Beat: Arts

Strauss and the Immortal Waltz

Vienna ` s Eternal Rhythm

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USPA NEWS - At the beginning of every year , we hear the Vienna New Year ` s Concert on the radio or watch it on television . The concert traditionally draws to a close with one of the most famous waltzes ever written : The Blue Danube .One day , I set out on a journey to discover. the man behind this magnificent composition . When I arrived in Vienna , my first stop was in Stadtpark . There , the golden monument to Johann Straus II , created by the Austrian sculptor Edmund Hellmer , seemed to invite me on a journey back through time .The monument was unveiled in 1921 and depicts the composer playing his violin , framed by an elegant marble arch .Our story takes us to Paris , where Emperor Napoleon III was at the height of his glory . In 1867 , the French Capital hosted ,, L `Exposition Universelle ``an event that attracted visitors from across the world .During the summer of that year , nearly 20.000 people gathered to attend a concert conducted by Johann Strauss II .The performance of The Blue Danube , was an extraordinary success . Hippolyte de Villemessant , the influential owner of the French newspaper ,, Le Figaro ``is said to have described Strauss as ,, a Napoleon among composers ``.

In his tribute , Villemessant declared ,, From this day forward , the Danube is no longer merely the great waterway linking Western Europe with the East . It is also the name of a celebrated waltz by Johann Strauss II .That evening Hippolyte de Villemessant hosted a Grand Reception attended by Ivan Turgenev , Gustave Flaubert , Alexandre Dumas fils , Théophille Gautier and Victor Tissot . Before this distinguished gathering Johann Strauss II raised his violin and played the opening arpeggio of the Blue Danube .When Strauss returned to Vienna , his music had already made him immortal . Audiences every where had begun to call him ,, The Waltz King ``. At the Hofburg Palace , Empress Elisabeth of Austria , known throughout world as Sissi , welcomed him with admiration . Strauss had become more than a composer . He had become a symbol of Vienna itself , of its elegance , splendor and timeless musical spirit ;

The meeting of Empress Sissi and Johann Strauss II , the Waltz King , symbolized the Golden Age of Imperial Vienna , where beauty , elegance and music came together to create a timeless legend ;More than a century and a Half later ,, The Blue Danube ``continues to enchant audiences around the world .

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