

Lehar - Der Zarewitsch (Mattes) [1988/2011]

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CD 1: 1. Erster Akt: Nr. 1 - *Introduktion & Chor: Es Ateht Ein Soldat Am Wolgastrand - Wir Tscherkessen Brauchen Weder Gut Noch Geld (Chor)* 2. Erster Akt: Nr. 2 - *Melodram* 3. Erster Akt: Nr. 3 - *Duett: Dich Nur Allein Nenne Ich Mein - Schaukle, Liebchen, Schaukle (Iwan - Mascha)* 4. Erster Akt: *Dialog* 5. Erster Akt: Nr. 4 - *Lied: Einer Wird Kommen, Der Wird Mich Begehren (Sonja) - Dialog* 6. Erster Akt: *Wolgalied: Allein, Wieder Allein - Es Steht Ein Soldat Am Wolgastrand (Wolgalied Zarewitsch)* 7. Erster Akt: *Dialog* 8. Erster Akt: Nr. 6 - *Finale I: Ein Weib! Du Ein Weib! - Champagner Ist Ein Feuerwein - Es Steht Ein Soldat Am Wolgastrand (Zarewitsch - Sonja)* 9. Zweiter Akt: Nr. 7 - *Introduktion, Lied & Tanz: Herz, Warum Schlagst Du So Bang (Zarewitsch - Chor)* 10. Zweiter Akt: *Dialog* 11. Zweiter Akt: Nr. 8 - *Duett: Bleib Bei Mir - Hab' Nur Dich Allein (Zarewitsch - Sonja)* 12. Zweiter Akt: *Dialog* 13. Zweiter Akt: *Lied (Einlage): Heute Hab' Ich Meinen Schonsten Tag - O Komm, Es Hat Der Fruhling, Ach, Nur Einen Mai (Zarewitsch)* 14. Zweiter Akt: *Dialog* 15. Zweiter Akt: Nr. 10 - *Duett: Was Mir Einst An Dir Gefiel - Heute Abend Komm' Ich Zu Dir (Mascha - Iwan)* CD 2: 1. Zweiter Akt: *Dialog* 2. Zweiter Akt: Nr. 11 - *Walzerlied: Bin Ein Gluckseliges Menschenkind - Das Leben Ruft (Sonja)* 3. Zweiter Akt: *Dialog* 4. Zweiter Akt: Nr. 12 - *Szene & Duett: Es Warten Die Kleinen Madchen - Liebe Mich, Kusse Mich (Sonja - Zarewitsch)* 5. Zweiter Akt: *Dialog* 6. Zweiter Akt: Nr. 13 - *Finale II: Setz Dich Her! - Wir Tscherkessen Brauchen Weder Gut Noch Geld (Ballett) (Sonja - Chor)* 7. Zweiter Akt: *Berauscht Hat Mich Der Heimatliche Tanz - Jetzt Weiss Ich, Was Das Leben Ist (Sonja - Zarewitsch - Grossfurst - Chor)* 8. Dritter Akt: Nr. 13, 5 - *Intermezzo (Orchester)* 9. Dritter Akt: Nr. 14 - *Duett & Melodram: Kosende Wellen - Warum Hat Jeder Fruhling, Ach, Nur Einen Mai (Zarewitsch - Sonja)* 10. Dritter Akt: *Dialog* 11. Dritter Akt: Nr. 9 - *Duett: Madel, Wonniges Madel - Kuss Mich (Zarewitsch - Sonja)* 12. Dritter Akt: *Dialog* 13. Dritter Akt: Nr. 15 - *Duett: Komm An Meine Brust - Wenn Dein Zartes Herz Nach Liebe Schreit (Iwan - Mascha)* 14. Dritter Akt: *Dialog* 15. Dritter Akt: Nr. 16 - *Finale III: Fur Den Grossen Zar - Warum Hat Jeder Fruhling, Ach, Nur Einen Mai (Sonja - Zarewitsch - Grossfurst - Chor)*

Der
Zarewitsch - Nicolai Gedda Sonja - Rita Streich Der Grossfurst - Hans Söhnker Der
Ministerpraesident – Anton Reimer Iwan – Harry Friedauer Mascha – Ursula Reichard Chor
der Bayerischen Staatsoper Munchen Balalaika Ensemble Tschaika Symphonie-Orchester
Graunke Willy Mattes – conductor

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Der Zarewitsch is representative of the last phase of the "silver age" of operetta. It takes on an aura of serious opera and symphonic music, it includes subject matter that one also finds in the cinema of the time; and the vocal writing shows the influence of Puccini. Lehár's orchestration is refined in its use of colorful contrasts, and the stage roles are precisely characterized musically. The vocal writing in Der Zarewitsch is unabashedly lyrical, perhaps because Lehár was certain of the quality of the performers he would have for the work's first performance.

The success of Lehár's Paganini of 1925 prompted the composer to continue in the direction of historical drama, producing first Der Zarewitsch and then, soon after, Friederike. Der Zarewitsch is based on a Polish play of the same name, by the playwright Gabryela Zapolska, which Lehár had seen in Vienna in 1917. From the original play Béla Jenbach (1871-1943) and Heinz Reichert developed a libretto, which was offered to Lehár in 1925. Evidently, the composer rejected the book, which was then offered to Mascagni, who wrote nothing, then to Eduard Künneke. Lehár eventually changed his mind and decided to set the text.

Jenbach and Reichert glossed over some of the unpleasant historical facts contained in Zapolska's play, which is loosely based on the life of Czar Peter the Great's son, Alexei. Very early in the eighteenth century, Alexei left Russia with a Finnish woman, intending to live in Italy. Advisors convinced Alexei to return to his homeland, but he was promptly put on trial by his father and sent to prison, where he eventually died. In Jenbach and Reichert's version, the Czar-to-be leaves his lady, Sonja, in Italy to take up his duties in Russia.

Lehár tailored the part of the Zarewitsch to the voice of Richard Tauber, the famous Austrian tenor who had become the composer's standard interpreter and whose voice and stage presence almost ensured the success of Lehár's later works. Tauber once claimed that he and Lehár were brothers, "without the luxury of a blood relationship." Lehár was able to compose very ambitious voice parts for Tauber, and a typical "Tauber song" developed, featuring a dramatic, initial upward thrust that others came to imitate. Such songs in Der Zarewitsch are "Es steht ein Soldat am Wolgastrand" (There stands a soldier on the bank of the Volga) from the first act and "Willst du?" (Do you want to?), from Act Two. Tauber later claimed Der Zarewitsch was his favorite role.

Lehár found Berlin audiences more responsive to his Romantic voice than the Viennese and relocated to Berlin shortly before beginning Der Zarewitsch. Commissioned by the Deutsches Künstlertheater, Der Zarewitsch received its premiere there on February 21, 1927. Although the work may not have the continuous melodic flow of Paganini, it does possess some excellent numbers, among them Sonja's "Einer wird kommen" (Someone will come) and the first-act duet for Marscha and Ivan, "Dich nur allein, nenn' ich mein" (You alone I take for mine). "Warum hat

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jeder Frühling, ach, nur einen Mai?" (Why does every spring have but one May?), a duet for Sonja and Der Zarewitsch at the beginning of the third act, is a melodically splendid vehicle for both singers, especially the tenor.

Most of these numbers would fit well into any of Lehár's late operettas and bring nothing to the particular atmosphere of Der Zarewitsch. Lehár established the local color of the operetta's Russian milieu through orchestration, including balalaikas, and the use of the Neapolitan sixth chord and various church modes to create an "exotic" flavor. ---John Palmer, Rovi

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