

THE VIENNESE WALTZ RECEPTION AND SOCIAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN VIENNA AND BUDAPEST

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Abstract

Until the latter part of 1886, there was only one real ballet premiere at the Hungarian Royal Opera House: the *Wiener Walzer* [*Viennese Waltz*], performed on May 16, 1885. The piece, which proved successful in the imperial city, also received great acclaim in Budapest a few months later. The creators of the ballet did not strive for a classical plot: in the piece, individual images present the major stages of the development of the waltz, with a loose dramaturgical thread included for the sole purpose of holding the piece together and music comprised of a medley of handpicked waltzes. The piece was very well received at the time and was featured as part of the repertoire for decades. This study attempts to present danced history primarily through the reception of the piece in Vienna and, to a lesser extent, Budapest, while also touching upon its appearance in a charity performance by amateur aristocrats in Kolozsvár; furthermore, this article also emphasizes how the *Wiener Walzer* can be interpreted in the context of urban and social history.

Keywords: Viennese Waltz, Johann Strauß, urban history, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Cluj Napoca

1. THE STORY OF THE VIENNESE WALTZ IN BALLET

The *Wiener Walzer*¹ [*Viennese Waltz*] premiered in January 1885 in the imperial city, and was later performed at the Budapest Opera House in the spring of the same

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¹ Frappart and Gaul wrote the libretto and choreography. According to sources, the choreography was primarily the work of the dancer-choreographer Frappart, while Gaul likely wrote most of the libretto and also served as the costume designer. Josef Bayer, born in Vienna (1852–1913), studied at the conservatory of the imperial city, where he was taught by several masters, including Joseph Hellmesberger (violin) and Anton Bruckner (harmony). From 1870, he was a violinist at the Vienna Court Opera for 28 years. His career gained momentum when he was appointed conductor in 1883, and from 1885 until his death he led the Court Ballet. A prolific composer, he wrote 70 one-act ballets and 19 operettas, as well as numerous songs, dance scenes, and marches among other works. His breakthrough came with the *Wiener Walzer*, which premiered in Vienna in 1885, followed by *Die Puppenfee* [*The Fairy Doll*], which brought him worldwide fame (ÖBL, 1957). Libretto: https://libretti.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/fs1/object/display/bsb00058447_00001.html?sort=&letter=B&person_str=%7BBayer%2C+Josef%7D&mode=person&context=

year with choreography by Frigyes Campilli.² The dance performance portrayed the 100-year history of the Viennese waltz through three different scenes, featuring the most beloved melodies yet lacking a continuous plot. Its origins date back to 1786, when Márton Vincenz's *Una cosa rara* (*A Rare Thing*)³ first showcased the waltz in a performance by four dancers, and later in Mozart's *Don Juan* in 1787. Waltz melodies can also be heard in the works of Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Chopin. The Ländler-style dance was referred to as "cosa rara" (rare thing) or "Langaus" (Vályi, 1969). Two waltz melodies from that time, accompanied by satirical verses, have survived to this day: *Oh, du lieber Augustin* [*Oh, You Dear Augustin*] and *Habe ich kein Federbett, schlaf ich auf Stroh* [*If I Don't Have a Feather Bed, I Sleep on Straw*]. Carl Maria von Weber's *Aufforderung zum Tanz* [*Invitation to the Dance*], composed in 1819, redefined the contemporary dance music of the time, and in ballet, "the rondo form developed into a crystalline symmetry (...). Never before had the joy of love been expressed so simply and positively as in Weber's work" (Vályi, 1969). Weber created the basic stage forms for the great ballet waltzes (Vályi, 1969). The golden age of the Viennese waltz was associated with names such as Joseph Lanner, Johann Strauß Sr., and Franz Morelli, with the next generation represented by Johann Strauß Jr., all following the romantic form established by Weber (Mendelssohn, 1926; Vályi, 1969; Flotzinger, 2016; Witzmann, 2023).

In Hungary, however, apart from Ferenc Liszt, no other composer was able to create lasting works in the waltz genre, which was seen as a dance of the oppressors during the events of 1848/49 events and was thus viewed negatively. Nevertheless, among Slavic peoples, such as the Russians, passionate waltz fantasies emerged, including Glinka's *Valse-Fantasie* or Tchaikovsky's grand ballet waltzes (Vályi, 1969).

