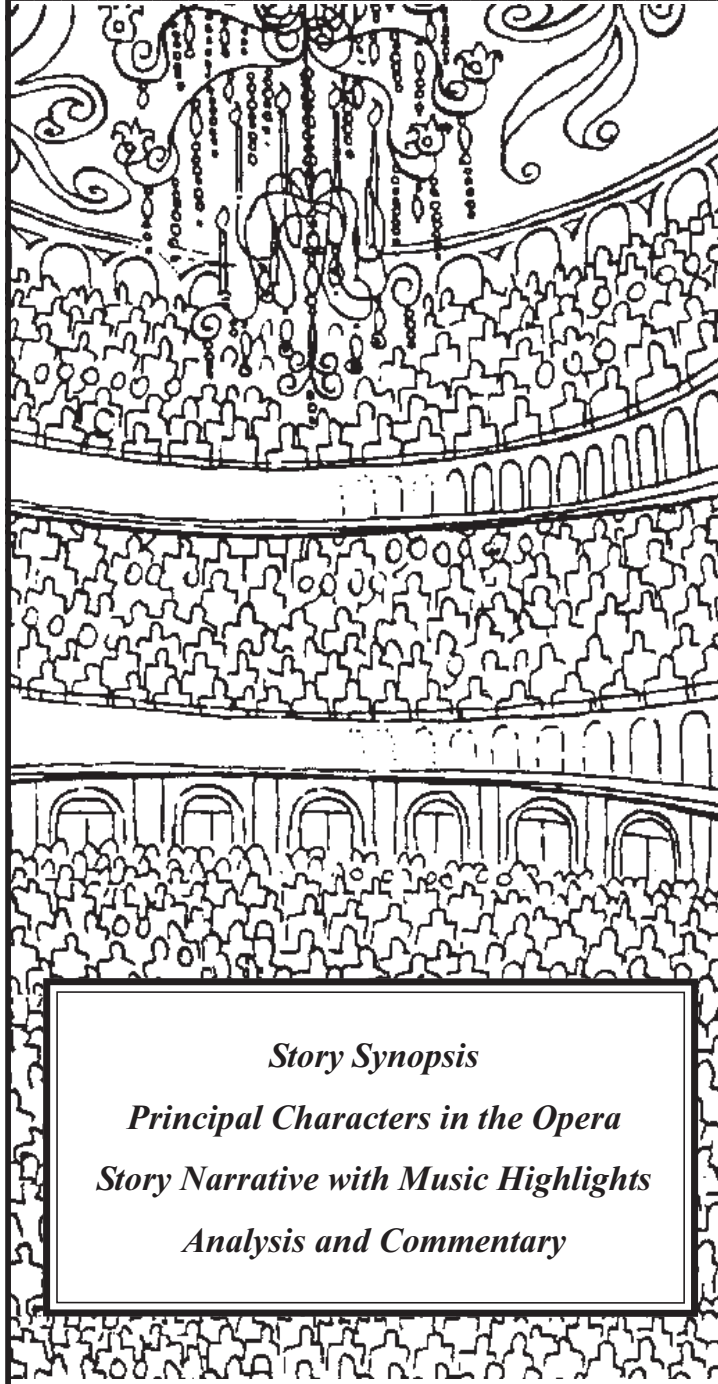


Die Fledermaus

Opera Journeys Mini Guides Series



Story Synopsis

Principal Characters in the Opera

Story Narrative with Music Highlights

Analysis and Commentary



**Burton D. Fisher, editor,
*Opera Journeys Mini Guide Series***

Burton D. Fisher is a former opera conductor, author-editor-publisher of the *Opera Classics Library Series*, the *Opera Journeys Mini Guide Series*, and the *Opera Journeys Libretto Series*, principal lecturer for the *Opera Journeys Lecture Series* at Florida International University, a commissioned author for Season Opera guides and Program Notes for regional opera companies, and a frequent opera commentator on National Public Radio.

OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY™ SERIES

OPERA JOURNEYS MINI GUIDE™ SERIES

OPERA JOURNEYS LIBRETTO SERIES

- Aida • Andrea Chénier • The Barber of Seville
- La Bohème • Boris Godunov • Carmen
- Cavalleria Rusticana • Così fan tutte • Der Freischütz
- Der Rosenkavalier • Die Fledermaus • Don Carlo
- Don Giovanni • Don Pasquale • The Elixir of Love
- Elektra • Eugene Onegin • Exploring Wagner's Ring
- Falstaff • Faust • The Flying Dutchman
- Hansel and Gretel • L'Italiana in Algeri
- Julius Caesar • Lohengrin • Lucia di Lammermoor
- Macbeth • Madama Butterfly • The Magic Flute
- Manon • Manon Lescaut • The Marriage of Figaro
- A Masked Ball • The Mikado • Norma • Otello
- I Pagliacci • Porgy and Bess • The Rhinegold
- Rigoletto • The Ring of the Nibelung
- Der Rosenkavalier • Salome • Samson and Delilah
- Siegfried • The Tales of Hoffmann • Tannhäuser
- Tosca • La Traviata • Il Trovatore • Turandot
- Twilight of the Gods • The Valkyrie • Werther

Copyright © 2002 by Opera Journeys Publishing
All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission from Opera Journeys Publishing.

All musical notations contained herein are original transcriptions by Opera Journeys Publishing.

Die Fledermaus

“The Bat”

**German comic opera (operetta)
in three acts**

Music by Johann Strauss, Jr.

