

# Vienna Night in Miami

a true story by Richard Parker, Delray Beach, FL



The night was clear and the bright lights of Bayside, Miami, sparkled all around us as we approached the hotel in the rented limousine.

She stepped gingerly out of the long car, placing her foot carefully on the pavement and gathered up the dress around her. I took her by the hand and left the car to the attendant.

And after we walked down the long promenade to the ballroom, I turned to the right and could see the Orpheus Ensemble Orchestra on the raised stage before me. All around were the elegantly attired patrons of WTMI Radio, at their celebration of the “Miami Project to Cure Paralysis.” On the left was the Chamber Choir of the Florida Philharmonic, and around the room you could see powdered wigs, hoop skirts and Louis XIV tuxedos.



Vienna Ball Illustration

It was a magical night in 1991, with an actual orchestra as the dance band, exhibited in the halls of the giant Hotel Intercontinental in Miami.

As a ballroom dancer, of course, I already had my tail suit, together with the pique white tie, patent leather shoes and satin white gloves, so I fit in just fine.



Kaiser Ball, Vienna

In fact, a dancer fits in just fine in almost any social event. Many do not understand that most attendees to these charity affairs are people with an accumulated sum of money, but no accumulation of skill.

They come to celebrate a fantasy which they little understand. But the dancer is *living* the fantasy, and he comes to celebrate his *being*, feeling wonderfully familiar with all the surroundings, the tempo and sway of the music, the shine of the dance floor, and the steps of the figures.

Feeling it is better to celebrate life than a fantasy, the dancer folds into the ambience of the evening, and blends in seamlessly into the social fabric, being uniquely qualified to enjoy, participate and to give.

But the splendid patrons in their attire of Gucci and Armani are sadly lacking in the more natural features of the “feather and three.” And as the dancer exhibits his skill in navigation and presentation, the onlookers who lack such ability regards it as an addition to the evening, where the skill of the performer colors the evening with the spectrum of grace and beauty.



Invitation to the Waltz, Vienna

So I said to the lady (Bobbye McDonald, owner of Bobbye McDonald's studios in Ft. Lauderdale), "Let us move to the music, fill the floor and tune-out the time."

And so the evening was filled with the glide of the Viennese turn and the dress opened up and out like a huge inverted white umbrella and coated the floor with swirls and fans.

And the orchestra played the wonderful songs of the Waltz King (Strauss wrote over 150 Viennese waltzes), beginning with "The Blue Danube" followed by "Tales from the Vienna Woods."



Orpheus Ensemble Orchestra



Johann Strauss

The music seems to dissolve into you. It penetrates you as you move and it rolls through your mind and moves down through your legs. And as you connect with your partner, you become a singular unit, changing from individuals to a piece of performance art, no longer acquaintances or friends, but partners in the dance and a man and a woman together completely for that time, playing the parts on the stage of musical expression.

But now, we turn to the practical aspects of the Viennese Waltz, and I offer these observations to you:

- Realize that Johann Strauss put lots of hesitations and tempo changes in his productions, because you need a "time out" on occasion (I believe Mrs. Strauss insisted on this).
- After an 11-minute Viennese Waltz (quite common), it is not good form to ask the lady for another. Go get her a glass of water.
- As you dance to the music, remember to primarily to turn to the right, or take Natural Turns. This keeps you on the outside of the dance floor so you do not go spinning madly into the center and crash into another couple. There is a notable exception to this, and that is when you approach the orchestra.
- When you approach the orchestra, you will encounter the cellos, all arrayed in a line like brown gophers popping up out of the ground. If you take the lady in a turn to the left, you come dangerously close to the open bow movement of the cellos. The wrong turn can cause the cello player to stab the lady in the ribs which will definitely cause her to lose time. In addition, the lady will endeavor to hold her dress out, (looking so elegant), and the hem will get caught in the cello strings if you are turning to the left.
- As you attempt to come to the lady's aid, you will pull the cello player off the stage and onto the floor. The resulting splintering of wood occurring when the rest of the dance company gallops down on the scene will be distracting to the other orchestra members.



Quebec Vienna Ball

The lady will not so easily forget this incident.