

# *A Trip to Africa:*

A Comic Opera  
by Franz von Suppé



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Compiled and Researched by

Dario Salvi and Hannah Salvi

Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing



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*Dario:*  
*To my dad, Bepi,*  
*who I know would have been*  
*proud of me for contributing to this research.*  
*Thank you for sitting me down as a toddler in front of the TV*  
*to watch the New Year's Concert from Vienna.*

*Hannah:*  
*To all those who have encouraged me,*  
*both musically and in life, to pursue my goals;*  
*to my family; and especially to my husband,*  
*whose passion for music inspires me every day.*

## DISCLAIMER

This document has been constructed for historical reference, and therefore the lyrics and stage directions have been printed as per the original libretto. Some derogatory references have been omitted so that the operetta may be performed publically, however some content may still be seen as offensive. It is important to note that the operetta is intended as light-entertainment, and therefore any such instances are merely satirical humour of the time, and are not the views of the editors or publisher.

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## FOREWORD

“Vienna—17<sup>th</sup> March 1883. In the Theater an der Wien the 22<sup>nd</sup> operetta by Franz von Suppé receives its first performance.” So reads the entry made by the composer in the handwritten list of his works as documented in the Vienna library. It is the last listing of a complete work; later entries only sketch out intentions.

With this first performance, Suppé had returned to the origins of his life as a composer of operettas. Twenty three years earlier, by staging the first performance of his one-act operetta *Das Pensionat*, he had helped found the Wiener Operette as a new artistic genre in its own right, trying to get away from the influence of Offenbach. Several attempts by various composers had preceded this attempt but it was Suppé who took the decisive steps. The success of the amusing one-act show was such that the Viennese audience showed more interest in it than in the new compositions of the internationally renowned Johann Strauss Jr., the ‘Waltz King’, which he had brought back from his guest performance in Pavlovsk, St. Petersburg.

In 1862, when it became clear that the directorship of Alois Pokorny was coming to an end due to his inability to pay the salaries, Suppé left the Theater an der Wien where he had both worked and resided, and, under the protection of the up and coming operetta theatre director Karl Treumann, he moved first to the Theatre on the Franz-Josef-Kai and later to the more traditional Carltheater in the Praterstraße.

Neither building exists today; the Kai-Theater burned down in 1863 and the Carltheater was bombed in 1944 and pulled down in 1951.

The Carltheater established Franz von Suppé as the most important composer of operettas beside Johann Strauss Jr. It was here that the first performances of his three successes *Fatinitza*, *Boccaccio* and *Donna Juanita* took place. As in the Theater an der Wien, Suppé took up lodgings on the fourth floor of the theatre until 1882.

In 1882 Franz von Suppé ended his contract with the Carltheater, leaving himself free to choose any venue for his first performances. Once again, with the performance of *Die Afrikareise*, the Theater an der Wien brought him success as it had done 23 years previously; there had been suggestions after his last creation for the Carltheater, the operetta *Herzblättchen*, that he had lost his creative drive.

This idea was not entirely unwarranted: the average lifespan in Vienna in the 1880s was around 60 years and Suppé, at 63, was considered to be an old man.

But his creative powers had not waned. In *Herzblättchen*, the confused libretto of Carl Albert Tetzlaff, a renowned director but amateur librettist, did not inspire Suppé greatly. He did not even consider the work worthy of a proper overture and took an overture from one of his one-act operettas, *Das Corps der Rache*, which 19 years earlier had flopped and sank out of sight after only 11 performances within three weeks.

This situation was to change significantly in the case of *Die Afrikareise* because the old master and expert among the Viennese librettists, Richard Genée, appeared on the scene once again. In collaboration with F. Zell he had prepared the ground for Suppé's greatest operetta successes.

To regard Genée only as a librettist is not to do him justice: he was also a very talented composer, valued even by Johann Strauss Jr. on account of his musical gifts; furthermore he was sensitive to the literary trends of his time and to the public's expectations.

For *Die Afrikareise* however, it was not Zell, the genial collaborator and inventor of stories, who helped Genée, but Moritz West, alias Dr. Moritz Nitzelberger. He was a school and university friend of the composer Carl Zeller and by profession the director of the Moravian–Silesian Central Railway. Zell had persuaded and taught him to write librettos.

During the writing of the plot, Genée employed a well tried strategy which he had invented for the Viennese operetta. Whereas Offenbach's Parisian operetta resorted to political parody and provocation by showing up the moral weaknesses of contemporary society, the Viennese operetta, within the confines of the strictly catholic and absolute Habsburg regime, had to dispense with parody and open eroticism.

