

**NAXOS**

# **SUPPÉ**

**Fantasia  
Symphonica**

**Orchestral  
Overtures**

**Preludes**

**Tonkünstler-  
Orchester**

**Ola Rudner**



## Franz von Suppé (1819–1895)

### Fantasia Symphonica • Orchestral Overtures • Preludes

Franz von Suppé [Suppè] (Francesco Ermenegildo Ezechiele Cavaliere Suppé-Demelli), born on 18 April 1819 in Split of Belgian-Italian heritage, was the first to compose an operetta in Vienna (*Das Pensionat*, 1860). He wrote more operettas than any of his contemporaries. His overtures are still loved all over the world, and fascinate through their beauty, verve and wit. Year after year he continued turning out theatrical scores, ranging from overtures and incidental music to plays, opera parodies, operettas and occasional operas. His greatest successes were *Die schöne Galatea* (1865), *Fatinitza* (1876), and especially *Boccaccio* (1879).

Suppé's operettas owe less to the satire and parody of the Parisian model of Offenbach and more to the melodic lyricism of the Italian style. He was influenced by the classic *opéras-comiques* of Boieldieu, Auber and Adam, and the tender, emotional German comic *Singspiele* of Lortzing. The secondary themes or middle sections of his overtures usually imitate the cadences of the Italian serenade, and suggest the fervent passion of the Neapolitans. Equally Italian is Suppé's predilection for spirited *stretta* effects. In exactly the manner of Rossini, his overtures always end with a sweeping, brilliant finale. In many of them, it is the galop that predominates. Suppé's music does not have quite the Viennese flavour that is characteristic of Johann Strauss II (1825–1899), Karl Millöcker (1842–1899) or Carl Zeller (1842–1898), whose works approached the genre of folk music. Suppé remained the Italian from the Adriatic Coast, the devoted relative of Donizetti, even though the waltz does feature in many of his scores. Suppé was a master of three styles; the Italian, the French and the German. He knew how to blend them irresistibly, assisted in the instrumentation by his rich experience as a theatre orchestra conductor. Suppé's music moves along briskly: crisp in diction, free of sentimentality, and effervescent in its abrupt intensity. He was invited to Paris, Brussels, Germany (1876) and Italy (1879). In 1881 the freedom of the city of Vienna was conferred on him, and in 1882 he retired from his post as Kapellmeister to the Carltheater. Suppé continued composing, however, and enjoyed success in Germany, where he conducted his opera *Des Matrosen Heimkehr* in Hamburg (1885). His death was deeply sad, a long starvation because of an agonising stomach cancer. He died in his adopted city on 21 May 1895. An exact contemporary of Offenbach, he survived him by 15 years, and left a legacy at least as important: 31 operettas and 180 vaudevilles, as well as more serious compositions like a Mass, a symphony, and many chamber works and string quartets. Their vivid themes and irresistible passion display a cosmopolitan *grandezza*, something of the generous spirit of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, in which he could compose and assimilate in his own special way.

What really sets Suppé aside from his contemporaries is his very distinctive symphonic writing and orchestration. His sound world is immediately recognisable in his imaginative, rousing and beautiful overtures. These are exemplified superbly by the masterpieces *Ein Morgen, ein Mittag, ein Abend in Wien* and *Dichter und Bauer*.

*Poet and Peasant* was written for a play by Karl Elmar (1815–1888) (Theater an der Wien, 24 August 1846), a comedy with songs. Suppé, aged 27, had already used the *Overture* twice before, but without success. On this third occasion it worked, and was encored on the night of the premiere. The rustic, bucolic mood of the *Overture*, and its later exuberance, was particularly appropriate to the character of the play, in which a poet, suffering from a broken heart, makes use of a holiday in the mountains to create all kinds of havoc and confusion among the country belles and their beaux. After the brassy and stately introduction there follows a sumptuous 6/8 opening *andante* with beautiful writing for cello and harp. A vigorous change of mood initiates a broad, exciting and syncopated common-time *allegro* that gives way to a relaxed episode in crisp waltz time, these two themes now played out in alternation. With its big bold themes and bright, almost bumptious, orchestration, this rustic overture became, with the very military *Leichte Kavallerie* (1866), the composer's most famous work, and was subject to some 37 different arrangements, from brass band and piano duet to flute duet. It has enchanted generations of popular concert-goers entirely ignorant of its origins and relationship to the forgotten dramatic work in question.

