



# The Glorious Waltz: Music, Dance, and Society in Three-Quarter Time

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## **Notes on the Waltz** (Adapted from Wikipedia by S.L.)

There are many references to a sliding or gliding dance that would evolve into the waltz that date from 16th century Europe. The French philosopher Montaigne wrote of a dance he saw in 1580 in Augsburg, where the dancers held each other so closely that their faces touched. Kunz Haas (of approximately the same period) wrote, "Now they are dancing the godless Spinner. The vigorous peasant dancer, following an instinctive knowledge of the weight of fall, uses his surplus energy to press all his strength into the proper beat of the bar, thus intensifying his personal enjoyment in dancing." The peasants of Bavaria, Tyrol, and Styria began dancing a dance called Walzer, a dance for couples, around 1750. The Ländler, also known as the Schleifer, a country dance in 3/4 time, was popular in Bohemia, Austria, and Bavaria, and spread from the countryside to the suburbs of the city. While the eighteenth century upper classes continued to dance the minuet, bored noblemen slipped away to the balls of their servants.

In the 1771 German novel *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* by Sophie von La Roche, a high-minded character complains about the newly introduced waltz among aristocrats thus: "But when he put his arm around her, pressed her to his breast, cavorted with her in the shameless, indecent whirling-dance of the Germans and engaged in a familiarity that broke all the bounds of good breeding—then my silent misery turned into burning rage."

What is now called the Viennese waltz is the original form of the waltz. It was the first ballroom dance performed in the [closed hold](#) position. It emerged in the second half of the 18th century from the German dance and the Ländler in Austria and was both popular and subject to criticism. At that time, the waltz, as described in a magazine from 1799, was performed by dancers who held on to their long gowns to prevent them from dragging or being stepped on. The dancers would lift their dresses and hold them high like cloaks, and this would bring both their bodies under one cover. This action also required the dancers' bodies to be very close together, and this closeness attracted moral disparagement. In 1797, Wolf published a pamphlet against the dance entitled "Proof that Waltzing is the Main Source of Weakness of the Body and Mind of our Generation". But even when faced with all this negativity, it became very popular in Vienna. Large dance halls like the Zum Sperl in 1807 and the Apollo in 1808 were opened to provide space for thousands of dancers. The dance reached and spread to England sometime before 1812. It was introduced as the German waltz and became a huge hit. It gained ground through the Congress of Vienna at the beginning of the 19th century and by the famous compositions by Josef Lanner, Johann Strauss I and his son, Johann Strauss II.

To understand why the dance historian Belinda Quirey wrote, *"The advent of the Waltz in polite society was quite simply the greatest change in dance form and dancing manners that has happened in our history"* we need to realize that all European social dances before the waltz were communal sequence dances – communal, because all the dancers on the floor took part in a preset pattern (often chosen by a master of ceremony. Dancers separately, and as couples, faced outwards to the spectators as much as they faced inwards. Thus all present took part as dancers or as onlookers. This was the way with the country dance and all previous popular dances. With the waltz, couples were independent of each other and were turned towards each other.

Describing life in Vienna (dated at either 1776 or 1786[4]), Don Curzio wrote, "The people were dancing mad ... The ladies of Vienna are particularly celebrated for their grace and movements of waltzing of which they never tire."

In the transition from country to town, the hopping of the Ländler, a dance known as Langaus, became a sliding step, and gliding rotation replaced stamping rotation.[4]

In the 19th century, the word primarily indicated that the dance was a turning one; one would "waltz" in the polka to indicate rotating rather than going straight forward without turning.

The Viennese custom is to anticipate slightly the second beat of each bar, making it sound as if the third is late and creating a certain buoyancy. The younger Strauss (Johann Strauss II) would sometimes break up the one-two-three of the melody with a one-two pattern in the accompaniment along with other rhythms, maintaining the 3/4 time while causing the dancers to dance a two-step waltz.

Shocking many when it was first introduced, the waltz became fashionable in Vienna around the 1780s, spreading to many other countries in the years to follow. According to contemporary singer Michael Kelly, it reached England in 1791. Diarist Thomas Raikes later recounted that "No event ever produced so great a sensation in English society as the introduction of the waltz in 1813." The entry in the Oxford English Dictionary shows that it was considered "riotous and indecent" as late as 1825.

The waltz, especially its closed position, became the example for the creation of many other ballroom dances. Subsequently, new types of waltz have developed, including many folk and several ballroom dances.

### **Johann Strauss, Father & Son** (Compiled fr. Wikipedia & various other sources by S.L.)

Strauss, Sr. was born in Leopoldstadt, Vienna , 1894. He took lessons in the violin and viola as a youngster and eventually managed to secure a place in a local orchestra. Strauss left the orchestra to join a popular string quartet known as the *Lanner Quartet*, formed by his would-be rival Joseph Lanner. This string quartet, playing Viennese Waltzes and rustic German dances, expanded into a small string orchestra in 1824.