Libretto by

**Carl Haffner and Richard Genée,
after Henri Meilhac
and Ludovic Halévy’s French satire,
*Le Réveillon (The Party)***

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

**Adapted from the
Opera Journeys Lecture Series
by
Burton D. Fisher**

Characters in <i>Die Fledermaus</i>	Page 4
Brief Synopsis	Page 4
Story Narrative with Music Highlights	Page 5
Strauss and <i>Die Fledermaus</i>	Page 19

Opera Journeys Mini Guide Series

Published © Copywritten by *Opera Journeys*

www.operajourneys.com

Characters in Die Fledermaus

Gabriel von Eisenstein, a man of substantial private means	Tenor (or Baritone)
Rosalinde, his wife	Soprano
Frank, a prison governor	Baritone
Prince Orlofsky	Mezzo-soprano
Alfred, a singing teacher	Tenor
Dr. Falke (the Bat), a notary	Baritone
Dr. Blind, a lawyer	Tenor
Adele, Rosalinde's maid	Soprano
Ida, Adele's sister	Soprano
Frosch, a jailer	speaking role

Guests and servants of Prince Orlofsky

TIME: Late 19th century

PLACE: Vienna, Austria

Brief Synopsis

Gabriel von Eisenstein was sentenced to serve a short jail term for insulting a government official. His friend, Dr. Falke, seethes with revenge against him because Eisenstein had earlier embarrassed and humiliated him after a party they had attended. Falke's revenge against Eisenstein takes place that evening at Prince Orlofsky's party. He has persuaded Eisenstein to attend the party before he begins serving his jail term, and he has also invited Eisenstein's wife, Rosalinde, to attend the party disguised as a Hungarian countess. Falke's intention is to create havoc in Eisenstein's marriage by having his wife witness her husband's indiscretions with other women.

Earlier, Alfred, a former lover of Rosalinde, tried to compromise her. He believed that Eisenstein went off to serve his jail term, so he invited himself to dine with Rosalinde. But suddenly the jailer came to collect his prisoner. Rosalinde avoided embarrassment and scandal by convincing the jailer that Alfred was her husband, Eisenstein. Alfred left for jail wearing Eisenstein's evening jacket.

At Prince Orlofsky's party, Eisenstein becomes enthralled by the beautiful Hungarian countess, who steals his repeater watch while he attempts to seduce her. The watch will eventually become Rosalinde's proof of her husband's guilt.

After Prince Orlofsky's party, Eisenstein presents himself at the jail to serve his term. But he discovers an Italian singer dressed in his evening jacket and being addressed as Eisenstein.

In the end, everyone's indiscretions are revealed, and all misunderstandings are reconciled.

Story Narrative with Music Highlights

The *Overture* to *Die Fledermaus* is a potpourri of some of the principal melodies in the operetta, a popular concert favorite that captures the music from some of the operetta's principal scenes: Eisenstein exploding at his betrayal (Act III); Orlofsky's party when the clock strikes six in the morning (Act II); Rosalinde condemning Eisenstein's betrayal to the lawyer, Dr. Blind (Act III); Falke exposing the charade to Eisenstein (Act III); Orlofsky's invitation for all to dance (Act II); the "Fledermaus Waltz" (Act II); and Rosalinde's lament because Eisenstein is leaving to serve his prison term (Act I).

Act I: A room in Gabriel von Eisenstein's house that overlooks a garden

Alfred was once Rosalinde's singing teacher and lover, but she is now Mrs. Gabriel von Eisenstein. He still seethes with revenge because her father prevented his daughter from marrying a poor, struggling musician. But Alfred is now a success, a singer in the wealthy and flamboyant Prince Orlofsky's entourage of personal musicians. The Prince and his retinue are visiting Vienna. Alfred has learned that Rosalinde's husband will be serving a short prison term, and in his absence, the singer has decided to pursue his former love.

Alfred, like an amorous troubadour, serenades Rosalinde from the garden.

“Täubchen, das entflattert ist, stille mein Verlangen”Allegretto
ALFRED

Adele, the Eisensteins' maid, interrupts Alfred's song to read a letter from her sister Ida, a dancer in the ballet, who advises her that the rich young Prince Orlofsky is hosting a lavish dinner party that evening. Ida promises her sister fun and enjoyment if she joins her at the party, and even suggests that Adele borrow one of her mistress's dresses for the event.

As Alfred resumes his song, the unhappy maid becomes angry because she is not free to share in pleasures like others; she is a dove imprisoned in a cage.

“Wenn ich jenes Täubchen wär”Moderato
ADELE

Rosalinde enters in agitation. She heard Alfred singing his serenade from the garden, and she is fearful that he has come to compromise her. More importantly, she is afraid she will again find him irresistible, and in particular his resonant tenor voice.

Adele is eager to go to the Orlofsky party with her sister Ida, so she feigns tears and asks her mistress for the evening off, explaining that she wants to visit a sick aunt. But Rosalinde refuses her request because she needs Adele's services in the evening; her husband, Gabriel von Eisenstein, is to start a five-day prison sentence, and before he goes he must have a good dinner. Adele leaves the room, perturbed and weeping.

Alfred appears before Rosalinde, impetuously appealing that they renew their love affair; after all, it would be a wonderful opportunity for them since he has learned that Eisenstein will be in jail for a few days. Alfred boldly promises Rosalinde that he will return in the evening after Eisenstein

has left. This is an offer that Rosalinde has difficulty resisting: “Oh, if only he wouldn’t sing! When I hear his high A, my strength fails me!”

Eisenstein arrives with his stuttering lawyer, Dr. Blind. They are both hostile to each other as they argue and exchange mutual recriminations. Eisenstein was arrested because he insulted a government official and was summoned to court. Each blames the other for the unfortunate outcome of the court case. According to Dr. Blind, they lost the case because Eisenstein was in contempt of court when he lost his temper; according to Eisenstein, Blind conducted the case like a congenital idiot.

Rosalinde intervenes to pacify her husband, trying to placate his anger by reminding him he must serve only five short days in prison. But Eisenstein responds in exasperation, shouting that it will be eight days—an increased sentence because of Dr. Blind’s incompetence.

“Nein, mit solchen Advokaten”

Allegro moderato
EISENSTEIN



Nein, mit solchen Advokaten ist verkauft man und verrathen! da verliert man die Geduld!
Only an awful lawyer could destroy his own employer! It's enough to drive one mad!

Blind suggests that as soon as Eisenstein is free, he will appeal the case and prove that he is astute at legal chicanery. However, Eisenstein is implacable. He becomes irritated and peeved, and then pushes Blind from the house.

Eisenstein rings for Adele, who arrives in tears as she complains about the condition of her poor sick aunt. But Eisenstein is more concerned about his last dinner before prison, so he sends Adele to the hotel to order a first-rate dinner. In the meantime, Rosalinde prepares for her husband’s prison stay, and searches for old and shabby clothes for him to wear in prison.