This recital presents two titles never heard before. The *Fantasia Symphonica* (1859) for large orchestra, and the *Ouverture zur additionelle Ausstellung des Carl-Theaters*. Both demonstrate Suppé's credentials as a great symphonist. Ola Rudner, knowing that Suppé had written a lost symphony, worked on manuscripts from the Austrian National Library and the Vienna Museum for a whole year. After a long search he found the *Fantasia Symphonica*. The manuscript turned out to be the missing symphony. The work demonstrates everything that Suppé had to offer: masterful orchestration, melodies with a typical Viennese touch, but also learned techniques of counterpoint like fugatos, and serious themes that can seem almost Beethovenian.



*I. Adagio non troppo:* A drum roll announces a passage in the brass and high woodwind, solemn and stately. This launches into a theme tinged with sadness, with a cello transitioning into a reprise. Busy strings begin an *allegro* with woodwind ripostes, with a stormy transition to serene oboe melody, taken up by the strings. A dramatic dialogue initiates the tempestuous development, with fugato elements and ascending first inversion sequences, with the brass theme in dramatic interplay. The recapitulation begins with the serene subject lyrically unfolded, the coda making allusion to all these elements.

*II. Andante con moto:* A tentative string motif is taken over by the woodwind in decorative variation, moving into a broad placid theme, with a dialogue between the lower strings and woodwind. A new spirited melody for the high woodwind and harp ensues, most reminiscent of the melodic contours of the famous overtures, leading into a powerful statement on the trombones. A falling string sequence heralds the reprise with powerful outbursts from the brass, very dramatic and solemn, trailing into a dreamy reminiscence.

*III. Allegro scherzoso:* A sprightly skipping theme for strings and clarinets is contrasted with an episode for the lower instruments, pitting the lighter theme against the trombones. The trio presents a new idea on the oboe, developed by the strings. The opening ideas return before a sudden cadence.

*IV. Allegro ma non troppo:* Interacting strings and a brisk chordal woodwind sequence lead into a powerful theme, brass and woodwind interacting as in the *scherzo*. A second idea emerges, almost march-like, with a profile similar to the developments in the overtures. It becomes syncopated and lyrical, before resumption of the first idea with considerable drama. Various interactions initiate the reprise with variations, including a fugal section passing through all the instrumental groups, building into the final peroration. A huge climax is reached, with a new brassy theme transmuting into a triumphant coda.

*Des Matrosen Heimkehr* ('The Sailor's Homecoming') is a *Romantische Oper* in two acts by the playwright Anton Langer (1824–1879), and first performed in Hamburg (Stadttheater, 4 May 1885). Suppé, like Offenbach, never, amid his great fame as a composer of light and entertaining works, forgot his aspiration to a higher calling. This opera represents just such a weightier work. The plot is set in 1816. The ship *Delfino* on which the titular sailor is returning has been at sea for 20 years.

The *Prelude* opens calmly but gives way to a depiction of a storm at sea with almost Impressionistic stylistic techniques and sound colouring. These anticipate dramatic passages occurring later in the work. A gentle woodwind motif with prominent cor anglais and solemn brass chords flows into brief variation on the strings, all conveying the tranquillity of the deep ocean. A sudden huge chord announces the brewing storm, with rising brass before the general unleashing of forces as the storm breaks. A theme on the lower strings begins a soothing process and return to the opening calm, with rustling strings and the harp.

As the *Delfino* approaches the shore of Lesina (Hvar), the sailor's express their joy at their homecoming. The cabin boys (*mozzi*) dance to a *polka française* in dotted rhythm. A strongly propulsive theme, almost like a perpetuum mobile, gives way to a more lyrical middle section, before returning to the reinforced open theme.

