



DAS LAND DES LÄCHELNS

Franz Lehár

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Logos for this production: **Rising Alternative + Opernhaus Zürich + Accentus...**

Text by Ludwig Herzer and Fritz Löhner after the libretto by Victor Léon

Opera in 3 acts

Sung in German

Recorded 2017

From Zürich Opera House

Approximately 1h47

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor	Fabio Luisi
Producer	Andreas Homoki
Choreography	Arturo Gama
Set design	Wolfgang Gussmann
Costumes	Wolfgang Gussmann, Susana Mendoza
Lightning	Franck Evin
Dramaturgy	Kathrin Brunner
Chorus Master	Ernst Raffelsberger

ARTISTIC TEAM

Prinz Sou-Chong	Piotr Beczala
Lisa	Julia Kleiter
Mi	Rebeca Olvera
Graf Gustav von Pottenstein	Spencer Lang
Tschang	Cheyene Davidson
Obereunuch	Martin Zysset

Produced by Accentus Music

Chorus and Orchestra of Oper Zürich and Philharmonia Zürich

PRESENTATION

“Always smile and always be cheerful, always satisfied, no matter what happens, smile in spite of your sorrows and a thousand aches and pains,” sings Prince Sou-Chong, thus introducing the fundamentally melancholy tone of this operetta, which even has a tragic ending in store. *Das Land des Lächelns* is one of Franz Lehár’s late operettas, which are stylistically a far cry from the frivolous Viennese operetta of the turn of the 20th century and whose symphonic density is reminiscent of the great film scores.

In *Das Land des Lächelns*, two young people from different cultures meet: during his sojourn in Vienna, the Chinese diplomat Prince Sou-Chong meets Lisa, who is from an aristocratic family. The two are attracted to one another and fall in love. When Sou-Chong is appointed Chinese prime minister, Lisa follows him to Peking, where she is confronted with strange customs and ancient traditions that put her love for Sou-Chong to the test. In the end it becomes clear that the two worlds are incompatible and will not allow the pair to share a future.

Opera writers have always been fascinated by the allure of the unfamiliar – and the psychological and social conflicts it entails. Asian subjects were particularly fashionable during the fin de siècle period, of which Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* is only the most prominent example. However, Lehár's operetta owes its popularity to one song in particular, which was linked with one of the greatest tenors of the time: "Dein ist mein ganzes Herz" (My heart is entirely yours), with which Richard Tauber sang his way into the hearts of millions. For this new production, world star Piotr Beczała, who cultivates the tradition of the famous Tauber style like no other, returned to Zurich Opera House as Sou-Chong; he had an equal partner in Julia Kleiter as Lisa. Fabio Luisi and Andreas Homoki also know that the genre of operetta requires particular care – which is why they assumed personal responsibility for this production.

SYNOPSIS

Lisa, a young Viennese woman, has many admirers, including her friend of many years, Gustl. However, Lisa has already found the love of her life: Prince Sou-Chong, a Chinese envoy in Vienna. Sou-Chong is also in love with Lisa. When the message arrives that he has been appointed Prime Minister of China and must return to his homeland, Lisa is willing to go to Peking with him.

Yet in China, the young couple's happiness is short-lived. As Prime Minister, Sou-Chong faces social constraints that Lisa cannot comprehend.

Meanwhile, Gustl has followed Lisa to China. He encounters Sou-Chong's sister, Mi, and is instantly enchanted.

Sou-Chong is reminded by his uncle, Chang, that he must marry four Chinese women. Convinced that the Chinese wedding will not compromise his sincere love for Lisa, Sou-Chong acquiesces. Lisa, however, feels betrayed. The couple has to recognise that their love has failed. Neither do Mi and Gustl have a future in China. The two couples separate.