The notary Dr. Falke, Eisenstein’s old friend and drinking companion, arrives. Dr. Falke is the antagonist in a secret intrigue to embarrass Eisenstein. Falke earned the sobriquet “Fledermaus,” or “Bat,” when Eisenstein played a practical joke on him after both attended a costume party. Falke was dressed as a bat, and

was humiliated when Eisenstein placed him on a bench and exposed his drunkenness in broad daylight. Ever since, Falke has planned revenge against Eisenstein.

Now, Eisenstein will become Falke's victim. Falke entices Eisenstein by explaining that he is authorized to invite him to Prince Orlofsky's sumptuous party that evening. He persuades Eisenstein to delay starting his prison sentence by one day so that they can both attend the party. It is a party that offers the prospect of many attractive young ladies from the ballet; certainly, one or two of them will be easy prey for Eisenstein if he plays his game with his repeater watch, an unusual watch with a spring-loaded striking mechanism to indicate the time. But unknown to Eisenstein, Falke has secretly invited Rosalinde, and Adele has been invited by her sister Ida, to Prince Orlofsky's party; Falke will achieve his revenge by embarrassing and humiliating Eisenstein.

Falke has led Eisenstein into temptation. Eisenstein hesitates, overcome with a momentary sense of guilt because he will be enjoying himself while his dear wife Rosalinde will be home alone. Nevertheless, Falke pacifies Eisenstein's uneasiness and assures him that no one will ever know about it because Eisenstein will attend incognito as the unknown Marquis Renard. Eisenstein is won over, and the pair gloat as they fantasize about the great fun and amusement that awaits them.

“Ein Souper uns heute winkt”

Allegro non troppo
EISENSTEIN

Ein Sou - per uns heu - te winkt, wie noch garkeins da - ge - we - sen,
Ah, what joys the night will bring, pleasure for the gods to savor,
schö - ne Mäd - chen, aus - er - le - sen zwanglos dort man lacht und singt!
Beauties eager for our favor, all night long we'll laugh and sing!

After Falke departs, Rosalinde, Gabriel, and Adele appear solemn, but each is secretly delighted in the anticipation of the evening's forthcoming adventures. Eisenstein is dressed in formal evening attire and is highspirited as he

impatiently contemplates attending Prince Orlofsky's party. Rosalinde has decided to give Adele the evening off, conquering her ambivalent feelings of hope and fear by deciding that after her husband's departure an innocent evening alone with Alfred might be quite enjoyable. And Adele has achieved her moment of freedom, and has even planned to "borrow" one of her mistress's dresses so she can attend the party with her sister Ida.

Rosalinde feigns a tearful farewell to Eisenstein by describing the anguish she will experience during the next eight days without him; she will think of him at breakfast when his empty cup will stare at her, at midday when his food will be untouched, and again at night when she realizes her loneliness.

"So muss allein ich bleiben"

Moderato espressivo
ROSALINDE

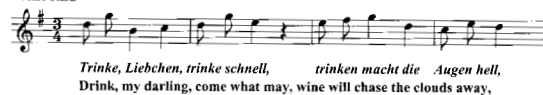


Eisenstein tears himself away. However, he carefully snatches the carnation that came with his supper sent from the hotel, and places it in his buttonhole.

As soon as Eisenstein and Adele depart, Alfred enters the house and relishes his longed-for opportunity to be alone with Rosalinde. A supper is on the table, which Alfred thinks Rosalinde prepared specially for him. He makes himself comfortable by putting on Eisenstein's dressing gown and smoking cap, and immediately settles down to dine and share intimacies with Rosalinde. But first, he urges Rosalinde to drink with him.

"Trinke, Liebchen, trinke schnell"

Allegretto moderato
ALFRED



Frank, the prison warden, arrives to collect Eisenstein and accompany him to prison. Frank, having never met Eisenstein, assumes that the man wearing Eisenstein's evening jacket must be

Eisenstein, and to avoid a scandal, Rosalinde assures him that he is indeed her husband.

Somewhat convinced, Frank rises to perform his duty. He addresses Alfred as Herr von Eisenstein and asks him to come along with him to jail. Alfred panics and denies he is Eisenstein, but Rosalinde maintains the deception by quickly showering Alfred with kisses. As such, Rosalinde convinces Frank that only her husband could possibly be in his evening jacket and intimate with her at that time of the evening.

“Mit mir so spät im tête à tête”

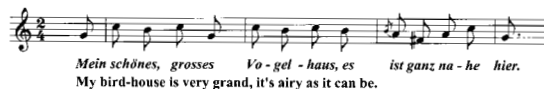
Moderato
ROSALINDE



Frank, himself eager to be off to Orlofsky's party, orders Rosalinde's "husband" to kiss his wife goodbye. Alfred is so obsessed with pleasing Rosalinde that he decides to go along with the pretence and impersonate Eisenstein. Alfred takes advantage of the situation, and he prolongs his goodbye with copious kisses for his "wife." Frank becomes impatient, intervenes, and urges him to jail.

“Mein schönes, grosses Vogelhaus”

Allegro
FRANK



Rosalinde, rather ambivalent about Alfred's being in her house, watches him go off to jail with Frank. The amorous tenor was so confounded that he forgot to remove Eisenstein's evening jacket before leaving.



Dr. Falke introduces Eisenstein to an arriving guest, a Chevalier Chagrin, who is none other than Frank, the prison warden, comfortable that his prisoner Eisenstein is now safely in jail, and ready and eager to enjoy the party. Immediately, the Chevalier begins to court Adele.

The fun and frolic of the party begin in earnest when Rosalinde arrives, entering majestically as a Hungarian countess but disguised by a mask. Falke, the master of this intrigue, explains that this illustrious Hungarian countess could venture only incognito into such company. Rosalinde immediately becomes exasperated when she sees her husband, Eisenstein, flirting outrageously with her maid and other young ladies. She thought that her husband was in jail, but she realizes that she has been deceived and resolves to punish him.

Eisenstein does not realize that the Hungarian countess is his wife Rosalinde and, enthralled by her beauty, he proceeds to flirt with her.

“Dieser Anstand, so manierlich”

Un poco moderato
EISENSTEIN



Hungarian csárdás, “the music of her fatherland.” She begins with mournful laments and nostalgia for Hungary, and explains the pain that separation from her beloved homeland has caused her. Nevertheless, she concludes with her philosophy that happiness can be achieved only through drink and merriment.