The Viennese operetta replaced parody with musical sentimentality, enriched with folk music and Bel Canto opera, and the erotic element by introducing trouser roles showing off the legs of the ladies and by setting the scenes in places evocative of erotic sentiments such as Venice or the Middle East.

Whereas in Offenbach, such places served as ciphers for real historical situations, in the Viennese operetta they became codes for sexual innuendo, sometimes bordering on pornography. The names of far-away cities and countries, known only through literature, aroused feelings of longing for remote places and dreams of unsuspected erotic possibilities.

The choice of place for *Die Afrikareise*—Cairo and its surroundings—was indeed influenced by a current political event: the occupation of Egypt

by the English in 1882. The occupation was a reaction to the nationalistic Urabi movement which opposed the international financial control of the country forced upon the Khedives and against the autocratic regime of the Khedives themselves. The movement was put down by British troops under Garnet Joseph Wolseley. This political event was not mentioned in the libretto as such but is an indication of the topicality of the operetta.

That the libretto alone provides the erotic attraction is supported by the fact that the music of *Die Afrikareise* never has recourse to African rhythms and African sounds but stays within the usual spectrum of the Viennese operetta. Suppé never leaves the “sound-world” which he himself, as quasi founder of the Viennese operetta, had created, a “sound-world” which does not go beyond the core countries of the Habsburg monarchy. Whereas the Strauss brothers, for example, were responsive to fresh musical events, such as Richard Wagner, Suppé, who was present at the first *Ring des Nibelungen* in Bayreuth, 1876, on account of his ‘discovery’ of Amalie Materna, who sang Brünnhilde, and heard the master pontificating in the intervals, was quite unaffected by the new musical language which electrified Europe and America.

In Suppé’s *A Trip to Africa* you hear the triangle and tambourine—and the slaves happily indulge in polka dancing.

Suppé also stayed faithful to his musical compositional principles and ended the work, as he did with all his successful oeuvres, with a convincing march in E-major. An instrumental version, again successful, appeared under the title “Over mountains and Valleys”—hardly evocative of Cairo and its surroundings.

In spite of its historical links, *Die Afrikareise* introduced some changes. No longer can we speak about a libretto with a clear plot which evolves step by step. The action develops erratically and jumps from situation to situation as though to represent the fast pace of modern times. The wit has become more scanty too as documented by the use of far-fetched names and certain peculiarities such as dates grown to make you sneeze.

The plundering of literary sources, however, is as alive as ever; this time even ‘borrowings’ from Mozart’s *The Abduction from the Seraglio* are evident. Clearly Suppé still felt the longing to write an opera which he had been wanting to do all his life, with little success. He no longer uses the short, fragmented style; musical numbers, traditionally divided by dialogues, are now combined into larger groupings.

The first performance of *Die Afrikareise* in the Theater an der Wien could rely on an excellent cast: Karl Blasel, Therese Schäfer, Joseph Josephi, Caroline Finaly—all stars of the Viennese operetta. The biggest

name was Alexander Girardi in the role of Miradillo. One could read in the 'Wiener Zeitung' newspaper that he was "greater than the music, the text and everything else". He was to prove the accuracy of this statement in his later career.

The press did not agree in its judgement of this work. The magazine 'Lyra' praised it exceedingly whilst the 'Wiener Zeitung' accused the composer of being trivial. Whatever, *Die Afrikareise* does not deserve to have been forgotten. Perhaps our times, with a more relaxed understanding of what is possible on stage, are better suited to the charm of this story. Certainly, the music of Franz von Suppé more than deserves our appreciation.

HANS DIETER ROSER  
Official biographer of Franz von Suppé  
Vienna, Austria, February 2016

## PREFACE

It all started one autumn afternoon in 2014 when I was looking for some new music to perform with my orchestra; the Imperial Vienna Orchestra—a group of talented musicians based in East Anglia, England, with a passion for Viennese music. Since its formation in 2012, we have brought well-known works as well as rare gems and even world premieres to an ever growing audience.

It was with this in mind that I was browsing the internet to find something typically Viennese, but with something different about it.

I came across a piece called ‘A Trip to Africa Polka’. The title alone resonated with me; a Viennese piece with Oriental themes thrown into it. It made me curious to find out more about it. I started browsing through the orchestral parts I could find—sadly not a full set—and I quickly realised the beauty and originality of the work. This prompted me to create a full orchestral arrangement of the polka from the incomplete set and a piano score I had managed to obtain.

