates. He also wrote little musical plays which the patients performed. Hervé's objective appears to have been semi-therapeutic - to keep the patients' minds focused on something other than their mental aberrations. Over time, the fame of these events grew; theatrical managers came to see them. The upshot of all this was Hervé was offered the post of conductor at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal. He became a successful composer in the operetta genre. However, while Offenbach probably did not "invent" operetta, he did consolidate and popularize internationally, the musical ball that Hervé started rolling. So who are we to say that our operetta papa-idol has clay feet?

the fashionable Bohemianism of its life style. From these, the astute Jacques Offenbach, facilitated a receptive and profitable⁴¹ environment for a new musical form. Besides all of the above, the Paris Exposition of 1855 would shortly be opening, showcasing the city to the world and --- swarms of folks would be coming to town looking for new adventures--- musical and otherwise.⁴²

The composer's targeted a self-developed musical theatrical form while close to opera, was definitely not yet again another operatic variation. Offenbach's musical style was not French, in the 19th century contemporary sense. He associated himself compositionally with an 18th century French tradition of "le genre primitive et gai."⁴³ Offenbach's overall musical concept was "really gay, witty and cheerful music." He saw that through the consequences of existing Parisian censorship and production controls, music with life in it was gradually being forgotten.

In developing the characteristics of the works he would produce at his own theater, the Bouffes Parisian, Offenbach almost exclusively focused on small-scale

⁴¹ The composer did have a head for business as well as musical theatre.

⁴² The Paris Exhibition of 1855 proved to be an ideal public relations vehicle and product showcase for Offenbach new entertainment form. .

⁴³ A.k.a. the French spirit of gaiety.

pieces⁴⁴ in terms of production and as opposed to the bloated works that were the tradition of the Paris Opera. His works were to be light and very upbeat; a heavy but subtle, dose of satire did not hurt either. Early on, it was described as “musical journalism” from the rather hasty sketch nature of some parts of its first forms. Despite his new evolutionary form of music and stage topics, the composer prudently avoided challenging the “genre” status quo directly.⁴⁵

As Offenbach’s new musical form began to hit its stride, the works staged by him and others came to combine elements of comedy, satire, parody and farce. Eventually those types of works became generically labeled from the Theatre’s marquee as “opera bouffe;” It even became recognized as a member of the operatic family.⁴⁶ More popularly, the form became operetta and later morphed, especially in the United States, into what

⁴⁴ Somewhat like Puccini, Offenbach was noted for having an unerring sense of theatre. He knew what would play well on stage. Unfortunately that “sense” began to overcome his business acumen. While the house was SRO every performance night, the on-stage visual effects became more and more lavish. As a result, the budget did not balance--- the productions were costing more than their revenue justified. At that balance sheet imbalance point, the composer decided it was time for him to retire from the business end of the theater to concentrate more on composition and international musical tours.

⁴⁵ Offenbach stayed within the “operetta limits” that he had defined; he concentrated on comedy and farce and left the Theatre-Lyrique to musically confront the musical dictatorships. That Theatre had been legally sanctioned to encourage more innovative forms of opera than were occurring with the Paris Opera or Opera-Comique

⁴⁶ Perhaps more low caste and less respectable than other family members, but still eligible to be mentioned in a Will and/or invited to Thanksgiving dinner. .

we now term musical theatre, However that is another story for another time and place.

The essence of Offenbach's "stunning successful career" was roughly encompassed between to the two Paris-based Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867. It all imploded along with the Second Empire's because of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. Immediately on the heels of that French defeat and the Emperor's German imprisonment, a horrific socialistic revolution erupted and brought into being the bloody but short-lived Paris Commune (1871).⁴⁷

The downward slide towards the Prussian War began as the 1867 Exposition was concluding. Offenbach found himself essentially a man potentially without a country: the French always noted for their xenophobia, were suspicious of him because of his German origins; the Germans because of his current citizenship and Parisian success, felt him a traitor to his homeland. As a result, the composer and his family prudently traveled internationally.

When the Offenbachs returned to Paris subsequent to the War and Commune episodes, the city was physically

⁴⁷ Paris Commune consequences: In addition to the siege of Paris creating the near-starvation of its population, it is estimated that 30,000 died in the battle to reclaim the city; subsequently an additional 50,000 were either summarily executed or imprisoned, and 7, 000 were sent into colonial exile.

emerging from the deprivations of the War. However, it was significantly changed politically and psychologically. The Third Republic was under way and would last until 1940 when the Nazis marched into Paris. With the Republic, the politics had shifted not as far to the left as the tragic Commune, but certainly further to the left than the right of Offenbach's Second Empire environment.