Csárdás: “Klänge der Heimat, ihr weckt in mir das Sehnen”

Langsam
ROSALINDE



Klänge der Heimat, ihr weckt mir das Sehnen, rufet die Thränen in's Auge mir!
Songs of my homeland, you fill me with longing, mem'ries sad with tears!

In the meantime, Frank—the Chevalier Chagrin—has fallen head over heels in love with Adele and her sister Ida. In particular, Adele attracts him, and he pursues her everywhere.

Seeking further amusement, the guests urge Dr. Falke to relate the story of his sobriquet, the Bat. But Eisenstein quickly intervenes and triumphantly relates the story of how a year or two ago, after a fancy ball, he had deceived his drunken friend Falke, whom he exposed in broad daylight in his bat costume. (Ergo: Falke has contrived the “Bat’s Revenge” against the man who humiliated him.) Quietly, the vengeful Falke remarks “Out of sight is not out of mind!”

Prince Orlofsky decides to rejuvenate the spirit of his party and invites the guests to join him in a toast to champagne, the king of all wines.

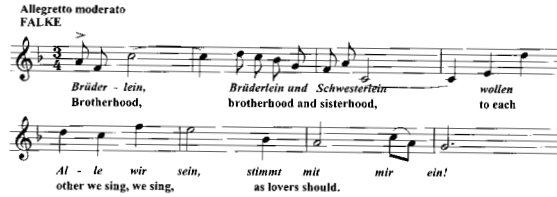
“Im Feuerstrom der Reben”

Allegro con brio
ORLOFSKY, EISENSTEIN, ADELE



Im Feu - er - strom der Re - ben, tra la la la la la la la,
The sparkling wine is flowing, tra la la la la la la la,

Falke leads the guests to vow friendship, eternal and everlasting brotherhood and sisterhood. All kiss each other copiously, underscored by a gentle and sentimental waltz.

“Brüderlein, Brüderlein und Schwesterlein”

Prince Orlofsky calls upon his guests to dance, and all join in the swirling “Fledermaus Waltz” while singing of the joys of this night of pleasure.

Orlofsky ordered that Frank’s and Eisenstein’s glasses be continuously replenished. Both have become intoxicated and tipsy, each assisting the other to stand upright. Rosalinde, Falke and Orlofsky gleefully laugh as they contemplate the surprise when the two meet in prison.

Frank asks Eisenstein the time, but his watch is not working. Suddenly Eisenstein remembers that the countess took his repeater watch. He approaches her and begs her to unmask, but she mysteriously warns him about insisting: if he were to see her face, the blemish on her nose would shock him. Orlofsky and the other guests burst into laughter.

The clock strikes six in the morning. Eisenstein and Frank, both equally drunk, become alarmed. Eisenstein realizes that he should be off to serve his jail sentence before dawn, and Frank realizes that he should be at his jail and at work. Eisenstein and Frank, not knowing each other’s true identity, stagger out together.

Act 3: The city jail, early that morning

Alfred, who went to prison as Eisenstein’s replacement, is heard singing from his cell his earlier serenade to Rosalinde, “Täubchen, holdes Täubchen mein.” Frosch, the drunken jailer, insists that he be silent, but his efforts are unsuccessful. Nevertheless, Alfred has tired of his noble sacrifice for Rosalinde’s love, and calls for a lawyer to get him out.

As Frosch staggers off to check the other prisoners, Frank arrives at the jail. Unsteadily, he waltzes about as he recalls the delights of Orlofsky's party, the beautiful Olga and Ida, and that delightful Marquis Renard with whom he swore eternal brotherhood. He tries to make himself some tea, but is unsettled by the effects of drinking so much champagne at the party. He settles for a glass of water. As he attempts to read the morning paper, he falls asleep.

Frosch awakens Frank to deliver his daily report. All has been in order except for that Herr von Eisenstein, who has demanded a lawyer. Frosch reports that he has sent for Dr. Blind.

Frosch leaves to answer a bell. He returns to advise Frank that two ladies are seeking the Chevalier Chagrin. Frank becomes perturbed and uneasy when he learns that the callers are Olga and Ida. Nevertheless, his concerns are relieved when Olga (Adele) reveals the truth to him: she is not really an actress but would like to be one, and she believes that the Chevalier, a man of obvious influence, can help her get on the stage. To prove her acting talents, Adele impersonates successively an innocent country girl, a queen exuding dignity as well as condescension, and a Parisian marquise flirting with a young count.

“Spiel’ ich die Unschuld vom Lande”

Allegro moderato
ADELE



prison. Likewise, the Marquis Renard reveals that he is none other than Gabriel von Eisenstein, at the jail to serve his eight-day term.

Frank becomes skeptical, if not incredulous. He explains that he personally took Eisenstein into custody the previous evening, and further, that Eisenstein was wearing his evening jacket and dining intimately with his wife. Frank tells Eisenstein that he has the man right here in his jail, safely under lock and key.

Frosch announces the arrival of a masked lady (Rosalinde), and Frank goes out to see her. While he is away, Dr. Blind arrives, claiming that his client Eisenstein has summoned him. (It was Alfred.)

Eisenstein becomes anxious, determined to discover who was with his wife and wearing his evening jacket. He decides to investigate the matter incognito, and he demands to borrow Blind's wig, gown, spectacles and papers. Both go off into another room to make the exchange.

Frosch returns with Alfred, still wearing Eisenstein's evening jacket, and complaining that he is bored and that no one pays attention to him. Alfred is delighted when he finds Rosalinde, but she cautions him that her husband may arrive at the prison momentarily, and if he should find Alfred dressed in his evening jacket, he will explode into a fury.

Alfred suggests that they resolve their dilemma by speaking to a lawyer; he has sent for him, and he has just arrived at the jail. The lawyer — Eisenstein disguised as Dr. Blind — suddenly appears. Eisenstein/Blind witnesses his unfaithful wife in the presence of her lover, and in his rage has difficulty speaking. Nevertheless, he disguises his voice and exhorts the pair to tell him the entire truth. Dutifully, Alfred narrates his strange adventure the night before: he was dining with the beautiful lady, and his misfortune was that he was arrested in place of her husband.

Eisenstein/Blind has difficulty remaining impassive, and vehemently scolds Rosalinde.