We started performing the polka soon after with the orchestra, and my taste for it kept growing. It really is an amazing piece of music.

Intrigued by this little snippet from the opera, I wanted to find out more about the work from which it was taken. I soon came across the German/Italian vocal score, and, flicking through its pages I decided that I would love to perform this amazing work in its entirety.

I began the painstaking process of sourcing the full orchestral set of the whole opera, however nothing was available anywhere. What next?

All I came across were piano pieces, or vocal and piano pieces, both in German and English, a print of the original German libretto and a reduction of the English libretto.

The titles of these works were as intriguing as the music. They included: ‘Flower Duettino’, ‘Life Oriental, Occidental’, ‘Fanfani March’, ‘Titania Waltz’, ‘The Snuff Song’ and ‘Spring Tide’. I also came across a march called ‘Uber Berg, Uber Tal’, two selections from the operetta for orchestra and some potpourris arranged for piano. The music was unfolding before my eyes.

However something was very wrong. I could not find anything in the German score that even remotely sounded or looked like the ‘Snuff Song’ or ‘Spring Tide’. A name I had never heard before was associated to these works: Adolf Neuendorff. Who was this musician?

Some research taught me that he was a composer himself; a contemporary of Suppé, who exported—or imported since he was living there—to the States many operas from German speaking countries as well as composing original works.

Neuendorff had composed these two works to modify Suppé's original music and libretto in order to suit the American stage. He replaced a song (No.8) and a couplet (No.11) from the original score with his two compositions. I studied the music and the text, and the style was nothing like Suppé's, with the lyrics moving away dramatically from Genée and West's libretto.

I was confronted with yet another obstacle. What should I do with these two pieces? Shall I include them in my work or should I maintain Suppé's original version? The answer was not an immediate one.

After months of research I managed to source all the orchestral parts from an American production. They were hidden in the archives of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Library. I had to get hold of them and see for myself what material was there for me to use and what had to be recreated.

Thanks to the amazing staff at the University, I managed to get hold of all the orchestral parts, some promptbooks, a stage manager's guide and a couple of different scripts for the acted parts in between the songs.

At the same time in Milan I managed to find the Italian copione (script) and in Bologna the Italian libretto. It took almost a year but at last I had all the words in English and Italian and all the lyrics to the songs in German too.

However, problems soon started to arise. First of all, I did not have English text for the two songs Neuendorff had removed from the American production. I had to create English lyrics that followed Suppé's storyline without changing the meaning of the songs themselves. After some months of trial and error, and the precious help of my wife Hannah, I managed to come up with lyrics for those songs which were satisfactory.

After months of waiting, the scanned parts arrived from America. Both the Neuendorff orchestration and Suppé's original songs were included in the parts. Sadly though, all the parts were handwritten. What I had to do next was a mammoth task: digitising all the music into Sibelius—a music engraving program—to check for mistakes in the original parts and to create a full orchestral score that included everything needed for future productions of the opera. The task took months. I first created a vocal score, with piano and all the vocal parts.

Once that was completed, all the orchestral parts were added. I came across so many mistakes that I was amazed they managed to perform the operetta at all using this material—but I guess they did.

The whole score was completed within three or four months. It was time to test some of the music.

I decided on three pieces from the operetta: the ‘Flower Duetto’ (No.9), ‘Terzett’ (No. 15) and the mysterious ‘Couplet’ (No.11).

We performed them with the Imperial Vienna Orchestra in three concerts. The music proved to be amazing, the singing parts wonderfully romantic—and sometimes very funny! —and the melodies very catchy and easy to remember. The story of the opera was unfolding before my eyes and the music was being performed for the first time in a century, and for the first time in English in the UK and Europe. *A Trip to Africa* was starting to come back to life.

I just could not get enough of the music. I had to find any available recordings out there with music from the opera. Apart from the easily accessible ones (‘Titania-Walzer’, ‘Die Afrikareise Polka’, ‘Orientale Polka Mazurka’ and ‘Über Berg, Über Tal Marsch’) I could not find anything else anywhere. I came across a recording of an Overture from *Die Afrikareise*, but it was a puzzling piece of work.

I had managed to get a manuscript of Suppé’s Overture through the Johann Strauss Society of Great Britain, of which I am an Honorary Lifetime Member. However what had been recorded was not what I had in my hands. Luckily the Society sent me another piece called ‘Overture from *Die Afrikareise*’. This one was arranged by the famous German composer Paul Lincke and was the piece I had found a recording of. Now I wanted to hear the Overture. Also, was it a stand-alone piece or was it meant to be performed before the opera, since a Prelude was already part of the score? We will never know this, but future performances should include the Overture as an opening piece. Johann Strauss, Jr.’s *Die Fledermaus* has taught us how an Overture can become a performance-within-a-performance and a stand-alone concert piece in itself.