The composer was identified as a creature of the defeated Empire, its musical voice and one of its most publicly visible symbols. He was popularly tarred with the euphemism: "the grand corruptor;" his music was viewed as decadent. In addition, the people were no longer in the mood for frivolous tunes and satirical subject matters; the operetta (at least Offenbach's version) was passé. The Parisian "joie d'vie" had gone with the wind.

While Paris was no longer a fertile operetta environment a la mode Offenbach, Viennese-based composers picked up his gauntlet; Strauss,⁴⁸ Lehar and von Suppe among the more notable. In addition, we must not forget our British cousins of Gilbert and Sullivan and later, their American genre relatives of Victor Herbert and Sigmund Romberg. Cross-cultural modifications did occur, but Offenbach's central essence remained.

⁴⁸ *Die Fledermaus* premiered in 1874.

Briefly: Birthing *The Bat*.

Offenbach in his heyday was not only acclaimed in Paris, but internationally. He like Strauss, would tour with his orchestra as well as with his operettas. His visit to the US during our Centennial Year was a highlight among all the events. The composer was also a favorite visitor to Vienna along with his works. There, he had met Strauss II and more importantly, encouraged him to write operettas.

Unfortunately, Strauss was a creature of habit and the theater was not one of his habits. He had no disaffection for the theater, he just had really never indulged in its charms. His composing of individual “light” works, conducting and touring were the sufficient sum of his professional life.

To get to the end of our story first. Despite eventually composing some sixteen operettas, Straus only achieved enduring critical and public success with three: *Die Fledermaus* in 1874 was and is his most memorable and popular effort; *Ein Niacht in Venedig* followed albeit slowly in 1883; and finally, *Der Zigeunerbaron* in 1885.

The essential problem with the Strauss operettas with the probable exception of *Fledermau*, was their librettos.

They were in a word, “deadly.” Overly complex and frequently illogical and/or incomprehensible, the words were a deathly dilution of the music. However, let us hand it to the man, he kept on trying.

The core of the libretto problem probably was his ignorance of the theater. He did not have an innate sense of what would play well on the stage. In the dance or concert hall, he had no problem.

Recognizing on-stage playability appears to be a critical skill for the successful operatic and operetta composer. It is one for which especially Puccini and Verdi were noted. Forward momentum and plot were keystones for their most successful works. Strauss II never quite got the hang of that. However, if you are only going to have one arrow in your operetta quiver, *Fledermaus* is not a bad one to have.

Despite Offenbach’s urging and apart from ignorance of things theatrical, Strauss delayed his operetta debut because he was a great believer in, “Shoemaker stick to your Last.” He did light music composition very well and very lucratively. Therefore, why explore uncharted territories?

While Strauss was content where he was professionally, the first Frau Strauss (Hetty) felt otherwise. Despite her encouragement and support as well as that of others,

Johann II procrastinated any new musical ventures. Hetty took matters into her own hands. Unknown to Strauss, she removed a considerable amount of his composed but un-premiered music and delivered it to the Director of the Theater an der Wien. Around these, a libretto was composed. The next step was a progression of singers appearing in front of Strauss singing his music to which has been added very effective text. The composer finally gave up and started his first operetta.

The first product was *Indigo Oder die Vierzig Rauber*. The result was not good, but more weighted down by words and convoluted plotting than by music. However, as credit to all involved with the composer, especially Hetty and the Impresario, they kept at it. Finally, *Le Reveillon* fresh from Parisian success was brought to Strauss II, modified for Viennese audiences and mores.⁴⁹ The rest is probably history and probably, the only public success of a bat in besting a butterfly!



⁴⁹ The French midnight supper was replaced by Orlofsky's Ball.

FINALLY--



**THE OPERA or
OPERETTA?**

If you have not already discovered this **Irreverent Guide to Enjoying *Fledermaus*** is not a learned musical treatise, here is your right up front notice!

The field of learned musical literature is littered with debate ad nauseam, as to "definitive" differences among opera, operetta and/or musical theater. As interesting and profound as these pronouncements may be, they still leave the bulk of us puzzled as to which is fish, which is fowl and perhaps most importantly, so what? Probably the best conclusion to all this categorical caterwauling is (no critical pun intended), if it quacks to you like a duck, it is one!

