

## February 24, 2022 – Franz von Suppé's *Boccaccio*

A delightful operetta by Austrian composer Franz von Suppé is featured on this week's Thursday Night Opera House. *Boccaccio, or the Prince of Palermo* was based on Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and first performed in Vienna on February 1, 1879. Born Francesco Ezechiele Ermenegildo Cavaliere di Suppé-Demelli on April 18, 1819 in Dalmatia, the composer simplified and Germanized his name while living in Vienna. His mother was Viennese by birth and he was a distant relative of Gaetano Donizetti. While only *Queen of Spades* and *The Beautiful Galatea* are still regularly performed in Europe, the overtures to *Poet and Peasant* and *Light Cavalry* are frequently played at symphonic "pops" concerts.

The Florentines are angry with Giovanni Boccaccio (baritone **Hermann Prey**) for ridiculing them in his books. Boccaccio's friend Leonetto (bass-baritone **Walter Berry**) loves Beatrice (soprano **Edda Moser**) but her father, Scalza (bass **Kurt Böhme**), does not approve. Leonetto visits Beatrice while Scalza is out of town but is surprised when Scalza returns early. Boccaccio helps Leonetto escape. Meanwhile, Boccaccio himself loves Lambertuccio's (baritone **Friedrich Lenz**) adopted daughter Fiametta (soprano **Anneliese Rothenberger**). Boccaccio meets Pietro (tenor **Willi Brokmeier**), the prince of Palermo, who is in town to marry the duke's daughter. While Boccaccio woos Fiametta, Pietro woos Lotteringhi's (tenor **Adolf Dallapozza**) wife, Isabella (mezzo-soprano **Kari Lövaas**). The crowd burns Boccaccio's books.

Boccaccio, Leonetto and Pietro woo their respective loves. Mistaking Pietro for Boccaccio, the Florentines beat him. Fiametta is really the duke's daughter, and is thus engaged to Pietro. Boccaccio is asked to write a comedy to be performed for the duke's entourage. He uses the opportunity to satirize Pietro, who graciously forgives him and helps him win Fiametta.

**Willy Boskovsky** conducts the Bavarian Symphony Orchestra and the Chorus of the Bavarian State Opera in this 1975 recording.

From a 2006 Vienna Volksoper production, mezzo-soprano **Elisabeth Kuhlman** and soprano **Jennifer O'Loughlin** sing the lovely duet "Florenz hat schöne Frauen": <http://youtu.be/0eCKfu8x8Xo>.

As a bonus, we'll hear historic recordings of arias from Viennese operettas by Johann Strauss Jr., Karl Millöcker, Karl Zeller, Karl Michael Ziehrer, Franz Lehár, Richard Heuberger, Nico Dostal, Robert Stolz, and Emmerich Kálmán.