

Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna Overture  
Franz von Suppé (1819 -1895)

Scored for: two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, and strings.

Franz von Suppé—aka. Francesco Ezechiele Ermenegildo Cavaliere Suppé Demelli—was born in Spalato, Dalmatia (now Split, Croatia) to parents who, like so many others before and since, discouraged his aspirations for musical career. Though he demonstrated promise as a composer at a young age, von Suppé agreed to move with the family to study law in Padua, Italy. However, upon his father's death in 1835, he returned to Vienna with his mother, enrolled in the Conservatory, and pursued his true passion. Having been swooned by the Italian music of Rossini and Verdi, he began to compose in the effervescent Italianate melodic style. At the height of his long and profitable career, von Suppé was the founder and leading composer of light of Austrian operetta in the middle and late nineteenth century, enjoying a success that rivaled that of Frenchman Jacques Offenbach. A review of his first score (*Young and Merry*, 1841) praised the youthful von Suppé for all the same qualities associated with his later masterpieces:

Melodious, rich in tender ideas and fine nuances, clearly and effectively orchestrated and containing such surprising modulations and transitions, that the overture and most of the songs and choruses had to be encored . . . The whole composition has traces of the Italian style but now and then goes in for thoroughly vernacular, simply handled themes.

*Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna* belongs to a musical genre that precedes the operetta--a humorous play interspersed with song. The overture to such a production rarely, if ever, related to the actual story line of the play. Its function was simply to get the attention of the audience, quiet the house, and set the scene for the entertainment. Even with this relatively early work, composed at age of twenty-four, Suppé had a feel for how to grab the attention of the audience. The play closed after three nights, but the overture was a huge success.

The lighthearted character of the play is apparent in the music from the very beginning, as the dramatic opening statement by brass and winds is answered, perhaps mocked would be a better word, by a pizzicato response. This is followed by a brief and calming woodwind and brass chorale, capped off by a recurrence of the dramatic opening material and another brief chorale. All of the preceding bluster turns out to be merely an introduction to an extended cello solo, featuring a plaintive melody over a waltz accompaniment on pizzicato strings. The lyrical melody occurs twice before the full orchestra takes over, providing a new closure to the tune in the high strings. The cello takes over once again, ending its passage with an expressive mini-cadenza. The opening bang returns abruptly, signaling a change to come. From nowhere an exceptionally active and agitated tune commences in the strings and the remainder of the overture is a whirlwind of melodies intended to excite the listener and propel the music onward to the dramatic conclusion.