

Vive Offenbach! (Rosenthal) [2009]

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Disc: 1 1. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'Qu'est-ce que vous dites?' 2. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'L'employé m'a dit' 3. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'Quand il a vu' 4. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'Mon oncle, ne vous fâchez pas' 5. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'Eh bien, non... je ne me fâcherai pas' 6. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'Bonjour monsieur' 7. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'Et si on vous en demandait' 8. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'Va donc, va donc chercher le gril' 9. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'Bon! Je vais chercher le gril' 10. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'C'est un dimanche, un matin' 11. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'C'est moi!' 12. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'A table, à table' 13. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'Ah! Tu m'embêtes, toi!' 14. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'Écoutez votre coeur' 15. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: 'Si je l'aime toujours' 16. Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act: Final 17. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'Ernestine! habille-toi!' 18. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'J'étais vraiment très ignorante' 19. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'Ernestine! Chère Ernestine!' 20. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'Pedro possède une guitare' 21. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'Et je n'épouserais pas' 22. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'En naissant, chaque creature' 23. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'John! John! John! mon ami!' 24. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'Babylas! Babylas! Babylas!... J'arrive en galant paladin!' Disc: 2 1. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'Qui est et d'ou vient ce jeune homme?' 2. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'Le plaisir nous invite' 3. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'Bonjour, cher Balandard' 4. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'Italia la bella' et reprise de L'Ensemble 5. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: 'Bravo! Mon Dieu que c'est beau!' 6. Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act: Final 7. Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: Choeur des marchandes 8. Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Mais quel bruit' 9. Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Au beau jour de la Mi-Carême' 10. Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Bonjour, Beautés!' 11. Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Ma Ciboulette' 12. Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'C'est lui... C'est Croute-au-pot!' 13. Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Quel est ce vacarme infernal?' 14. Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Quel bruit... Je suis la petite fruitiere' 15. Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Qui cherchez-vous, major?' 16. Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Vous êtes la lune' 17. Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Le soleil...épouser la lune' 18. Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Oui, mon bonheur...' 19.

Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Bah, c'est du propre...' 20. *Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Je défendrai mon enfant'* 21. *Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: 'Mais enfin, laquelle est sa mère?... Ô nature!'* 22. *Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act: Final*
Ensemble Choral Jean Laforge Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo Manuel Rosenthal
– conductor

Pomme d'api, operetta in 1 act. By the end of the 1860s, the decade of Offenbach's most brilliant successes -- *La belle Hélène* (1864), *La Vie parisienne* (1866), *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* (1867) -- the public's taste for satire had given way to a new vogue for romance, which Offenbach answered in *La Périchole* (1868). But in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 -- the bombardment of Paris, the spectacle of Prussian troops marching down the Champs-Élysées in March 1871 -- and the horrors of the Paris Commune, the sharp satire laced with carefree giddiness, which had been Offenbach's stock-in-trade, was decisively out of fashion as life resumed in the capital. Saint-Saëns, who had been one of Offenbach's most discriminating admirers, was busy organizing, with Franck, Lalo, and Fauré, the Société Nationale de Musique (established on February 25, 1871) to promote chamber and symphonic music beneath the proud motto *Ars Gallica*. Offenbach had taken refuge from the war in Italy, Vienna, and London. Returning to Paris in the summer of 1871, he found the aristocracy that had winked at and supported his productions replaced by a government of sober, indifferent, middle-class bureaucrats. Meanwhile, serious rivals, such as Johann Strauss II, Suppé, and Lecocq, were making a broadening public appeal. Lecocq's *La fille de Madame Angot* appeared in 1872, while *Giroflé-Girofla* was produced in 1874 -- sandwiching Offenbach's *Pomme d'api*, which opened at the Théâtre de la Renaissance on September 4, 1873. Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* appeared the following year, while the first Gilbert and Sullivan collaboration, *Thespis*, was heard in 1871, though not until 1875 did *Trial by Jury* inaugurate the spate of wildly popular operettas by that team. A new world was taking shape, and in an increasingly international market -- *Pomme d'api* opened in London's Gaiety as *The Love Apple* on September 24, 1874, and at Vienna's Theater an der Wien as *Nesthäkchen* on November 22, 1877 -- these things mattered. Part of Offenbach's response was to become, again, the manager of his own theater -- on June 1, 1873, he assumed the management of the Théâtre de la Gaîté -- which he completely remodeled at enormous expense, to pay for a revival of *Orphée aux Enfers*, likewise refurbished with new characters, scenes, and ballet music to make a stunning box-office success. *Pomme d'api* represents the other arm of Offenbach's strategy -- a kinder, gentler one-act operetta in which farce gives way to sentimental musical comedy for which the composer found music of great charm, albeit set off by a finale of inspired ribaldry.

