

JOHANN STRAUSS THE YOUNGER

ON THE WAY TO THE TOP

At the age of 45 Johann Strauss the Elder fell ill with scarlet fever. He had caught it from one of his and Emilie Trampusch's children and died after a few days on 25 September 1849 in their home. After the blessing in St. Stephen's Cathedral on 27 September he was buried in the Döbling Cemetery next to his friend Josef Lanner. It is not known what happened to Emilie: all traces of her were lost within ten years of Johann's death.

After his father died young Strauss took over his orchestra. As the eldest son he now felt that it was his duty to take on the role of head of the family, and that included supporting his mother and younger brothers and sisters. Now no longer under competitive pressure from his father, he began to advance his career.

Just like his father though, he found himself forced to play in more than one place each night. On top of that were the trying rehearsals, organisational work and contract negotiations. He composed tirelessly and made exhausting concert tours throughout Europe. His generally nervous disposition and the continuous excessive demands made on him resulted in long periods of ill health.

A medallion with a portrait of Johann Strauss the Elder on his gravestone in the Central Cemetery.





The young Johann took on the musical legacy of his father and responsibility for the family. The public was won over completely after a brief period of scepticism, and in 1852 the press spoke with one voice: "It has turned out beyond any doubt that Strauss the Younger is the complete replacement for his father."

JETTY, HIS FIRST WIFE

In the summer of 1862, Johann, who had only just arrived in Russia, had himself freed from the contractual obligations on the basis of an unspecified “feverish” illness. When his brother arrived to take his place, he was, however, in the best of health. Johann travelled hastily back to Vienna and, without announcing the fact, married the opera singer Henriette Chalupetzky, better known under her stage name Jetty Treffz. They had decided it would be better to face the expected gossip with the knot tied.

Jetty was a self-confident, temperamental and spirited woman. Through her international career as a singer she had made her own money at an early age. She could thus afford to have seven children, without ever having married. She had lived with Baron Moritz Todesco for eighteen years and had been accepted in the Viennese Society despite the absence of a marriage certificate. She left the baron to marry Johann Strauss.



It was a very happy marriage. In Jetty Johann had found a strong woman he could rely on. In her striving to encourage him, she kept anything unpleasant and mundane away from him. With female intuition, and a lot of energy and devotion, she organised his private life and managed his career. Her kindness quickly made her popular within the family, particularly as she avoided conflicts with Johann’s mother and supported Johann’s confidence in himself as an artist.



Jetty's real name was Henriette Chalupetzky. She took the abbreviation of her first name and her mother's maiden name, Treffz, as her stage name, and made an international career as an opera singer.



An earring that once belonged to Jetty Treffz.

STRAUSS AND THE OPERETTA

Soon after they were married, Jetty started trying to get Johann to write operettas. Jacques Offenbach had been having great success in this particular music genre since the 1850s. He told Strauss he should compose operettas: “You have what it takes!”

