

WIENER PHILHARMONIKER

Roses, Railways, and the Blue Danube: New Year's Concert 2026

Thursday, January 1, 2026 · 11:15 · Musikverein

Yannick Nézet-Séguin, conductor

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	STRAUSS II 1825–1899 <i>Overture to the operetta Indigo und die vierzig Räuber (Indigo and the Forty Thieves)</i>	8'
2	ZIEHRER 1843–1922 <i>Donausagen, Walzer, Op. 446</i>	8'
3	LANNER 1801–1843 <i>Malapou-Galoppe, Op. 148</i>	3'
4	STRAUSS 1835–1916 <i>Brausteufelchen, Polka schnell, Op. 154</i>	3'
5	STRAUSS II 1825–1899 <i>Fledermaus-Quadrille, Op. 363</i>	6'
6	STRAUSS I 1804–1849 <i>Der Karneval in Paris, Galopp, Op. 100</i>	3'
7	SUPPÈ 1819–1895 <i>Overture to the operetta Die schöne Galathée</i>	8'
8	WEINLICH 1848–1887 <i>Sirenen Lieder, Polka mazur, Op. 13 (arr. W. Dörner)</i>	5'
9	STRAUSS 1827–1870 <i>Frauenwürde, Walzer, Op. 277</i>	8'
10	STRAUSS II 1825–1899 <i>Diplomaten-Polka, Polka française, Op. 448</i>	4'
11	PRICE 1887–1953 <i>Rainbow Waltz (arr. W. Dörner)</i>	5'
12	LUMBYE 1810–1874 <i>Københavns Jernbane-Damp-Galop (Copenhagen Steam Railway Galop)</i>	4'
13	STRAUSS II 1825–1899 <i>Rosen aus dem Süden (Roses from the South), Walzer, Op. 388</i>	9'
14	STRAUSS II 1825–1899 <i>Egyptischer Marsch (Egyptian March), Op. 335</i>	5'
15	STRAUSS 1827–1870 <i>Friedenspalmen (Palms of Peace), Walzer, Op. 207</i>	8'
16	FAHRBACH THE YOUNGER 1843–1894 <i>Zirkus, Polka schnell, Op. 110</i>	3'
TOTAL MUSIC		103'

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
17	STRAUSS II 1825–1899 <i>An der schönen blauen Donau</i> (<i>The Blue Danube</i>), Walzer, Op. 314	10'
18	STRAUSS I 1804–1849 <i>Radetzky-Marsch</i> , Op. 228	3'
TOTAL MUSIC		103'

Johann Strauss II

8 minutes

1825–1899

Overture to the operetta Indigo und die vierzig Räuber (Indigo and the Forty Thieves)

THE COMPOSER

Johann Strauss II, born in Vienna in 1825, was the most celebrated member of a whole dynasty of dance composers and remains, more than any other figure, the musical embodiment of imperial Vienna. His father, Johann Strauss I, forbade him a musical career, hoping to spare him a precarious life; the boy studied the violin in secret and in 1844 made his debut at the head of his own orchestra. He soon eclipsed his father and his brothers Josef and Eduard, touring Europe, Russia, and the United States, and earning the title 'the Waltz King.' Over a long career he produced some five hundred waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, and marches, raising the Viennese waltz to a peak of melodic richness and orchestral colour, and turning to the operetta stage with *Die Fledermaus* and *Der Zigeunerbaron*. His *An der schönen blauen Donau* (*The Blue Danube*) is often called Austria's unofficial anthem. He died in 1899, and his music has formed the heart of the Vienna Philharmonic's New Year's Concert ever since.

ABOUT THE WORK

The New Year's Concert of the Vienna Philharmonic, broadcast each 1 January from the golden Musikverein to tens of millions of viewers worldwide, is among the most cherished rituals in classical music; in 2026 it is led for the first time by Yannick Nézet-Séguin, making his debut on the podium of this most Viennese of occasions. The programme opens with the overture to *Indigo und die vierzig Räuber*, the work that marked Johann Strauss II's first venture into the operetta theatre. Premiered at Vienna's Theater an der Wien in February 1871, It arrived at a time when Viennese composers were answering the Parisian operettas of Offenbach, and it set an Arabian Nights tale loosely drawn from the story of Ali Baba. The critics were divided and the operetta did not hold the stage, but its music was prized, and Strauss later recycled much of it, most famously in the waltz *Tausend und eine Nacht*. The overture survives as a sparkling concert curtain-

raiser, stitching together the score's best tunes into a single exuberant sweep, an apt way to begin a morning devoted to the Strauss family's art.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Like most operetta overtures, this is a pot-pourri: a sequence of contrasting tunes rather than a tightly argued form. Listen for the way Strauss strings together brilliant marches, lilting waltz episodes, and quicksilver dance passages, each handed around the orchestra with his characteristic lightness. The waltz themes that will dominate the morning make an early appearance here, and the whole piece builds to a glittering, applause-courting close: Strauss the showman, setting the festive tone.

