

FRANZ VON SUPPÉ

Born 18 April 1819 in Spalato, Dalmatia [now Split, Croatia]; died 21 May 1895 in Vienna

Overture to *Poet and Peasant* (1846)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Vienna, 24 August 1846

Theater-an-der-Wien

Franz von Suppé, conductor

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 9 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION: woodwinds in pairs plus piccolo, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp and strings.

Just as Jacques Offenbach, the great innovator of French comic opera, was an immigrant from Germany, so one of the seminal figures in the development of Viennese operetta came from what is now Croatia. Francesco Suppé Demelli was born in 1819 on a ship off the Adriatic coast city of Spalato, Dalmatia (now Split, Croatia) to Austrian parents, sent to Italy to study law, and moved with his mother after his father's death in 1835 to Vienna, where he became Franz von Suppé and took up music in earnest as a student of Ignaz Seyfried. Seyfried helped him get a job — initially unpaid — as Third Kapellmeister at the Josefstadt Theater, where his first stage work appeared in 1841. More than twenty theater scores followed in the next five years. He moved on to other, more lucrative, positions in Vienna's light-opera theaters, and continued to conduct until 1883, all the while turning out a steady stream of well-received musical farces. *Das Pensionat* of 1860, the first successful Viennese response to the growing local popularity of Offenbach's Parisian operettas, established the form with which Johann Strauss, Franz Lehár and others were to charm the world in later decades. Suppé's *Poet and Peasant Overture*, composed in 1846 as part of the incidental music for Karl Elmar's forgotten comedy *Dichter und Bauer*, may be Suppé's most familiar music — one catalog lists some 59 transcriptions for virtually every conceivable ensemble.