



# LORTZING

## Opera Overtures

Der Waffenschmied

Undine

Der Wildschütz

Hans Sachs

Malmö Opera  
Orchestra

Jun Märkl





## Albert Lortzing (1801–1851)

### Opera Overtures

Gustav Albert Lortzing was a multifaceted man of the theatre – actor, singer, librettist, composer and conductor. Though international currency of his operas has been limited, on German stages he was for some 150 years the most performed composer after Mozart and Verdi. While the pace of productions there has slackened over the past half-century, he retains a significant presence.

For all his versatility and success, he died overworked and impoverished in 1851 at the age of 49. He was born on 23 October 1801 in Berlin, where his parents ran a hide business. They were also keen amateur performers and, when the family business failed during the Napoleonic campaigns, they took up acting professionally. Thereafter they toured widely, the father mainly playing comic and sentimental parts, the mother operatic soubrette roles. Thus, young Albert gained experience of the theatre to supplement his musical education on violin, cello, guitar and piano. In 1824 he married Rosina Regina Ahles, a fellow member of the theatrical company, and he soon began writing and composing his own Singspiels ('musical plays') and operas – mostly comic. He later conducted in Leipzig, Vienna – alongside Franz von Suppé at the Theater an der Wien – and Berlin.

Written to his own libretti, his works follow the German theatrical tradition of Mozart and Weber. They are notable for their comic bass roles, and their overtures provide a ready indication of their lively and tuneful nature. *Der Waffenschmied* ('The Armourer'), premiered in Vienna on 30 May 1846, was one of Lortzing's most successful works, and exemplifies his endorsement of working-class values. A three-act comic opera, it is set in the German city of Worms. It concerns the Count von Liebenau who, in the disguise of an apprentice armourer, wins the hand of Marie, daughter of Stadinger, the master armourer of the work's title. Stadinger is given one of Lortzing's trade mark bass roles. Like other overtures, this starts imposingly enough before giving way to Lortzing's lighter side.

*Die Opernprobe* ('The Opera Rehearsal'), premiered in Frankfurt on 20 January 1851, was Lortzing's last

staged work, first produced the evening before his death. The relatively brief and sprightly overture sets the scene for a behind-the-scenes one-act piece in the tradition of Cimarosa's *Il maestro di capella*, Mozart's *Der Schauspieldirektor* and similar works. In the castle of a Count (another of those comic bass roles), the household is rehearsing an opera. When two strangers arrive, they are roped in to the performance, one of them turning out to be the young man promised in marriage to the Count's daughter Louise.

*Undine*, premiered in Magdeburg on 21 April 1845, is an unusual addition to Lortzing's output, being a four-act *romantische Zauberoper* ('romantic fairy-tale opera') with music generally weightier than usual. It was inspired by the story of the same title by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, the same source being used for operas by E.T.A. Hoffmann (1816) and Tchaikovsky (1870), as well as ballet scores by Cesare Pugni (1843) and Hans Werner Henze (1958). Undine is the adopted daughter of the old fisherman Tobias, but her real father is Kühleborn, prince of the water spirits. Undine marries Hugo von Ringstetten, only for the latter to fall under the spell of Bertalda, who turns out to be Tobias's real daughter. In the end, Undine and Hugo are reconciled, and Kühleborn permits them to remain together in the realm of the water spirits.

*Der Wildschütz* ('The Poacher'), premiered in Leipzig, 31 December 1842, is Lortzing's comic masterpiece, a hint of its content being provided by the gunshot in the overture. The poacher in question is the schoolmaster Baculus, who is dismissed by his employer Count Eberbach for his misdemeanour. The action concerns Baculus's bumbling attempts to gain reinstatement, leading to a chain of disguises and comic situations, including a scene at a game of billiards. Baculus eventually achieves a pardon when it transpires that he had shot not the Count's deer, but his own mule.