Carl Michael Ziehrer

8 minutes

1843–1922

Donausagen, Walzer, Op. 446

THE COMPOSER

Carl Michael Ziehrer, born in Vienna in 1843, was one of the leading Viennese dance composers of the generation after Johann Strauss II, and for a time his most prominent rival. A pupil of Simon Sechter, he was promoted by the publisher Carl Haslinger as a challenger to the Strausses and formed his own orchestra in 1863, building a following with waltzes, polkas, and marches in the popular Viennese idiom. From 1885 to 1893 he was bandmaster of the Hoch- und Deutschmeister infantry regiment, and his military marches became enormously popular. Late in the Habsburg era he received the title of k. u. k. Hofballmusikdirektor, director of music for the imperial court balls, a title once held by the Strausses themselves; he was the last to hold it. Ziehrer composed more than six hundred works, including numerous operettas. His fortunes collapsed after the First World War and the fall of the monarchy, and he died in poverty in Vienna in 1922. His tuneful, good-humoured dances have kept a modest place in the Viennese repertoire.

ABOUT THE WORK

Donausagen ('Danube Legends') is one of Carl Michael Ziehrer's most attractive concert waltzes, and 2026 was the first time it had been played at the New Year's Concert. Its title places it squarely within the rich Viennese tradition of music inspired by the Danube, the river that Johann Strauss II had immortalised in *The Blue Danube*. Where Strauss evoked the river's shimmering current, Ziehrer reaches toward its 'legends,' the folk tales and romantic associations that cling to its banks, lending the waltz a touch of storytelling colour. Cast in the standard Viennese mould (an evocative slow introduction, a garland of linked waltz sections and a rounding coda), it shows Ziehrer's

gift for broad, singable melody and his polished orchestration. The piece is a relative rarity at the New Year's Concert, where Ziehrer appears far less often than the Strauss brothers, making its inclusion a welcome reminder of the breadth of Vienna's dance-music heritage.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen first to the introduction, which sets a reflective, almost narrative mood before the dancing begins, with Ziehrer painting the river's mythic atmosphere. Then follows the chain of waltz tunes, each with its own character, swung in the elastic Viennese rhythm where the second beat arrives a fraction early. Note the warmth Ziehrer draws from the strings and the genial woodwind countermelodies, and the way the coda gathers the waltz's best ideas for a satisfying final flourish.

Joseph Lanner

1801–1843

3 minutes

Malapou-Galoppe, Op. 148

THE COMPOSER

Joseph Lanner, born in Vienna in 1801, was, alongside the elder Johann Strauss, one of the two founding fathers of the classical Viennese waltz. Largely self-taught, he began playing the violin in dance ensembles as a boy and formed a small string band that grew into a celebrated orchestra. For a time the young Johann Strauss I played in and helped lead Lanner's group, before the two parted, amicably at first and then as rivals, to dominate the dance halls of Vienna in the 1820s and 1830s. Lanner refined the waltz from a simple peasant dance into an elegant, melodically graceful concert form, with a gentler, more lyrical sensibility than his rival's fierier style; his *Die Schönbrunner* and *Die Werber* are among the loveliest products of the early Romantic Viennese dance. He composed over two hundred works before his early death in 1843, at only forty-two. Lanner laid the foundations on which the Strauss dynasty would build the waltz's golden age.

ABOUT THE WORK

The *Malapou-Galoppe* is a brief, high-spirited dance from Joseph Lanner, the older master whose graceful, lyrical style helped invent the Viennese waltz tradition that the Strauss family would carry to its zenith. The galop, a fast duple-time round dance that swept the European ballrooms of the 1820s and 1830s, was a staple of Lanner's output, offering a breathless contrast to his more refined waltzes. Pieces like this were written for immediate use on the dance floor, and their charm lies in their compactness and forward drive rather than in elaborate development. Lanner appears only rarely at the New

Year's Concert, and this galop was new to it in 2026, so its inclusion is a graceful nod to the founding generation of Viennese dance music, the world from which the Strausses emerged.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

This is short and quick, a burst of energy among the longer waltzes. Listen for the galloping duple rhythm that gives the dance its name, the bright orchestration, and the contrasting central trio section that offers a moment's lyrical relief before the headlong music returns. Lanner's writing is lighter and more transparent than the later Strauss style, a window onto the waltz's earlier, more innocent youth.

Eduard Strauss

3 minutes

1835–1916

Brausteuflchen, Polka schnell, Op. 154

THE COMPOSER

Eduard Strauss, born in Vienna in 1835, was the youngest of the three composer sons of Johann Strauss I and the longest-lived. Like his brothers Johann II and Josef, he was at first intended for another profession, but the family's musical enterprise drew him in. When Johann II withdrew to concentrate on operetta, it fell to Eduard to take over the Strauss Orchestra, which he led until he disbanded it in 1901, touring widely across Europe and, in 1899, to North America and keeping the family's dance music before the public. A brisk, energetic conductor, he was especially admired for his fast polkas. He composed several hundred works of his own, though he is remembered as much for sustaining the dynasty's performing tradition as for his compositions. In a notorious act, in October 1907, years after the orchestra's end, he had a large part of the family's manuscript archive burned. He died in Vienna in 1916, the last of the brothers.

ABOUT THE WORK

Brausteuflchen ('Little Fizzing Devil') is a quick polka by Eduard Strauss, the youngest of the three Strauss brothers and the one most associated with the fast, fizzing polka schnell. The whimsical title, conjuring a tiny, effervescent imp, perfectly captures the genre's character: brisk, sparkling, and over almost before it has begun. Eduard built much of his reputation on exactly this kind of piece, which he conducted at the head of the Strauss Orchestra. The polka schnell ('fast polka') is a New Year's Concert favourite precisely because of its breathless gaiety, and it provides a welcome jolt of speed between the more expansive waltzes. Like much of Eduard's output it is light entertainment of the highest craft, designed to delight rather than to instruct.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Speed and sparkle are the whole point. Listen for the scurrying string figures and pert woodwind interjections that suggest the darting ‘little devil’ of the title, and for the abrupt dynamic contrasts and cheeky accents that pepper the dance. There is the usual contrasting trio in the middle before the opening material races back, and the piece ends as briskly as it began, a momentary burst of fireworks.