“Ich stehe voll Zagen”

Andante
ROSALINDE

ALFRED

*Ich ste - he voll Za - gen,
I feel a suspicion,
Um Rath ihn zu fra - gen,
To make his petition,*

Alfred and Rosalinde indignantly urge him to simmer down. Then Alfred tries to explain the bizarre events that happened to him yesterday.

“Ein seltsam Abenteuer ist gestern mir passiert”

Allegretto
ALFRED

*Ein seltsam A - ben - teu - rer ist ge - stern mir pas - siert,
Some funny things have happened to me since yesterday,*

Rosalinde assures Eisenstein/Blind that her husband is a perfidious scoundrel. He pretended that he was going to jail last night, but actually spent the evening dining and dancing with girls at a lavish party. She affirms that when he returns home, she will not only scratch his eyes out, but leave him as well. Alfred, capitalizing on an opportunity to continue to pursue Rosalinde, joins her in condemning Eisenstein. But Eisenstein is unable to control his anger and outrage any longer. He removes his disguise, confronts them, and demands vengeance.

“Ja, ich bin's, den ihr betrogen”

Più mosso
EISENSTEIN

*Ja, ich bin's, den ihr be - tro - gen,
Yes, I am the man whom you are betraying,*

Rosalinde tries to placate her husband, but he becomes unreasonable and unable to be assuaged because Alfred stands before him, wearing his own evening jacket.

But now Rosalinde meets her husband with an equal challenge. She produces Eisenstein's jeweled watch, proving that she was the disguised

Hungarian countess whom the Marquis Renard/Eisenstein had sought to seduce at Prince Orlofsky's party. Rosalinde's revelation of the truth causes Eisenstein to collapse.

All the remaining guests from Prince Orlofsky's party suddenly appear in the room, with the exception of Adele and Ida, who Frosch reveals are causing him so much difficulty because they refuse to let the jailer bathe them.

Frank orders everyone to be brought together. He further asks Dr. Falke to take pity on them.

"O Fledermaus, O Fledermaus"

Allegretto

The musical score is for the song "O Fledermaus, O Fledermaus" from the opera The Merry Widow. It is in 2/4 time, marked Allegretto, and in the key of B-flat major. The score consists of two staves. The first staff has the melody with lyrics in German and English. The second staff provides harmonic accompaniment. The lyrics are: "O Fledermaus, o Fledermaus, lass endlich jetzt dein O - pfer aus; der The vengeance of the bat is won, now let the victim share the fun; you've arme Mann, der arme Mann ist gar zu ü - bel dran! got the best of him tonight, he is a sorry sight!"

O Fledermaus, o Fledermaus, lass endlich jetzt dein O - pfer aus; der
The vengeance of the bat is won, now let the victim share the fun; you've
arme Mann, der arme Mann ist gar zu ü - bel dran!
got the best of him tonight, he is a sorry sight!

Eisenstein requests an explanation, prompting Dr. Falke to reveal that the whole charade was a trick that he contrived: the Bat's revenge against Eisenstein. Each of the participants confesses his or her part in the joke played on Eisenstein. Rosalinde and Alfred seize the opportunity to assure Eisenstein that the supper in his house was only a fabrication, and that he wore Eisenstein's evening jacket merely to make Falke's joke believable.

Rosalinde and Eisenstein reconcile. Adele, who had been pursuing Frank/Chevalier Chagrin, is led away by Prince Orlofsky. All agree that champagne was to blame for their misdemeanors; nevertheless, they praise its spirits — the cause of trouble at times, but also the force of light and reconciliation.

Strauss and Die Fledermaus

The name Johann Strauss immediately summons images of elegant nineteenth-century Viennese society and elegantly dressed people dancing to sentimental waltz music at sumptuous balls. The dynasty of esteemed music traditions began with the father, Johann Strauss the elder (1804–1849) and continued with his son, Johann Strauss, Jr. (1825–1899). The latter was the composer of the operetta *Die Fledermaus*.

During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the elder Strauss gained acclaim not only in his native Vienna, but also throughout Europe, astonishing audiences with the brilliance of his orchestral performances as well as the melodiousness of his own music compositions. The centerpiece of his successes was the waltz, earning him the popular sobriquet of the “Waltz King.”

Although the waltz as a dance form preceded Strauss by almost a century, he became its greatest exponent during his lifetime. It originated as a highly popular eighteenth-century Austro-German dance, the “ländler,” which later evolved into the waltz in its contemporary form. Its most prominent feature was embracing couples, slide stepping and turning in three-quarter time. At first, the dancers’ intimacy shocked polite society, but that failed to keep the dance from becoming the craze of Europe. As the nineteenth century progressed, the waltz evolved into a ballroom dance par excellence, enthusiastically embraced as the favorite form of popular entertainment.

Vienna became the center of the new waltz frenzy. The elder Strauss and his sons composed original waltz tunes and performed them extensively with their orchestras. Virtually every home in Vienna had a piano, and Strauss waltz music sat prominently on its desk. As Strauss succeeded in popularizing the waltz, it became the featured dance at carnivals and masquerades. The Viennese enthusiastically attended these events with a passion, determined to make their dancing last from early evening until early morning. Prim and proper society condemned the sensuousness

of Strauss's music, considering the intimacy of the waltz dancing immoral. Nevertheless, the public had become intoxicated with the dance, and its popularity was irreversible.

All over Europe, waltz music was in demand, and many composers—great and not so great—industriously composed waltz music for their voracious audiences. Haydn and Mozart wrote much dance music; Schubert wrote several volumes of waltzes; Weber's "Invitation to the Dance" for piano represented an early introduction of waltz to the concert stage; Chopin wrote idealized waltzes that were not for dancing; and there were contributions by Brahms, Dvořák, Richard Strauss, Ravel, and Debussy, among others.

As a composer, the elder Strauss was unusually skillful; his music possessed insinuating melodies, grace, vitality, and a fiery energy. He composed dance music unceasingly, leaving a legacy of popular pieces such as the waltz "Lorelei-Rheinklänge" ("Sounds of the Rhine Lorelei") (1843) and the "Radetzky March" (1848), in addition to polkas and quadrilles and waltzes.