While researching it I stumbled upon a problem. I had already heard of Lincke’s potpourri Overture, but I was very surprised that I could not come across an Overture written by the ‘King of Overtures’ himself for one of his most successful operas. Thanks to the precious help of John Diamond, chairman of the Johann Strauss Society of Great Britain, I managed to get hold of all Suppé’s handwritten orchestral parts for the Overture, which was not included in any edition of the opera I could find. And what a surprise it was! I studied the score and could recognise all of the melodies included in the work but one; the Andante section in 3/4 had a very similar

feel to the 'Flower Duetto', but with a completely different melody. I was very lucky that recently I had conducted in a concert a song I had arranged for orchestra by Suppé called 'Das Vergissmeinnicht' (The Forget-me-not). This was the melody in the Overture, however it was missing from the operetta itself. I was intrigued and wanted to find out more about this song and its role in the operetta. First of all, the vocal/piano parts of the songs I managed to retrieve from the USA were all dated 1883, the year Suppé composed *A Trip To Africa*. Secondly, the title is the name of a flower, just like a rose is the subject of the 'Flower Duetto'. Thirdly, both songs are in the same time signature— $3/4$ —and in a very similar tempo; one is Andante (66 bpm) and the other is Moderato (70 bpm) and develop in a very similar way. The only difference I could find, apart from the lyrics and melody, was that 'The Forget-me-not' was composed for one singer whereas the Duetto is, of course, for two singers.

I can only speculate that Suppé composed the Overture when 'The Forget-me-not' was still part of the operetta, but for some unknown reason—his own decision, pressure from the producers to include a love duet or other—he substituted it in the final work. This is probably why the work was never staged with the Overture and only with the Prelude. The Overture assumes, in light of all this, an even more interesting connotation.

In my search for recordings from the operetta I came across a live recording of the Prelude, kindly sent to me by Uwe Eisenpreis from the Franz von Suppé website. The recording is very good quality even if the tempo of the performance differs from Suppé's metronome markings. The other recordings I could find were not of actual performances but came from concertina and celestina owners who had rolls from *Die Afrikareise*. I managed to obtain them and I store them dearly in my archive. The sound is really beautiful and the choice of motifs from the opera in each roll is fascinating. They helped me a lot in understanding the real spirit of the music. Even with such a primitive instrument the music does not seem to require more; it works perfectly already. This told me a lot about the quality of the composition—simple and catchy but yet very effective and beautifully put together.

The music was now complete, all the lyrics were in place, all the corrections were made and the opera was ready to be performed in its musical form. What we were missing was a plot that made full sense, since the songs from the score were missing all the links between them. Hannah and I managed to extract a plot that made sense from the promptbooks, stage manager's guide and script from the American version of the opera.

The big task was now to put it all together and create a storyline that would allow the work to make sense from the raising of the curtain after the Prelude to the closing of the same after the Finale of Act 3.

Hannah undertook the task of compiling the full libretto, a work that took her some months to complete because our sources were sometimes clashing with each other or not making much sense. Using all the available material, we managed to recreate the full storyline—not without some difficulty especially since we came across two different versions of the very last scenes before the very ending. The version we have decided to go for is actually a mix of the two, and forms a better logical conclusion to all the events happening in the last act.

Now that we had what we needed to enable a performance of the whole work in English, I decided it was time for me to concentrate more on everything else that could make this work even more significant in the world of opera.

A meeting with Dr. Robert Ignatius Letellier in his lovely Cambridge home fostered in me the desire to make the libretto more complete by adding a full transcription of the original German libretto as well as a full transcription of the Italian libretto and script (copione) a very rare finding in itself.

On top of that I researched every newspaper article in the world press that talked about the performances of the original runs of the opera in Austria, Germany, Sweden, Slovenia, Italy and the U.S.A. I have decided to include some of them in this book to give the reader an idea of how the opera was received by the public in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The last recorded performance was in Parma, Italy, in 1922.

Next I wanted to give a face and a setting to the opera. I needed photos or drawings from the historical productions, which proved to be a very difficult task. I came across drawings of actors that were at some point involved in *A Trip to Africa*, but none of them were in costume, until I came across a colour postcard from a Viennese production depicting Alexander Girardi in full costume as Miradillo. Now I had a name and a starting point. Miradillo looked interesting but nothing exceptional or exotic as I had expected.