Johann Strauss II

6 minutes

1825–1899

Fledermaus-Quadrille, Op. 363

THE COMPOSER

Johann Strauss II, born in Vienna in 1825, was the most celebrated member of a whole dynasty of dance composers and remains, more than any other figure, the musical embodiment of imperial Vienna. His father, Johann Strauss I, forbade him a musical career, hoping to spare him a precarious life; the boy studied the violin in secret and in 1844 made his debut at the head of his own orchestra. He soon eclipsed his father and his brothers Josef and Eduard, touring Europe, Russia, and the United States, and earning the title ‘the Waltz King.’ Over a long career he produced some five hundred waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, and marches, raising the Viennese waltz to a peak of melodic richness and orchestral colour, and turning to the operetta stage with *Die Fledermaus* and *Der Zigeunerbaron*. His *An der schönen blauen Donau* (The Blue Danube) is often called Austria’s unofficial anthem. He died in 1899, and his music has formed the heart of the Vienna Philharmonic’s New Year’s Concert ever since.

ABOUT THE WORK

The *Fledermaus-Quadrille* distils the most famous of all Viennese operettas into a single dance. Johann Strauss II’s *Die Fledermaus* (‘The Bat’), premiered at the Theater an der Wien in April 1874, is the supreme masterpiece of the genre. It is a champagne comedy of disguises, flirtations and a revenge prank that ends in laughter, and its score overflows with irresistible tunes. As was the custom, Strauss arranged its highlights into the dance forms of the ballroom, and this quadrille gathers the operetta’s melodies into the five contrasting figures of that elegant set dance. The quadrille, a French import that became a fixture of Viennese balls, threads together a sequence of lively episodes, each in a different tempo and mood. Hearing the well-loved *Fledermaus* melodies recast as dance music is part of the New Year’s Concert’s particular pleasure, a reminder of the seamless traffic between Strauss’s theatre and the ballroom.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

A quadrille comes in five (sometimes six) short numbered figures, each with its own tempo, so listen for the music's frequent changes of gear. The fun lies in spotting the tunes: melodies from the operetta flash past in quick succession, recast to fit the steps of the dance. The effect is a witty, fast-moving medley, a love letter to *Die Fledermaus* in miniature.

Johann Strauss I

3 minutes

1804–1849

Der Karneval in Paris, Galopp, Op. 100

THE COMPOSER

Johann Strauss I, born in Vienna in 1804, was the founder of the Strauss dynasty and, with Joseph Lanner, one of the creators of the classical Viennese waltz. Of humble origins, he learned the violin and played in dance ensembles, joining and then leaving Lanner's orchestra to form his own in 1825. Through tireless touring across Europe, reaching as far as Britain, where he played for Queen Victoria's coronation in 1838, he carried the Viennese waltz to international fame and built a thriving musical business. He opposed his sons' musical ambitions, hoping they would avoid the insecurity of a performer's life, but Johann II defied him and became a rival. The elder Strauss's own fame today rests above all on the *Radetzky-Marsch* of 1848, written in honour of the Austrian field marshal and now the traditional, hand-clapping finale of the New Year's Concert. He died of scarlet fever in Vienna in 1849, leaving a legacy his sons would magnify into a golden age.

ABOUT THE WORK

Der Karneval in Paris is a brilliant galop by Johann Strauss I, the founding father of the dynasty, and it carries the round number Op. 100, a milestone in his prolific output. The galop, a fast and furious duple-time dance, was one of the elder Strauss's specialities, and this one wears its French inspiration openly, evoking the giddy whirl of a Parisian carnival. Strauss I had taken his orchestra to France in 1837 and absorbed its theatrical brilliance into his own style. Pieces like this, written for the dance floor, were meant to send couples spinning at headlong speed, and their irresistible momentum has kept them alive in the concert hall long after the ballrooms fell silent. As one of the rarer appearances of the dynasty's founder at the New Year's Concert, it offers a glimpse of the energetic style on which the whole Strauss empire was built.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

This is fast, bright, and unrelenting. Listen for the driving gallop rhythm, the festive brass and percussion that conjure carnival revelry, and the contrasting trio that briefly relaxes the pace before the headlong rush returns. The orchestration is more robust and direct than the silkier style of the elder Strauss's sons: this is the sound of the waltz tradition in its vigorous early days.

Franz von Suppè

1819–1895

8 minutes

Overture to the operetta Die schöne Galathée

THE COMPOSER

Franz von Suppè, born in 1819 in Split (then part of the Austrian Empire, now Croatia), was a pioneer of Viennese operetta and one of the most gifted theatre composers of his age. Of Italian and Austrian descent (the old story of Belgian ancestry is unfounded), he came to Vienna as a young man and spent his career working in its theatres as a conductor and house composer, producing a vast quantity of incidental music, farces, operettas, and full operas. Drawing on Italian melodic grace and Viennese charm, he helped establish the operetta as a distinctively Viennese art form in the decades before Johann Strauss II turned to the stage. Today he is remembered above all for a handful of dazzling overtures, among them *Dichter und Bauer* ('Poet and Peasant'), *Leichte Kavallerie* ('Light Cavalry') and *Die schöne Galathée*, which have outlived the stage works they introduced and become beloved orchestral showpieces. Suppè died in Vienna in 1895, his sparkling, tuneful overtures securing him a permanent place in the popular orchestral repertoire.