The story of the *Wiener Walzer* begins around 1799 in a simple tavern on Spittel Hill during carnival time, where young people dance the Ländler. Among the revelers, Pernerer,⁴ a poor wandering lad, appears with his bride, whom he soon marries.

In the second picture, the once young couple appears three decades later, now as wealthy Viennese citizens participating in a magnificent wedding held at the lavish Apollo Hall, located in the richest merchant district of the imperial city. In the background, there is a set table, and colorful waiters and footmen enliven the scene. The wedding guests dance gavottes, mazurkas, and waltzes.⁵ The most prominent dances are the double waltz (performed by Coppini and Müller Katalin) and the young couple's pillow dance (Anna Kürthy as the groom⁶ and Fanni Maruzzi as the bride). As a musical joke, the popular song *Ach du lieber Augustin* is played, accompanied by the waltz from *Der Freischütz* [*The Magic Hunter*].

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²For an overview of the cultural context and the historical period, see (Gelencsér, 1984) and (Vályi, 1956); for detailed account of Frigyes Campilli's work at the Hungarian Opera House, see (Pónyai, 2020).

³This work is by Italian librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749–1838) and Spanish composer Vicente Martín y Soler (1754–1806). The name given is the one used by the Hungarian press.

⁴It was performed in Budapest with Frigyes Campilli in the lead role. For further information on the cast, see <http://digitar.opera.hu/www/cl6operadigitar.01.01.php?as=53620&bm=1&mt=1>

⁵For information on the appearance, spread, and function of dances, particularly in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, see (Vályi, 1969) and (Dóka, 2018).

⁶According to the cast, two Kürthy girls appeared in the play, Anna and Hermin; several media outlets have confused the names, but according to the *OperaDigiTár*, Anna was the fiancée.

The next and most influential picture takes place four decades later compared to the previous event. The cheerful elderly couple strolls through the Wurstelprater when they suddenly find themselves in a bustling folk festival where, as they did throughout their lives, they enjoy the melodies of the Viennese waltz once again. The colorful scenery, the multitude of stalls, the dancing and merry crowds, the various characters of Viennese life (maids, coachmen, soldiers, waiters, etc.), the gypsy band playing Szabados's orchestrated csardas,⁷ as well as the hussar and the dancing peasant, all contribute to the effect. The polka, the rising balloon, the rotunda's lighting, the gas lamps' light, and the retreat melodies are also part of the colorful picture (Fővárosi Lapok, May 15, p. 734; Pesti Hírlap, January 12, 1885, p. 10; Fővárosi Lapok, May 17, 1885, p. 746; Nemzet, May p. 17, 1885, p. 3; Ország-Világ, May 23, 1885, p. 351; Vasárnapi Ujság, May 24, 1885, p. 344; Pesti Napló, May 17, 1885, 2).

The music of the ballet is a selection from about a hundred years of waltz music, including the works of Schöbl, Franz Schanner, Josef Lanner, Franz Schubert, Ludwig Morelli, C. M. v. Weber, Johann Strauß senior and junior, providing a cross-section of their best waltzes composed between 1765 and 1873. Following the Budapest premiere, the critics unanimously predicted that the success of the Viennese waltz, which in terms of both dance and music was popular not only in Vienna, would undoubtedly be replicated in Budapest. As one critic noted, "after so many mythological and 'ideal' ballets, it was pleasant to see and hear this sparkling collection of dances drawn from everyday life." (Fővárosi Lapok, May 17, 1885, p. 746)⁸

The only negative remarks were expressed by a music critic from the *Pesti Hírlap* who, rather than question the Viennese success on the basis of its local relevance, raised issue with whether the ballet featuring colorful images was really suitable for the stage of the Budapest Opera House: "All of this, of course, has a tremendous impact in Vienna because of its local interest and has a certain legitimacy there; however, only the busy scenes of the 'Prater' could arouse interest in us - in the national theater. Whether it fits within the framework of the Hungarian Royal Opera House is another question. If the management believes that it does, then it should act consistently and present the Parisian 'Jardin mabille'⁹ with its cancan in the same place next time." (K., May 17, 1885, p. 4)¹⁰

⁷Szabados Károly (1860–1892), a pianist, composer, and conductor of the Opera House, composed the music of *Vióra* (Újvári, 2022b).

⁸The well-received Budapest premiere and the expected series of successes were reported briefly in the Vienna newspapers as well (Neue Freie Presse, May 19, 1885, p. 6; Die Presse, May 18, 1885, p. 2). The play's first rehearsal in Budapest took place on May 1, 1885. (Pesti Napló, May 2, 1885, p. 6).