The Carltheater was in the suburbs of Leopoldstadt at Praterstraße 31 (then called Jägerzeile). It was the successor to the Leopoldstädter Theater. After a series of financial difficulties, that theatre was sold in 1838 to the director, Karl Andreas Bernbrunn (1787–1854) or 'Carl Carl', who continued to run it in parallel to his Theater an der Wien until 1845. Two years later, the building was partially rebuilt following the plans of architects August Sicard von Sicardsburg (1813–1868) and Eduard van der Nüll (1812–1868), who would later design the Vienna State Opera. The theatre was opened as the Carltheater in the same year, 1847. Many plays of the *Alt-Wiener Volkstheater* by Johann Nepomuk Nestroy (1801–1862) premiered here between 1854 and 1860 when Nestroy was the director of the theatre. In the following years, many well-known Viennese playwrights wrote for the Carltheater (including the famous Theodor Herzl [1860–1904]). This reinforced its reputation as the favoured opera house for Viennese operettas, especially for Suppé who became the musical director: 19 of his works were premiered there, as well as works by Johann Strauss II (2), Carl Zeller (2), Oskar Straus (2), Franz Lehár (3), Heinrich Reinhardt (3), Leo Fall (1), Oskar Nedbal (1) and Robert Stolz (1).

After a rapid succession of directors in the early 20th century, the theatre became unprofitable, and was finally closed in 1929. In 1944, the auditorium of the theatre was almost entirely destroyed in a bomb attack. The valuable facade was still intact after the war but in 1951 it too was demolished.



Franz von Suppé as a young man



The Carltheater, Vienna (wood engraving, 1897)



Suppé's overture written for an *Exhibition at the Carltheater* assumes great interest in the light of his close association with this theatre. It is a most original piece, episodic, using melodic patterns typical of the composer, but most unusually ending *pianissimo*. There is a solemn reflective opening, with brassy fanfares and meditative woodwinds, leading into a *leggiero* theme for the winds. An iterative bass figure with oboe melody is taken up by the orchestra, with a light-hearted 4/4 presenting the second theme, developing into a climax for the full orchestra. The opening theme returns, given as a trombone recital, changing into a 3/4 passage for woodwind and strings with ripostes for the whole orchestra. The theme transmutes into a virtuoso flute solo which is reprised most lyrically, before dying away into silence.

*Ein Morgen, ein Mittag, ein Abend in Wien* ('Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna') is a *Lokales Gemälde* in two acts by the dramatist Franz Xaver Told (1793–1849). It was first performed at the Theater in der Josefstadt (26 February 1844). The immensely famous overture is a work of Suppé's youth, written at a time when he had just taken up his conducting post at the Josefstadt. It is noted for its beautiful cello solo and the tripping woodwind figures in the opening section, recalling the composer's visit to Milan in 1843 when he met Rossini, Donizetti and the young Verdi. The story depicts breakfast in the Graben, lunch in the Prater, and a nocturnal assignation in the gardens of Schönbrunn – so providing a kind of emblem of the spirit of old Vienna.

**Robert Ignatius Letellier**

## **Bibliography**

Letellier, Robert Ignatius. *Operetta. A Sourcebook. 2 vols.* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015)  
– *Franz von Suppé, Overtures and Preludes* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013)

## Tonkünstler-Orchester



Photo: Martina Siebenhandl

Czech Republic, Japan and the Baltic states. Its versatile artistic profile is reflected in its varied discography, and the orchestra's own label, founded in 2016, releases up to four recordings per year of in-house studio productions and live recordings, mostly from the Wiener Musikverein. [tonkuenstler.at](http://tonkuenstler.at)

With its three residencies – at the Musikverein Wien, Festspielhaus St Pölten and in Grafenegg – the Tonkünstler-Orchester is one of Austria's largest and most important musical ambassadors. The orchestra's traditional Sunday Afternoon concerts at the Wiener Musikverein go back more than 70 years. The Tonkünstler-Orchester officially opened the Festspielhaus St Pölten in 1997, and it regularly performs at Grafenegg, including as the festival orchestra. The focus of its artistic work is the traditional orchestral repertoire, ranging from the Classical to the Romantic periods through to the 20th century. The unique Tonkünstler approach to programming is appreciated by musicians, audiences and press alike. Former music directors include Walter Weller, Heinz Wallberg, Miltiades Caridis, Fabio Luisi, Kristjan Järvi and Andrés Orozco-Estrada. Yutaka Sado has led the orchestra since the 2015–16 season. Recent tours have taken the Tonkünstler to Britain, Germany, the



