

Senior Citizens Music Appreciation Program

Date: December 16, 2024

Time: 10:30-noon

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Franz Lehar and Viennese Operetta

I. Announcements

A. Dates and topics for Music Appreciation, Jan to June 2025

Proposed dates: Jan. 13, Feb. 10, March 17, April 14, May 19, June 30
Awaiting confirmation and then topics will be determined for Feb. through June

B. January 2025 topic: Music of Great Cities: Paris and Prague

C. NJ Symphony Trip: Awaiting confirmation of availability of transportation and Tickets for either Feb. 23 or April 5 concerts in New Brunswick (State Theatre)

II. Franz Lehar (1870-1948)

- A. Born in Komarom, Hungary (Then part of Austro-Hungarian Empire)
- B. Died in Bad Ischl, Austria
- C. Father was a bandmaster in the Austro-Hungarian army, and after studying violin at the Prague Conservatory, Franz Lehar became asst. bandmaster to his father's band in Vienna.
- D. Lehar was self-taught as a composer, and he resigned his bandmaster post in 1902, when he became director of the Theater an der Wien in Vienna.
- E. Lehar's wife was from a Jewish family (she converted to Catholicism before marrying Lehar) and the librettists for many of Lehar's operas were Jewish, which posed difficulties for Lehar due to anti-Semitism prior to the rise of Nazism, and during the Third Reich (1933-45).
- F. Adolf Hitler loved *The Merry Widow* and through the intervention of his Propaganda minister Josef Goebbels, Lehar's wife was not deported during the period 1933-1945. However, other Jewish artists who had worked with Lehar were persecuted, with some dying in Nazi concentration and death camps.

III. Lehar's Operettas (he composed over 40 operas and operettas)

- A. *The Merry Widow* (1905)
- B. *Der Graf von Luxembourg* (1909)
- C. *Frasquita* (1922)
- D. *Paganini* (1925)
- E. *Der Zarewitsch* (1927)

- F. *Friederike* (1928)
- G. *The Land of Smiles* (1929)

IV. Franz Lehar and Richard Tauber

- A. From 1910 onwards, the tenor Richard Tauber was the world's greatest male singer in Lehar's operettas, with Lehar composing 6 operettas specifically for Tauber's voice between 1925-1934. Tauber had achieved Success in opera prior to working with Lehar, but his international fame was greatly enhanced by his association with Lehar through stage performances, recitals and recordings. Tauber's mother was Jewish by birth (although she had converted to Catholicism before Tauber was born) and this posed problems for Tauber when Hitler rose to power in 1933. Following the Anschluss in 1938, Tauber left for the UK, where he remained until his death in 1948.

V. Additional Resources

- A. Franz Lehar: Wikipedia entry https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Lehár
- B. Richard Tauber: Wikipedia entry https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Tauber
- C. Frederic Morton: A Nervous Splendor: Vienna, 1888-1889 and Thunder at Twilight: Vienna 1913/1914

VI. YouTube Films

- A. Lehar: *Gold and Silver Waltzes* (orchestral work) <https://youtu.be/MMkyqcnQixY?feature=shared>
- B. Lehar: "Lippen Schweigen" from *The Merry Widow* with Jonas Kauffman and Diana Damrau <https://youtu.be/vJL7r6Xa7Jk?feature=shared>
- C. Lehar: *Der Graf von Luxembourg*, Festival Morbisch (complete performance) <https://youtu.be/fCi2OxShn-k?feature=shared>
- D. Lehar: "Meine Lippen" from *Giuditta* <https://youtu.be/pzF3ubtimGE?feature=shared>
- E. Richard Tauber sings "Vienna, City of My Dreams" (from the film "Heart's Desire") <https://youtu.be/lGqgoLx6Oyc?feature=shared> (1938)
- F. Richard Tauber sings "Dein Ist Mein Ganzes Herz" from *The Land of Smiles* (1931 film of the operetta) <https://youtu.be/rsKQqYPgK-E?feature=shared>

VII. Today's Recordings

- A. Lehar: *The Merry Widow*, 1953 EMI CDH 7 69520 2
- B. Lehar: *The Land of Smiles*, 1953 EMI CHS 7 6952 2
- C. "Dein Ist Mein Ganzes Herz", Beautiful Melodies by Franz Lehar Profil PH 22004

- D. Richard Tauber, "The Gentleman Tenor" 5 CD set
EMI Classics 50999 6 98542 2 4
- E. Heart's Delight: The Songs of Richard Tauber, Piotr Beczala DG B0018337-02
- F. Jonas Kauffman, Wien Sony Classics 19075950402