⁹Bal Mabilie or Jardin Mabilie was a popular open-air dance venue in Paris at that time.

¹⁰The city's German-language papers only reported on the novelty in its regular news columns, not in a more extensive review. See, e.g. Max Schütz' supplement (May 17, 1885). (It was presented together with Félicien David's opera *Lalla Roukh*.) No detailed critique of the work was published in any of the papers; the articles were limited to summarizing the content, listing the dances, and describing the scenery. This was generally the case in that era, see (Pónyai, n.d.)."

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE VIENNESE PREMIERE

The Viennese premiere in early 1885 produced an almost euphoric atmosphere as the audience greatly enjoyed the play, which offered a joyful celebration of the development and presence of the Viennese waltz genre. The presentation of the centuries-old history of the waltz put the viewers in the mood to dance themselves. The ballet takes the audience on a journey not only through the history of the genre and its most beautiful melodies but also through the history of Vienna. According to a reviewer from *Die Presse*, Johann Strauß's works were the most impressive among the musical selections (K., January 11, 1885, p. 15). The waltz selection fits perfectly with the carnival season. The concept of the play was well received, as Bayer linked the choice waltzes to an authentic picture of Viennese life. The striking choreography from Frappart¹¹ was greatly appreciated by the audience (Neue Freie Presse, January 11, 1885, p. 5).



Figure 1. Program of the premiere of *Wiener Walzer / Viennese Waltz*. Wiener Hofoper / Viennese Court Opera, January 10th, 1885 (Austrian National Library, (<https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=wtz&datum=18850110&zoom=33>))

¹¹ Louis Ruault-Frappart (pseudonym Frappart) (1832, Bernay, France – 1921, Vienna) was a dancer and choreographer. He studied under Saint-Léon in Paris and then became a dancer at the Théâtre Lyrique. He performed as a guest dancer in London, Brussels, and Amsterdam, and in 1854 he was invited by Bournonville to perform at the Kärntnertheater, where he debuted in the play *Das Fest in Albano*. He was a member of the Vienna Opera until 1895 (Stern, 1898; Jahn, 2002).

THE VIENNESE WALTZ



Figure 2. Group photo with Therese Biedermann (1863, Vienna – 1942, Vienna)
Wiener Hofoper / Viennese Court Opera, January 10th, 1885
(Theatermuseum, Vienna, 1885, www.theatermuseum.at/de/object/406169/)

The development history of the Viennese waltz can be easily traced in the play: in the first scene, at the end of the 18th century, the comfortable and slow Ländler dominated; then, in the 1830s it became much more soaring, while in recent decades it has featured particularly fiery traits. However, it is not clear from the ballet's developmental arc how the csárdás or the polka appeared in the play. The costumes designed by Franz Gaul¹² were very pleasing and not entirely unknown, as the aristocratic audience of Vienna had already admired them in the previous season of the noble *Wiener Walzer* evening shows. The reviewer highlighted the costume of Die Jugend / The Youth, which was based on the costume worn by Therese Krones¹³ in Raimund's *Mädchen aus der Feenwelt*¹⁴ [*Girl from the Fairy World*] play. Hanswurst's figure was also lifelike (W. Fr., January 11, 1885, p. 5).



Figure 3. Minna Rathner (1863, Vienna – 1913, Baden by Vienna)
as barmaid (or landlady?)
(Theatermuseum, Vienna, 1885, www.theatermuseum.at/de/object/555056/)

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¹² Franz Gaul (1837–1906) was an Austrian painter and costume designer who had been working for the Viennese Court Theaters since 1868.

¹³ Therese Krones (1801–1830) was an Austrian actress and singer.

¹⁴ The Austrian playwright and actor Ferdinand Raimund (1790–1836) premiered this play [*The Girl from Fairyland or The Farmer as a Millionaire*] at the Theater in der Leopoldstadt in 1826.



