

STRAUSS: DIE FLEDERMAUS

METROPOLITAN OPERA

CONDUCTED BY EUGENE ORMANDY

- 1 Overture - *Orchestra* (8:06)
- 2 Act 1: Do you still belong to me - *Alfred* (1:05)
- 3 I've a sister rarely writes me - *Adèle, Rosalinda* (3:11)
- 4 Let me tell you you're no bargain - *Eisenstein, Blind, Rosalinda* (3:38)
- 5 I've a plan for a man - *Falke, Eisenstein* (3:15)
- 6 The grayling sea - the leaden sky - *Rosalinda, Eisenstein, Adèle* (3:36)
- 7 What a lovely rendezvous! - *Alfred, Rosalinda, Frank* (5:17)
- 8 The scene you see appears to be - *Rosalinda, Alfred, Frank* (4:03)
- 9 Oh come with me and you'll agree - *Frank, Alfred, Rosalinda* (1:54)
- 10 Look me over once (Adèle's Laughing Song) - *Adèle, Chorus* (3:35)
- 11 What a beauty! What a charmer! - *Eisenstein, Rosalinda* (4:08)
- 12 Some days you're lonely (Czardas) - *Rosalinda* (4:11)
- 13 A Bacchanalian revel - *Orlofsky, Eisenstein, Adèle, Chorus* (2:23)
- 14 When we are gone - where do we go? ... Happy Days! - *Eisenstein, Frank, Falke, Rosalinda, Adèle, Ida, Orlofsky, Chorus* (5:48)
- 15 Ballet Music (Roses from the South - Waltz, Op. 388) - *Orchestra* (7:14)
- 16 Let's hope this never halts - *Orlofsky, Chorus, Eisenstein, Frank, Rosalinda, Falke, Adèle, Ida* (4:21)
- 17 Act 3: Olga, dear - *Frank* (4:38)
- 18 I am portraying a farm girl - *Adèle* (4:27)
- 19 The case that you take up - *Rosalind, Alfred, Eisenstein* (6:36)
- 20 Die Fledermaus, Die Fledermaus - *Rosalinda, Adèle, Ida, Frank, Chorus, Eisenstein, Falke, Orlofsky, Alfred* (2:55)

- 1 Act 2: You will find - *Chorus* (1:35)
- 2 I've many peculiarities - *Orlofsky* (2:53)
- 3 It seems we're entertaining an uninvited guest - *Orlofsky, Falke, Chorus, Adèle, Eisenstein* (0:58)

Recorded December 24 and 29, 1950 and January 7, 1951 at the Columbia 30th Street Studios, New York City

First issued on Columbia SL-108

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Ljuba Weltsch

Total duration: 89:47 © 2008 Pristine Audio.

SAKL Pristine Audio, Le Bourg, 24610 St. Méard de Gurçon, France - Tel +33 (0)5 55 82 18 57 - Internet: www.pristineclassical.com

