

# Hans Pitzner Overtures

**Hans Erich Pitzner** (5 May 1869 – 22 May 1949) was a German composer and self-described anti-modernist. His best known work is the post-Romantic opera *Palatina*, loosely based on the life of the great sixteenth-century composer Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina.

Pitzner was born in Moscow, Russia, where his father played violin in a theater orchestra. The family returned to his father's native Frankfurt in 1872, when Pitzner was two years old, and he always considered Frankfurt his home town. He received early instruction in violin from his father, and his earliest compositions were composed at age 11. In 1884, he wrote his first songs. From 1886 to 1890 he studied composition with Max Knorr and piano with James Kuyert at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt. (He later married Knorr's daughter Mimi Knorr, a grand-daughter of Ferdinand Hiller, after she had rejected the advances of Percy Grainger.) He taught piano and theory at the Koblenz Conservatory from 1892 to 1895. In 1894 he was appointed conductor at the Stadttheater in Mainz where he worked for a few months. These were all low-paying jobs, and Pitzner was working as Erster (First) Kapellmeister with the Berlin Theater des Westens when he was appointed to a modestly prestigious post of opera director and head of the conservatory in Strassburg (Strasbourg) in 1908, when Pitzner was almost forty.

In Strassburg, Pitzner finally had some professional stability, and it was there he gained significant power to direct his own operas. He viewed control over the stage direction to be his particular domain, and this view was to cause him particular difficulty for the rest of his career. The central event of Pitzner's life was the annexation of Imperial Alsace - and with it Strassburg - by France in the aftermath of World War I. Pitzner lost his livelihood and was left destitute at age 39. This hardened several difficult traits in Pitzner's personality: an elitism believing he was entitled to sinecures for his contributions to German art and for the hard work of his youth; notorious social awkwardness and a lack of tact; a sincere belief that his music was under-recognized and under-appreciated with a tendency for his sympathizers to form cults around him; a patronizing style with his publishers; and a feeling that he had been personally slighted by Germany's enemies. His bitterness and cultural pessimism deepened in the 1920s with the death of his wife in 1926 and the maimings of his older son Paul, who was committed to institutionalized medical care.

*From Wikipedia biography of Pitzner - reproduced in full on our website*

### Producer's Note

Previous releases devoted to composer/conductor Hans Pitzner have focused on his recordings of Beethoven and Schumann symphonies, as well as those of his own compositions. This release brings together (for the first time, I believe) his complete commercially-issued electrical recordings of works by other composers – mainly overtures, and in one case a waltz.

The sources for the transfers were French Polydor pressings of the two Mozart overtures, the Osborn Overture and part of the Haberdash Overture. The rest of the Haberdash came from a British Decca pressing, and the remaining items came from German Polydor or Gramophon discs. The Freischütz and Preciosa Overtures were recorded using Brunswick's "light-ray" process. Notorious for the distortion it produced during loud passages, it was quickly abandoned by Polydor.

Mark Ober-Thorn

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# Pitzner

conducts

## Overtures

Mozart

Weber

Mendelssohn

Lortzing

Lanner

Berlin Philharmonic and  
State Opera Orchestras

Studio recordings 1927-1933

 **Mark Ober-Thorn**

## Pfitzner Overtures

- 1 **MOZART** *Le nozze di Figaro – Overture* (4:10)  
Matrix no.: 255 BS II  
First issued on Grammophon/Polydor 27066
- 2 **MOZART** *Così fan tutte – Overture* (4:38)  
Matrix no.: 256 BS II  
First issued on Grammophon/Polydor 27066
- 3 **WEBER** *Der Freischütz – Overture* (9:39)  
Matrix nos.: 320 ½ bi, 321 bi and 322 bi  
First issued on Grammophon/Polydor 66545/6
- 4 **WEBER** *Preciosa – Overture* (7:28)  
Matrix no.: 323 bi and 324 bi  
First issued on Grammophon/Polydor 66544
- 5 **WEBER** *Oberon – Overture* (8:08)  
Matrix no.: 917 bm and 918 bm  
First issued on Grammophon/Polydor 95091
- 6 **WEBER** *Jubel Overture* (8:15)  
Matrix no.: 921 ½ bm and 922 bm  
First issued on Grammophon/Polydor 19858
- 7 **MEYERBEER** *Hebrides Overture (Fingal's Cave)* (8:39)  
Matrix no.: 919 bm and 929 BI I  
First issued on Grammophon/Polydor 95372
- 8 **LORTZING** *Zar und Zimmermann – Overture* (6:31)  
Matrix no.: 1627 RM I and 1628 RM I  
First issued on Grammophon/Polydor 27069
- 9 **LANNER** *Pestherwalzer, Op. 93* (6:33)  
Matrix no.: 6294 ½ BD 3 and 6296 ½ BD 3  
First issued on Grammophon/Polydor 10133

**Berlin State Opera Orchestra** Hans Pfitzner (1-4, 8, 9)  
**Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra** Hans Pfitzner (5-7)

Producer and Audio Restoration  
Engineer **Mark Obert-Thorn**

Cover artwork based on a photograph  
of Hans Pfitzner by **Wanda von  
Debschitz-Kunowski**, ca 1910

Special thanks to **Richard Kaplan** for  
providing source material

### Recording dates

1927 (3, 4)  
1928 (5, 6, 7)  
1929 (1, 2, 7, 8)  
1933 (9)

All recordings made in **Berlin**

Total duration: **64:01**

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