ABOUT THE WORK

The overture to *Die schöne Galathée* ('The Beautiful Galatea') is one of Franz von Suppè's most delightful curtain-raisers. The one-act operetta, premiered in Berlin in 1865, retells the ancient myth of Pygmalion, the sculptor who falls in love with his own statue, which Venus brings to life. Here it becomes a sparkling comedy, for the animated Galatea proves fickle and headstrong rather than the ideal he dreamed of. As with so many of Suppè's stage works, the operetta itself is now rarely performed, but its overture has taken on an independent life, prized for its irresistible blend of lyrical warmth and theatrical brilliance. It is a model of the form: an arresting opening, songful lyrical episodes, and a whirling, accelerating finish guaranteed to bring the house down. Its appearance at the New Year's Concert widens the morning beyond the Strauss family to embrace the broader world of Viennese light music.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Suppè's overture unfolds as a sequence of vivid contrasts. Listen for the bold, attention-grabbing opening; a tender, song-like central melody of real beauty; and the gradual acceleration into a brilliant, headlong final section. The orchestration is colourful and theatrical, with prominent solos for cello and woodwinds amid the festive tutti, a compact drama in sound that builds inexorably to its exhilarating close.

Josephine Weinlich

1848–1887

5 minutes

Sirenen Lieder, Polka mazur, Op. 13 (arr. W. Dörner)

THE COMPOSER

Josephine Weinlich (also known as Josephine Amann-Weinlich), born in 1848, was a pioneering Austrian conductor and composer at a time when the podium was almost exclusively a male preserve. In 1868 she founded a ladies' orchestra in Vienna, later renamed the Erste Europäische Damenorchester (First European Ladies' Orchestra) and generally counted as Europe's first women's orchestra, and toured it widely, from Germany and Paris to Saint Petersburg and the United States. As a conductor she championed the light Viennese dance repertoire of the Strauss circle, and she composed dances of her own in the same idiom: waltzes, polkas and mazurkas for her ensemble to play. Long overlooked by music history, Weinlich has been rediscovered in recent years as an important early figure in the story of women in orchestral music. Her appearance on the New Year's Concert programme reflects the Vienna Philharmonic's recent efforts to broaden its repertoire and honour the women whose contributions to this tradition were once forgotten.

ABOUT THE WORK

Sirenen Lieder ('Songs of the Sirens') is a polka-mazurka by Josephine Weinlich, the pioneering nineteenth-century conductor and composer who founded Europe's first women's orchestra. Its inclusion at the 2026 New Year's Concert, in an arrangement by Wolfgang Dörner and heard there for the first time, marks a significant act of rediscovery, restoring to the concert hall a voice long lost to history. The polka-mazurka is a graceful hybrid dance: it weds the gentle lilt of the Polish mazurka, in a moderate triple time, to the Viennese polka tradition, producing music more lyrical and swaying than the brisk polka schnell. The evocative title gestures toward the alluring song of the mythological sirens, and the piece unfolds with an unhurried, singing charm well suited to its subject. That a work by Weinlich should now sound in the Musikverein is a quiet but meaningful expansion of the New Year's tradition.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Unlike the fast polkas elsewhere on the programme, this is a polka-mazurka: moderate in tempo and triple in metre, with a gentle, rocking lilt. Listen for the characteristic mazurka emphasis that falls on the second or third beat, lending the dance its slightly wistful sway, and for the singing, song-like melodies that justify the ‘siren’ of the title. Dörner’s arrangement clothes Weinlich’s tunes in idiomatic Viennese orchestral colour.

Josef Strauss

8 minutes

1827–1870

Frauenwürde, Walzer, Op. 277

THE COMPOSER

Josef Strauss, born in Vienna in 1827, was the middle of the three composer sons of Johann Strauss I and, for many admirers, the most poetically gifted of the dynasty. Trained as an engineer, he designed machines (among them a horse-drawn street-sweeping vehicle) and published mathematical textbooks, and he was reluctantly drawn into the family business in 1853, when serious illness kept his brother Johann II from conducting. Sensitive and introspective by temperament, Josef brought a refinement and harmonic subtlety to the Viennese dance that set his music slightly apart: his brother Johann is said to have called him ‘the more gifted of us two.’ His finest waltzes, such as *Sphärenklänge* (‘Music of the Spheres’) and *Dorfschwalben aus Österreich* (‘Village Swallows from Austria’), are prized for their melancholy beauty and delicate orchestration. He composed nearly three hundred works in a short career, collapsing while conducting in Warsaw and dying in 1870 at only forty-two. His early death robbed Viennese music of its most lyrical voice.