*Hans Sachs*, premiered in Leipzig on 23 June 1840, anticipates by some 28 years Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in portraying the 16th-century German master singer, poet, playwright and shoemaker of the title. Wagner,

though, sketched out a plan for an opera on the subject as early as 1845, and he was certainly aware of Lortzing's work. Set in 1517, when Sachs would have been 23 and a young cobbler, Lortzing's opera centres on Sachs's courtship of his first wife, Kunigunde, daughter of goldsmith Steffen (the counterpart of Wagner's Pogner). Steffen has offered Kunigunde's hand as the prize in a singing contest, but has arranged that the winner should be Eoban Hesse, an alderman from Augsburg. When Hesse claims a song lost by Sachs as his own, his attempt to perform it arouses laughter. When the true authorship is proved, Sachs is declared free to live happily with Kunigunde.

*Der Weihnachtsabend* ('The Christmas Eve'), premiered in Münster on 21 December 1832, is a one-act piece set in the living room of the Käferling family – father, mother and five children, the eldest of whom (Suschen) is a daughter from Frau Käferling's first marriage. Suschen is in love with her stepfather's nephew, Gottlieb Finke, who has been banned from the house and, as a soldier, is forced to spend Christmas Eve on duty in the cold outside the barracks. Käferling is a lover of natural history, and his wife has planned a stuffed fur seal as his Christmas present. When Finke is smuggled into the house in the seal's place he finally wins approval to marry with Suschen. What made the piece a portrayal of not just family life but Lortzing's own family life is the fact that Lortzing himself played Finke, with his children as the Käferlings' youngsters. Most of the work's vocal numbers use existing music by Mozart, Schubert and others, but the lightly scored overture (lacking Lortzing's usual horns, trombones and percussion) is entirely original.

*Zar und Zimmermann* ('Tsar and Carpenter'), premiered in Leipzig on 22 December 1837, vies with *Der Wildschütz* as Lortzing's most popular work, and it was the work that effectively established his fame. It uses the same French source as Grétry's *Pierre le Grand* (1790) and Donizetti's *Il borgomastro di Saardam* (1827). The Tsar is Peter the Great of Russia, who is working in disguise in a shipyard in the Dutch town of Zaandam alongside Peter Ivanov, a carpenter and deserter from the Russian army. The latter is in love with Marie, daughter of the town's mayor, Van Bett. When the Tsar needs to return to Russia to quell an attempted coup, his passport is given to the

wrong Peter. Ivanov hands it to the Tsar, thereby obtaining the latter's blessing for his union with Marie. Van Bett was yet another of Lortzing's richly comic bass creations, and Lortzing himself created the tenor role of Peter Ivanov.

*Andreas Hofer* is, like *Der Weihnachtsabend*, a one-act piece composed in 1832. It features real and imaginary episodes of the life of the innkeeper and drover who in 1809 led the Tyrolean rebellion against occupation by Bavarian forces imposed by Napoleon. Hofer's actions led to his capture and execution the following year. The opera's calls for freedom were considered dangerous by the authorities of the time, and production was forbidden during Lortzing's lifetime. A revised version was performed in Mainz in 1887, but in original form the piece had to await a production at Annaberg-Buchholz in Saxony in December 2014 in a double bill with *Der Weihnachtsabend*. As with the latter, the vocal numbers make use of music by earlier composers, including Haydn and Weber, but the particularly imposing overture is again entirely Lortzing's own.

*Regina* was another serious work – this time a full-length one – which likewise never saw the light of day during Lortzing's lifetime. He composed it in Vienna on the back of the rebellion there in March 1848. When the uprising was finally quashed in bloody fashion later that year the opera stood no chance of production. It was eventually staged in altered form in Berlin in 1899, the original version being restored for a production in Gelsenkirchen in 1998. It opens in a factory whose workers are about to strike for higher wages, and other working-class elements populate its story. Simon, the factory owner, nominates foreman Richard as his successor and promises his daughter Regina's hand in marriage. However, Regina is abducted by another foreman, Stephan, who when he is captured in an ammunition dump, threatens to blow everyone up. Finally, Stephan is shot by Regina herself. As elsewhere in the opera, the overture reuses material from an unsuccessful 1837 Lortzing opera, *Caramo*. Also, like several of his colleague Suppé's overtures from the 1840s (including *Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna* and *Poet and Peasant*), it features a cello solo.