Further research on Alexander Girardi allowed me to find an antique book called *Girardi Album*, a pictorial collection of most of the roles Girardi covered in his extensive career. Sure enough a photo of the tenor in Miradillo's costume was inside the book. I had found further material, but I needed more.

After weeks of thorough research on the Internet, I came across eight trade cards from a production of the operetta which started on 12<sup>th</sup> May

1884 at Haverly's Theatre in Philadelphia, U.S.A. I was overwhelmed by this finding. Almost all of the characters were featured on the cards and they were in full colour. Now I knew what the characters looked like in the original run of the opera. Everything was starting to come together. During the same week I also managed to come across two colour marquee posters from the very same production. They were massive in size and in amazing quality for their age. Scenes taken from the opera were drawn in detail on them, as well as characters and scenes. I had everything I needed visually apart from some photos that could show me the actual stage, props and backdrops.

I did not have to wait too long. I managed to find a book on the history of the Bijou Theatre in New York, which contained photos of the three acts. There were no characters on stage but I could see the square outside the Hotel Pharone for Act 1, Fanfani's villa by the Nile with the barge floating upstage for Act 2 and the tents and the desert for Act 3. I had managed, with passion and will-power to collect most of material available in the world about *A Trip to Africa*. I did not want to keep it all to myself; I wanted to share it with all the opera and theatre lovers in the world. I wanted it published and to be made available to everyone.

That's why, alongside the musical side of it, I have worked hard, and, with the help of amazing music enthusiasts from all over the world and the generosity of archives and libraries, I have been able to create what I believe to be the most extensive collection of material in the world on *A Trip to Africa*, which is now available for everyone to see and use.

The title of the operetta itself is *Die Afrikareise* in its German version, *Un Viaggio in Africa* and *Voyage en Afrique* in the Italian and French translation respectively. The problem with the English title is the slight difference of meaning that we can get if we choose one or the other between the two available versions: *Journey through Africa* or *A Trip to Africa*. As one can see the former implies some sort of exploring or just travelling within or through Africa whereas the latter involves more going to, a trip to, Africa from somewhere else—in this case Italy. The plot reveals that the latter one is the more accurate translation and the one I have decided to adopt.

Working on this gigantic project has enriched me as a musician and researcher. I have come into contact with incredible people from the world of opera and Viennese music. I have learnt to love, appreciate and promote operetta. I have become involved in the wonderful music of Suppé, the fantastic libretto of West and Genée, two of the great librettists of Viennese operettas. Nowadays Genée is surely better known for his work as a lyricist and sadly not remembered for his musical talent. Interestingly

his musical output is at par with his literary one. He is the composer of amazing operettas and instrumental works as well as of great and incredibly witty choral music, including the world famous ‘Insalata Italiana’ (Italian Salad). To better understand one of the men behind *A Trip to Africa* I had to learn about and understand his music too. I have therefore been lucky enough to conduct an orchestra and singers in some excerpts from his most famous operetta, *Nanon*. ‘Anna’s Song’ and the ‘Duet’ from the operetta, which I arranged, are amazing pieces of classical music; Viennese to the core with an eye to the masters and to comic theatre. Genée is surely an interesting and intelligent composer and *Nanon* is a masterpiece of the genre. I am now working on resurrecting the Overture from it as well as making more of his music available for orchestras to perform e.g. *Nisida*, *Freund Felix* and hopefully more.

The next step is to perform the opera. At the time of writing, a venue has already been booked; the Maddermarket Theatre in Norwich, England, one of the most beautiful cities in Britain and in its most historic theatre. The date is set for 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2016; auditions have already taken place and a cast of singers has been selected.

Kevin Bell Music, a music publishing company, is now working on the score and parts ready for our performance in December and for public use thereafter.

We are sourcing costumes for the performance from all over the world. The plan is to stage it as a concert performance in costume, with singers, choir and orchestra on stage and a narrator to describe the acted parts. We are also hoping to organise a week-long run of performances in the coming year to allow more people to attend such an historical event.

*A Trip to Africa* has been for me “A Trip through the world of Operetta”. A battle against time as the material and recorded memories became harder to find; a journey of self-discovery, of my surprisingly strong will power, which I knew nothing of before-hand! It has been a fantastic trip full of melodies, colours, little things that have immense value, large things that touch many; it has been a spiritual meeting with the composer, the librettists, the translators and the illustrators, who are far from being long-forgotten, and I feel are all sitting here next to me while I am working on this book, and will be on stage with me when I am conducting their creation. I hope that reading this collection of words will bring you immense joy and trigger in you a desire to dig deeper into the world of operetta; into the world of the classical music that was not the output of those few 10% of composers that make up 90% of the orchestral repertoire nowadays. There is more to classical music than the masters.