ABOUT THE WORK

Frauenwürde (‘Woman’s Dignity’) is a concert waltz by Josef Strauss, the middle brother whose music is prized for its lyrical sensitivity and harmonic refinement. The title reflects the gallant, idealising spirit of its age, paying tribute to womanhood in the manner of nineteenth-century salon culture. Composed in Josef’s characteristically poetic vein, the waltz shows the qualities that led his brother Johann II to call him the more talented of the two: a gift for long, singing melody, subtle modulations, and an orchestral palette of unusual delicacy. Where Johann’s waltzes tend toward brilliance and extroversion, Josef’s often carry a tinge of wistfulness, a shadow of melancholy beneath the dance. *Frauenwürde* follows the classic Viennese design of an atmospheric introduction, a chain of contrasting waltz sections and a coda, but bears throughout the gentler, more inward stamp of its composer.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the introduction's reflective, almost yearning mood before the dance proper begins, and for the breadth and tenderness of Josef's waltz melodies, which tend to sing rather than sparkle. Note the refined orchestration, with its warm strings and expressive woodwind lines, and the subtle harmonic touches that give his music its characteristic poignancy. The coda gathers the waltz's most affecting themes for a glowing close that lingers rather than dazzles.

Johann Strauss II

1825–1899

4 minutes

Diplomaten-Polka, Polka française, Op. 448

THE COMPOSER

Johann Strauss II, born in Vienna in 1825, was the most celebrated member of a whole dynasty of dance composers and remains, more than any other figure, the musical embodiment of imperial Vienna. His father, Johann Strauss I, forbade him a musical career, hoping to spare him a precarious life; the boy studied the violin in secret and in 1844 made his debut at the head of his own orchestra. He soon eclipsed his father and his brothers Josef and Eduard, touring Europe, Russia, and the United States, and earning the title 'the Waltz King.' Over a long career he produced some five hundred waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, and marches, raising the Viennese waltz to a peak of melodic richness and orchestral colour, and turning to the operetta stage with *Die Fledermaus* and *Der Zigeunerbaron*. His *An der schönen blauen Donau* (The Blue Danube) is often called Austria's unofficial anthem. He died in 1899, and his music has formed the heart of the Vienna Philharmonic's New Year's Concert ever since.

ABOUT THE WORK

The *Diplomaten-Polka* ('Diplomats' Polka') is a *polka française* by Johann Strauss II, a late work from a composer whose mastery of the smaller dance forms never flagged. Unlike the headlong *polka schnell*, the *polka française* ('French polka') is a moderate, graceful dance in a comfortable strolling tempo, more poised and elegant than its break-neck cousin. The title's nod to diplomacy suits this air of suave refinement; one can imagine the measured, courteous bearing of statesmen at a court ball. Strauss wrote dozens of polkas in this genre, each a perfectly turned miniature, and they form an essential part of the New Year's Concert's variety, supplying moments of relaxed charm between the grand waltzes and the dashing fast polkas. This one displays the Waltz King's effortless melodic invention working at modest scale.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The polka française moves at a comfortable, swaying pace. Listen for its even, unhurried two-beat rhythm and the gentle, almost conversational character of the tunes. Strauss decorates the melody with elegant woodwind touches and graceful turns of phrase, and the central trio offers a contrasting strain before the opening returns. The mood throughout is one of polished good humour rather than excitement: courtly poise set to music.

Florence Price

1887–1953

Rainbow Waltz (arr. W. Dörner)

THE COMPOSER

Florence Price, born in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1887, was an American composer who made history as the first African-American woman to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra, when the Chicago Symphony premiered her Symphony No. 1 in E minor in 1933. Trained at the New England Conservatory, she built a career as a pianist, organist, and teacher before settling in Chicago, where she came to prominence amid the cultural flowering of the era. Her music fuses the forms and idioms of European Romanticism with the spirituals, dances, and rhythms of African-American tradition, producing a warm, lyrical, and distinctly American voice. Long neglected after her death in 1953, Price has undergone a dramatic rediscovery in recent years, spurred by the 2009 discovery of a trove of her manuscripts in an abandoned house near St. Anne, Illinois, and is now celebrated as a major figure in American music. Her appearance at the New Year's Concert, a first for an American woman in this Viennese stronghold, reflects the orchestra's recent broadening of its programming.

ABOUT THE WORK

The Rainbow Waltz is a charming dance by the American composer Florence Price, heard here in an arrangement by Wolfgang Dörner that adapts it for the Vienna Philharmonic's distinctive sound. Its inclusion is one of the most striking gestures of the 2026 programme. Price, long overlooked and now widely celebrated, is the first American woman, and one of very few composers from outside Europe, to feature at the New Year's Concert. The waltz reflects the side of Price's art that delighted in shorter, genial character pieces alongside her symphonies and concertos, and it carries her warm, lyrical voice, rooted in Romantic harmony but inflected with an American melodic sweetness, into the heart of the Viennese tradition. To hear a waltz

5 minutes

from across the Atlantic in the Musikverein is a quietly historic moment, widening a ritual long defined by the Strauss family to embrace a broader musical world.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for how Price's melodic idiom differs from the native Viennese style: a gentle, songful lyricism with its own American flavour, even as the triple-time waltz rhythm anchors it firmly in the dance tradition. Dörner's arrangement, made from a piano original, wraps Price's tunes in the warm string sound of the Vienna Philharmonic; some scholars have objected that it strays a long way from that original.