Monsieur Choufleury restera chez lui le . . . , operetta in 1 act. Those fashionable gossips, the waspish Goncourt brothers, though they might refer to Offenbach's tiny Bouffes-Parisiens as "that big little theatre, the Figaro of theatres," entertained some very personal dislikes amid the Parisian theater scene. One of Offenbach's oldest and most reliable librettists, Hector Crémieux, was viciously derided as one who "rises and rises, makes money with plays he doesn't write, a mountebank combined with a Jewish clown, a buffoon who jobs in manufactured verse." But the point of their attack was not wholly anti-Semitic, though they castigated the circle extending "from Halévy to that Crémieux, from Crémieux to Villemessant, from Villemessant to Offenbach, chevalier in the Légion d'honneur -- engaged in shady deals, selling a bit of everything, their wives to a certain extent included...and to Morny, Offenbach's patron, the prototype man of the Empire, immersed and rotted in every sort of Parisian corruptness...." What could have prompted so much venom? The Duc de Morny, Napoléon III's illegitimate half-brother and the second most powerful man in France, was not only an Offenbach fan -- whose influence had shielded the composer from censorship on occasion and lifted restrictions on the size of the spectacles offered at the Bouffes-Parisiens -- but stage-struck. Having written the scenario for an opéra-comique, he was avid to make his debut (though under the pseudonym M. de Saint-Rémy) and summoned Offenbach, with his chief librettist, Ludovic Halévy, to his office. Morny's scenario, concerning a social climbing nouveau riche, was not only viable but offered possibilities for parodies of Italian opera. Halévy, with Crémieux's assistance, worked the sketch into a substantial one-act piece for which Offenbach composed, with his usual rapidity, one of his freshest and most delightful scores -- a score, moreover, anticipating the sublime farce of the banquet scene in *La Vie parisienne*. Every number is a jewel -- the soubrette's sprightly bolero, a spirited spoof on cheeky servants, a deliciously inane love duet, and, surpassing all, the compact ensemble guying the stereotypes of Italian opera, at which Chabrier would take aim in *L'étoile* (1877), and which was still providing fodder for satire as late as 1916 in Busoni's *Arlecchino*. After a round of exacting rehearsals, supervised by de Morny, *Monsieur Choufleury Restera chez lui...* was given a brilliant presentation at the Presidential Palace on May 31, 1861, and opening at the Bouffes-Parisiens only on September 14, though it had already been heard in Vienna on July 6, 1861, in French, to be re-christened in German at Salon Pitzelberger later that year.

Mesdames de la Halle, operetta in 1 act. Within the decade between the performance of his first opéra comique, *L'Alcôve* (1847) and *Orphée aux Enfers* (1858) -- the first of the great operettas for which he is remembered today -- Offenbach, restricted by his theater license to spectacles of one act and no more than four speaking/singing parts, assembled the essentials of his distinctive stagecraft and plied them with equal measures of cunning and inspiration. The first requirement was librettists who shared his penchant for the madcap, bizarre, and satirical. The composer worked through a number of hacks before discovering his preferred collaborators in Etienne Tréfeu, Hector Crémieux, Charles-Desiré Dupeuty, Ernest Bourget, Edouard Plouvier, and -- above all -- Ludovic Halévy. The latter would be joined by Henri Meilhac in the

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upcoming decade to form the dream team that supplied books for Offenbach's greatest operettas, from *La belle Hélène* (1864) to *La Périchole* (1868), and for many lesser works into the 1870s. Always on the lookout for talent and sex appeal, he signed 22-year-old Hortense Schneider for *Le Violoneux* (1855). She continued as his first lady -- at ever more astronomical salaries -- for nearly two decades, while such talented singing actresses as Lise Tautin, first heard in *Une Demoiselle en lôterie* (1857); Zulma Bouffar (*Lischen et Fritzchen*, 1863), who became Offenbach's mistress; or Léa Silly (*Orestes* in *La belle Hélène*) could only be bitter rivals. In 1855 he secured his own tiny theater on the Champs-Élysées, the Bouffes-Parisiens. While the Bouffes-Parisiens shifted venue several times, Rossini's sobriquet, "the little Mozart of the Champs-Élysées," stuck. For the series of one-acters needed to keep his theater going, Offenbach developed a formulaic approach allowing rapid production, featuring the inevitable military sendup, a sentimental waltz or aria for the soubrette, and popular dances such as the polka, tyrolienne, can-can, or galop. As Offenbach's popularity reached the court, powerful patrons such as Napoléon III's half-brother the Duc de Morny exerted influence to have the restrictions on his theater license removed. For *Le mariage aux lanternes* (on October 10, 1857) he was allowed the use of a chorus -- which he exploited to novel and charming effect -- while *Mesdames de la Halle*, opening at the Bouffes-Parisiens on October 10, 1858, (with Tautin as *Ciboulette*), was the first work in which Offenbach used as many singers/actors as he pleased. A lumbering farce (from a book by one Armand Lapointe) set in the Innocents market, Offenbach graced it with a score of suave delicacy, glowing rather than coruscating, and moving as it delights. --- Adrian Corleonis, Rovi

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