Figure 4–5. Louis Frappart (1832, Bernay – 1921, Vienna) as Leopold Pernauer (Theatermuseum, Vienna, 1885, www.theatermuseum.at/de/object/581537/ www.theatermuseum.at/de/object/581536/)

The first scene left the audience rather unmoved, but the Apollo Hall¹⁵ scene and Lanner's music were well-received. The lively Prater scene was very successful both in terms of music and staging, especially thanks to the two Strauß compositions. Johann Strauß Junior himself was present at the premiere and could personally witness the impact. The flesh-and-blood figures taken from Viennese life, and the bustling scenes were greatly appreciated; in addition, the ballet *Karnevals-Abenteuer* [*Carnival Adventure*] (Borri & Strebing, 1858) achieved unprecedented success. Bayer skillfully selected the music for the ballet (W. Fr., January 11, 1885, p. 5). Similarly, another journal appreciated the portrayal of Viennese life as entirely stage-worthy, even in the city's first theater, so it was high time for the Court Opera to put on a ballet with such a theme (*Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 11, 1885, pp. 6–7.). The only addition they made was that an inappropriate gavotte and pas de deux were included in the second act, set in the Vienna of the 1830s, which was likely only to feature Haßreiter and Miss Cereale.¹⁶ Although the two dancers' performances left nothing to be desired, such dances were never performed at weddings in the old Apollo Hall (*Wiener Zeitung*, January, 1885, p. 3). The *Wiener Presse* shared this view, but noted that the performance's conductor should have been better chosen, as Hellmesberger did not conduct the orchestra with sufficient vigor. A Strauß would have been a better choice to lead the Philharmonic (Mz, January 11, 1885, p. 3).

Although both *Wiener Walzer* and *Excelsior* were premiered in the imperial city in 1885, the pieces lost none of their popularity. Two years later, the Court Opera celebrated the 100th performance of the ballet; as such, the ballet was not presented in its usual manner. This was evident in the wedding scene of the second act, where every table and dish was covered with flowers which had been sent to the dancers,

¹⁵ "The 'Apollo Hall' was located in Vienna's wealthiest merchant quarter, which was also known as the diamond suburb by the Viennese." (Fővárosi Lapok, May 15, 1885, p. 734).

¹⁶ Luigia Cereale/Cereale (1859–1937) was an Italian dancer who made her debut in Vienna in 1878 and continued her career there; Joseph Haßreiter/Josef Hassreiter (1845–1940) was a dancer, ballet master, and choreographer, one of his most successful works being *Die Puppenfee* [The Fairy Doll].

and Frappart's entrance was met with prolonged applause. The last scene, set in Prater, was enriched with new scenes and characters from Viennese life, including a competition waltz. Frappart, the ballet master and author of the dance medley, incorporated both slow, Ländler-like steps as well as fast gallop into this section. The winner of the contest was an elderly gentleman played by Frappart. The commotion in Prater was musically accompanied by piano and accordion, as well as the ballet choir's singing and dancing of the *Vindobona Walzer*. As one review proclaims, "the audience was almost unable to stop applauding" (March 14, 1887, p. 2).¹⁷

3. THE VIENNESE WALTZ IN ITS HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

The genre of the waltz can be interpreted not only from the perspective of music and dance, but also from the point of view of Vienna's social history. It is associated with the city itself and has an almost identity-forming function, as the dance reveals the community's identity, history and present (Deaville, 2011; Jung-Kaiser, 2012). The social function of dance, the social context, and dance as a "projected manifestation of mentality" are the focus of anthropologically-oriented dance research. The investigation focuses on "understanding the communal reality", with the human being revealed through dance. The primary question is *what* and *why* they dance, and what symbolic significance the action holds (Kavecsánszki, 2013).

Wiener Walzer represents a piece of lived history, a selection of waltzes that is complemented by folk songs and occasionally other dances (Meyer, 2021). Even the origin story of the ballet provides interesting insights, as it can be approached from three directions: a piano score published by Cranz¹⁸ in 1885, a program booklet, and a possible first version of the ballet known from 1884. The latter confirms that in some primitive form, the ballet was already being performed on January 1, 1884 in the small hall of the Musikverein, which was reported in the daily press. From this perspective, the identity of the creators also raises questions, as the choreography, libretto and music are credited to Louis Frappart, Franz Gaul and Josef Bayer, but in 1884 Eduard Kremser's¹⁹ name also surfaced in connection with the authorship of the work (Meyer, 2021).²⁰

The selection of dances in the operetta carries political and cultural-historical significance: a Hungarian dance (the csárdás), a polka, and the entrance from Carl Millöcker's operetta *Der Bettelstudent* [*The Beggar Student*] represent the patriotism present in the multi-ethnic country.²¹ On the other hand, the title of the operetta places Vienna and the waltz on an equal footing, especially in the pieces that refer to

¹⁷ They soon reported on the 150th performance (Fővárosi Lapok, August 14, 1889, p. 1642). The work was part of the Vienna ballet repertoire for over 50 years and was performed more than 600 times.