Hans Christian Lumbye

4 minutes

1810–1874

Københavns Jernbane-Damp-Galop (Copenhagen Steam Railway Galop)

THE COMPOSER

Hans Christian Lumbye, born in Copenhagen in 1810, was Denmark's foremost composer of light dance music and is affectionately known as 'the Strauss of the North.' Inspired by hearing a Viennese orchestra in 1839, he devoted himself to the waltzes, polkas, and galops of the Strauss-Lanner style and became the resident composer and conductor of Copenhagen's celebrated Tivoli Gardens pleasure park, a post he held from its opening in 1843 until 1872. There he produced a steady stream of dances that delighted Danish audiences and gave the nation its own branch of the Viennese tradition. His Champagne Galop, which opens with a popping cork, became a signature work, and his witty, pictorial dances (above all the Copenhagen Steam Railway Galop, which imitates a locomotive) show a flair for orchestral mimicry and good humour. Lumbye died in Copenhagen in 1874. His music remains a cherished part of Danish musical life and an occasional welcome guest at the Vienna New Year's Concert.

ABOUT THE WORK

The Copenhagen Steam Railway Galop is the most famous of Hans Christian Lumbye's pictorial dances and one of the most delightful novelties in the entire light-music repertoire. Composed in 1847 to celebrate the opening of Denmark's first railway, the line from Copenhagen to Roskilde, and first played at Tivoli three days later, it is a vivid musical portrait of a steam-train journey: programme music in miniature, written when railways were still a thrilling marvel of modernity. Lumbye, the 'Strauss of the North,' was a master of orchestral mimicry, and here he turns the whole orchestra into a locomotive, complete with whistles, the chuffing of the engine, and the

steady acceleration and deceleration of the train. The galop's giddy speed makes it the perfect vehicle for such effects. Its appearance at the New Year's Concert brings a touch of Nordic wit to the Viennese morning.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

This is musical storytelling, so listen for the journey. The piece opens with the engine starting up (a whistle, the first puffs of steam, the gradual gathering of speed) before settling into a brisk, racing galop that depicts the train at full tilt. Note the imitations of the locomotive's chugging rhythm in the orchestra and the whistle calls along the way, then the slowing and final hiss of brakes as the train pulls into the station. Charming, witty, and instantly evocative.

Johann Strauss II

1825–1899

9 minutes

Rosen aus dem Süden (Roses from the South), Walzer, Op. 388

THE COMPOSER

Johann Strauss II, born in Vienna in 1825, was the most celebrated member of a whole dynasty of dance composers and remains, more than any other figure, the musical embodiment of imperial Vienna. His father, Johann Strauss I, forbade him a musical career, hoping to spare him a precarious life; the boy studied the violin in secret and in 1844 made his debut at the head of his own orchestra. He soon eclipsed his father and his brothers Josef and Eduard, touring Europe, Russia, and the United States, and earning the title 'the Waltz King.' Over a long career he produced some five hundred waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, and marches, raising the Viennese waltz to a peak of melodic richness and orchestral colour, and turning to the operetta stage with *Die Fledermaus* and *Der Zigeunerbaron*. His *An der schönen blauen Donau* (The Blue Danube) is often called Austria's unofficial anthem. He died in 1899, and his music has formed the heart of the Vienna Philharmonic's New Year's Concert ever since.

ABOUT THE WORK

Rosen aus dem Süden ('Roses from the South') is one of Johann Strauss II's most beloved concert waltzes, and one of several he fashioned from melodies in his operettas, in this case *Das Spitzentuch der Königin* ('The Queen's Lace Handkerchief') of 1880. The title comes from that operetta's romance 'Wo die wilde Rose erblüht', and the waltz was first played at the Musikverein in November 1880 under Eduard Strauss. Strauss, like Suppè, recognised that the theatre's best tunes could enjoy a second life on the concert platform, and he re-worked them into self-standing waltz sequences that have far out-

lived their parent stage works. *Rosen aus dem Süden* is a particularly rich example, its title evoking the warmth and fragrance of the Mediterranean south, and its melodies among the most generously lyrical the Waltz King ever wrote. The waltz unfolds with the breadth and confidence of Strauss at the height of his powers, a garland of memorable themes strung together with consummate skill. It ranks among the cornerstones of the New Year's Concert repertoire and a perennial audience favourite.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the broad, songful introduction that sets a glowing, romantic mood before the dancing begins. Then comes the chain of waltz melodies, each more memorable than the last; Strauss's invention here is at its most generous and flowing. Note the elastic Viennese rhythm, the lustrous string sound, and the way the coda gathers the waltz's loveliest themes into a warm, expansive farewell. This is the Waltz King in his fullest lyrical bloom.

Johann Strauss II

1825–1899

5 minutes

Egyptischer Marsch (Egyptian March), Op. 335

THE COMPOSER

Johann Strauss II, born in Vienna in 1825, was the most celebrated member of a whole dynasty of dance composers and remains, more than any other figure, the musical embodiment of imperial Vienna. His father, Johann Strauss I, forbade him a musical career, hoping to spare him a precarious life; the boy studied the violin in secret and in 1844 made his debut at the head of his own orchestra. He soon eclipsed his father and his brothers Josef and Eduard, touring Europe, Russia, and the United States, and earning the title 'the Waltz King.' Over a long career he produced some five hundred waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, and marches, raising the Viennese waltz to a peak of melodic richness and orchestral colour, and turning to the operetta stage with *Die Fledermaus* and *Der Zigeunerbaron*. His *An der schönen blauen Donau* (The Blue Danube) is often called Austria's unofficial anthem. He died in 1899, and his music has formed the heart of the Vienna Philharmonic's New Year's Concert ever since.