This is more than *A Trip to Africa*; let me take you on a Trip of Discovery to a new musical world.

DARIO SALVI  
Norwich, England, January 2016

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## INTRODUCTION

Franz von Suppé, the originator of the Viennese operetta, was baptized Francesco Ezechiele Ermenegildo Cavaliere Suppé-Demelli. He was born on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1819, a contemporary of Offenbach, in Spalato (Split) in the southern part of the Habsburg Monarchy, the son of an Austrian civil servant of Italian-Belgian parentage. His mother, Katharina Landovsky, came of Bohemian-Polish stock. Suppé was in fact related to the great Gaetano Donizetti of Bergamo, and a desire to compose showed itself early in Francesco Suppé-Demelli. As a boy, before beginning a cursory study of law, Suppé was taken to Vienna without knowing a word of German.

Vienna, before the 1848 Revolution, showed many Italian characteristics: the small, single-storey houses, the many palaces of the nobility and, in particular, the musical theater, the 'Royal Opera'. The Viennese, like the Italians, were keen theater-goers. Suppé became the pupil of the Viennese master of counterpoint Simon Sechter, but professionally soon worked as a kind of musical factotum for the Vienna stages. As conductor at the Theater an der Wien, as well as at the Theater in der Leopoldstadt, Suppé collaborated with the directors Pokorny and Treumann in providing incidental music for the various plays—most memorably for *Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna*, 1844, and *Poet and Peasant*, 1845—farces and satires that were so popular with the Viennese public. During the 1850s the vogue for Offenbach's music spread out from Paris. Vienna was enthralled. Suppé decided to try to emulate something of his German-born French contemporary. In 1860 he celebrated his debut with a modest little operetta, *Das Pensionat*, and in 1865 he had his first truly international hit with the burlesque operetta *Die schöne Galathee* (The Beautiful Galatea) a Greek travesty in the manner of Offenbach. The next two decades saw Suppé at the height of his Viennese and international popularity as a composer of musical comedy, with works like *Fatinitza* (1876), *Boccaccio* (1879), *Donna Juanita* (1880) and *Die Afrikareise* (1883).

Suppé died in his adopted city on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1895. He survived Offenbach by 14 years, and left a legacy at least as important: 31 operettas and 180 vaudevilles, as well as more serious compositions like a Mass, a symphony, and many chamber works and string quartets. The operettas—the first actual products of the new genre in the Imperial city—reflected varying degrees of success. The librettos of some were reworked often.

Suppé was a master of three styles; the Italian, the French and the German. He knew how to blend them irresistibly, assisted in the instrumentation by his rich experience as a theatre orchestra conductor, and with a sure symphonic technique deriving from his classical training. His overtures were a major feature of his stage work, some attaining immense popularity, and securing him an enduring fame in the concert hall. Many of his operettas from the 1870s, on the other hand, have short preludes or instrumental introductions, very much in the mode of Offenbach, like *Der Teufel auf Erden*, *Fatinitza*, *Donna Juanita*, *Die Afrikareise*, *Des Matrosen Heimkehr* and *Die Jagd nach dem Glück*.

Suppé's music moves briskly; it is sparse in diction, free of cloying sentimentality, and effervescent in its crisp intensity. It mediates as it were between Vienna, the French *opéra-comique* and the Italian *opera buffa*. The melodious charm of his overtures, their artistic instrumentation—often featuring extended solos—the rhythmic verve and their masterful vocal composition, have ensured their survival for more than a century. *Poet and Peasant* and *Light Cavalry* are among the most famous overtures ever written.

Suppé's work inevitably reflects the changing fortunes of his adopted home of the city of Vienna, and by implication the social effects of the great historical events of the age. Vienna was radically affected by the events of 1848, the Year of Revolutions, which saw upheavals in Prague, Vienna and Budapest. The restoration of the Monarchy by force of arms and the imposition of the autocracy during the 1850s saw the end of the Biedermeier Period, and an intensification of the desire for national expression on the part of the member nations of the Habsburg Empire; this yearning is expressed in the Hungarian music of *Die leichte Kavallerie*, 1866. These aspirations found greater expression after the great confrontation with Prussia during the 1860s. Bismarck launched successful wars of aggression against Denmark (1864), Austria (1866) and France (1870), with momentous consequences. In Austria the Habsburg defeat at Königsgrätz led to the *Ausgleich*—or political compromise with Hungary—resulting in the establishment of the Dual Monarchy.

