

*An der schönen, blauen Donau* (The Blue Danube), Op. 314 (1867)  
Johann Strauss, Jr. (1825 – 1899)

Many Austrians regard this most beloved waltz as their unofficial national anthem. The title, borrowed from a line by a local poet, is a marvelous example of poetic license. That the Danube is actually muddy brown or pale green, not “blue,” is immaterial; the title conjures up a romantic or nostalgic image of Vienna’s famous river, and *that* is what matters. Curiously, the original version for male chorus and orchestra was a failure. When the orchestral version was subsequently performed in London and Paris, audiences loved it, and it quickly became world-famous. In 1872, Strauss visited Boston to conduct a program of his own works, including this waltz, for an astronomical fee – \$100,000 plus expenses! The concert comprised 20,000 musicians, 100 conductors, and an audience of over 100,000.

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