

Vienna, *The City of Music*, has many faces that express the many musical traditions it has fostered. In this concert, mainly of dance music, we see at least three of them. The first is the one we know best in this New Year's season: the world of the Strauss family, father and sons. It is pre-eminently the world of the waltz, a dance with humble origins given status in the cafés and salons of wealthy and expanding middle-class Vienna in the early 19th century. Johann Strauss Jr.'s *Blue Danube Waltz* (1867), now 150 years old, is synonymous with the prosperity and gaiety of mid-century Vienna. Just one of many grand waltz's from Strauss Jr.'s pen, it consists of at least four waltz melodies in a range of keys in addition to the familiar lilting opening tune. For the more athletic dancers Strauss's output included energetic popular dances such as the polka. The *Pizzicato Polka* (composed in 1869 with his brother Joseph), however, is more of a concert showpiece: a somewhat humorous *tour de force* for strings (plucked throughout) with percussion accompaniment.

Before social and economic changes reshaped Europe in the late 18th and early 19th century, Vienna had a different face. She was an imperial city with musical traditions that were more aristocratic and conservative. Mozart was one of the musical forces who was to help change that. Born and employed in Salzburg, he longed to move to Vienna, the centre of musical culture. He got there, eventually, but both of his compositions tonight predate that move. His opera, *Idomeneo* (1781) written and premiered in Munich, contains a section of ballet music, a *divertissement*. Ballet in an opera? Yes, indeed. Required, in fact! Mozart, however, seemed none too keen on the idea. As late as two weeks before the performance he wrote his father that he was still working on that "confounded ballet." Of the opera's five ballet movements, we hear the opening one. Mozart chose the form of a *chaconne*, originally a stately aristocratic dance in 3:4 time often favoured by composers because of its musical potential. Here the opening *chaconne*, *allegro*, is followed by a slower movement, *larghetto*, before the *allegro* section returns.

In 1775, the year of the *Violin Concerto #3 in G*, Mozart was 19. The four violin concertos he wrote that year in Salzburg were his first major venture in the concerto form. Who could tell? Though young, his instinctual understanding of the interplay between orchestra and soloist and how it unlocks the range of expression in new ways is astounding. But in the first movement, which we hear tonight, it is Mozart's irrepressible tunefulness that strikes us—at least five tunes between orchestra and soloist are introduced, developed and reworked such that we are overwhelmed with melody. Very fitting for a Viennese concert.

In tonight's celebration of dance music, it is hard to tell who has more energy—the youthful Mozart of the violin concerto or the fifty-five year-old Haydn in the last movement of *Symphony #88* (1787), dancing us off to intermission. Like many last movements of his symphonies, Haydn chooses a perky folk dance tune, one like many heard regularly on the Esterházy estate where he laboured for so many years. He treats it as a rondo theme, bringing it back regularly and, in between, developing it with contrapuntal sophistication that only adds to the joy and energy.

The third glimpse we have of Vienna tonight is of its cosmopolitan face. As capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Vienna was the gathering place for a great range of peoples who passed through or took up residence, and whose cultural traditions took root and flourished there. Much of the music in the second half of tonight's concert draws on a musical culture that Vienna had long nurtured—the Hungarian/Roma folk tradition.

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) was a Hungarian composer and music educator committed to fostering Hungary's native musical traditions. His *Galánta Dances* (1933), are arrangements of previously published melodies from the Galánta region of Hungary, some of which Kodály likely heard

performed as a youth growing up there. The slow introduction is in three parts, the orchestra first, followed by solo clarinet, then a rich orchestral section, *andante maestoso*. Then comes a faster section beginning *allegro moderato*, and then four fast dances each separated by brief reminders of the earlier *andante maestoso*.

Spanish violin virtuoso and composer, Pablo de Sarasate (1844-1908), was in Budapest, Hungary in 1877, performing, visiting composer Franz Liszt, and absorbing local musical culture. The latter included the popular songs and dances of gypsy bands, whose tradition of brilliant improvisatory violin playing would naturally have appealed to him. As a memento of his visit he wrote *Zigeunerweisen (Gypsy Airs)* for violin and piano in 1878, choosing as a form the *csárdás*, a dance with a slow beginning and increasingly fast and dramatic continuation. Although written as one movement, *Zigeunerweisen* has four sections of different speeds and melodies, each of which is a vehicle for spectacular violin playing. The last section is the fastest and most technically demanding bringing the piece to a brilliant and energetic conclusion.

Finland is a long way from Vienna, yet the young student, Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), heard the call of the *City of Music*, and travelled there to study from 1890-1891, confidently hoping to work with Brahms or Bruckner. He had to find other teachers for the year. Back in Finland, in 1903, he composed incidental music for a play, *Kuolema (Death)* including this *Valse Triste* that accompanies the dance of a dying woman as the figure of Death approaches her. The rest of the play's music is seldom heard, but once Sibelius had reworked this waltz it almost immediately took on a life of its own as a concert piece. From Austria in 1891, Sibelius had written home, "Vienna is all laughter and waltzes." And although this "valse triste" is permeated with the melancholy tonalities of his northern folk tradition, just occasionally the music lifts its veil and we glimpse the gaiety and glamour Sibelius recalls from his student years.

It is fitting that a work by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) should close tonight's concert revealing the musical faces of Vienna. He is a composer in the great Viennese classical tradition of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, but also one with performance experience of gypsy musical styles and traditions. Born in Hamburg, Brahms settled in Vienna in 1863. Earlier, in 1850, he had been befriended by Ede Reményi, the Hungarian violin virtuoso. Their busking tour in 1853 with Brahms accompanying Reményi on the piano in their tavern and café gigs introduced him directly to the folk dances and melodies of Hungary and other European countries. Later, in 1869, Brahms, now better known, published a set of 21 dances arranged for piano four-hands, based on existing folk melodies. Later still, they were orchestrated, some by Brahms himself (and Dvorak too), and have become widely admired. This first dance, the "Divine Csárdás" in G minor, *allegro molto*, with its plaintive, sweeping melodies and contrasts between restraint and energy, will confirm why.