## Ola Rudner



Photo: Marinko Belanov

Swedish conductor Ola Rudner began his musical career as a first-rate violinist, assistant to Sándor Végh, and as concertmaster of several orchestras, including the Camerata Salzburg, Volksoper Wien and Wiener Symphoniker. He founded the Philharmonia Wien in 1995, was principal conductor of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra (2001–03), principal conductor of the Haydn Orchestra of Bolzano and Trento (2003–07), and chief conductor of the Württemberg Philharmonic Orchestra in Reutlingen (2008–16). Rudner has appeared with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, BBC Symphony Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Orchestra among others, and has conducted almost every major Australian and Scandinavian Orchestra. Since 2010 he has undertaken annual tours of Japan with the Orchestra of the Volksoper Wien, and given opera performances with Opera Australia, the Arena di Verona, Volksoper Wien and Salzburger Landestheater, among

others. Rudner has recorded on the Harmonia Mundi, Amadeus, BIS, Camerata Tokyo, ABC Classics, ARS Produktion, cpo and Antes labels. He was awarded Australia's Centenary Medal in recognition of his musical work, and the Republic of Austria's Silver Medal of Merit.

or.no-te.com

In addition to having written the first Viennese operetta, Franz von Suppé was a master of the Italian, French and German styles which he blended like an alchemist to form his own unique, irrepressible compositions. Two imperishable examples are here, the overtures *Poet and Peasant* and *Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna*. This album also explores his previously unrecorded *Fantasia Symphonica*, recently rediscovered in Viennese archives by conductor Ola Rudner, which displays masterful orchestration, distinctive melodies and a mastery of counterpoint. Other rarities complete this fresh look at the breadth of Suppé's ambition.

TONKÜNSTLER  
ORCHESTER

Franz von  
**SUPPÉ**  
(1819–1895)

- |   |   |              |
|---|---|--------------|
| ① | <b>Dichter und Bauer ('Poet and Peasant') – Overture (1846)</b>   | <b>9:54</b>  |
|   | <b>Fantasia Symphonica (1859)*</b>  | <b>31:56</b> |
| ② | I. Adagio non troppo  | 10:56        |
| ③ | II. Andante con moto  | 7:51         |
| ④ | III. Allegro scherzoso  | 3:52         |
| ⑤ | IV. Allegro ma non troppo   | 9:15         |
|   | <b>Des Matrosen Heimkehr ('The Sailor's Homecoming')</b><br>(premiered and published 1885)  | <b>6:29</b>  |
| ⑥ | Act I – Präludium   | 4:14         |
| ⑦ | Act I Scene 1 – Ballet: Tanz der Schiffsjungen ('Dance of the Cabin Boys')  | 2:14         |
| ⑧ | <b>Historisch-Additionelle Ausstellung des Carl-Theaters</b><br>( <b>'Exhibition at the Carltheater'</b> ) – <b>Overture: Präludium</b><br>(published 1873?)* | <b>6:27</b>  |
| ⑨ | <b>Ein Morgen, ein Mittag, ein Abend in Wien</b><br>( <b>'Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna'</b> ) – <b>Overture (1843–44)</b>                                | <b>8:40</b>  |

\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

**Tonkünstler-Orchester • Ola Rudner**

Recorded: 27 ① ⑧–⑨, 28 ⑥–⑦ and 27–29 ②–⑤ October 2022 at the Auditorium, Grafenegg, Austria  
Producer: Frank Druschel • Engineer: Georg Burdick • Editor: Étienne Decreuse  
Booklet notes: Robert Ignatius Letellier • Publishers: Edwin F. Kalmus ①, transcribed from manuscripts found in the Austrian National Library, Vienna and the Vienna Museum by Ola Rudner (b. 1953) ②–⑨  
Cover: Franz von Suppé (late photograph by Emilie Bieber [1810–1884], Hamburg)

© & © 2024 Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd • www.naxos.com