Truth be told, all these vocal musical forms are beginning to beneficially blend, as their politically correct barricades have been successfully stormed. Actually, your only real concern should be, sitting back and enjoying visually and aurally, the wonder of it all! ---and of course, finding your shoes when it is over.

P.S. operetta = little opera, if that helps.

WHO ARE THESE VERY VOCAL VIENNESE?



(In Order of Dance Program Autograph and/or Venturing to Vocalizing)

- **Alfred (Tenor).** A truly troublesome tenor, this fellow is heard more than seen (thankfully) in our song-fest saga. Our Heroine (see below) pre-promenading down the marital aisle with our Hero, had a “pinch and tickle” with the Tenor which proves today, to be Tenor-ishly troublesome.
- **Adele (Soprano).** A merry Maid in the employ of our Principal Hero and Heroine (see also, below) --- although in what follows, it is frequently difficult to determine who is working for whom. This manipulating maiden aspires to the acting profession. A status she will actually achieve by the cessation of our song-filled scenario.
- **Rosalinde von Eisenstein (Soprano).** A clever but conspiratorially-inclined Viennese beauty of the upper crust. In addition to being our Principal Heroine, she is mistress of the principal Haus wherein our plot pushes off. However, in the course of our operatic opus she also more than manages a Magyar mien magnificently and pays back in perfect

timing,⁵⁰ her playboy partner-in-property (also a troublesome tenor).

- **Blind (Tenor).** Not necessarily a troublesome-type tenor, this person's profession (advocate for the defense) presents a plethora of problems to our Principal Hero. However, he also comes conveniently wigged and garbed. A covering that will conveniently contribute to carrying forward, comedic confusion.
- **Gabriel von Eisenstein (Tenor).** Our Principal Hero conveniently albeit, almost still "newly" married to our Heroine. Independently wealthy and probably in a happy relationship with his Frau, he still continues to pursue his playboy pursuits. As we will soon spy, he has gone one bridge too far. His wandering wings will soon be clipped by a Bat and his lovely, lyrical and legal live-in lady.
- **Dr. Falke (Baritone).** Our Principal Hero's long-standing, long-remembered best Friend and playboy partner. The Friend it should be noted is a baritone, a breed notorious to be more shrewd and settled than temperamental tenor(s). These traits are those upon which our tuneful tale will turn.
- **Frank (Baritone).** The Viennese Gaol Governor. Our viciously spinning plot makes him more victim than victorious. Confronted with an critical identify crisis of the first order, he all but psychologically crumples. That causes him to contemplate resorting to retirement.

⁵⁰ The perfection of that pun will emerge presently from the plot.

- **Ida (Speaking role).** Our merry Maid's sibling of a slightly snobbish sister. Even though with a day job of ballerina,⁵¹ she does not jeté sufficiently to escape ensnarement in the Bat's Revenge.⁵²
- **Prince Orlofsky (Mezzo-soprano).**⁵³ A princely plutocrat, he prefers the vacuous Viennese to the stern Slavic residents of his native Russian steppes. Bored with too much of everything elegant, he is involuntarily invited as the only in-on-the-joke audience to *The Bat's Revenge*. Not now so bored, he becomes boisterously bemused. Well, chacun a son gout!
- **Frosch (Speaking role).** The key man with the keys to the Clink, he hears not well, but comments quite comically in the final phases of this French-flavored farce.
- **Whirling Waltzers and Singing Servants,** all choraling in cooperative cacophony captivating completely **Act II's** bountiful Ball. However, if by **Act III**, we have more cacophony than cooperation, blame it on very fine vintage of on-stage champagne!

⁵¹ We will not discuss her night job.

⁵² Nor does her silly sibling.

⁵³ One of those visually gender-bending operatic eccentricities, but usually a vocal wunderbar.





ON-STAGE ACTION AND MUSIC

Overture. In pep and pace, this piece will seem a similar sisterish sibling of Bernstein's *Candide* Overture. Having become a standard and perpetual concert hall performer, the Strauss's Overture contains snippets of several the composer's jewels from the operetta, all winningly whipped into a delightful pastiche. Enjoy!

Act I

Place. The "Informal" Parlor of Gabriel and Rosalinda's wealthily adorned mansion on the outskirts of Vienna.

Time. Late afternoon.

