

# Wienerblut

Music by  
**Johann Strauss**  
transcribed for piano



Lars Boye Jensen

Nogle vil måske hævde, at en nyudgivelse med wienervalse af Johann Strauss er lidt overflødig. Og sandt nok er hans champagnebrusende toner repræsenteret i pladeselskabernes kataloger til overflod. Denne CD indeholder imidlertid ikke de originale stryger-arrangementer af hans valse. Derimod er der tale om syv bearbejdelser for klaver, hvoraf flere hermed indspilles for første gang. Ophavsmændene til disse stykker er en svunden tids klavervirtuoser, der med både glimt i øjet og eftertænksomhed giver en *anden* indfaldsvinkel til de ellers så velkendte toner.

Wien har i århundreder været uløseligt forbundet med musikkens store navne. Men af disse var Johann Strauss en af de meget få, der var født og vokset op i byen ved den blå Donau. Og måske er det derfor, at hans musik så rammende udtrykker både højdepunktet og afslutningen på to sammenfaldende epoker: Wienervalsens og kejsermetropolisens sensommer-blomstring. Anlægningen af den berømte Ringstrasse i anden halvdel af 1800-

tallet markerede Wiens forvandling fra storby til verdensby. Samtidig voksede wienervalsen fra sin rolle som dansemusik og blev efterhånden spillet mere i koncertsalene end i dansehallerne. Strauss var selv beskeden med hensyn til sin egen rolle i wienervalsens udvikling. Han pointerede, at han blot havde ført arven videre efter sin far og Josef Lanner. Selvom Strauss overtog den ydre form, som hans forgængere havde skabt, hævdede han den op på et højere plan og gav den en ny organisk sammenhæng.

Men det var først og fremmest som melodiker, at Strauss røbede sit geni. Hans evne til at variere en enkel idé og give den rytmisk frihed og liv er lige så udtalt som fraværet af sentimentalitet og patos. I den klassiske Strauss-vals bliver tilhøreren ført gennem en verden, hvor kontraster og stemninger skifter i samme hæsblæsende tempo som under en spadseretur på Ringstrasse.

Skønt hans melodier domineres af et fremadrivende, karakteristisk Schwung, er der dog samtidig en grundtone af melankoli og Weltschmerz. Er denne tvetydighed et ekko af hans egen sammensatte personlighed? Er den samti-

dig en dyster forudelse om det østrig-ungarske imperiums sammenbrud? Og er den årsagen til, at valsekongens tidstypiske musik med tiden er blevet tidløs, – *klassisk* om man vil?

I hvertfald ligger det fast, at det ikke bare var de danseglade wienere, der lod sig rive med af valseytmerne. Mange af den klassiske musiks mestre udtalte sig begejstret om Strauss. Wagner kaldte ham den mest musikalske hjerne, han havde mødt. Og vennen Brahms beklagede højlydt, at det var Strauss og ikke ham, der havde komponeret »An der schönen blauen Donau«.

Tidens koncertpianister som Anton Rubinstein, Moritz Rosenthal, Carl Tausig og wienernes yndling Alfred Grünfeld *transskriberede* hans valse og gav dem en helt ny drejning på klaverets betingelser – iøvrigt til valsekongens store stolthed. Komponister og pianister har til alle tider bearbejdet deres egne og andres værker. Men det var Franz Liszt, der med sine parafraser fik klaveret til at klinge ikke som ét, men *hundrede* instrumenter. Dermed grundlagde han en hel genre indenfor klaverlitteraturen, hvor Strauss-

bearbejdelserne efterhånden kom til at indtage en særlig plads.

Det mest fremherskende træk ved disse valse er den utilslørede og aldeles umådeholdne begejstring for klaveret og dets klangverden. Stykkerne er pianistiske i ordets bredeste betydning: De giver genklang af kejsertidens forkærlighed for det overdådige og festligt pyntede. Alle mulige – og umulige – finger-akrobatiske krumspring er udnyttet. Ofte har de improvisationens spontane karakter og afspejler ophavsmændens særlige force, hvad enten det er glitrende ornamentik eller tordnende uvejr. Men man mærker også en underfundig dybde og en søgen efter andre lag i musikken. Det er som om, vi oplever Wiens storhedstid passere revy i en let fortegnet erindring om verden af i forgårs.

