



# JOHANN STRAUSS SR.

## *Radetzky March*

**Johann Strauss I** (March 14, 1804 – September 25, 1849) was born in Leopoldstadt, Vienna to innkeepers. Both parents died before his twelfth birthday, and he was sent as an apprentice to a bookbinder. During this time he learned the violin and viola, and he won a position in the local orchestra. Strauss soon discovered that it was possible to become successful through writing dance music and formed his own band to play his compositions. He soon became one of the best-known and well loved dance composers in Vienna. During the carnival of 1826, Strauss inaugurated his long line of triumphs by introducing his band to the public of Vienna at the Schwan, in the Roßau suburb, where his *Täuberln-Walzer* (op. 1) at once established his reputation. He toured with his band to Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Britain. The conducting reins and management of this 'Strauss Orchestra' would eventually be passed over to the hands of his sons variously until its disbandment by Eduard Strauss in 1901. Despite family problems, (his wife sued for divorce upon learning that he took a mistress, with whom he had a daughter) Strauss continued to tour frequently and was always prepared to write novelty pieces for numerous charitable organizations. His waltzes were gradually developed from a rustic peasant dance into one which posterity would recognize as the Viennese Waltz. Strauss died in Vienna on September 25, 1849 at the age of 45 from scarlet fever contracted from one of his illegitimate children. Hector Berlioz himself paid tribute to the 'Father of the Viennese Waltz' by commenting that "Vienna without Strauss is like Austria without the Danube".

**Radetzky March, Op. 228**, is a march composed by Johann Strauss Sr. in 1848. It was dedicated to the Field Marshal Joseph Radetzky von Radetz and soon became quite popular among regimented marching soldiers. It has been remarked that its tone is more celebratory than martial; Strauss was commissioned to write the piece to commemorate Radetsky's victory at the Battle of Custoza. When it was first played in front of Austrian officers they spontaneously clapped and stamped their feet when they heard the chorus. This tradition, with quiet rhythmic clapping on the first iteration of the melody, followed by thunderous clapping on the second, is kept alive today when the march is played in classical music venues in Vienna, among members of the audience who are familiar with the custom. It is almost always played as the last piece at the *Neujahrskonzert* of the Vienna Philharmonic, the Vienna New Year Concert.