But there was more to the elder Strauss's waltzes than their appeal to the public's passion for dancing and entertainment. Strauss was a master of the orchestra before the era of autocratic conductors. His orchestra played with a heretofore unknown precision and discipline, intonation, rhythmic subtlety, and a refined integration of its ensemble. In many respects, Strauss's mastery of orchestral virtuosity and precision may have established the guidelines for the development of the modern virtuoso symphony orchestra. Strauss the conductor stood authoritatively on the platform before his orchestra, a hero in his time who was often referred to as the "Austrian Napoleon."

The elder Strauss's waltz music, as well as his orchestras that performed them, had become a phenomenal success. The Strauss music world grew into a huge business enterprise that at one time employed some 200 musicians who provided music for as many as six balls in a single night. But the dynasty did not end with Johann Strauss, the "Waltz King."

Strauss fathered a large family, and was as despotic a father as he was a conductor of his orchestra. His career was his first priority, so attention to his family was a rarity. He lived solely for his orchestra and its financial rewards. Nevertheless, he developed an antipathy toward a musician's life, and he did everything possible to deter any of his children from becoming professional musicians.

His eldest son, Johann Baptiste (Johann Strauss, Jr.), the composer of *Die Fledermaus*, was born in Vienna in 1825. As years passed, the elder Strauss abandoned his wife and married another woman, fathering four more children. When his young son Johann indicated his interest in music, the elder Strauss had already been estranged from his original family, and therefore was powerless to deter his son's interests. However, the young Strauss's mother recognized her son's talents and encouraged his further musical education, at first arranging violin lessons for him with a member of his father's orchestra and subsequently intensive study in musical theory. By the age of fifteen young Johann Strauss, Jr. was a professional who was playing in various orchestras.

In 1844, at the age of nineteen, Johann Jr. made his debut with his own small orchestra at a *soirée dansante* (evening of social dancing), an event that established him as his father's most serious rival and competitor. The father-son rivalry transcended music and became even more contentious when each supported opposing factions during the European revolutions of 1848. But their vociferous feuds eventually ended with a reconciliation of their differences, and when Johann Sr. died in 1849, Johann Jr. took over his father's orchestras, by that time part of a considerable enterprise that required assistant conductors, librarians, copyists, publicists, and booking agents for their numerous European and world tours.

In 1863 Johann Jr. was appointed to the official position of Hofballmusikdirektor, (Music Director of the Court Balls). As the popularity of and demand for his music and orchestra increased, he enlisted the services of his equally talented brothers, Josef and Eduard. In subsequent years, the Strauss Jr. orchestra achieved international

renown, visiting Paris, London, Boston, and New York.

Johann Jr. composed some of the most popular songs of the day, music that was sung in the streets and in theaters, danced at balls, and performed in concert throughout Europe. His most famous polkas are “Annen” (1852), “Tritsch-Tratsch” (1858), “Excursion Train” (1864), “Thunder and Lightning” (1868), and “Tik Tak” (1874). Some of the most popular of his over 200 waltzes are “Morning Papers” (1864), “By the Beautiful Blue Danube” (1867), “Artist’s Life” (1867), “Tales from the Vienna Woods” (1868), “Wine, Women and Song” (1869), “Vienna Blood” (1873), “Voices of Spring” (1883), and “Emperor Waltz” (1889).

Strauss’s waltzes, songs and dance music were the output of an astute and ingenious craftsman and musician. These pieces represented great contributions to the musical repertory, and many of them contain elaborate introductions and codas, a refined melodic inspiration, and subtle rhythms. This member of the new generation of the Strauss family had become an ingenious master of the waltz. He was now poised to embark on another musical adventure: the development of a new genre of Viennese operetta.

The term operetta (“opérette” in French; “operette” in German; and “opereta” in Spanish) describes a genre of musical theater. Operetta as an art form is a diminutive of opera; the latter is translated in general terms as a play in which music is the primary element for conveying its story. Purists will find it impossible to make a distinction between the genres of opera and operetta, even though certain general attributes apply to each art form.

Textually and musically, operetta more often than not provides lighter lyrical theater than its opera counterpart; most of operetta’s librettos lean more toward sentimentality, romance, comedy and satire, whereas, with the exception of comic operas, most opera librettos contain dramatic or melodramatic portrayals of extremely profound

and tragic conflicts and tensions. Yet when operettas are saturated with extensive satire and humor, it is virtually impossible to distinguish the genre from its opera counterpart, opera buffa. But in general, operettas are usually shorter and far less ambitious than operas, and generally contain much spoken dialogue.

The operetta genre flourished during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. In England and the United States, operetta eventually evolved into the musical. Operetta became a full-fledged theatrical art form in Paris beginning in the 1850s. French audiences were seeking an antidote to the increasingly serious and ambitious theatrical spectacles of the Opéra and the Opéra Comique; in those years, the “kings” of French opera were Meyerbeer and Auber, innovators and perpetuators of pure spectacle for the lyric stage.

Operetta began by building and elaborating on the existing vaudeville genre, which was a stage presentation featuring light and comic entertainment enhanced with song and dance. Jacques Offenbach is considered to be the father of operetta. At his Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, he offered satirical, comic, or farcical one-act sketches that he integrated with musical numbers. Eventually he enlarged his format into longer and more comprehensive works in which he more often than not integrated songs seamlessly with the text. Offenbach’s musicals became popularly known as “opéra bouffes” or “opérettes”—literally, comical musical theater.

Operetta became a popular form of mainstream entertainment primarily because its plots portrayed contemporary moral attitudes and topics. The popularity and success of the art form attracted the most talented composers, librettists, performers, managers, directors and designers. In particular, the underlying stories in Offenbach’s operettas benefited from some of the finest theatrical writers of the era, such as Meilhac and Halévy, who provided lighthearted, witty and sparkling scenarios; many of these were far from subtle satires of Parisian life under the second empire of Napoléon III.

In 1858, after a relaxation of the restrictions on the number of stage performers permitted, Offenbach began to compose his first two-act opéras bouffes. His first enduring masterpiece was the mythological satire *Orphée aux enfers* (*Orpheus in the Underworld*), a burlesque on the Olympian gods (satirizing contemporary politicians), whose hilarious can-can ultimately humiliated devotees of serious musical theater. Some of Offenbach's other major works which continue to maintain their presence on contemporary stages are *La belle Hélène* (1864), *Barbe-bleue* (1866), *La Vie parisienne* (1866), *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* (1868), and *La Périhole* (1868). By the end of the 1860s Offenbach's French opéras bouffes, or opérettes, had become the rage in Paris as well as on the international stage. Their unique, witty and satirical character clearly distinguished opéras bouffes not only from contemporary vaudeville, but also from all other forms of lyric theater.