Plot. When the curtain rises, the stage will usually be empty except for the voice of Alfred echoing from somewhere unseen. He is serenading Rosalinda unbidden. However, in the manner of maudlin moon-struck men, he imagines her as a little dove lost to his love. Yuck! (**Turtle dove that flew away---**).

Adele enters excitedly. You know she is excited as in the manner of all stratospheric sopranos, she is singing way up there. The cause of the vocal fireworks is a letter from her sister Ida inviting Adele to join her at a bacchanalian bash given by the eccentric émigré Russian prince, Orlofsky. **(We are going to a party---**). As our Merry Maid musically mutters, Alfred's lament comes and blissfully goes. Apart from Alfred's adenoids, Adele's problem is she must promptly arrange for the night off, without the requirement of providing truthful details.

Rosalinda makes her prima donna promenade into the Parlor and Adele goes verbally but not vocally, into her "Auntie agony" act. Her story to get out of doing the dishes involves much weeping. Auntie is seriously sick. Adele must be there to offer comfort in the awful hours of illness.

Rosalinda is sympathetic but adamant. Adele is on duty tonight and she will be present and accounted for! This is the day Herr Eisenstein begins his five-day jail junket for insulting and then belting (not vocally), the local gendarmes. The two women conclude their negotiations by musically musing over the problems of Adele and poor Auntie. **(Alas, I may not go and see you [Auntie] ---)**.

As the duet dies, Alfred begins to below again still unseen. Rosalinda spills the beans about her perpetual serenader. Before her marriage, she had visited a Spa in Bohemia. However, she encountered Albert more than the baths as she enjoyed him more than the sulfurous seawater. The ceaseless serenade, in spite of marriage to another, is the current status of their romantic hanky-panky. Rosalinda does admit though a great longing whenever she hears his song.

Speak of the devil and Alfred enters! Rosalinda understandably upset, negotiates his immediate exit by agreeing to entertain him this evening after husband has hustled to the hoosegow. Alfred exits happily hitting his high notes, as not so happy voices are heard off-stage.

Eisenstein enters in a furious fettle with his somewhat cowering and steadily stammering legal counsel.⁵⁴ Rosalinda in her most majestic manner makes to mollify the men. No success! She then suggests, in a trio among herself, her husband and the hectored counsel, that the lawyer leave. (**You had better leave---**.) He directly does so.

Eisenstein then informs his Frau that his sentence is now eight days. Why! He continued an acrimonious argument with the police people, while his lawyer was failing to

⁵⁴ The Counsel's moniker, Blind becomes an uncommented upon commentary about lawyers. It just lays there for laughs.

fluff up his defense. Not content to leave well enough alone, our counsel reenters armed to debate the competence of counsels, general and Blind specific. A furious trio ensues that borders on Gilbert and Sullivan patter—but that has yet to be invented. **(I can tell you---.)** Blind finally exits, this time permanently--- for now.

As one complication leaves, another enters. Eisenstein's best friend, Falke has arrived to cheer up his soon-to-be-departing-for-prison pal. Rosalinda leaves the pair going to pack for her partner. Friend then reveals, "Tomorrow you can go to prison, but tonight you will play at Prince Orlofsky's."

Eisenstein always an easy sell, is delighted. The friends then reminisce about the practical joke with which Eisenstein fooled Falke.⁵⁵ The Friend clearly not as amused about past playfulness as Eisenstein, shifts the subject back to the evening's entertainment. Falke's elaborates further: Eisenstein's name for the night will be Monsieur Reynard--- pretty foxy huh? Oh ! also, why doesn't Eisenstein bring along that chiming watch he used to co-opt cuties in his salad days? "Of course," the gullible guy concurs. To confirm their forthcoming frolic, the two friends launch into a duet of doings yet to be done. **(Come along to the ball.)**

⁵⁵ For full details, see *Miscellany to Munch On*.

Rosalinda reenters with one of her husband's old suits, quite appropriate for a jail cell. He however insists on white tie and tails, as he must make a statement to the other inmates. He departs to dress decorously. The Frau uses his absence to organize her own evening: Adele may have the night off and Alfred--- we will worry about him later.

Eisenstein returns in full sartorial splendor. A spirited trio of "auf wiedersein" ensues among the soon to be parted coupled and their now quite happy sprung for the night household help person. **(Oh my poor, poor darling---.)**

One lover out one door and a possible other enters through another. Ever on the spot, Alfred appears in his tacky tenor-ish best. He makes himself quite at home, dressing in Eisenstein's robe and related paraphernalia. All is set for a romantic evening when the Prison Governor appears to personally escort his distinguished guest-to-be to the Gaol. Goodness, what to do?