The city of Vienna in the meantime was caught up in the extraordinary physical transformation following the demolition of the walls of the old city (1857), and the huge building projects that followed this—with immense aesthetic and cultural implications for the city which now entered a period of tremendous efflorescence that would have enduring influence on the whole of modern European culture.

The new opera house became symbolic of this resurgence of creativity, which expressed itself musically not only in the Second Viennese School

of Brahms, Bruckner, Wolf and Mahler, but also in the emergence of the Golden Age of Viennese Operetta, distilled for all time in *Die Fledermaus* (1874) of Johann Strauss the Younger. Suppé's *Boccaccio* was his lasting contribution to this refashioning of operetta into a melodically more lyrical and formally more developed expression of the typical satirical and parodistic concerns of the genre established by Offenbach.

And it was indeed Offenbach who would help to channel other new elements of the age into the operetta ethos. The defeat of France in 1870 and the Paris Commune of 1871 had changed the country politically and culturally. France, now the home of radical scientific discovery—like those of Louis Pasteur and Marie Curie—and the new school of Impressionism, turned to a more overt form of political self-expression in the growing international trend to colonial expansion. In the rush for an empire, Britain, France and Germany especially would be caught up in a race for global influence and dominance. Already Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign (1798) and the Greek War of Independence (1821-30) had marked the growing decline of the Ottoman Empire. The Algerian adventure of 1835-48 had seen France expand its influence aggressively into Africa, with the colonization of Algeria. In the 1850s a new fashion for Orientalism had found growing musical expression in the works of Félicien David (*Le Désert*, 1844), and would soon find significant operatic expression in Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs des Perles* (1863), Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* (1865) and Delibes's *Lakmé* (1883). But these trends were now intensified by the hugely popular and influential novels of Jules Verne (1828-1905), whose fictional explorations of space, the oceans, the subterranean and foreign land set a mark on the age that culminated in *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873). Practically the travel industry had already been initiated by the enterprising Thomas Cook who expanded his English excursion in 1841 into tours to Europe in 1855, and to the United States in 1865 with scientific discovery, geographical exploration, political imperialism, and a new interest in recreational travel, Offenbach, always alert to these social manifestations, adapted several of Verne's novels for the operetta stage; *Le Voyage dans la Lune* in 1875, and *Le Docteur Ox* in 1877. The success of this trend had its effects on the Viennese theatre too.

Suppé, always alert to the trends set in Paris, the home of operetta, produced several works (revues, or *Ausstattungsstücke*) on Jules Verne's novels: *Die Reise um die Erde in Achtzig Tage* (1875); *Zum Mond und unterm Meer* (1876); *Der Courier des Czaren, oder M. Strogoff's Reise* (1877). But he would bring out his own successful operetta reflecting these trends a few years later; *Die Afrikareise (Operette in drei Aufzüge*, with

librettists Richard Genée and M. West, and first performed in Vienna, at the Theater an der Wien, on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1883). The work ran for less than a month despite the presence of Alexander Girardi in the cast. While not in the same league as the other great Suppé successes, the work played profitably in European and American theatres, a success acknowledged in the publication of the score in Hamburg (Cranz, 1883) and a number of different productions in the US (New York, Boston).

The scenario reflects many of the interests and concerns of the age, with exploration, colonialism, touristic excursion, exoticism, and Orientalism in particular, finding a most sentimental-satirical persuasive expression in the generic terms of operetta. The fascination with Egypt and Lebanon, reflecting French political engagement, is bound up with curiosity about the diversities and religions of the Near East (Islam and Maronite Christianity), as well as the mystique of travel and cultural novelty. The story presents perceived prototypes not only from exotic lands, but in the collections of tourists from different countries—a parody of the European abroad—all enmeshed in the usual social intrigues and sentimental wish-fulfilment and social transformation that are the default positions of this theatrical genre. All is garbed of course in the musical language of Vienna, which in the process presents the most striking of Suppé's late works.