By the 1870s, xenophobic Viennese theatrical impresarios became alarmed by the vast number of imported works that were dominating their musical stage—in particular, the opérettes of Jacques Offenbach. Nineteenth-century Austria was the Hapsburg Empire. Austrian Francophobia extended beyond memories of Napoleon and the Second Empire, and Austrians were seeking their own theatrical identity that would express their own ethos and culture. They turned to their most singular popular composer, Johann Strauss, Jr., a composer of “true” Viennese music. In Strauss, they envisioned their musical hero, a man who possessed the stature and talent to meet the formidable task of developing Austrian musical theater. Strauss was further encouraged to meet the challenge by his wife, the singer Jetty Treffz, who persuaded him to resign his position as Hofballmusikdirektor. Now in his mid-forties, Strauss agreed to concentrate all of his efforts on music for the stage, and ceded the direction of the family orchestra to his only surviving brother, Eduard.

In 1871, Strauss's first completed operetta, *Indigo* or *The Forty Thieves* (eventually reworked for Paris as *1001 Nights*), reached the stage and achieved unquestionable success. Often, Strauss adapted themes from his ballroom waltz music and injected them into his operettas. The waltz from *The Forty Thieves*, "Tausend und eine Nacht," has endured beyond the operetta itself.

Strauss reached the pinnacle of his Viennese operetta successes with *Der Karneval in Rom* (*The Carnival in Rome*) (1873), *Die Fledermaus* (1874), and *Der Zigeunerbaron* (*The Gypsy Baron*) (1885). The latter's second-act love duet is considered by many to portray the quintessence of the Viennese romantic spirit. Many of his other operettas are rarely performed in modern times because their librettos lack depth or modern significance: *Cagliostro in Wien* (*Cagliostro in Vienna*) (1875), about the exploits of an Italian adventurer; the satirical Offenbachian-style *Prinz Methusalem* (*Prince Methusaleh*) (1877), *Blinde Kuh* (*The Blind Cow*) (1878), *Das Spitzentuch der Königin* (*The Queen's Lace*) (1880), and *Der Lustige Krieg* (*The Happy War*) (1881). The latter is the source of the popular waltz "Rosen aus dem Süden." *Eine Nacht in Venedig* (*One Night in Venice*) (1883), although rarely performed, has been recognized musically as perhaps his most beautiful operetta, a work he composed without knowing the plot; when he finally read the dialogue he became exasperated. Nevertheless, it is the operetta *Die Fledermaus* that is universally considered Strauss's *tour de force*, an ingenious work whose text and music magnificently capture the vivacious romantic and sentimental spirit of late nineteenth-century Vienna.

Like Offenbach, Strauss wanted to be remembered as a composer of serious opera. Although Offenbach indeed succeeded—although posthumously—with *The Tales of Hoffmann*, Strauss's only serious attempt at opera per se was *Ritter Pázmán* (*Pazman the Knight*), but it failed to hold the stage. Afterwards, Strauss decided to devote all of his energies to lighthearted operettas; his final works were *Fürstin Ninetta* (*Queen Ninetta*) (1893) for the celebration of his artistic golden jubilee, *Waldmeister* (*The Forester*)

(1895), and *Die Göttin der Vernunft* (*The Wise Queen*) (1897).

Strauss died in 1899. He was a rare musician who achieved the combination of fame and extensive financial rewards from orchestral performances and tours, as well as from his prodigious composition of over 550 musical works, among them 15 operettas. Like his father, he had an undeniable genius for inventing music that was easily discernible and universally appealing. For this reason his music receives infinite praise from the most innocent music lover as well as the most sophisticated.

Strauss unabashedly integrated the irresistible melodic grace and vitality of his musical inventions into his operettas. By bringing the ballroom into the theater he virtually invented the genre of Viennese operetta, an art form whose music is profoundly sensuous and romantic and possesses a delectable appeal. It is evocative music that conveys the enchanting mood and sublime ambience of fairy-tale Vienna, a world of handsome young men and beautiful young ladies, of sentimentality, charm, dance and romance.

Today, Strauss's music survives and thrives, prey for arrangers who have adapted and popularized it for new generations—a trend of which Strauss himself approved. Perhaps one of the greatest tributes to the unique musical inventions of Johann Strauss, Jr. comes from the unrelated Richard Strauss, who commented about the waltzes he composed for his opera *Der Rosenkavalier*: “....how could I have composed those without thinking of the laughing genius of Vienna?”

Die Fledermaus is perhaps one of the finest operettas of its period, and 125 years after its premiere it has proven to be an incontrovertible classic of the lyric stage. Viewed in its entirety of text and music, it is a work of supreme musical theater, a magnificent blend of solid plot, wit, credible characterizations, and magnificent musical inventions.

At times, legends about the lyric theater rival their inherent melodrama. One legend about *Die Fledermaus* relates that Strauss composed the work in a mere six weeks, and many aficionados of opera never cease to be amazed by the rapidity in which a composer's inspiration can materialize; the composition of the bel canto operas of Rossini and Donizetti are another perfect example. History indeed affirms that Strauss sketched out *Die Fledermaus* in six weeks, but six months elapsed from the start of its composition to its ultimate production. During that time many of its songs had been released for publication; and in particular, Rosalinde's "Csárdás" was performed at a charity ball and received immediate acclaim.

Another legend claims that *Die Fledermaus* was a failure and closed after sixteen performances. But in truth, it closed shortly after its premiere because the theater had been pre-booked by a visiting company; nevertheless, *Die Fledermaus* returned immediately thereafter, and the accolades have never ceased.

Theater is illusion, but it simultaneously possesses a sense of realism. In great comedy, the humor is not necessarily derived from what is actually happening on the stage, but from the realization that those comic events could indeed happen in real life. *Die Fledermaus* portrays some awfully silly things that people are capable of doing, and the viewer-listener responds to the magnificence of its humor because it portrays a truth—a realistic comic truth of human shortcomings.