¹⁸ August Heinrich Cranz (1789–1870) founded a music publishing house in Hamburg which was later continued by his son, Alwin Cranz (1834–1923) and his grandson, Oskar Cranz (1863–1929). The publishing house had a presence in numerous countries throughout Europe.

¹⁹ Eduard Kremser (1838–1914) was a composer and conductor, as well as one of the greatest collectors of Viennese songs.

²⁰ Othon de Bourgoing, a baron who is mentioned by name as an author in the Budapest newspapers, may have had connections to Kremser: "Bourgoing, the author of the libretto for 'Wiener Walzer,' is writing a new ballet text for the Vienna Opera House." (Pesti Hirlap, October 12, 1885, p. 3)

²¹ For a detailed explanation of the subject matter, see (Dóka, 2018).

the city in their titles (e.g. Johann Strauß Jr.'s *Neu-Wien* [*New-Vienna*] and Schrammel's *Vindobona, Du Herrliche Stadt* [*Vindobona, You Beautiful City*]). It is also noteworthy that the oldest waltz (Schöbl: *Die Schleicherer* [*The Sneaks*]) dates back to 1765, the era of Empress Maria Theresa, a period that was considered a political and social reference point in the imperial city at the end of the 19th century. Overall, the operetta tells the story of Vienna's history through the lens of the waltz (Meyer, 2021).

The historical narrative is also reflected in the choice of settings and the plot: the first scene takes place at Spittel Hill, an old suburban Viennese tavern that symbolizes the Biedermeier period in the late 19th century. The Apollo Hall, a famous entertainment venue that existed between 1808 and 1839, symbolizes the Vienna of the 1830s, where waltzes were regularly played. The present-day is represented by the Prater, which embodies high society entertainment and also served as the venue for the 1873 Vienna World's Fair (Ujvári, 2012). Overall, the three settings represent three emblematic places in Vienna (Meyer, 2021).

Storytelling through dance is also a part of the historical narration. In the first scene, young Leopold Pernauer conquers the heart of his beloved to the sounds of the Ländler. In the second scene, they appear as a married couple living in bourgeois prosperity as wealthy factory owners. The couple and their two daughters attend a wedding at the Apollo Hall, where the waltz and dance music represent understanding between generations. After growing tired of this "modern jumping," Pernauer dances a Gavotte as it reminds him of his youth. The generational conflict is ultimately smoothed over by an old German country dance, representing a "specific Viennese dance."²² Similarly, in the third scene, where Pernauer is portrayed as an old man, a Viennese melody entitled the *Vindobona Walzer* represents the link between past and present, as even in their old age Viennese people still attempt to dance, with the public festival evokes their youthful spirit (Meyer, 2021).

In addition to presenting a historical narrative and establishing points of connection between generations, the Prater scene in the *Wiener Walzer* depicts harmony between social classes – ladies and gentlemen, soldiers and officers, maids and workers – through dance and entertainment. The portrayal of the working class was a new phenomenon, a consequence of industrialization and urbanization; its depiction in the ballet also highlights the social history of the piece (Meyer, 2021).

As Kavecsánszki mentions it, "When the movement system of a 'dance language' leaves its original context and is received by another social class, it can be recharged with meaning and become a symbol once again." (Kavecsánszki, 2013, p. 93) While political and ideological implications often appeared in connection with folk dances performed at balls, this could also happen in reverse. In the case of a social dance, such as the waltz, symbolic meaning could also be associated with it (Kavecsánszki, 2013).

Social dances served an entertainment function in the noble-bourgeois circles and also met expectations related to social and political representation. However, instead of emphasizing national unity, dances were more likely to represent ethnic characteristics, serving as a means of expressing identity in national performances (Dóka, 2017; Kavecsánszki, 2013). During the national movements of the 19th

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²²For the development and function of dances, see (Vályi, 1969).

century, national dances had symbolic significance as carriers of cultural traits which were characteristic of national identity, such as the German-Austrian waltz or the Hungarian verbunk and csárdás (Dóka, 2018).