The measure of the wider success of the score can also be gauged by the number of arrangements made by the composer himself out of themes from the work: the 'Titania Waltz', the gallop 'Le Voyage dans l'Afrique', the march 'Über Berg, Über Tal', and later the pot-pourri overture arranged by the Berlin master of operetta, Paul Lincke. All these pieces use motifs and melodies that capture the spirits of enterprise, tourism, and romantic adventure that dominate the work. While the brief 'Titania-Walzer' lacks the delicacy of Shakespeare's fairy queen, it draws from the work as a suite of memorable tunes that represents the enchantment of the operetta genre itself captured in the central waltz themes: the principal one "Ach was kann man dafür" and the secondary "Von Allah's Thron". The first is elegant and brisk in Suppé's typical manner, the second slower and more reflective, a distinction captured beautifully in Lincke's overture. But it is perhaps the march 'Über Berg, Über Tal'—which became very well-known—that distills the mystique of exotic tourism in *Die Afrikareise*; the main theme derives from the perky melody that serves as a motto for the Europeans abroad ("Ich seh' das Vaterland") is followed by the motif of intrepid exploration ("Über Berg, über Tal"), both taken from the climactic No.15 –'Terzett'. The march trio is made up of the 'Tourist Song' itself

(“Land, wo Feuer dem Vulkan entspricht”) which, as 1b, begins the work, and provides the leading theme.

This operetta, written towards the end of the Golden Age of Viennese Operetta, captures something important about the time it was written. It provides a glimpse into the late work of Franz von Suppé, one of the great figures of operetta. In the overture arranged by Lincke it looks to the Berlin School, which would find its typical expression in this composer’s *Frau Luna* (1899), another tribute to Verne’s space travel. Beyond that, *Die Afrikareise* looks to another work that compares the clash of cultures and values in an Oriental setting; *Die Rose von Stamboul* (1916), Leo Fall’s splendid work, and a masterpiece of the Silver Age of Viennese operetta.

DR. ROBERT IGNATIUS LETELLIER  
Cambridge, England, January 2016



A TRIP TO AFRICA  
OR DIE AFRIKAREISE

COMIC OPERA IN THREE ACTS

BY

MORITZ WEST, RICHARD GENÉE,  
DARIO SALVI AND HANNAH SALVI

ORCHESTRATED AND CORRECTED

BY

DARIO SALVI

LIBRETTO COMPILED

BY

HANNAH SALVI

MUSIC BY

FRANZ VON SUPPÉ

# LIST OF CHARACTERS

MIRADILLO ..... An impecunious European  
Tenor

TITANIA FANFANI ..... The Heiress  
Soprano

FANFANI PASHA ..... Uncle of Titania  
Comedian

ANTARSID ..... Prince of the Maronites  
Tenor

TESSA ..... A young milliner from Palermo  
Mezzo Soprano (Soubrette)

BUCCAMETTA ..... Mother of Tessa  
Contralto (Character)

PERICLES ..... A hotel keeper  
Basso

NAKID ..... A Coptic dealer in poisons and perfumes  
Tenor (Comedian)

SEBIL ..... An Abyssinian slave  
Contralto (Small part)

HOSH ..... A servant in Pericles' hotel  
Mute slave

MUEZZIN  
Baritone

MAJORDOMO

FIRST SAIS

SECOND SAIS

CHORUS of Maronites, Hotel Servants, Guests of Fanfani Pasha, Slave Traders, Muleteers, Dancers, Bedouins, Greek and Arabian People.

Time.....1883

Scenes.....Acts 1 and 2 – Cairo  
Act 3 – The Interior of Africa

# LIST OF MUSIC

## ACT 1

### PRELUDE

- 1A. INTRODUCTION..... Sebil, Pericles and Chorus
- 1B. TOURIST SONG ..... Miradillo, Sebil, Pericles and Chorus  
“I sail over ev’ry ocean” ..... Miradillo, Sebil and Chorus
- 1C. APPEARANCE OF THE MUEZZIN ..... Miradillo, Pericles, Muezzin, Sebil,  
Chorus and Servants
2. ENTRANCE OF THE PRINCE ..... Sais, Servants and Maronites  
“Like winds that lightly” ..... Antarsid and Chorus
3. ENTRANCE OF TITANIA..... Titania, Sebil, Antarsid, Nakid, Pericles  
and Chorus  
“Tho’ we were strangers hitherto ..... Titania and Chorus

### ANTARSID EXITS

4. QUARTETTE ..... Fanfani, Pericles, Titania  
and Miradillo  
“In proud Palermo, throbs the air” ..... Fanfani, Pericles, Titania  
and Miradillo
5. TERZETT  
“Big beard visage framing” ..... Fanfani, Tessa and Buccametta
6. FINALE (ACT 1) ..... Titania, Antarsid, Tessa, Buccametta  
Sebil, Miradillo and Chorus  
“Oh what delight” ..... Titania, Antarsid, Tessa, Buccametta,  
Sebil, Miradillo, Fanfani, Pericles and Chorus