ABOUT THE WORK

The *Egyptischer Marsch* ('Egyptian March') is one of Johann Strauss II's most colourful and exotic miniatures, first performed at Pavlovsk, near Saint Petersburg, in 1869. The work reflects the period's fascination with the Orient, heightened that very year by the opening of the Suez Canal, which turned European eyes toward Egypt. Strauss, ever

attuned to the public mood, responded with a march that wraps a brisk military tread in ‘Eastern’ atmosphere, a piece of nineteenth-century musical exoticism that makes no claim to authenticity but delights in evoking a fantasy of distant lands. Its most celebrated feature is a passage where the orchestral players are asked to sing a wordless vocal refrain, a touch of theatrical fun that always charms audiences at the New Year’s Concert. Light, vivid, and faintly comic, the march is a perfect example of Strauss’s gift for turning the day’s headlines into irresistible entertainment.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the ‘exotic’ colouring with which Strauss conjures his imagined Orient: piccolo, percussion, and decorative turns of phrase suggesting distant climes over a steady march rhythm. The highlight comes when the orchestra’s musicians lift their voices in a brief, wordless sung refrain, a delightful surprise that breaks the instrumental texture. The whole piece is brisk, bright, and good-humoured, exotic spice atop a jaunty parade.

Josef Strauss

1827–1870

8 minutes

Friedenspalmen (Palms of Peace), Walzer, Op. 207

THE COMPOSER

Josef Strauss, born in Vienna in 1827, was the middle of the three composer sons of Johann Strauss I and, for many admirers, the most poetically gifted of the dynasty. Trained as an engineer, he designed machines (among them a horse-drawn street-sweeping vehicle) and published mathematical textbooks, and he was reluctantly drawn into the family business in 1853, when serious illness kept his brother Johann II from conducting. Sensitive and introspective by temperament, Josef brought a refinement and harmonic subtlety to the Viennese dance that set his music slightly apart: his brother Johann is said to have called him ‘the more gifted of us two.’ His finest waltzes, such as *Sphärenklänge* (‘Music of the Spheres’) and *Dorfschwalben aus Österreich* (‘Village Swallows from Austria’), are prized for their melancholy beauty and delicate orchestration. He composed nearly three hundred works in a short career, collapsing while conducting in Warsaw and dying in 1870 at only forty-two. His early death robbed Viennese music of its most lyrical voice.

ABOUT THE WORK

Friedenspalmen (‘Palms of Peace’) is a concert waltz by Josef Strauss, the most poetic of the three brothers, and its title, the palm branch as an emblem of peace, sets a gentle, conciliatory tone. It belongs to the rich body of waltzes in which Josef brought his characteristic refine-

ment and emotional depth to the Viennese dance. Where his brother Johann's waltzes tend to dazzle, Josef's often probe a more inward, sometimes melancholy world, achieved through subtle harmonies and an unusually delicate sense of orchestral colour. Friedenspalmen shows these qualities in abundance, its peaceful title matched by music of tenderness and grace. Less frequently heard than the great Strauss waltzes, it rewards attention as a fine example of the lyrical gift that led many to regard Josef as the most musically subtle of the family. Placed at the end of the printed programme, it deepens the morning's tribute to the quieter genius among the Strauss brothers.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the gentle, peaceful mood that pervades the work, from its reflective introduction onward. Josef's waltz melodies sing with a tender, slightly wistful quality, and his orchestration favours warm, transparent textures over brilliance. Note the subtle harmonic shadings that distinguish his style, and the way the coda draws the themes together into a serene, glowing close.

Philipp Fahrbach the Younger

3 minutes

1843–1894

Zirkus, Polka schnell, Op. 110

THE COMPOSER

Philipp Fahrbach the Younger, born in Vienna in 1843, came from a noted Viennese family of dance musicians and bandmasters active in the orbit of the Strauss dynasty. He trained with his father, Philipp Fahrbach the Elder, a well-known conductor and composer in the orbit of the Strausses, and followed him into the profession, composing more than five hundred dances and marches in the popular Viennese idiom. From 1860 he served as a military bandmaster, later guest-conducting across Europe, and he was a familiar figure in Vienna's flourishing dance-music scene of the later nineteenth century, supplying the ballrooms and pleasure gardens with a steady stream of fashionable entertainment. Though overshadowed by his more famous contemporaries, Fahrbach was a skilled craftsman whose lively pieces held their own place in the repertoire. He died in Vienna in 1894. His music is rarely heard today, which makes its appearance at the New Year's Concert, a first for this composer, a genuine act of rediscovery.

ABOUT THE WORK

Zirkus ('Circus') is a fast polka by Philipp Fahrbach the Younger, played at the New Year's Concert for the first time in 2026, as the first, unannounced encore. The piece comes from the broad world of Viennese dance music that flourished around and alongside the

Strauss dynasty, where many capable composers supplied the city's tireless appetite for waltzes and polkas. Its title promises exactly the right spirit for a polka schnell: the bustle, sparkle, and high-spirited fun of the circus ring, all conjured in a brisk and breathless dance. As an encore, it lands at the point in the programme where the mood turns most exuberant, and its novelty adds an extra frisson of delight. Reviving a forgotten piece like this is part of the New Year's Concert's quiet mission to refresh and expand its beloved repertoire.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

This is a polka schnell, so expect speed and sparkle. Listen for the circus atmosphere Fahrbach paints: perky woodwind figures, bright brass fanfares, and a sense of acrobatic bustle, perhaps even a hint of fairground colour. The dance races along with the usual contrasting trio in the middle before the opening material whirls back for a brisk, applause-courting finish. A delightful rediscovery to set the festive mood.