The kernel of the *Die Fledermaus* story involves the mistaken arrest of one person for another (Alfred instead of Eisenstein), and the voluntary later surrender of the person who was really supposed to be imprisoned (Eisenstein). But the real humor involves Eisenstein's one-night avoidance of jail to attend Prince Orlofsky's party, which results in his presumed infidelity and betrayal of his wife, and the comic complications when all meet in prison the next day. The comic essence of *Die Fledermaus* springs from the fact

that everyone achieves that great fantasy of being someone else for a day, but when true identities are exposed at the police station the morning after, the characters' fantasies surrender to stark reality.

The original story of *Die Fledermaus* is generally attributed to Roderich Benedix (1811-1873), the writer of *Das Gefängnis* (*The Prison*), a popular comedy that premiered in Berlin in 1851. Twenty years later, the renowned French writers Henry Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy adapted the all-but-forgotten play and produced it as a comedy in three acts at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal in 1872; their title was *Le Réveillon* (*The Party*). The success of the Meilhac-Halévy play, as well as the wit and humor in its underlying story, inspired the Viennese Theater an der Wien to purchase its rights. They immediately commissioned Johann Strauss to set the play to music.

In the hands of the French writers Meilhac and Halévy, the story's original German antecedents were transformed into a purely Gallic escapade. So the story had to be newly translated and adapted to Viennese taste, a task that was admirably achieved by two of the finest theatrical craftsmen of the day, Carl Haffner and Franz Richard Genée, librettists/scenarists who faced the formidable challenge of converting a spoken play to musical theater and keeping the plot moving even though song usurps time for dialogue and action.

In the French *Le Réveillon* play, Fanny (Rosalinde) plays an almost minor part, merely calling on her husband at the prison in the final scene to confront him with evidence of his infidelity. But the librettists knew well that an opera/opera required a leading lady, one who would be present in each act. So they devised the masterstroke of integrating Rosalinde into the first and second acts. Therefore, in Act I the avenging Dr. Falke invites Eisenstein to Prince Orlofsky's party before he serves his jail term, but he also secretly invites Rosalinde to the party. And their great modification was to invent her appearance at the party under the plausible guise of a masked and disguised Hungarian countess, whose identity is unrecognized by her husband.

The maid Adele appeared only sparsely in the opening scenes of *Le Réveillon*. The librettists added more character depth by embellishing her role; in the operetta she appears at Prince Orlofsky's second-act party because her sister Ida, one of the ladies of the Opéra ballet, invited her. With the introduction of Rosalinde and Adele at Orlofsky's party, the comedy surrounding the unsuspecting Eisenstein becomes irony: he believes that he has seen Adele somewhere but cannot quite place her; both Adele and Rosalinde certainly recognize him; and he never suspects that the masked Hungarian countess with whom he has become smitten might be his wife. Rosalinde, on the other hand, not only recognizes Adele, but also becomes appalled when she notices that her maid is wearing one of her dresses.

In *Le Réveillon*, Fanny's former lover is a violin virtuoso who was her music teacher four years earlier. Fanny fell madly in love with him but refused to marry him, dutifully obeying her father, who was appalled at the thought that his daughter would marry a musician. But the violin virtuoso has now achieved success as the "chef d'orchestre hongrois" to a rich Russian nobleman, Prince Yermontof (Prince Orlofsky), and the violin teacher's presence is explained by the fact that his patron and employer is visiting the area. But the spurned fiddler has learned that Fanny's husband and rival is about to serve a prison sentence. His obsession for Fanny as well as his revenge for being spurned by her is unappeasable. So, while he is in town, he decides to visit his former love with the hope that he will be able to compromise her. Of course, in Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* version of the story, the fiddler has become Alfred, a tenor whose singing melts the resistance of his former pupil, Rosalinde.

Eisenstein's repeating watch has played a significant role in all of his apparent voluminous adventures and conquests. At Orlofsky's party, Eisenstein shows the watch to the Hungarian countess who immediately seizes it and foils his efforts to have it returned. In the final prison scene, she produces it as her indisputable evidence of her husband's infidelity; she has not only witnessed his indiscretions, but also has

Eisenstein's repeating watch: Rosalinde's smoking gun.

The character of Prince Orlofsky must be viewed in the perspective of mid-nineteenth-century aristocratic excess. In particular, France was a playground for a host of Russian nobles. Prince Orlofsky (Yermontof in *Le Réveillon*) was supposedly modeled on the Russian Prince Paul Demidof, a notorious character of the period whose renown was attributed to his immense wealth and his obsession with pleasure; he was twenty-three years old when he descended upon Paris and turned its social life topsy-turvy with his extravagances.

Another model for *Die Fledermaus*'s Prince Orlofsky could have been a young Russian named Narishkine, even richer than Demidof and quite as mad. A Parisian diarist, Comte Horace de Viel Castel, described Demidof in 1860 as "a disgusting imbecile, worn out with debauchery." He added that there was no viler creature who could be imagined on earth—insolent to his inferiors, cowardly and false with those who stood up to him.

Demidof or Narishkine? At the time, there was an abundance of role models for the jaded Prince, a weak and sickly man who was unable to find joy from his wealth.

The greatness of *Die Fledermaus*'s comic story is that it is peopled with real characters, identifiable to all. But its true grandeur is Strauss's music that refines and emphasizes the plot's ironies and situations, and unifies them into a credible and seamless unity. The entire action is bathed in an atmosphere of refined sensuality, so characteristic of Viennese operetta.

It has been said that the operetta's "Fledermaus Waltz" is one of the great classical tunes of all time, a slice of chocolate cake from Old Vienna that defines the spirit of the era as well as the entire operetta, and that a sparkling performance of *Die Fledermaus* sends the audience home immersed in the frothy champagne that swirls so abundantly around its stage. In Austria, *Die Fledermaus* is a hallowed work that

evokes generational nostalgia, memories of a world in which delightful music represents the ideal escape from a turbulent world.

In the end, Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* has achieved theatrical immortality, a longevity that has survived time and fashion triumphantly. The operetta has transcended its origins and become an acknowledged cornerstone of the lyric theater. It is a tribute to this operetta that it is included in the repertoires of many opera companies. *Die Fledermaus* can legitimately be called immortal, magnificent lyric theater that continues to entertain and enchant its audiences through its lighthearted story and, of course, through the vitality and sparkle of Strauss's ebullient music.