Rosalinda always on the ready, pawns poor Alfred off as her husband, a part he semi-indulges. In a lengthy trio of great comedic and musical merit, the wife, the lover and the constabulary amble on about adieu, a dinner not devoured, delinquent doves and other such drivel. **(Drink, my darling. Drink for me.)** In the denouement

however, the male duo departs amid a deafening display of Straussian sound and a sinking curtain.

Act II

Place. The lavish “digs” of Prince Orlofsky, especially the Ballroom-Platz.

Time. Fashionably later that **Act I** evening.

Plot. After a brief but tuneful entr’acte, the curtain rises on the proceedings which are parading in full Princely and Struassian swing. As it their wont in opera(etta), the chorus in voluminous voice, informs the audience of the obvious, “**It’s a party!**”

Adele sweeps in amazingly adorned in one Rosalinda’s ensembles. The maid and her snobbish sister encounter and then engage in some sisterly snarling. In addition, they discover that Adele’s invitation is counterfeit, but who is culprit?⁵⁶ At that pregnant pause, the chorus again reminds us, “**It’s a party!**”

The Prince enters with our Friend Falke filling him in on his elegant engineering of the evening’s entertainment, “*The Bat’s Revenge.*” As the cast of unknowing characters enter, Falke presents the Prince with a short

⁵⁶ Later events will finger Falke as our prime suspect.

precise of their performance persona. Orlofsky usually “state-of-the-art” bored is becoming somewhat amused and intrigued. Amid that process he is introduced to the swinging sisters of Ida and Adele and is charmed in a somewhat boring way, with the giggling girls. Our randy Royal, intrigued enough though to invest in the maidens’ meander thru and Baccarat table-tasting in his house’s Casino. As they exit and Eisenstein enters, the Prince (always a helpful host) introduces his current company to his party philosophy. **(I like inviting people to a party [a.k.a. Chacun a son gout!]).**

The gambling girls emerge quite broke from the Casino and unfortunately encounter Eisenstein. Falke attempts to finesse a potential seamy scene among them. Unfortunately, Eisenstein accuses Adele (now Mademoiselle Olga) of being his chambermaid. His remark is greeted with alarm by Falke and Adele. However, the Prince (Johnny on the spot) informed of the Bat’s program for an entertaining evening, covers Eisenstein’s gaff. What a faux pas for a Viennese gentleman to make! Adele quickly covers also by launching into her bemused musical rebuke of her (to-be-former?) boss **(My dear Marquis---**).⁵⁷

⁵⁷ This piece is a soprano solo concert favorite not only because of its very melodic meandering, but also its requirement of very vocal fireworks. It is also frequently referred to as “The Laughing Song.”

The Adele anxiety averted, another player in the Bat's plot now enters, the Prison Governor. Back from depositing the pseudo-Eisenstein in Germanic Bastille, our bureaucrat is now named at least for the evening, as Chevalier Chagrin. Falke with a great flourish introduces the Chevalier to the Marquis, assuring them they will become better acquainted as the evening progresses.

The Friend's next maneuver is to announce a delay in dinner as they are awaiting a mysterious Hungarian countess who for unexplained reasons must remain masqued. Now, who do we suppose that will be?

In the delay interval, Eisenstein acquaints Adele/Madame Olga to the charms of his chiming watch. Before the inevitable "watchful" conclusion can be contracted, the Countess appears.

Though well disguised and with a Hungarian accent preserved in paprika, she is our Rosalinda primed⁵⁸ to play her assigned part in the "*The Bat's Revenge*." After she spots her husband's maneuvers with Madame Olga, little other performance incentive is indicated.

The Countess's playful performance centers on the Marquis' watch. In daintily dueling for it to pass to her

⁵⁸ By our friendly Falke.

possession (sans coupling cost), a duet emerges. **(How engaging, how exciting.)** At its core is a feigned need of the Countess to synchronize her heartbeats to the watch's tick-tock. At the climax, our Magyar maneuvers the watch into her possession, much to Einstein's consternation.