Dance not only carries symbolic meaning, cultural messages, and expressions of individual and collective identity, but also political content (e.g., the acknowledgment of power relations versus protest against them) an 'objectified' form of national culture," which functions as a means of creating and expressing national (and ethnic) identity on both the local and national level (Kavecsánszki, 2013).

The *Wiener Walzer* tells the story of the evolution of the waltz and the social history of the imperial city, while also showcasing the Viennese identity across the centuries. The changes, developments, and different eras - from the period until 1848 as well as the subsequent period - are harmoniously interconnected according to the ballet narrative, and there is no tension between the elderly, wealthy Pernauer and the workers of lower social status who make up the younger generation. In this sense, the ballet embodies a social utopia (Meyer, 2021).

In this context, it is necessary to refer back to the history of the creation of the ballet, as it is significant to note that the initiative came from the Gesellschaft der Wiener Kunstfreunde, which primarily aimed to receive support from the Vienna Conservatory. The organization consisted of individuals of different social statuses, including members of both noble and bourgeois origins. Richard Klemens Metternich-Winneburg was the president of the organization and was supported by Nathaniel Rothschild, Baron Othon de Bourgoing, and industrialist Nikolaus Dumba, among others. Bourgoing was probably the source of inspiration for the piece as a representative from the circle of patrons who collaborated with Eduard Kremser, a man of lower social position; Frappart and Gault later became involved in the process as well, and eventually, Johann Strauß Jr. wrote a final waltz for the novel piece. The premiere of the ballet, as well as its repetition, was open to both the aristocracy and the middle classes, which meant that the desire for the *Wiener Walzer* and subsequent dances broke down the walls between social classes and symbolized an alliance between the nobility and the bourgeoisie, which greatly influenced the period after 1848. In this way, the waltz also served as a bridge in a social sense. Thanks to the success of the Wiener Kunstfreunde evenings, the *Wiener Walzer* also reached the stage of the Court Opera (Meyer, 2021).

The use of storytelling to present the history of Viennese dance is not entirely new, as a precedent can be found in the form of Carl Michael Ziehrer's composition *Wien's Tanzmusik seit 50 Jahren: Chronologische Potpourri from 1864* [Vienna's Dance Music for 51 Years: Chronological Potpourri from 1864]. In addition to overviews of music history such as August Wilhelm Ambros's *Die Tanzmusik seit hundert Jahren* [Dance Music from 100 Years] from 1860/65, travel guides such as *Wiener Baedeker* from 1868 also presented the Viennese waltz as part of the city's historical heritage. Ambros discusses the history of the Viennese waltz from Strauß Senior, but like the ballet, he also presents its precedents (Meyer, 2021).

Franz Tschischka's *Geschichte der Stadt Wien* [History of Vienna] (1847) refers to the dance music of Johann Strauß Senior and Lanner as being famous throughout Europe, as does Karl Weiß in his *Geschichte der Stadt Wien* [History of Vienna] (1872). A decade later, in the second edition of Weiß's book, there is already a clearer differentiation; in

this version of his historical overview, he distinguishes Strauß Senior and Lanner's period from the creative period of Johann Strauss Jr., presenting the Viennese waltz as part of the modernization efforts of the turn of the century that contributed to the city's revival in modern architecture, painting, theater, and music, including Viennese dance music. Just as classical music had its place in concert halls, dance music had been part of Vienna's social life both before and after 1848 (Meyer, 2021).

In addition to being subject to interpretation from social, economic, and urban planning perspectives, the *Wiener Walzer* can also be approached from the perspective of "modern cultural history." Bayer composed a chronologically structured compilation that only provides a complete reading in conjunction with the musical and historical background of the city with an emphasis on cultural-historical aspects. In the ballet, the music presents Vienna's "musicalized" urban and social history. This pragmatic Viennese social dance brings together social classes (nobility and bourgeoisie) and creates continuity between the old and new Vienna. However, the piece does not offer a nostalgic look into the past but rather integrates the past into the present. The waltz functions as a link between a bygone era and the present, ultimately representing gradual improvement, development, and growth. The piece fits entirely into the Viennese modernism paradigm and heralds reform "as it breaks with the previously established, intellectual, and scenic ballet tools, a ballet that has paved the way for modern realism with incredible courage against all traditions" (Meyer, 2021).

