

Viennese Nights

Allentown Symphony celebrates Valentine's Day with a night of Old Vienna

by Diane Wittry

Many people have watched the famous Vienna Philharmonic over the years performing their New Year's Eve program, or the violinist Andre Rieu and his orchestra, with his elaborate Viennese inspired concerts.

Programs of Viennese music featuring composers from Vienna, Austria, have become very popular and are often enhanced by a chorus, or dancers, and a variety of soloists.

Since the February Concert of the Allentown Symphony Orchestra on Saturday, February 11, 7:30pm and Sunday, February 12, 3:00pm, occurs very close to Valentine's Day, I wanted to offer a very special program for listeners that features some of this popular Viennese music.

It is a wonderful way to celebrate and enjoy a program of beautiful music with someone you love.

When building a program such as this, there were so many wonderful works to select from, but I knew that I needed to include some specific pieces, like the Blue Danube Waltz by Johann Strauss, Jr, and of course, the famous Radetsky March. Who would want to miss out on an opportunity for the audience to clap along.

Since the operetta, "Die Fledermaus" by Johann Strauss, Jr. takes place at a large New Year's party in Vienna, I thought it would be great to include it. We will be playing the Overture, and then showcasing Soprano, Jessica Lennick, performing the Laughing Song and the Czardas.

Jessica Lennick is an acclaimed soprano having performed at the Caramoor Festival, NY, and with the Orchestra of St. Luke's. The American Record Guide called her "stratospheric singing...stunning as she tosses off gleaming high E-flats and Fs" and the Baltimore examiner gleamed that she "is a complete package, including a terrific smile and stage presence to go along with her pleasing voice."

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is one of the most famous composers from Vienna and it seem fitting to perform one of his piano concertos on the program. Pianist Katie Mahan will be the soloist for the first movement of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 17.

Praised as "one of the most outstanding talents coming up today," Katie Mahan is "capturing the attention of audiences throughout the world for her innovative musical personality, poetic

interpretations, and graceful, charming stage presence." She has recently performed with the Prague Philharmonia, the Colorado Symphony, the West Virginia Symphony, the Colorado Springs Philharmonic, the Boulder Philharmonic, the Vancouver Metropolitan Orchestra, and the Wiener Residenz Orchestra, among others.

Ballet Dancers from the Ballet Guild of the Lehigh Valley will dance to the Ballet Music from Rosemunde by Franz Schubert and Waltz dancers will appear in the second half of the program. And other pieces like, "Morning Noon and Night in Vienna," by Franz von Suppe, and the "Merry Widow Waltz," by Franz Lehar, are full of wonderful melodies that almost entice the audience to sing along.

Closing the concert, we will feature the Bel Canto Children's Chorus of the Bach Choir of Bethlehem. This group, comprised of about 40 young singers will warm your hearts as they perform the "Tristch-Trastsch Polka" (Chit-chat), and the "Sängerlust Polka" (the Joy of Singing), both composed by Johann Strauss, Jr.

These Viennese Nights concerts with the Allentown Symphony have something for everyone. There will be wonderful music by popular Viennese composers, and lots of variety to the program. So this year, you can celebrate Valentine's Day in Old Vienna.