De syv valse på CD'en tilhører den sidste generation af transskriptioner. De fleste af dem stammer fra mellemkrigstiden, da valsen havde mistet sit tag i det brede publikum, og en ny streng æstetik bandlyste enhver form for

glamour og pynt. I stedet indtrådte en kraftigere betoning af det oprindelige og alvorsfulde og en uddybning af skellet mellem de musikalske gener. Nu gjaldt det først og fremmest om at følge komponistens intentioner, og de excentriske pianisters spillestil blev stemplet som dekadent. I det tomrum, der opstod mellem finkultur og folkelighed, var der ikke længere plads til klaverløvernes skamløse virtuoserier.

Besyderligt nok har nutidens lydhørhed overfor det stemningsbårne og umiddelbart charmerende kun i begrænset omfang betydet en renaissance for de musikalske kærligheds-erklæringer til byen, komponisten og dansen. Ingen påstår, at de befatter sig med livets store temaer. Men pianisternes gendigtninger af de festlige Strauss-valse giver på én gang plads for både adspredelsen og fordybelsen. Og mon ikke livet ville være lidt kedeligere uden disse perler i 3/4-takt fra klaverets guldalder?

© *Lars Boye Jensen 1995*

Pianisten *Lars Boye Jensen* (f. 1957) er uddannet på Det jyske Musikkonservatorium og elev af Poul la Cour og Jørgen Hald Nielsen.

Han har baggrund i en broget vifte af genrer, der strækker sig fra underholdning og jazz til klassisk. Som pianist har han haft opgaver for revy, teater, radio og TV og har desuden spillet med flere af landets symfoniorkestre. Til daglig underviser han i klaver på Århus Folkemusikskole.

I de senere år har han i stigende grad koncentreret sig om koncerter. Her har han gået sine egne veje og især dyrket de såkaldte klavertranskriptioner. Med dette sjældne repertoire har han besøgt kirker, højskoler og musikforeninger.

Some might think yet another recording of Johann Strauss's Viennese waltzes a trifle superfluous and his effervescent tones are certainly well represented in the catalogues of recording companies. But this CD is different.

These seven waltzes are not reproduced in the original arrangements for strings, on the contrary, they have been transcribed for piano and some are recorded for the first time. The originators of these pieces were all piano virtuosos in bygone days; with a glint in the eye and in meditative mood, they have approached these well-known strains from another angle.

Vienna has for centuries been inextricably linked with the great names of music, but Johann Strauss was one of the very few who were born and grew up in the city by the blue Danube. Perhaps that is why his music so strikingly expresses the culmination and the closing of two epochs: the late summer flowering of both the Viennese waltz and the Imperial metropolis. The construction of the famous Ringstrasse in the second half of the

19th century signalled the transformation of Vienna from a city into a metropolis. At the same time, the Viennese waltz grew out of its role as dance music, gradually being played more in the concert hall than in the dance hall.

Strauss himself was modest about his role in the development of the Viennese waltz. He insisted that he had merely continued in the tradition of his father and Josef Lanner. Although Strauss adopted the outer form his predecessors had created, he raised the music to a higher level and gave it a new organic coherence.

But it was chiefly as a melodist that Strauss revealed his genius. His ability to vary a simple idea and give it rhythmic freedom and life is just as marked as the absence of sentimentality and bombast. The classical Strauss waltz leads the listener through a world where contrasts and moods change at the same tremendous pace as they do during a promenade along the Ringstrasse.

Although his melodies are dominated by a sweeping, characteristic zest, there is also an undertone of melancholy and Weltschmerz.

Does this ambiguity reflect his own complex personality? Is it simultaneously a sombre presentiment of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy? And is this why the music, so typical of the Waltz King's times, has since become timeless – *classical*, if you will?