4. THE VIENNESE WALTZ AMONG ARTSY ARISTOCRATS IN KOLOZSVÁR

The Wiener Walzer was a success among artsy aristocrats in Kolozsvár,²³ who planned to present it twice during a charity event in March 1888 under the direction of György Bánffy (1845–1929).²⁴ Due to the heightened anticipation, the dress rehearsal was made public for a symbolic fee (Magyar Polgár – Kolozsvár, February 28, 1888, p. 2.; Pesti Hírlap, March 2, 1888, p. 5):

Those who have seen the previous rehearsals confidently state that the old stage of Kolozsvár has not seen so much liveliness and dazzling light as the Viennese waltz will bring over these two evenings. The interest of the audience is so great that the ticket box office has become a real battlefield. It was a clever decision by the director to make the dress rehearsal public for those who did not get a seat for either of the two performances. (Magyar Polgár – Kolozsvár, February 28, 1888, p. 2)

The dress rehearsal was performed in front of an almost full house, and the Prater scene was a great success (Magyar Polgár – Kolozsvár, March 1, 1888, p. 3).

²³ The attention of the daily press in Budapest was likely aroused by the amateur performance.

²⁴ The female participants: Countesses Eliz and Marie Tholdalaghi, the Aubin sisters, Józsefné Bölöny, Baroness Eszther Bornemisza, the Fischer sisters, Countesses Pálffy and Esterházy. Male participants: Count Imre Almássy, Pál Macskássy, Baron István Apor, László Béldy, Tamás Barcsay, Domokos Barcsay, István Keller, Count István Lázár, Baron László Nyáry, István Thoroczky, Sámuel Inczedy jun., Árpád Splényi, Count Ákos Béldy, Baron György Bánffy, Count Gergely Bethlen, Count László Teleki, Ákos Sigmund, Imre Miksa, Baron Ádám Inczedy, Count. Wallis, Bálint Bethlen. See: Műkedvelő ballet [Amateur ballet in Kolozsvár] (Fővárosi Lapok, February 1, 1888, p. 231).

The support of the arts was not foreign to the noble families of Kolozsvár; they were the first to introduce tragedy, then opera, and then ballet to the city stage (Pesti Hirlap, March 7, 1888, p. 4). The enterprise was surrounded by a host of doubts and fears: “[s]peaking on stage is one thing, singing is another, but to speak and sing with your feet for three acts, as an amateur, is a new case in the history of dilettantism.” (H.V. March 2, 1888, pp. 2–3). The idea of the event came from György Bánffy, and “he was the one who worked the most on its creation.” (Pesti Hirlap, March 4, 1888, p. 9) Success did not fail to materialize: according to the local press, “The unanimous opinion is that the noble amateurs offered the richest performance in terms of light and value that one could expect from dilettantes” (Kolozsvár, March 3, 1888, p. 2). All three scenes of the ballet were excellently executed, but the wedding scene received the greatest applause. The success of the production was also due to Lajos Mazzantini (1857–1921), who taught the choreography: “The Italian dance master created a real miracle. It was clear that he taught the ballet with ambition. Everyone knew exactly what they had to do. Not only did the dance go perfectly, but everyone knew the exact position of his hands and feet in every movement and formation.” (Kolozsvár, March 3, 1888, p. 2)

5. SUMMARY

The *Wiener Walzer* presented the centuries-old history of the waltz in the form of ballet. The piece not only showcased the most beautiful melodies of the genre but also brought the history of the imperial city to life. By tying the best waltzes to authentic scenes of Viennese life and featuring characters who represented prominent local figures, the audience could easily identify with the piece. In addition, the visual world of the ballet and its lively scenes also garnered success. Alongside the history of the genre narrated through the waltz, the ballet was also able to portray the characteristic Viennese identity that had formed throughout the centuries. The success of the piece is evidenced by the fact that it was continuously performed in the imperial city until 1940.

At the end of the 19th century, the most popular forms of entertainment in Vienna were lighter genres such as operetta and ballet. However, the works staged represent more than mere entertainment; a broader significance becomes apparent when the genres are framed in terms of the socio-cultural context from which they originated and when the analysis goes beyond a work-centered interpretation focused only on internal elements. The interpretative framework must inevitably extend to the points of connection between Viennese modernity as well as Central European and Austrian history and culture, as artistic creation is part of the fabric of what we understand as culture. This paper attempted to place the dance piece back into this social, political, and cultural context and then attempted to draw conclusions regarding the mental content that defined the life of this region (Linhardt, 2006; Csáky, 2021; Ujvári, 2022a).

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Reviews

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