The Prince's guests now returning from the long delayed dinner, begin to request that the lady unmask. No can do! The suggestion is then made that the Countess may not be Hungarian. In response to this and in defense of her national origin, our Heroine launches into an impassioned Czardas **(Songs of my Homeland.)**

The Prince and Friend now propose a toast, which almost seems an attempt on Strauss's part to slow down the momentum of the pulsating plot, albeit briefly. **(Champagne!)** This rollicking chorus with intersecting ensemble couplets, brings everyone on stage into play (pun!). It includes mocking toasts among the principals with "merci, merci, merci" melodic murmuring in response.

Falke keeps the liquid interval in action by proposing yet again a toast, this time to Brotherhood. **(Brother dear and sister sweet.)**

In actual performances, following this bittersweet ensemble, there are usually some on-stage options: a

ballet, a roster of celebrity performances⁵⁹ or, if a really cut-rate opera company, a straight cut to the Act finale.⁶⁰

In the final frolicsome moments, the Prince proposes a dance floor promenade. **(Take your place for the dance!)** As the entire company launches into one of Strauss' more enduring and endearing waltz melodies, by-play between Rosalinda and Eisenstein bubbles up. Our Hero makes a pass to retrieve his wooing watch, but our Heroine returns his serve---no sale! In that process though, the watch climes six a.m. reminding our boys, the bat and butterfly, that they are overdue for the Bastille. Amid glorious musical chaos, hats, cloaks and characters all head for the exit--- followed by the curtain.

Act III

Place. The Viennese Hoosegow.

Time. A short, but fashionable time after Act II's 6 a.m. dash for the door.

Plot. Following a brief but perky Entr'acte, the curtain rises on an empty stage. Alfred is heard, but not seen singing selections from his tenor-ish repertoire. The jailor Frosh enters much annoyed with the cacophony. Even though quite happily inebriated and hard of hearing

⁵⁹ Those who happen to be in town, have their own evening clothes and work cheap.

⁶⁰ Be surprised!

to boot, he keeps demanding Albert to put a sock in it as Frosh comments on affairs of the world.

As the weaving warden wanders off, the Governor glides on much the worse for wine, but melodically reliving the Ball as he channels Fred Astaire. Frosh then reenters and the two engage in some confused chatter related to the pseudo-Eisenstein, who is demanding a lawyer.

Adele and Ida then put in an appearance bent on a little truth-telling and also, a little blackmail. All this to insure that Frank will finance Adele's stage debut. In response to Frank's interrogatory as to the extent of her talent, she vocally launches into a brilliant recital of her resume including a brief playlet performance. **(Ever since I was a baby.)**

Hot on the heels of Adele's accomplished acting, the Marquis Reynard is at the door! The girls are quickly hustled off to an empty cell next to the troublesome Tenor. Identity issues immediately arise with the entering Eisenstein (Reynard) and Frank (Chagrin). When they exchange true identities, Frank is dubious as he has already lodged Eisenstein in a cell. To shore up his earlier action, the Governor provides our Hero specific details about his search and seizure including the married couple at their meal and the dressing gown demeanor of his detainee-to-be. Eisenstein usually

somewhat slow on situational analysis, gets the big picture here quite completely.

As our Hero processes the perfidy with which he has been presented, his counsel appears in full court garb. The man has been summoned allegedly by Eisenstein to have an immediate habeas corpus happen. Our Hero having suddenly settled on a solution to his seamy situation, seizes the protesting counsel's judicial garb and disguises himself therein.

Alfred is brought in by Frosh as Rosalinda enters. The two romantically reunite, The disguised Eisenstein enters and engages the duo in a discussion of the dealings that dumped our Tenor in the clink. This tale tunefully emerges as a trio of truth-telling **(I'm filled with trepidation.)**

Eisenstein continues his masquerade manfully until--- enough is enough! He goes ballistic hurling accusations at his wife and her "friend". She quickly and cleverly curtails the conversation by producing the wooing watch. Checkmate!

Falke enters the scene to enjoy the last moments of his revenge as Eisenstein and Albert argue over who is whom and more importantly, who should finish the jail junket? Adele and Ida are spring from their cell to identify the "true" Eisenstein.

The Merry Maid's identification is not sufficient, but what will suffice is the now arriving full ballroom of Orlofsky's guests. With the appearance of that assemblage. our quarreling characters capitulate. All is confessed by all, and failures in faithfulness our forgiven. In the purifying process our merry Maid becomes the protégé of the now un-bored Prince. A rousing chorus mixed with some encore snippets flows us frantically into the finale, finally! (**It's all the fault of champagne.**)



Auf Wiedersein!