Johann Strauss II

1825–1899

10 minutes

An der schönen blauen Donau (The Blue Danube), Walzer, Op. 314

THE COMPOSER

Johann Strauss II, born in Vienna in 1825, was the most celebrated member of a whole dynasty of dance composers and remains, more than any other figure, the musical embodiment of imperial Vienna. His father, Johann Strauss I, forbade him a musical career, hoping to spare him a precarious life; the boy studied the violin in secret and in 1844 made his debut at the head of his own orchestra. He soon eclipsed his father and his brothers Josef and Eduard, touring Europe, Russia, and the United States, and earning the title 'the Waltz King.' Over a long career he produced some five hundred waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, and marches, raising the Viennese waltz to a peak of melodic richness and orchestral colour, and turning to the operetta stage with *Die Fledermaus* and *Der Zigeunerbaron*. His *An der schönen blauen Donau* (The Blue Danube) is often called Austria's unofficial anthem. He died in 1899, and his music has formed the heart of the Vienna Philharmonic's New Year's Concert ever since.

ABOUT THE WORK

An der schönen blauen Donau ('On the Beautiful Blue Danube') is the most famous waltz ever written and the unofficial anthem of Austria. Johann Strauss II wrote it originally as a choral piece for the Wiener Männergesang-Verein, which first sang it in February 1867, at a low moment for national morale after Austria's defeat by Prussia; in its

later purely orchestral form it became a worldwide sensation and the very symbol of imperial Vienna. By long tradition it follows the first, unannounced encore at the New Year's Concert, and its opening is the most ritualised moment of the morning: the famous shimmering tremolo begins, the audience applauds in recognition, the music stops, and conductor and orchestra wish the world a happy new year before the waltz starts again. Few pieces of music are so universally loved or so bound up with a single occasion.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the magical opening: a soft string tremolo like dawn over the river, from which the famous rising horn theme gently emerges: the most recognisable few bars in all of light music. After the traditional pause and new year greeting, the great chain of waltz melodies unfolds, each more glorious than the last, swung in the inimitable Viennese lilt. Note the long-breathed lyricism and the radiant orchestration, and the way the coda recalls the principal themes before its joyous final flourish.

Johann Strauss I

1804–1849

Radetzky-Marsch, Op. 228

THE COMPOSER

Johann Strauss I, born in Vienna in 1804, was the founder of the Strauss dynasty and, with Joseph Lanner, one of the creators of the classical Viennese waltz. Of humble origins, he learned the violin and played in dance ensembles, joining and then leaving Lanner's orchestra to form his own in 1825. Through tireless touring across Europe, reaching as far as Britain, where he played for Queen Victoria's coronation in 1838, he carried the Viennese waltz to international fame and built a thriving musical business. He opposed his sons' musical ambitions, hoping they would avoid the insecurity of a performer's life, but Johann II defied him and became a rival. The elder Strauss's own fame today rests above all on the *Radetzky-Marsch* of 1848, written in honour of the Austrian field marshal and now the traditional, hand-clapping finale of the New Year's Concert. He died of scarlet fever in Vienna in 1849, leaving a legacy his sons would magnify into a golden age.

ABOUT THE WORK

The *Radetzky-Marsch* is the traditional closing encore of the New Year's Concert and one of the most famous marches ever written. Johann Strauss I composed it in 1848, naming it in honour of the Austrian field marshal Joseph Radetzky after his victory at Custoza. Its trio borrows an old Viennese tune said to have been sung by Radetzky's returning soldiers. The march quickly became a symbol of the

3 minutes

Habsburg empire and remains the elder Strauss's most enduring work. It has closed the New Year's Concert since Josef Krips brought it into the programme in 1946, and it has acquired a unique ritual: from the first famous strain, the audience claps along in time, the conductor turning to direct not the orchestra but the hall, modulating the volume of thousands of clapping hands. It is a moment of pure communal joy that sends the audience, and the worldwide television public, into the new year on a wave of high spirits, the perfect, irresistible conclusion to the morning's festivities.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

You will know the famous main tune at once, and you will be invited to join in, clapping along as the whole hall does by tradition. Listen for the contrast between the brilliant, brassy march strain and the softer, more lyrical central trio, and watch the conductor turn around to lead the audience's clapping, coaxing it louder and softer. It is less a performance than a shared celebration, and it brings the New Year's Concert to its jubilant, hand-clapping close.

FURTHER READING

ACCESSIBLE **The Last Waltz: The Strauss Dynasty and Vienna**

John Suchet, Elliott and Thompson 2017

Suchet tells the story of the Strauss family, Johann I, Johann II, Josef and Eduard, all of whom appear on this New Year's programme.

ACCESSIBLE **A Nervous Splendor: Vienna 1888/1889**

Frederic Morton, Diversion Books 2014

Morton's portrait of Vienna in 1888 and 1889, a city in which Johann Strauss II was a celebrity, gives the backdrop to the waltzes and polkas of this concert.

DEEPER **Johann Strauss and Vienna: Operetta and the Politics of Popular Culture**

Camille Crittenden, Cambridge University Press 2006

A scholarly study of Johann Strauss II's operettas and their Vienna, including *Die Fledermaus*, whose tunes fill the *Fledermaus-Quadrille*.

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