Strauss became deputy conductor of the orchestra to assist Lanner in commissions after it became so popular during the Fasching of 1824 and Strauss was soon placed in command of a second smaller orchestra which was formed as a result of the success of the parent orchestra. In 1825, he decided to form his own band and began to write music (chiefly, dance music) for it to play after he realized that he could also possibly emulate the success of Lanner. He soon became one of the best-known and well loved dance composers in Vienna. During the carnival of 1826, Strauss inaugurated his long line of triumphs by introducing his band to the public of Vienna at the *Schwan* in the suburb of Roßau where his Täuberln-Walzer (Op. 1) at once established his reputation. He toured with his band to Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Britain. On a trip to France in 1837 he heard the quadrille and began to compose them himself, becoming largely responsible for introducing that dance to Austria in the 1840 Fasching, where it became very popular. It was this very trip (in 1837) which has proved Strauss' popularity with audiences from different social backgrounds and this paved the way to forming an ambitious plan to perform his music in England for the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1838. He was among the handful of early waltz composers along with Joseph Lanner to actively write pieces with individual titles — with the view to boost sales of their sheet music — which enabled music enthusiasts to easily recognize those pieces.

Strauss married Maria Anna Streim in 1825. They had five surviving children; Johann, Josef, Eduard Strauss, and two daughters, Anna and Therese. Strauss was a strict disciplinarian and demanded that none of his sons pursue careers in music, despite their display of musical talent. Johann Jr. was to study banking, likewise his brother Josef was destined for a military career, whereas the youngest, Eduard, was expected to join the Austrian consulate.. When his marriage to Anna ended in divorce, she determined to further Johann Strauss II's musical career, allowing him to develop his skills as a composer.

Johann Strauss II often played his father's works and openly declared his admiration of them, although it was no secret to the Viennese that their rivalry was intense, with the press at that time fueling it. Johann Strauss I himself refused to play ever again at the Dommayer's Casino, which offered his son his conducting debut, and was to tower over his son during his lifetime in terms of career advancement, although Strauss II was to eclipse him in terms of popularity in the classical repertoire. Strauss died in Vienna on September 25, 1849 at the age of 45 from scarlet fever. He was buried at the Döblinger cemetery beside his friend Joseph Lanner.. Hector Berlioz himself paid tribute to the 'Father of the Viennese Waltz' by commenting that "Vienna without Strauss is like Austria without the Danube".

## **Johann Strauss II**

Johann was born in a suburb of Vienna in 1825. (His paternal great-grandfather was a Hungarian Jew — a fact which the Nazis, who lionized Strauss's music as "so German", later tried to conceal.) When his father discovered his son secretly practicing on a violin one day, he gave him a severe whipping, saying that he was going to beat the music out of the boy. It seems that rather than trying to avoid a Strauss rivalry, the elder Strauss only wanted his son to escape the rigours of

a musician's life. It was only when the father abandoned his family for a mistress, that the son was able to concentrate fully on a career as a composer with the support of his mother.

Armed with testimonials from various teachers he approached the Viennese authorities to apply for a license to perform. He initially formed his small orchestra where he recruited his members in a tavern, where musicians seeking work could be hired easily.

Johann Strauss I's influence over the local entertainment establishments meant that many of them were wary of offering the younger Strauss a contract for fear of angering the father. Strauss Jr. was able to persuade the Dommayer's Casino in Hietzing, a suburb of Vienna, to allow him to perform.

Strauss made his debut at Dommayer's in 1844, where he performed some of his first works. Critics and the press were unanimous in their praise for Strauss's music. Despite the initial fanfare, Strauss found his early years as a composer difficult, but he soon won over audiences after accepting commissions to perform away from home.

Vienna was wracked by the revolutions of 1848 in the Austrian Empire and the intense rivalry between father and son became much more apparent. Johann Jr. decided to side with the revolutionaries. (He was also arrested by the Viennese authorities for publicly playing "La Marseillaise", but was later acquitted.) The elder Strauss remained loyal to the monarchy, and composed his "Radetzky March", Op. 228 (dedicated to the Habsburg field marshal Joseph Radetzky von Radetz), which would become one of his best-known compositions..

When the elder Strauss died from scarlet fever in Vienna in 1849, the younger Strauss merged both their orchestras and engaged in further tours. Later, he also composed a number of patriotic marches dedicated to the Habsburg Emperor Franz Josef I, such as the "Kaiser Franz-Josef Marsch" Op. 67 and the "Kaiser Franz Josef Rettungs Jubel-Marsch" Op. 126, probably to ingratiate himself in the eyes of the new monarch, who ascended to the Austrian throne after the 1848 revolution.[Strauss Jr. eventually surpassed his father's fame, and became one of the most popular waltz composers of the era, extensively touring Austria, Poland, Germany and Russia with his orchestra.

Later, in the 1870s, Strauss and his orchestra toured the United States, where he took part in the Boston Festival at the invitation of bandmaster Patrick Gilmore and was the lead conductor in a "Monster Concert" of over 1000 performers, performing his "Blue Danube" waltz, amongst other pieces, to great acclaim.

Strauss married the singer Henrietta Treffz in 1862, and they remained together until her death in 1878. ] Six weeks after her death,[2][14] Strauss married the actress Angelika Dittrich. Dittrich was not a fervent supporter of his music, and their differences in status and opinion, and especially her indiscretion, led him to seek a divorce. Strauss sought solace in his third wife Adele Deutsch, whom he married in August 1887. She encouraged his creative talent to flow once more in his later years, resulting in many famous compositions. In 1899 he died in Vienna, at the age of 73.