At all events, it was not only the devotees of the dance in Vienna who were carried away by the rhythms of the waltz. Many of the masters of classical music were equally enthusiastic about Strauss. Wagner said that Strauss had the most musical brain of anyone he had met and Brahms loudly regretted that it was his friend and not he who had composed »An der schönen blauen Donau«.

Concert pianists of the day, like Anton Rubinstein, Moritz Rosenthal, Carl Tausig, and Vienna's own favourite, Alfred Grünfeld, *transcribed* the waltzes and, through the idiom of the piano, gave them an entirely new interpretation – incidentally, to the great pride of the Waltz King. Throughout the ages, composers and pianists have arranged their own works and

that of others. But it was Franz Liszt's paraphrases that made the piano sound not like one instrument, but a *hundred*. Thus he founded an entire genre of piano literature, in which Strauss arrangements came to occupy a special position.

The predominant feature of these transcriptions is the undisguised and completely uninhibited enthusiasm for the piano and its richness of timbre.

The pieces are pianistic in the broadest sense of the word. They reverberate with empire's predilection for the sumptuous and for festive adornment: all possible – and impossible – feats of finger acrobatics are exploited. Often they have the spontaneity of improvisation and they reflect the particular forte of the originator, whether this is sparkling ornamentation or thunderous squalls.

But there are also subtle depths and a seeking out of other layers in the music. It is as though the golden age of Vienna is passing before us in review in a slightly distorted reminder of the world of yesterday.

The seven waltzes on this CD belong to the last generation of transcriptions. Most of them originate from the period between the two World Wars, when the waltz had lost its hold on the general public, and the new, austere aesthetics forbade any form of glamour and finery. Instead the stress was laid on original versions and the solemn, and the barriers between the musical genres widened. To follow the composer's intentions was now all-important and the playing style of eccentric pianists was labelled decadent. The division between highbrow and lowbrow culture left no room for the outrageous virtuosity of piano lions.

In view of modern responsiveness to the evocative and immediately captivating, it is odd that there has not been a real revival of these musical declarations of love to the city, the composer, and the dance. No one could claim that the music is concerned with the grand themes of life. But these paraphrases of the festive Strauss waltzes are both diverting and absorbing. And don't you think life would be a

little more drab without these pearls in 3/4 time from the golden age of the piano?

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The pianist, *Lars Boye Jensen* (born 1957) was trained at The Royal Academy of Music in Århus and studied under Poul la Cour and Jørgen Hald Nielsen. His musical background is variegated, ranging from light music to jazz to classical music. As a pianist he has worked in revue, the theatre, radio and television, and has also performed with several Danish symphony orchestras. He teaches at The School of Music in Århus.

In recent years he has increasingly concentrated on concerts. Here he has taken a different path, devoting himself especially to piano transcriptions. With this unusual repertoire he has performed in churches, schools, and before musical societies.

*(Translated by Rosemary Sørensen)*

# Wienerblut

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Music by Johann Strauss (1825-1899) transcribed for piano  
Lars Boye Jensen, piano

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|----------|--|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Wienerblut</b><br><i>arr. Dirk Schäfer</i>                  | 9:33      |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Wein, Weib und Gesang</b><br><i>arr. Isidor Philipp</i>     | 7:41      |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Fledermaus-Paraphrase</b><br><i>arr. Stephen Kovács</i>     | 7:05      |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Rosen aus dem Süden</b><br><i>arr. Hubert Giesen</i>        | 10:07     |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Schatz-Walzer</b><br><i>arr. Ernő Dohnányi</i>              | 8:00      |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Kaiser-Walzer</b><br><i>arr. Leonard Pennario</i>           | 8:34      |
| <b>7</b> | <b>An der schönen blauen Donau</b><br><i>arr. Schulz-Evler</i> | 11:37     |
|          |  | TT= 62:40 |

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Piano: Steinway & Sons, Hamburg, Model D

Piano tuner: Steen Bjørnager

Digital recording and editing: Claus Byrith

Producer: Jørgen Hald Nielsen

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