Andrew Lamb

## Malmö Opera Orchestra



Photo: Frans Hällqvist

Malmö Opera Orchestra was founded in 1991. Consisting of 62 musicians, the orchestra is recognised for its ability to master a wide range of musical styles: from the classic operas to contemporary music dramas and ballet. Each season, the orchestra performs a number of symphonic concerts along with Gala and chamber concerts. The orchestra has made several recordings, which include symphonic music and operatic performances. In 2015 Leif Segerstam became the orchestra's honorary conductor after he completed his term as principal conductor. The principal guest conductor is currently Steven Sloane, and the orchestra is managed by Martin Brommann. [www.malmoopera.se](http://www.malmoopera.se)

## Jun Märkl



Photo: Christiane Höhne

Jun Märkl was music director of the Orchestre National de Lyon from 2005 to 2011 and principal conductor/artistic advisor of the MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony until 2012. In recognition of his tenure in Lyon and his very successful nine-album Debussy cycle with the orchestra on Naxos [8.509002], he was honoured by the French Ministry of Culture with the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2012. He also toured with the orchestra to Japan and major European halls and festivals. He has appeared as a guest conductor with leading orchestras in the United States, Europe and Japan, and at the Met, Covent Garden, Vienna State and Dresden Semper Operas. He also enjoys a close relationship with the NHK Symphony with which he conducted the first Japanese *Ring* cycle in Tokyo, and has performed and given premieres of many of Toshio Hosokawa's works, including *Lotus under the moonlight* with Momo Kodama in 2006. Born in Munich to a German father, a distinguished concertmaster, and a Japanese mother, a solo pianist, Märkl studied violin, piano and conducting at the Musikhochschule in Hanover, going on to study with Sergiu Celibidache in Munich and with Gustav Meier in Michigan. In 1986 he won the conducting competition of the Deutsche Musikrat and a year later won a scholarship from the Boston Symphony Orchestra to study at Tanglewood with Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. Soon afterwards he had a string of appointments in European opera houses followed by his first music directorships at the Staatstheater in Saarbrücken (1991–94) and at the Mannheim Nationaltheater (1994–2000). Jun Märkl has long been a highly respected interpreter of the core Germanic repertoire from both the symphonic and operatic traditions, and, more recently, for his refined and idiomatic performances of the music of Debussy, Ravel and Messiaen. He is Invited Professor at the Kunitachi College of Music in Tokyo. [www.junmarkl.com](http://www.junmarkl.com)

For 150 years Albert Lortzing was, after Mozart and Verdi, the most performed composer on German stages. He was a multifaceted man of the theatre who wrote his own libretti, and his works follow in the tradition of Mozart and Weber but explore a variety of subjects, from romantic fairy tales to heroic calls for political freedom, which inevitably led to bans on performance. His opera overtures reflect the liveliness of his imagination and orchestration, and the exceptionally tuneful nature of his writing, as the music traverses imposing grandeur and lighter motifs alike.

Albert  
**LORTZING**  
(1801–1851)  
**Opera Overtures**

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|---|---|-------------|
| ❶ | <b>Der Waffenschmied</b> ('The Armourer') (1846)        | <b>8:36</b> |
| ❷ | <b>Die Opernprobe</b> ('The Opera Rehearsal') (1851)    | <b>4:14</b> |
| ❸ | <b>Undine</b> (1845)                                    | <b>9:24</b> |
| ❹ | <b>Der Wildschütz</b> ('The Poacher') (1842)            | <b>7:14</b> |
| ❺ | <b>Hans Sachs</b> (1840)                                | <b>9:08</b> |
| ❻ | <b>Der Weihnachtsabend</b> ('The Christmas Eve') (1832) | <b>4:21</b> |
| ❼ | <b>Zar und Zimmermann</b> ('Tsar and Carpenter') (1837) | <b>6:44</b> |
| ❽ | <b>Andreas Hofer</b> (1832)                             | <b>9:21</b> |
| ❾ | <b>Regina</b> (1848)                                    | <b>7:31</b> |

**Malmö Opera Orchestra • Jun Märkl**

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