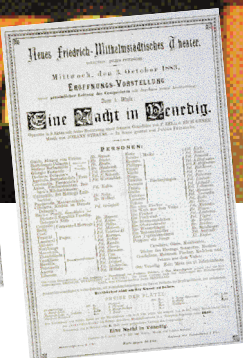
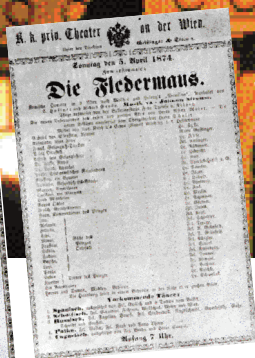
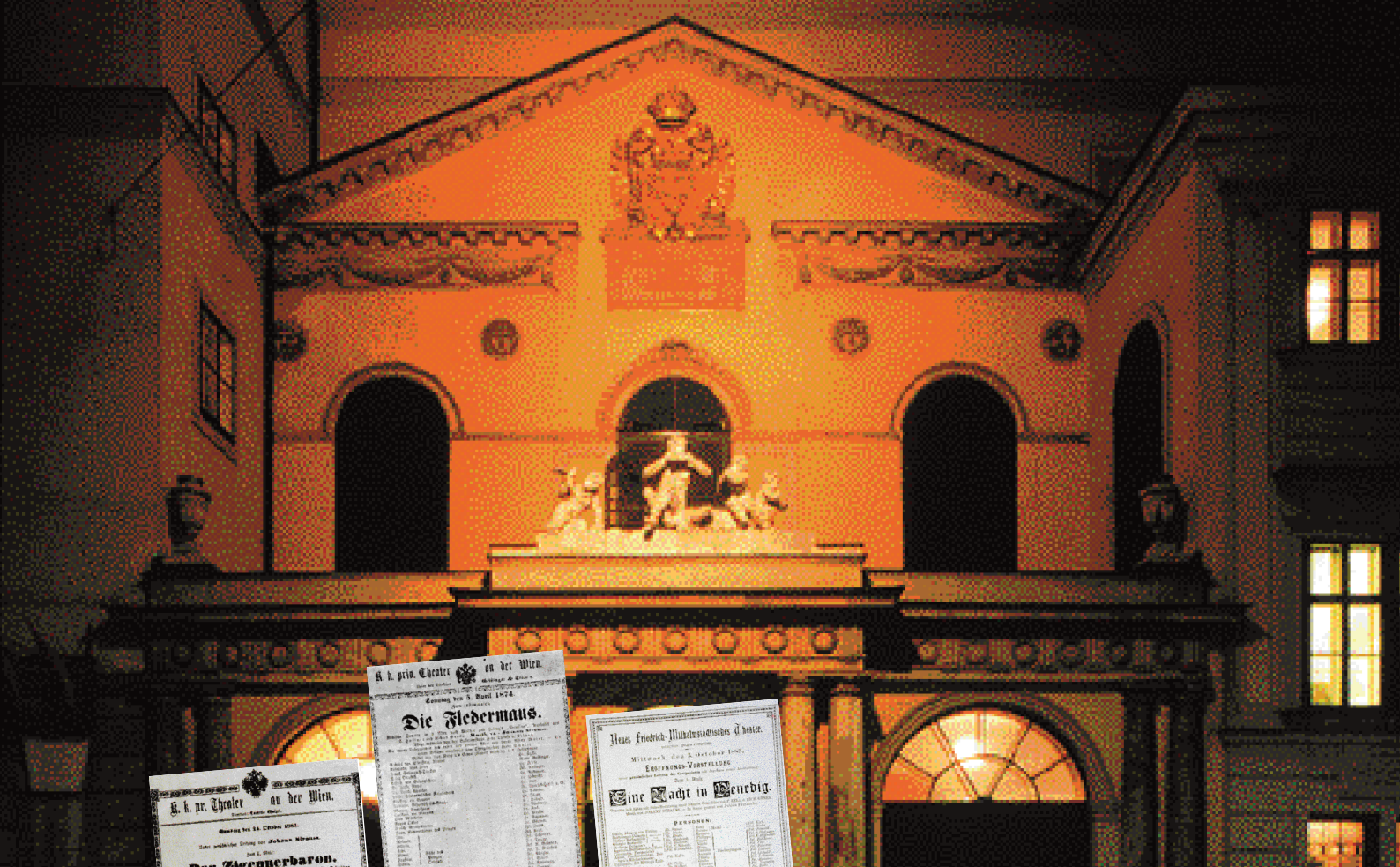
But Strauss hesitated, unsure of his talent for this type of composition. Jetty did not stop urging, and eventually won: 1871 saw the première of his first operetta “Indigo and the 40 thieves” in the Theater an der Wien (*). The audience in the sold out theatre was delighted. The press was divided – and today the piece is almost forgotten. Johann had, however, discovered and learned to love new territory and left posterity several more operettas.

“Die Fledermaus” has come to be the best known and most popular of his operettas all over the world. The première was in 1874 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Johann’s first public performance and took place in the Theater an der Wien. “Happy is he who forgets what cannot be changed”, one line from the text of “Fledermaus”, soon became a Viennese saying.

“A Night in Venice” (1883) and “The Gypsy Baron”, which had its first night in 1885 on the eve of his 60th birthday, are two of the other still popular and well known operettas Strauss wrote.

The Volksoper () is where
operetta is staged in Vienna today.*





Today the Theater an der Wien is one of the major stages for musicals in the city. This is a picture of what is called “the Papageno entrance”, one of the theatre’s side doors.

Johann Strauss in front of the Theater an der Wien, where the first nights of most of his operettas took place. One of the few exceptions was “A Night in Venice”. He refused to have the première of this piece held in the Theater an der Wien because his divorced second wife Lili and her new love Franz Steiner worked there.