Die Fledermaus

BY JOHANN STRAUSS II



Ljuba Weltsch
Rosalinda

Lily Pons
Adèle

Richard Tucker
Alfred

Charles Kullman
Gabriel von Eisenstein

Martha Lipton
Prinz Orlofsky

John Brownlee
Dr. Falke

Clifford Harvot
Frank

Paul Frank
Dr. Blind

**Metropolitan Opera Chorus
and Orchestra**
conducted by Eugene Ormandy

ENGLISH LYRICS BY HOWARD DIETZ

LIBRETTO BY GARSON KANIN

RECORDED 1950 & 1951

Obert-Thorn

PRISTINE
AUDIO

PRISTINE
AUDIO

PACO 030

STRAUSS: DIE FLEDERMAUS
WELTSCH, PONS, LIPTON, TUCKER, KULLMAN, BROWNLEE, METROPOLITAN OPERA, ORMANDY

PRISTINE
AUDIO

STRAUSS: DIE FLEDERMAUS

METROPOLITAN OPERA, 1950/1
CONDUCTED BY EUGENE ORMANDY

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

PACO 030

STRAUSS: DIE FLEDERMAUS
WELTSCH, PONS, LIPTON, TUCKER, KULLMAN, BROWNLEE, METROPOLITAN OPERA, ORMANDY

PACO 030

PRISTINE
AUDIO

One of the new productions planned by Rudolf Bing for his first season as general manager of the Metropolitan Opera (1949-50) was an all-star, Broadway-style revival, in English, of *Die Fledermaus*. Garson Kanin (the playwright of *Born Yesterday* and screenwriter of *Adam's Rib*) was asked to provide a new book and direct, while Howard Dietz (whose musical theater collaborations with composer Arthur Schwartz included *Dancing in the Dark* and *You and the Night and the Music*) would furnish the lyrics. Veteran French coloratura Lily Pons was initially discussed for the part of Adele, and Fritz Reiner was engaged to conduct. The whole production was to be recorded by Columbia Records as part of their ongoing series of complete operas featuring Met personnel.

From early on, however, the original plans began to unravel. Reiner feuded with Kanin over some of the latter's staging ideas, such as having the conductor face the audience during the overture, and having the chorus lying supine during the "Duidu" portion toward the end of the second act where they would be out of the conductor's sightline. More significantly, and unbeknownst to the Met management, Reiner had recently switched allegiance from Columbia to its rival RCA Victor, which was planning its own *Fledermaus* highlights album using Met stars under contract to them, to be conducted by Reiner (forthcoming from Pristine Audio).

After learning of this, Bing maneuvered to replace Reiner with Eugene Ormandy, the Philadelphia Orchestra music director who was a Columbia artist, but who had had limited experience as an opera conductor. (His continuing symphonic commitments would cause one Saturday afternoon *Fledermaus* broadcast to be completed by another conductor, as Ormandy had to leave early in order to lead a concert that evening in Philadelphia!) Reiner, furious when he heard he had been replaced, happened upon Ormandy in the office of the Met's musical administrator, and said with his typical dryness, "I hear that you are going to conduct *Fledermaus*. Do you know the piece?"

Meanwhile, the rest of the cast took shape. Ljuba Welitsch, the "Bulgarian bombshell" who had made such a striking impression as *Salome* under Reiner during the Met's previous season, would sing *Rosalinda*. Wagnerian tenor Set Svanholm was an unexpected choice as her husband, Eisenstein. Although Pons had learned the role of Adele, she would sing it only on the Columbia recording. Patrice Munsel was the Adele for the premiere, and would go on to record the role for RCA, as would the Orlofsky, Rise Stevens. John Brownlee, famed for his Mozart interpretations at Glyndebourne in the 1930s, would sing Falke; and the increasingly busy Met "house tenor," Richard Tucker, would display a hitherto unknown gift for comedy as Alfred. The production opened on December 20, 1950, and the recording was begun four days later.

For his part, Dietz intended his new lyrics not to be a mere translation of the original version. In addition to the slangy Americanisms he added ("If you wangle/Every angle/You can get yourself a spangle," sings Adele in her opening aria), he used the music as a springboard for sentiments that were sometimes quite different from the original intentions of Haffner and Genée. In the opening of the second act, the chorus addresses would-be librettists in the audience, advising them not to write a ball scene into their plays; and later on, "Herr Chevalier" becomes a drunken speculation on the afterlife ("When we are gone, where do we go? ..Below, below, below.")

The common criticism of this recording has been that it was not echt Wienerisch enough. (As Alan Blyth wrote in *Opera on Record*, "the cast, Welitsch apart, are oceans away from the idiom of the piece.") But that rather misses the point. It was never intended to be simply a production of Strauss' beloved operetta in translation, but rather an opportunity to hear some wonderful singers having a great time. And through this recording, which has not been available since the LP era, we can share it with them.

Notes by Mark Obert-Thorn

FULL NOTES ON THIS RECORDING CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM