THE OPERETTA EMPIRE:
POPULAR VIENNESE MUSIC THEATER AND AUSTRIAN IDENTITY,
1900-1930

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A DISSERTATION
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY
OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
PROGRAM IN MUSICOLOGY

Advisor: Wendy Heller

June 2014
Abstract

Operetta was the most popular form of popular entertainment in the Vienna of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This dissertation examines a selection of works by four of the most prominent operetta composers of the genre’s so-called Silver Age: Franz Lehár, Emmerich Kálmán, Oscar Straus, and Leo Fall. Considering operetta between 1900 and 1930, I argue that operetta was a hybrid genre whose multivalent influences enabled it to serve as an important nexus of late imperial cultural identity and, after the empire’s disappearance, a site of imperial memory. As operetta became a mass art form, I argue, it altered traditional hierarchies of aristocratic, folk and popular culture, making its dismissal and condemnation by the high art establishment a necessity.

My first chapter introduces Silver Age operetta as a cultural system, including its production as well as its historiography and historical background. In my second chapter, I outline the generational shift of composers that launched the Silver Age and its first great work: Franz Lehár’s *Die lustige Witwe*, which I argue targeted a newly cosmopolitan and modern Vienna and thematized operetta’s own conflict between Viennese and French influences. My third chapter considers operetta’s balance of the s critically privileged satirical and the often-condemned sentimental in light of, Oscar Straus’s *Ein Walzertraum* and Franz Lehár’s *Eva*.

My fourth chapter turns to the marketing of “Hungarian passion” to the Viennese through Emmerich Kálmán’s 1912 “gypsy operetta” *Der Zigeunerprimas*. My fifth chapter considers the role of operetta in World War I, examining Karl Kraus’s critique of operetta as propaganda as well as Kálmán’s actual propaganda operetta *Gold gab ich für Eisen* (1914) and the frenzied *Die Csárdásfürstin* (1916). My final chapter analyzes the legacy of the empire in several
exotic operettas of the 1920s, including Leo Fall's *Die Rose von Stambul*, Kálmán's *Die Bajadere*, and Franz Lehár's *Das Land des Lächelns*. My epilogue considers operetta’s dissolution in the face of competition from revue and film, as seen in the fractured late operetta *Die Herzogin von Chicago* (1928).
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Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the wisdom and support of many people. I am grateful first to my generous and brilliant advisor, Wendy Heller, whose close reading and patience have taught me so much. My committee members Scott Burnham and Mary Ann Smart also provided invaluable advice. Simon Morrison also provided important support in the early stages of this project.

My months in the libraries of Vienna and St. Pölten were generously funded by a study grant from the Fulbright Commission of the Austrian-American Educational Association, the Princeton University Department of Music’s Bryan Fund. I was allowed a comfortable final year of writing thanks to a Dissertation Completion Fellowship funded by the Mellon Foundation and administered by the American Council of Learned Societies. Additional funding for my trip to the Operetta Archives in Los Angeles was funded by a grant from the Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies at Princeton and conference travel was underwritten by the Austrian Cultural Forum. I am glad that interest in the scholarly study of operetta is alive in Austrian institutions.

Day to day, my most important source of scholarly support has been my colleagues at Princeton, who have provided copious feedback and stimulation, both formal and informal. I am particularly grateful to Ellen Lockhart, Jamie Greenberg Reuland, Kate Steiner, Nick Lockey, Bibiana Gattozzi, Alice Miller Cotter, Carolann Buff, Johanna Frymoyer, Elise Bonner, and John Reuland.

My parents have supported my graduate school experience from the beginning (which was probably in elementary school), and I am thankful that they stuck with me until the lengthy end. I also benefitted from the moral and musicological support of Barbara Milewski, Saraswathi
Shukla, Mark Loria, Lucy Barnhouse, Quinn Collins, Leila Adu, Anna Zayaruznaya, and most particularly my Viennese comrades Sebastian Smallshaw and Radmila Schweitzer.

I have been delighted how many musicologists and other scholars have encouraged me in my work and offered to read drafts, help me with archives, or discuss my topic. I am particularly grateful to Stefan Frey, Derek Scott, Lynn Hooker, Zoë Lang, Christopher Hailey, Morten Solvik, Christopher Gibbs, Michael Miller, and the anonymous reviewers solicited by the ACLS and Cambridge Opera Journal. I am also grateful for the feedback I received presenting portions of this work at meetings of the American Musicological Society, Hungarian-American Educators’ Association, Austrian Studies Association, and the Wagner World Wide conference at the University of South Carolina. I am also grateful to the librarians who patiently retrieved for me dozens of scripts and microfilms, particularly the periodicals staff of the Wienbibliothek, the staff of the Landesarchiv Niederösterreich, and the generous theater curators of the New York Public Library. Christopher Hailey and Michael Haas were benefactors of Viennese apartments, Stacy Wolfe and Regina Compton helped me with tricky libraries, and Darwin Scott bought Princeton’s Mendel Music Library a number of scores that, he rightfully pointed out, looked quite silly. I hope that they will find use in the future.
Abbreviations

ÖNB MS  Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Musiksammlung
ÖNB TS  Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Theatersammlung
ÖTM  Österreichisches Theatermuseum
WB  Wienbibliothek (formerly the Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek)
WBM  Wienbibliothek, Musiksammlung
WBH  Wienbibliothek, Handschriftsammlung
NÖLA  Niederösterreichische Landesarchiv St. Pölten
LA  Lehár-Archive, Stadtrechtsgemeinde, Bad Ischl, Austria
AK  Akademie der Künste, Berlin
SB  Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin
NYPL  New York Public Library (Billy Rose Theatre Collection unless otherwise noted)
HT  Harvard University Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Cambridge
OA  Operetta Archives, Los Angeles
Chapter 1

Introduction:
Operetta and Society
in Vienna

At the beginning of Ivan Cankar’s short story “Before the Goal,” Karl Jeréb, a Slovenian immigrant in Vienna, takes himself to the theater.¹ He leaves home at six in the evening, passing workers leaving factories, seamstresses, servants, and drunks. Eventually he reaches the grand streets of tall buildings and elegant people. As the city stares back at him, his head begins to sink in shame. When he reaches the theater, he pauses to watch the wealthy arrive in their carriages before slipping through the crowd and climbing to the third gallery, the highest and cheapest level of the theater.²

¹Ivan Cankar, “Vor dem Ziel,” in Vor dem Ziel: Literarische Skizzen aus Wien, trans. Erwin Köstler (Klangenfurt: Drava Verlag, 1995). The protagonist is based on Cankar himself. The text used here is Köstler’s German translation from the Slovenian; the original title is “Pred ciljem.” The story was first published in Ivan Cankar, Knjiga za labkomiselne ljudi (Ljubljana: L. Schwentner, 1901).

²The description of the theater as near the center of the city suggests that it is most likely the Theater an der Wien, located only just south of the center city across the Resselpark. Jeréb’s walk might trace the path between the outer districts of Ottakring or Rudolfsheim through the Vorstadt’s Neubau or Josefstadt, through Mariahilf, arriving in the fourth district, Wieden. Another possibility is the
When the performance begins, he does not hear precisely what was being said onstage, nor does he care. He simply enjoys the singing, the speaking, the acting, and is enthralled when the sound of the violins soars out of the orchestra pit. An idle, sweet sensation envelops him. It is as if he were “submerged up to his face in pure, lukewarm water, somnolent.”

Karl Jéreb had gone to the operetta.

***

Operetta was the most popular genre of musical entertainment in the Vienna of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Over the course of the 51 years of the Dual Empire—from 1867 to 1918—the city modernized, diversified, and grew, and after the Great War was instantly transformed from the nerve center of Europe’s last surviving multinational empire to the capital of the small Austrian republic, whereupon it began to shrink and homogenize once more. This study examines Viennese operetta’s so-called Silver Age, including the second half of this period and extending into Austria’s post-World War I First Republic. Focusing on the works of four of the most important composers of the time—Franz Lehár, Emmerich Kálmán, Oscar Straus, and Leo Fall—it considers operetta’s development as a genre, its place and function in a music-obsessed society, and its dialogue with the rapidly changing culture that produced it. I begin with

Carltheater, located in the somewhat less glamorous Leopoldstadt, north of the city center and across the Donaukanal, placing Jéreb’s home in Alsergrund or Brigittenau. See map, Figure 1.1.

3 “Es war ihm, als würde er baden, als würde er bis zu den Lippen in reinem, lauwarmem Wasser liegen, schlaftrig.” Cankar, “Vor dem Ziel,” 64.

the ascent of Franz Lehár’s *Die lustige Witwe*, which launched the Silver Age, and end with operetta’s decline in in the face of economic instability and increased competition from film and revue in the early 1930’s.

Like the convoluted bureaucracy that bound the empire itself, operetta achieved mass popularity through negotiation and hybridization. Operetta offered something for everyone. Drawing on a rich vocabulary of influences, conventions, and tropes, it stood in an uneasy zone between art and entertainment, central but liminal, its influences encompassing both from vaudeville to Wagner, alternating quasi-operatic arias with the latest international dance styles, and drawing on national traditions ranging from its progenitor of French *opérette* to Hungarian “gypsy music.” Some of its composers and performers hailed from the conservatory and opera house, others from nightclubs and the army—and many from both. They went to the Café Grienstedl, and they went to the circus. Operetta was the most exalted form of low art. When Gustav Mahler brought *Die Fledermaus* to the Hofoper in 1891, it was enshrined as the lowest form of high art as well. While Viennese operetta’s nineteenth-century Golden Age composers—Johann Strauss II, Carl Millöcker, Franz von Suppé, and Carl Zeller—sought to create traditionally Viennese works, Silver Age operettas embraced cosmopolitanism, modernity, and sentiment alongside the usual waltzes. They were central to a broader growth of an internationalized network of mass entertainment.

While this multifaceted identity was what allowed operetta to speak to such a wide audience, it also caused enormous instability in its composition and reception. For some critics, operetta represented an ennoblement of the public taste in the direction of proper opera, to others it was a dangerously hypnotic form of escapism. It was in the late nineteenth century that the German distinction between *E-* (*Ernste*, serious) and *U-* (*Unterhaltung*, entertainment)
music began to take root. Operetta provided critics with a test case for the construction of this binary, its ambition and complexity constantly pushed towards $E$ but in the era of modernism its mainstream, bourgeois status doomed it as forever $U$. Ultimately, it was the porosity of the $U/E$ boundary that makes it so strictly policed.

Operetta was, according to high art practitioners and critics such as Karl Kraus, Theodor Adorno, Ernst Krenek, and many others, uppity, with pretensions to an artistic value not applicable to art with such blatantly commercial intentions and broad an audience. For Carl Dahlhaus, it is “trivial music,” important on a sociological level but insignificant on the larger musicological continuum of “compositional history” due to its perceived lack of technical innovation and influence beyond its own boundaries of genre. For its critics of the Left, operetta was disgracefully sentimental, materialistically capitalist and, ultimately, part of the culture industry. To these critics, Offenbach’s nineteenth-century satiric operettas represented a medium of social commentary combined with ironic detachment unhappily supplanted in the Silver Age.

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6 Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 228. (The German original dates from 1980.) Richard Taruskin defends the importance of operetta (against charges that “operetta was an unimportant genre in music history… because it did not contribute to the evolution of musical style,” an absolutely clear if unstated allusion to Dahlhaus, by its normalizing of the “Wienerische Note”—a suspended sixth over the tonic—as consonant, but he discusses only *Die Fledermaus*, which in terms of the development of Viennese operetta is a very early work. Richard Taruskin, *Oxford History of Western Music: Music in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 649.
by sentimental identification and mass-produced pathos. Modern scholars have perpetuated this critique, preferring to ignore operetta or reduce it to a foil to worthier endeavors. While the time and place immortalized by Hermann Broch and Carl Schorske as “fin-de-siècle Vienna” is celebrated as a cultural paradise, operetta is rarely included among its achievements. In surveys of fin-de-siècle Viennese culture, the grand achievements of Freud, Mahler, Klimt and Schoenberg are given a highbrow unity of modernist purpose while operetta is mentioned in passing as a racy curiosity low in nutrition and high in calories. But its status as a historical footnote belies its tremendous ubiquity and broad appeal, as well as its role as a nexus for a variety of anxieties of the period, both those explicitly thematized on the operetta stage and those projected by both fans and critics.

Vienna’s wide world of theater included different venues for different social and economic classes—a defining feature of post-Industrial Revolution mass entertainment. But operetta needed to appeal to as wide an audience as possible to remain economically sustainable: it was the most expensive and complicated form of popular culture in the city (playing in large theaters with a sizable cast, chorus, dancers, and orchestra, plus elaborate sets and costumes), and

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7 The foremost advocate for this position is Viennese gadfly Karl Kraus, whose critique will be examined in detail later in this dissertation, but is also evident in Siegfried Kracauer’s study of Offenbach, Siegfried Kracauer, Jacques Offenbach und das Paris seiner Zeit, ed. Karsten Witte (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976).
9 Scott, Sounds of the Metropolis, 9–12. Scott’s study focuses on the mid-nineteenth century, but is readily applicable to the “long” nineteenth century, up to World War I. Marion Linhardt examines this phenomenon in Vienna-specific terms in Marion Linhardt, Residenzstadt und Metropole: Zu einer kulturellen Topographie des Wiener Unterhaltungstheaters (1858–1918), Theatron (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2006).
lacked the security of a patron system or the imperial subventions like those which kept the Hofoper and Burgtheater afloat. Each operetta was created to be as popular as possible, wrote influential librettist Victor Léon. One had to write with an eye on the box office:

What suits the aristocrat in the orchestra will not always suit the cook in the gallery, but what suits the cook in the gallery will always also suit the aristocrats. Therefore one works first and foremost for the cook, for the gallery, for the popular success. But nonetheless: constant cries for better, for quality.\(^\text{10}\)

Operetta, Léon wrote with the deference of one who has read his Schopenhauer, never aspired to be “the pure product of the will of an artist, of what moves him, of what forced into form through psychic propulsion.”\(^\text{11}\) If people wanted art, Léon wrote, they would go to spoken theater or to the opera. Yet other figures in the operetta world, such as Franz Lehár, proclaimed that operetta could serve a didactic purpose and, accordingly, by improving itself, “elevate the public taste.”\(^\text{12}\)

Despite or because of its contested status, operetta was sufficiently ubiquitous to serve as an important barometer for the populace. As the most lucrative and prestigious market in Central Europe, Vienna was a magnet for composers, writers, and actors to come and make their fortune, and their mix of ethnicities mirrored that of their audience—with the exception that they were much more likely to be Jewish. In a city already split not only by class but also nationality, ethnicity, religion, and education, operetta served as cultural glue. It gave the shaky coalition of the city and even the Austro-Hungarian Empire a common song, and its identity

\(^{10}\) “Was der Gnädigen im Parkett gefällt, gefällt nicht immer de r Köchin auf der Galerie…’ Man arbeitet also in erster Linie für die Köchin, für die Galerie, für den populären Erfolg. Trotz desselben: fortwährendes Geschrei nach Besserem, nach Qualität.” Victor Léon, “Bittere Operettenwahrheiten,” *Komödic: Wochenrevue für Bühne und Film*, January 9, 1923.

\(^{11}\) “Das reine Produkt des Willens eines Künstlers, der das gibt, was in ihm ruht und was er durch eine psychische Triebkraft förmlich gezwungen ist zu singen und zu sagen.” Ibid.

became tightly bound with the coalition of the empire. After the empire’s disappearance in 1919, operetta was transformed overnight; its conventional subjects now had a whole new meaning. Jewish creators of operetta, the imperial subjects of their librettos, and the mixture of national characters all had to be reconfigured. In the unstable First Republic, operetta became nostalgic, reimagining the empire in ever-sunnier terms.

Silver Age operetta’s dramaturgical language—very different from that of the mid-nineteenth century—strengthened its function as a refuge and dream space for its audiences. In Offenbach’s day, operetta had traded in exaggerated, commedia dell’arte-like types strictly estranged from reality; in the twentieth characters became figures of sentimental identification for the audience. Operetta echoed high art’s turn to Innerlichkeit, interiority, though it stopped well short of expressionism. Characters’ music gave lyrical, quasi-Wagnerian declamation to their inner emotional lives, shedding the more dry, rhythmically driven scores of the nineteenth century. Nearly every operetta plot of the Silver Age concentrates on a romantic relationship threatened by pragmatic concerns. There are no villains, only misunderstandings and social conventions threaten their relationships. Men and women fell in and out of love, worried about the impressions they made, and voiced their desires in song.

Operetta librettos balanced social reality and romantic idealism. Like the actors themselves, operetta characters provided fantasies for their audiences. The characters onstage were glamorous, rich, and happy in ways inaccessible to many of their audience members (as seen in Karl Jeréb’s journey from grim outer suburb to the glamorous theater), and yet the problems the libretto made them face spoke—absolutely intentionally—to their daily concerns. Audiences watched the beautiful people struggle with their finances, toil at boring jobs, attempt to negotiate convoluted love lives, and experience the rapid changes of fortune common both to modern city
life and farcical plot mechanics. For Marxist critics, Silver Age operetta was a textbook example of false consciousness.

In the inevitable happy ending which concludes every operetta, barriers are overcome and the ideal of a romantic marriage that is also economically advantageous always triumphs.\(^{13}\) These sunny endings led to frequent charges of sentimentality and escapism, carrying with them a reflexively negative judgment. These accusations would intensify as the genre became more and more grandiose in the 1920s. Operetta’s heritage, whether French, Austrian, or German, would continue to be contested even as it developed into something new altogether. Operetta never found a secure footing in the critical sphere.

In this dissertation, I trace the history of Silver Age operetta and its reception through key works by the four of its most important composers: Franz Lehár, Oscar Straus, Leo Fall, and Emmerich Kálmán. My scope is from the beginning of the Silver Age, around 1900, to 1935, when the operetta’s decline in the face of economic depression and competition from sound film had rendered it increasingly irrelevant. My goal is not only to explore the genre and the works themselves but also their role as a nexus in Vienna’s cultural ecosystem and how they reacted to and were shaped by criticism, current events, and social concerns.\(^{14}\)

Operetta’s dependency on market forces is conventionally considered a liability and disqualification from serious study. I consider its commercial nature not as a handicap but as a

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\(^{14}\) This kind of historical network formation is defined as “thick description” by Clifford Geertz. Clifford Geertz, “Art as a Cultural System,” *MLN* 91, no. 6 (December 1, 1976): 1473–99; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
central feature of the genre. Operettas that did not resonate with their audiences disappeared without a trace, while those that endured were imitated by other composers and librettists. Most of the operettas I will examine were successful, meaning that they enjoyed widespread and relatively sustained popularity in Viennese theaters. They inspired significant coverage in the Viennese media and were more apt to influence subsequent works. Many of these works were also successful internationally. The fame and fortune that could be gained through a success in London or New York became an incentive for composers and librettists to tailor their works to more generic rather than specifically Viennese tastes, or to heavily adapt (or have others adapt) their works for a foreign audience. International reception, however, is outside the scope of this study.  

This first chapter introduces operetta and its historiography. First, I sketch the social and political world of Vienna around 1900 and the development of operetta in the city up to this point, including the political and demographic upheavals of the late nineteenth century. I then consider the historiographical background that has made “fin-de-siècle Vienna” an object of scholarly and popular fascination, and the reasons why operetta and other popular culture of the period has largely been neglected in the cultural history and musicological scholarship of this period. Finally, I outline the theatrical conditions under which operetta operated, including theaters, process of composition, plot conventions, production conditions, censorship, critics, and

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audience demographics. This will introduce many of the major players and power dynamics that will be at play in subsequent chapters in my analyses of individual operettas.

My second chapter begins in the chaotic world of operetta around 1900, when the genre was on the cusp of a generational shift from the Gold to Silver Age. This transformation was completed in the premiere of Die lustige Witwe in 1905, whose analysis is the centerpiece of the chapter. Mythologized as a once-in-a-century success, fact and fiction often mix freely in accounts of its origins. A step back into the chaotic five years that preceded it, particularly the debate between French and native Austrian theatrical forms, throws its innovations into greater focus, and suggest that its phenomenal popularity was less a fluke than a coalescing of many trends that had been unfolding in the operetta world for the previous few years. These changes included experimentation in form, the staging of immigration issues, and the influence of English operetta in Vienna. Die lustige Witwe, I argue, thematized various conflicts about operetta’s future, contrasting a frivolous Paris with a more soulful, folk-inspired homeland. Simultaneously, its portrayal of homesick immigrants and lazy workers spoke directly to its ethnically diverse middle- and lower-class audience.16

The social function and discourses of representation of operetta after Die lustige Witwe are the subject of my third chapter. I further examine operetta’s means of engaging with its audience’s lives and the power dynamics between audiences, composers, and the art music establishment. Operetta was largely created by Jews, still a restricted group in Vienna, and often intended to serve a sentimental function, appealing to its audience’s emotions rather than their rationality (leading to its frequent gendering as female). These dubious associations were at play in the many art music/popular music debates of this period, in which operetta was often

16 An article based on portions of this chapter is forthcoming in Cambridge Opera Journal, late 2014.
condemned as racially and sexually suspect. While operetta did offer an escape and some voice for these oppressed and denigrated groups, it was only subversive within its own limited dream space. Oscar Straus’s 1907 hit *Ein Walzertraum* provides a particularly interesting example. The operetta portrays a *Damenkapelle*, an all-woman orchestra, who bring the sounds and joy of Vienna to a remote principality and its homesick prince. Yet despite the sentimentality of much of the music, it ultimately affirms that this world of pure pleasure is only an unattainable fantasy.

In contrast, Franz Lehár’s 1912 *Eva* purports to show social reality, but despite its gritty factory setting its Cinderella-like tale never achieves plausibility, and Lehár’s music shows an increasing grandeur befitting a fairy-tale subject matter.¹⁷

In my fourth chapter, I turn to the portrayal of the Hungarian half of the empire in Viennese operetta. While Budapest was only a few hours away from Vienna and the two cities’ operetta industries enjoyed some degree of exchange, the Viennese image of Hungary, particularly of its music, depended more on the stereotype of the temperamental gypsy than it did on any lived experience. This is vividly demonstrated in the early career of Hungarian composer Emmerich Kálmán. Kálmán’s first operetta (*Tatárjárás*, 1908) was successful in Budapest but found lacking in Vienna for, among other things, the Hungarian “fire” that audiences expected of a composer of his background. When writing for Vienna in his later *Der Zigeunerprimas* (1912), Kálmán learned how to market his Hungarian identity, setting up another musical dualism between Hungarian and Viennese music. He was, according to critics, a true “Ausgleichkomponist.”¹⁸

¹⁷ The portion of this chapter dealing with Oscar Straus’s *Die lustigen Nibelungen* was part of a presentation at the 2012 American Musicological Society annual meeting in New Orleans.

¹⁸ Portions of this chapter were presented at the May 2013 meeting of the American Hungarian Educators’ Association, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
My fifth chapter considers operetta during World War I. It begins with Kálmán and Victor Léon’s *Gold gab ich für Eisen* (1914), a rustic *Singspiel* written as war propaganda. But despite its patriotism, its endorsement of the war is hardly unequivocal. I argue that it reproduced the view of the war frequently modeled by the media as suitable for Austrian women: open to expressions of grief and suspicious of patriotism. The work of war as portrayed in this operetta is primarily emotional rather than physical hardship. Simultaneously, it creates a historical background for a confusing war, using folk song quotation and lore to link it with the Napoleonic conflict with the French. *Gold gab ich für Eisen*, along with operetta in general, came under considerable criticism from journalist Karl Kraus, who called operetta a tool of the powerful to instill blind patriotism and apathy among the common citizens. I examine Kálmán’s 1915 operetta *Die Csádásfürstin* in light of Kraus’s critique, and argue that Kálmán’s dualism between an outdated and hypocritical Viennese society and a nihilistic Hungarian cabaret represents a greater independence of perspective than Kraus suggested.¹⁹

My sixth chapter examines a series of exotic operettas dating from 1916 to 1929 which portray crises of succession and a confrontation with the unknown. In most of these works, a romance between a European and an exotic foreigner is threatened by social convention. These works defy many conventions of exoticism, often undercutting their own attempts to portray a foreign land and reflecting the anxieties of a city suddenly dethroned from its imperial status. These works include *Die Rose von Stambul*, an operetta by Leo Fall about Turkish feminists, Kálmán’s *Die Bajadere*, a purposefully inauthentic operetta about an operetta about India, and Lehár’s *Das Land des Lächelns*, in which the forces of China crush an international romance. The

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¹⁹ Portions of this chapter were presented at the Austrian Studies Association’s February 2014 conference in Austin, Texas.
exotic is repeatedly revealed to be only a titillating surface feature that conceals universal human characteristics. The only villains are the societies that keep the international couples apart. (This perspective gains particular force in Das Land des Lächelns, written by Jewish librettists in 1929, a period of rapidly increasing anti-Semitism.) Increasingly over-the-top scores help these characters retreat ever further into themselves, and further away from society.

As operetta was threatened by competition from revue and film, it increasingly adopted their conventions, including looser plots, and greater visual spectacle. Simultaneously, operetta commemorated the departed empire with which it still maintained a special relationship. Such nostalgia and appropriation could take on surreal form, seen in my epilogue in an analysis of Kálmán’s Die Herzogin von Chicago. While this operetta uses the old device of the tinpot kingdom to contrast old Habsburg music with a visiting American millionairess’s jazz band, to spectacular musical effect, the kingdom’s prince is a despot, and needs to generosity and open-mindedness from the American. She, in turn, needs to learn respect for tradition. Yet the tradition of operetta seems to have disintegrated.

EMPIRE AND METROPOLIS

Empire

In 1900, Vienna was in the midst of a rapid and belated modernization, even while imperial politics remained more or less static. The city was one of two capitals of the last great multinational empire in Europe and the economic and diplomatic center of the region.\textsuperscript{20} Emperor Franz Joseph I had sat on the imperial throne since 1848, providing continuity and

\textsuperscript{20} Since the Compromise of 1867 it had shared the title of capital with Budapest, but the latter never approached Vienna’s international stature.
pragmatic leadership. For his subjects, he was an avuncular, beloved presence, but also the exalted embodiment of the state’s old-fashioned grandeur. Whether through Franz Joseph’s willingness to compromise or through sheer inertia, the empire had, somewhat miraculously, emerged from the turmoil of the nineteenth century vulnerable but largely intact. Historians have often characterized the empire as an anachronism, the “old man of Europe” who had outlived his time. Such views were not unknown in the fin de siècle as well. But to his Viennese subjects, the empire and emperor was reassuring and a large-scale validation of Vienna’s status as a blessed, traditional, and unique city.

Yet the empire was not entirely untouched by the times. The nationalist revolutions and rebellions of the nineteenth century had cost Austria-Hungary some territory. In the Balkans, nationalist conflicts flared up on a regular basis until World War I. The slow-moving machinery of state did make some adaptations, such as the economic modernization of the 1870s Gründerzeit, concessions to ethnic minorities, and gradual and cautious political liberalization (including universal male suffrage in Austria in late 1906; women did not receive the right to vote until after the war).

Most importantly, the Compromise of 1867 bisected the Austrian Empire into the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Austrian half (technically “Cisleithania”) was occupied primarily by German-speakers and Bohemians; the Hungarian half was more diverse, with a mixture of Hungarians and various Slavic nationalities such as Slovakians, Slovenians and Ruthenians as well as Romanians.21 Ethnic Germans tended to call themselves German rather than Austrian,

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21 Statistics can be found in the appendix of Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974). The most detailed breakdown is found in the empire’s official annual census publications, for the Austrian half of the empire, K.K. Österreichische Staatliche Zentralkommission, *Österreichisches statistisches Handbuch* (Vienna: A. Hölder, 1883). For the
and Austria did not exist as a strong national entity. The “Austrian idea,” as proposed during and after World War I by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, defined Austrian nationality negatively, stating that to be Austrian was to belong to the German spirit but not the German nation, and that Austria served an essential mediating function in the center of Europe.\(^2\)

The Compromise of 1867 was more or less successful in accommodating the Hungarians, who in the revolutions and uprisings of 1848 and 1867 had emerged as the most numerous, organized, and dangerous of non-Germanic populations. The terms of the agreement granted Hungary considerable sovereignty, setting up two parallel governments with independent parliaments and internal governments. Imperial institutions shared between the two halves were designated as “kaiserliche und königliche” or “k.u.k.,” a moniker referring to the Habsburg monarch’s dual title of Emperor (Kaiser) of Austria and King (König) of Hungary. The k.u.k. institutions included the armed forces (both army and navy), diplomatic service, finance ministry, and the ruling Habsburg house itself.\(^3\) The abbreviation as pronounced in German, “ka und ka,” would be elaborated into the nickname “Kakania.” While the Austro-Hungarian Empire was an enormous, diverse, and in some places densely populated region, Kakania was its labyrinthine bureaucracy and sprawling, ill-equipped army. These institutions and the iconography associated with them were closely linked with those of the Emperor himself. Symbols—including the old man’s public persona—sometimes seemed to be the only things tying the empire together.


Kakania did not make its most famous literary appearance until the empire itself was history, when it was embalmed in Robert Musil’s *The Man Without Qualities.*

While Franz Joseph still commanded a considerable personal cult, by the twentieth century routine had largely replaced any higher-flown ideals of imperial glory. The English journalist Henry Wickham Steed wrote in 1913:

> I have been unable to perceive during ten years of constant observation and experience—years, moreover, filled with struggle and crisis—any sufficient reason why, with moderate foresight on the part of the part of the Dynasty, the Hapsburg [sic] Monarchy should not retain its rightful place in the European community. Its internal crises are often crises of growth rather than decay…. Faith in the Divine Right of Kings has faded and is not likely to revive. But the record of some republics and the advantages of continuity secured by some monarchies have assuredly reinforced the monarchical position and brought into play utilitarian considerations that would have seemed impious to legitimists of the old school.

The practical appeal of being part of a large, strangely persistent state instead of a small, unstable one helped keep most of the outlying provinces stitched together. Periodic crises erupted, but the empire, in the words of the nineteenth-century statesman Count Eduard Taaffe, managed to *fortwursten*, or muddle onwards.

**Metropolis**

While the empire itself attempted to stop time, growth and change in Vienna evinced the upheavals of industrial and technological transformation. The city, where the many nationalities

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24 Robert Musil described the conflicts between Austria and Hungary: “They were so violent that they jammed the machinery of government and brought it to a dead stop several times a year, but in the intervals and during the deadlocks people got along perfectly well and acted as if nothing had happened. And in fact, nothing really bad happened. It was only that everyone’s natural resentment of everyone else’s efforts to get ahead, a resentment we all feel nowadays, had crystallized earlier in Kakania, where it can be said to have assumed the form of a sublimated ceremonial rite, which could have had a great future had its development not been cut prematurely short by a catastrophe.” Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, ed. Burton Pike, trans. Sophie Wilkins (London: Picador, 1995), 29–30.

of the empire met (if not quite proportionately to the rest of its territory), was the epicenter for friction between modern and the anti-modern. Between the Gründerzeit of the 1860s and the early twentieth century, the city was transformed from a small, relatively homogenous German-speaking political and cultural center into a cosmopolitan metropolis. Industrialization and rapid population growth created crowds and alienation, in which people were just another cog in an incomprehensible machine. The journalist Felix Salten opened Wurstelprater, his account of the leisure time of the working classes (itself a new phenomenon) with a description of the masses rushing into Vienna’s largest park on a weekend. The populace is defined not as individuals but an unstoppable force akin to water, the sounds of a locomotive replacing human voices:

Through the high viaduct, over the piping of the locomotives, one goes down the wide sunny street to the stalls. People ceaselessly teem under the columns of the viaduct, as if the floodgates of a large city were open and everything, laziness and happiness, singing boredom and strolling squalor, everything that can’t find a place in the bustling life between the tall houses, floods out in a giant reservoir.²⁶

Similarly, Robert Musil describes the changing face of the city’s topography as “like a boiling bubble inside a pot made of the durable stuff of buildings, laws, regulations, and historical traditions.”²⁷

Industrialization in Vienna was relatively modest compared to the larger European cities of Paris and London. The machinery of the empire and its army continued to be the city’s


leading employer. And Vienna was resolutely the home of small, family-run shops and artisans, never the site of a Harrods or Galeries Lafayette, bearing little resemblance to Walter Benjamin’s Paris. Nevertheless, the city did experience the development of electricity and mass production and a rather belated transition to a wage labor economy. While Vienna never became a center of major heavy industry, the numerous factories devoted to light manufacturing (textiles, paper, and so on) employed more and more people. The modern industrial world coexisted with the stubborn traditional one in an uneasy alliance between old and new.

The resulting demand for unskilled labor was accommodated by a major demographic shift. Between 1860 and 1910, the city experienced immense population growth and diversification. The first modern census in 1857 recorded a population of 476,000 inhabitants. By 1880 this was 726,000, and by 1890 it had risen to 1,360,000, partly thanks to the incorporation of outlying suburbs into the official city limits as districts XI to XIX. In 1900, the population had reached 1,675,000; in 1910 its approximate apex of 2,031,000. The new inhabitants came largely from within the empire, most numerously from the unindustrialized areas of Bohemia and Moravia. The majority of the new arrivals were unskilled laborers of the lower social classes. (After World War I, non-Germanic citizens moved away to their new nation-states, and the population began to shrink.)

The previously homogenous, often provincial Viennese were now in the most literal sense surrounded by strangers with new languages, new food, and new traditions. The city expanded

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Figure 1.1: Map of Vienna (1905), including theaters and landmarks\textsuperscript{30}

Table 1.1: Map Key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operetta Theaters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Theater an der Wien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Carl-Theater</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Theater in der Josefstadt</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Raimund-Theater</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Deutsches-Volkstheater</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bürgertheater</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kaiserjubiläums-Stadttheater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Johann-Strauss-Theater</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Landmarks</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Stephansdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Hofburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Hofoper/Staatsoper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Burgtheater</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

geographically as well. (A 1905 city map including the Innere Stadt and Vorstadt with major landmarks indicated appears as Figure 1.1; its key is Table 1.1)

The power center of Vienna was and is the Hofburg, the official residence of the ruling family and the center for the empire’s administration; the visual center is the tower of Stephansdom. The most illustrious of city residents lived nearby in the city's core, known as the innere Stadt (inner city) and officially as the first district (I). The fortifications that had surrounded this center district were torn down in 1858 to create the Ringstrasse, a wide boulevard lined on either side by cultural and governmental institutions, constructed in a magnificent array of historical architectural styles. The style of each building fit its function by suggesting its inhabitant’s historic golden age: an Italianate Renaissance palazzo for the Hofoper (later the Staatsoper), high Gothic turrets for the City Hall, Grecian columns for the Parliament.31

Surrounding the Ringstrasse was the Vorstadt, numbered as districts II through IX. This area was home to the bourgeoisie and middle class, addresses respectable but less illustrious than

31 This is the subject of the first chapter of Schorske, Fin-de-Siècle Vienna, 24–115.
those in the first district. The Vorstadt was the site of most of the city’s operetta and other commercial theaters (only the state-supported, exalted Burgtheater and Hofoper were located in the Innere Stadt on the inner edge of the Ring, the former at a prime location across from the City Hall and the latter next to the Hofburg and at the foot of Kärntnerstrasse, one of the city’s major thoroughfares\textsuperscript{32}). It was in the outer districts, lying outside the Vorstadt (on the other side of a second ring road, the Gürtel) where the new migrants congregated, prompting a building boom in the last decades of the nineteenth century. These were the districts gradually incorporated into the city by 1890.

The system of Innere Stadt—inner suburbs (Vorstadt)—outer suburbs created a clear topographical hierarchy, more defined and tidy than those of London or Paris. An 1859 ordinance recommended that the rapidly developing outer suburbs be built in a geometrical grid pattern, contrary to the irregular streets of the older districts. The rigid urban plan—the straight lines of the streets filled with poor quality tenement housing, long and strictly regulated work hours, and the hierarchal organization of the city itself—created an impersonal, alienating experience for populations already in shock due to their relocation from rural to city environments. Violence and riots were common among the lower classes.\textsuperscript{33} The geographic compartmentalization also made the outer suburbs easy for the more privileged classes to ignore, who could wander the Innere Stadt and parts of the Vorstadt without giving a thought to what lay beyond it. (While violence prompted limited reform, it wasn’t until postwar “Red Vienna” that the welfare of the poorest citizens became a central concern of the city government.) The

\textsuperscript{32} Michael Steinberg argues that the placement of the Burgtheater and Hofoper inside the Ring (the other Ringstrasse buildings are on its outer edge) indicates their significance in the construction of an Austrian identity. Michael P Steinberg, \textit{The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival: Austria as Theater and Ideology, 1890-1938} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

\textsuperscript{33} The subaltern experience is examined in detail in Maderthaner and Musner, \textit{Unruly Masses}. 21
theater, however, was one of the few public spaces that formed a consistent point of contact between these social groups, and the operetta, as the offspring of many forms, may have been the most potent intersection point of all.

OPERETTA'S BIRTH AND ARRIVAL IN VIENNA

The beginnings of operetta in Vienna can be traced back to the 1850s, only a few years after the ascent of Offenbach's *Bouffes-Parisiens*. Unable to secure a visit from the *Bouffes-Parisiens* themselves to the Carl-Theater, playwright Johann Nestroy put on pirated versions of Offenbach operettas in German translation to great success. He followed the 1858 production of *Le Mariage aux lanternes* (*Die Verlobung bei der Laterne*, Engagement Under Lanterns) with *Orphée aux enfers*. By the time Offenbach was belatedly invited to the Carl-Theater in 1861 to conduct his own works—*Le Violoneux* (*Die Zaubergeige*, The Magic Fiddle), *Le Mariage aux laternes*, and *Un Mari à la porte* (*Ein Ehemann vor der Tür*, A Husband at the Door)—he was already highly popular. He had even won over such luminaries as Eduard Hanslick, which paved the way for the premiere of his opera *Die Rheinnixe* at the Hofoper in 1864.\(^3\) Theaters similar to the Carl-Theater, also playing to a middle and lower middle class audience, found in operetta a way to refresh their traditional programs of *Volksstück*, *Schwank*, and *Posse* (simple Vienna-grown

comedies, many of which included short songs) and began to include Offenbach and other
French light music composers in their repertoires.\textsuperscript{35} Compared to the regionalized humor of
their predecessors, French operettas seemed cosmopolitan and of the moment.

What social function did operetta fulfill for Viennese audiences, and how did it differ
from opera? Camille Crittenden has formulated a useful chart delineating the distinctions
between the two, defined mostly in terms of the genre’s audience and structural characteristics, a
slightly abridged version of which appears below as Table 1.2. It relies on a high art function for
opera that was not quite clear-cut as it appears in this stark binary form, but is accurate as a
broad generalization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operetta</th>
<th>Opera</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performed in commercial, suburban theaters</td>
<td>Performed in subvented court theaters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority lies with performer</td>
<td>Authority lies with composer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular music</td>
<td>Art music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attracts audience from a wide social spectrum</td>
<td>Largely aristocrats, civil servants, upper bourgeoisie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot could be “lascivious”</td>
<td>Proper morals maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local appeal</td>
<td>International appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value placed on simple melody</td>
<td>Complex melodic, harmonic, and timbral manipulation expected.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yet Crittenden’s only musical distinctions are popular music (operetta) versus art music (opera)
and “value placed on simple melody” (operetta) and “complex melodic, harmonic, and timbral
manipulation expected” (opera).\textsuperscript{37} Nor does Crittenden account for the importance of librettists,

\textsuperscript{35} For a critical but non-historical account of these genres, see Volker Klotz, \textit{Bürgerliches Lachtheater: Komödie, Posse, Schwank, Operette} (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2007).
\textsuperscript{36} Adapted from Camille Crittenden, \textit{Johann Strauss and Vienna: Operetta and the Politics of Popular Culture} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
who while not as famous as composers wielded considerably more influence than they did in opera.

In the hands of Offenbach, operetta acquired a highly distinctive musical character in terms of both compositional vocabulary and dramatic function. In Vienna, however, it subsequently evolved towards a more conventionally operatic mode of expression. Whether it should continue in this direction was one of the most heated topics of debate among polemicists. A second installment to Crittenden’s chart concentrating on musical characteristics might look like this (defining “opera” as it exists around 1870, that is to say in part post-Wagnerian):

Table 1.3: Opera vs. Operetta: Musical Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offenbachian Operetta</th>
<th>Post-Wagnerian Opera</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shorter sections of music in predictable, fixed forms</td>
<td>Large blocks of music in flexible forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonality used formulaically</td>
<td>Tonality serves dramatic action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performances emphasize humor and appeal of performer, conversational declamation 38</td>
<td>Performances emphasize vocal technique and sound, formal declamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few defined voice types, Fach system focuses on character types and special talents (e.g. dancing)</td>
<td>Fach system with variety of vocal ranges and types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music often works against text</td>
<td>Music generally heightens effect of text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual intelligibility a major priority</td>
<td>Music generally more important than text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimesis and transcendence a goal</td>
<td>Drama aspires to mimesis and transcendence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with Crittenden’s chart, this description simplifies a complex relationship, but nonetheless shows many ways in which opera and operetta differed. Some exceptions should be specifically noted: In finales, Offenbach did write larger, more dramatic blocks of music. Even elsewhere music did not always serve this proto-Verfremdungseffekt. However, this kind of formulaic, self-...

38 This distinction can be heard in the many buttoned-up recordings of opera singers attempting operetta. A recent examples is Bryn Terfel’s meticulously pronounced, stiff Baron Zeta in John Eliot Gardiner’s recording of Die lustige Witwe.
conscious utilization became a defining feature of early operetta, and later served as a foil for Silver Age critics.

Offenbach’s musical language was based on the *opera-comique* template of Boieldieu, Auber and others.\(^{39}\) His scores were built of discrete numbers: solo songs, duets, the occasional trio or quartet, dances, choruses, and more extended act finales. The songs are cast in a few predictable and simple forms, the most important being the *couplet*, a comic number in verse-refrain form, often including a chorus echoing the soloist. The melodic construction is similarly regular. The music makes a kind of anxious chatter, unfolding in short motives of straight eighth or sixteenth notes in scalar motion. Text and music are often juxtaposed for comic effect.

An example of both Offenbach’s musical syntax and his characteristic relationship between music and text can be found near the start of his satiric *Orphée et Euridice*, whose title characters are certainly not the lovebirds depicted in classical mythology. In their Act 1 duet, they debate the appeal of Orphée’s music: he loves it, she hates it (Example 1.1).

**Example 1.1:** Jacques Offenbach, *Orphée aux enfers*, No. 2 Duo, mm. 109-135

\(^{39}\) The relationship between Offenbach and his predecessors is discussed in Everist, “Jacques Offenbach: The Music of the Past and the Image of the Present.”
The music is brisk and patter-like; Euridice’s vocal line repeats a compact melodic cell with Orphée’s stays on the same pitch, providing additional rhythmic propulsion. The obsessive repetition of short motivic cells, usually with short note values in conjunct motion in a narrow range is Offenbach’s melodic signature: phrases are not forward-directed or expansive and avoid significant harmonic development. Instead they have a formulaic, relentlessly predictable cadence.

The music’s mundane but manic energy is enhanced by its relation to the text. Orphée and Eurydice both string together adjectives describing Orphée’s violin solo. Their words rhyme, but her descriptions are entirely negative and his entirely positive. These directly conflicting
sentiments are set to the exact same music. Eventually, Eurydice seems to have run out of words and her language breaks down into a series of ahs, as Orphée switches from singing to playing his violin. They make an ironic statement regarding the expressive possibilities of music itself: the two have differing opinions of the same music, and their expression of those differing opinions are similarly set to identical music. Just as Orphée’s violin solo lacks a single definitive expressive message, the music of their reactions lends itself to two directly opposing messages. The music does not reveal the inner thoughts of Orphée or Eurydice; indeed it seems to negate the ability of music to communicate a psychological state. While not extraordinary in the history of opera, such a juxtaposition became, for operetta critics, Offenbach’s trademark.

But it was not long after Offenbach’s arrival in Vienna that Viennese composers began to write their own operettas to suit local tastes. Viennese composers such as Franz von Suppé, Carl Millöcker, and, most of all, Johann Strauss II were the founders of the Viennese operetta school, in which they combined Viennese dialect, character types, and dances with the parody, satire, and irreverence of the French model. While the first homegrown operetta was Suppé’s Das Pensionat of 1860, it was not until Strauss began writing his own that the genre became truly Viennese. The “Waltz King” entered the field in 1871, when he was already the biggest celebrity in Viennese popular music. His Indigo und die vierzig Räuber and subsequent works—Der Karneval in Rom (1873), Die Fledermaus (1874), Cagliostro in Wien (1875)—mirrored the progress of the genre itself, becoming ever more musically ambitious and ever more enmeshed in Viennese cultural iconography. Actors such as Alexander Girardi, Marie Geistinger, and Josefine

In his early operettas, Strauss sometimes utilized the spikily satiric Offenbachian style. In \textit{Die Fledermaus}, examples of this include the trio “So muss allein ich bleibe,” the duet “Komm' mit mir zur Souper” and Adele's song “Spiel' ich die Unschuld vom Lande.” But with \textit{Die Zigeunerbaron} in 1885, his works turned serious and more traditionally operatic.\footnote{Crittenden, \textit{Johann Strauss and Vienna}, 170–256.} While some comic couplets remain (such as in Zsupán’s “Ja, das Schreiben und das Lesen”), Strauss turned away from Offenbachian discrepancies between music and text. The meaning of most of the numbers of \textit{Der Zigeunerbaron} is direct and unequivocal. Operettas of this period increasingly feature complex ensemble numbers, sometimes culminating in grand opera-style concertante ensembles, the use of tonality to narrate the drama in finales, and music that prioritized beauty of voice and melody over clear declamation of quicksilver verses. Strauss continued down this operatic path to ever more complex works, with decidedly mixed results (such as \textit{Simplicius}).\footnote{Ibid., chap. 6–7.}

Strauss’s other major musical innovation was to bring to operetta his famed waltzes, which quickly eclipsed Offenbach’s galops and cancans. The waltz had already developed associations general and geographically specific: dance, romance, intoxication, spinning, the city's
waltz venues, its ball season, and its entire iconography.\textsuperscript{43} The waltz’s musical features would also spread through operetta, most notably a casual approach to harmony and voice-leading. Its place as professionalized Unterhaltungsmusik for diversion and dance also preceded operetta’s status as professional entertainment rather than high art or amateur folk culture.

A climactic waltz—or, preferably, several—became an obligatory feature of any Viennese operetta, the work’s calling card. A waltz also could sell many copies of sheet music, as Strauss’s music had been doing for years. The use of the waltz made these Vienna-composed operettas, for the first time, fully Viennese in spirit, propelling their music into a preexisting Viennese sound world. Strauss would exploit this association when he juxtaposed a waltz with the Hungarian Rákóczy March in Der Zigeunerbaron, creating a potent dramatic effect.\textsuperscript{44} Two more important operetta composers emerged, Karl Millöcker and Carl Zeller, whose operettas gloried in domestic color and sentiment. Through the 1880s operetta in Vienna became ever less Offenbachian. As Eduard Hanslick described Strauss’s late work Apfelfest, “What is the setting? The libretto is silent. But the music says it without any doubt: it’s an Austrian setting, a good Viennese work.”\textsuperscript{45}

The question of what constituted a “good Viennese work” was the key issue of the 1880s. The political and economic developments of the 1870s changed the character of Viennese theater and proved fateful for Offenbach, whose audiences were dwindling. The Compromise of


\textsuperscript{44} Later, the process would be inverted when arrangers knitted preexistent Strauss music into a new operetta, most successfully in 1899’s Wiener Blut.

1867 and creation of the Dual Monarchy, the unification of Germany in 1871, and the stock market crash of 1873 all encouraged a precipitous increase in pan-German nationalism in Vienna.\textsuperscript{46} In 1870 and 1871, the Franco-Prussian War had dealt a swift and humiliating blow to France at the hands of the Germans. Vienna became a hostile place for all things French, and the revival of Germanic traditions was advocated by a bevy of critics and impresarios. New theaters were founded with a pro-Germanic, anti-Semitic, anti-Slavonic agenda, most importantly the Deutsches Volkstheater and the Kaiserjubiläums-Stadttheater, the latter founded by the prominent critic Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn.\textsuperscript{47}

Operetta was a major target for these critics. What was once modern and racy was now decadent and lascivious. When the alternative was French “frivolity” and willful strangeness, the familiar appeals of the new Viennese operettas—waltzes, Hungarian color, and sentimentality—seemed only more attractive. An 1875 review of Johann Strauss's \textit{Cagliostro in Wien} by a “Dr. Mutus” describes this as follows:

The Viennese composer Johann Strauss has sustained a new victory over the French. His new operetta \textit{Cagliostro in Vienna} is absolutely preferable to this year’s prior operettas Offenbach’s \textit{Schönröschen} and \textit{Madame Herzog}, as well as [Lecocq’s] \textit{Giroflé-Giroflé} [sic, correctly \textit{Giroflé-Girofla}]. Above all, the libretto is a rational one, free from the idiocy that the French take for fun. It doesn’t play in a fool’s land where the people wear impossible hats and robes and speak and act like lunatics, rather the events take place here in the fatherland, in the city of Vienna, is merry and amusing and unfurls every pageantry that the French introduced and the Viennese now cannot do without.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{48} “Johann Strauss, der Wiener Compositeur hat einen neuen Sieg über die Franzosen davon getragen. Seine neue Operette \textit{Cagliostro in Wien} ist den heuer zu Aufführung gelangten Operetten: \textit{Schönröschen} und \textit{Marame Herzog} von Offenbach und \textit{Giroflé-Giroflé} unbedingt vorzuziehen. Vor Allem ist das
As suggested by Dr. Mutus and described in more detail in Camille Crittenden’s analysis of Der Zigeunerbaron, operetta had already begun to move away from mythological topics to ones that were explicitly Habsburg, Germanic, or Viennese. Crittenden argues that Der Zigeunerbaron takes a conciliatory, even celebratory attitude towards the Hungarian population of the empire. But the crux of this move towards localism was a conservative return to the subjects of the old Volksstück: homespun, deliberately naïve, and “anti-decadent,” often connoting a degree of xenophobia and anti-Semitism. Crittenden argues that the pig farmer Zsúpan in Der Zigeunerbaron is an anti-Semitic caricature. Parody and satire, while still an important component, began to retreat in the face of music of simpler, more romantic plots and more clearly sympathetic characters. Caricatures like Zsúpan were largely restricted to supporting roles.

While the 1880s saw a major growth in stages devoted to German nationalist drama and Viennese operetta developed a distinctly indigenous profile, by the 1890s this fervor had already ebbed. Evidence suggests that despite noisy demagoguery by its more radical strains, German nationalist theater had never taken firm root with the theater-going public. The Kaiserjubuliäum Stadttheater failed to turn a profit, leading its nationalist ideologue Müller-Guttenbrunn to resign in 1903. For Viennese operetta, a more urgent and less ideological problem loomed: a lack of major composers. In the 1890s, the triumvirate of Strauss II—Millöcker—von Suppé had retired


49 Crittenden, Johann Strauss and Vienna, 170–210.
50 Ibid., 184–186.
from composing. Strauss and Millöcker died in 1899; von Suppé in 1895. Their works continued to be the most popular draws at Viennese operetta theaters. Composers such as Leo Ascher, Rudolf Dellinger, and Adolf Müller II wrote new operettas in the same style with no more than modest success, and when the audiences faded for one of their premieres a Golden Age operetta (already accorded classic status) was always ready to take their place. Commentators looked back to the Offenbach era with nostalgia, and wonder whether the genre had a future. Impresarios and librettists began to cast around for the the next major composer. The more astute critics realized that not only the composers but also the homogenous audience that had supported Golden Age operetta had been eclipsed. The new operetta would need to reach a larger, grimier populace. It would have to, in other words, reach beyond the Innere Stadt and Vorstadt into the outer districts of Vienna. This was the challenge met by the Silver Age.

THE FIN DE SIÈCLE CONSTRUCT

While fin-de-siècle Vienna has been the subject of many studies, operetta and its audiences have not often been considered worthy of discussion. Historians of culture and musicologists alike have long restricted themselves to the twisting lanes of the Innere Stadt. In his study *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and His Time* (1948), Hermann Broch made a then-daring claim for Vienna as a crucial center of early modernism, claiming it was the equal in importance to the more frequently studied Paris. Carl Schorske further developed and popularized this model in *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, a volume of previously published essays printed as a collection in 1977. In Schorske’s model, the conservative atmosphere of a decrepit Austro-Hungarian Empire created the conditions that would nurture the Modernist movement.

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51 Broch, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and His Time*; Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*.
According to this thesis, after the fall of liberalism and failure of democratization in the aftermath of the 1848 revolution (and the eventual ascension of Christian Socialist Karl Lueger as mayor of Vienna, and what Schorske calls his “politics in a new key”), the Austrian Liberal elite retreated from public life and politics to explore the psyche.

For Schorske, modernism is a result of a population alienated from public life and thrown, confused, into their own minds.\(^5\) Freud is the most obvious example, who, according to Schorske, “gave his fellow liberals an ahistorical theory of man and society that could make bearable a political world spun out of orbit and beyond control.”\(^5\) The theory’s tidiness is appealing: modernity is merely the byproduct of a sublimated intellectual libido. As implied by this language, Schorske avails himself of several of his subjects’ rhetorical styles and methodologies, particularly those of Freud, giving his work an element of circularity.\(^5\) (Many of fin-de-siecle Vienna’s major figures, a somewhat narcissistic group, had already written a great deal of similar work about themselves.) Sparked by Schorske, the 1970’s and 1980’s saw a boom in studies of Vienna, such as William McGrath’s Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Vienna and Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin’s Wittgenstein’s Vienna.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) Additionally, Schorske does not hesitate to draw comparisons between his subject and the period in which he was writing—the America of the 1970s. My own present study of multicultural twentieth-century Vienna, written during the Obama administration, is similarly apt.

\(^5\) For example, in his exegesis of Karl Lueger’s childhood, he notes, “One suspects that Karl’s mother was the real force in the household. Neither her two daughters nor her son married—a sign of extreme maternal authority...Where a powerful parvenu father shaped the Knight of Rosenau [George Schönerer], a tough little petit bourgeois formed the future ‘Lord God of Vienna.’” Ibid., 134.

\(^5\) McGrath’s study was actually published in 1972, before Schorske’s disparate essays were collected, and concentrates on the so-called “Pernerstorfer Circle” of intellectuals who came to maturity in Schorske’s “failure of liberalism” era. William J McGrath, Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, Wittgenstein’s Vienna (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).
In more recent decades, historians of social and political history have reassessed Schorske’s hypothesis, some noting that its broader claims are based on a questionable understanding of the civic engagement of the Viennese elite and others pointing out that Schorske deems only a small group of artists and writers significant. Schorske himself made no claim to being comprehensive (he defined his subject as, explicitly, the cultural elite and the world of “high culture”56) focusing merely on the development of one intellectual sphere. Yet the fact that his book achieved near-canonical status meant that his particular approach—his focus on elite historical subjects and their orbit, as well as his tendency to make sweeping conceptualizations of abstract phenomena—would dominate Vienna studies for some time.

Moreover, by recognizing the wealthy intellectuals and social elites and neglecting the proletariat, women, and the non-Germanic, Schorke’s work in fact perpetuated familiar historiographical trends. Schorske wrote that he chose his subjects due to their “cohesion” and because they “lived in relatively segregated political communities,” making them ideal for a concentrated study.57 The encapsulation of his subjects as isolated from a larger social community implies the existence of a mass culture “other.” Or, to put it another way, the world from which these elites are alienated remain, in Schorske’s work, both invisible and irrelevant. The argument that his subjects were forcibly isolated from broader cultural currents freed him from engaging with non-elite cultural activity, and the influence of his work has subsequently helped to deny popular culture a place at modernity’s table.58

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50 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, xxvii.
51 Ibid.
52 The idea of mass culture as an Other of art culture will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. It is theorized in Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).
Historians have challenged Schorske on both of these points. John Boyer’s monumental, painstaking research on Viennese political history and Pieter Judson’s work on nationality politics have questioned the political basis of Schorske’s work. Their conclusions suggest that Liberals never fully left public life, and that the fragmentation of their movement was more a matter of internal dissent than one imposed by external threats. Steven Beller has suggested that Schorske’s modernity is not the product of frustrated liberals so much as a Jewish bourgeois elite whose identity and motivations are more productively explained in terms of their ethnic and religious identities.59

Another major vein of responses to Schorske has been an attempt to broaden the demographic field of Viennese cultural studies. In his history of the Social Democratic movement, Helmut Gruber writes:

[Schorske's] powerful evocation of the intellectual and artistic climate… has become an obstacle to seeing Vienna as a thriving metropolis…. the Vienna of Schorske’s making is like a Chirico painting—symbolic and frozen in time and space. The golden age of high culture he re-creates so artfully does not appear to have roots or resonance in the complex experience of two million Viennese and therefore seems to be a dead end.60

Gruber’s consideration of the Social Democrats’ “experiment in working-class culture” reveals a completely different Vienna from Schorske’s. While Schorske’s fin de siècle is a magical but embalmed place, Gruber’s Vienna is dirty and crowded, and yet utopic and socially activist in a way never considered by Schorske. Dealing with an earlier period (closer, in fact, to Schorske),


Wolfgang Maderthaner and Lutz Musner’s *Unruly Masses: The Other Side of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* and Brigitte Hamann’s *Hitler’s Vienna* (as well as the work of Boyer) show the grim reality of the non-elite Viennese.

It is here that operetta provides a particularly useful lens: Vienna was socially compartmentalized to a greater degree than most cities, and operetta was one of the few cultural forms that bridged gaps between Innere Stadt, Vorstadt, and outer districts. But while Schorske closely mapped elite culture to elite politics, operetta’s mass appeal does not correspond to the mass political movements of the early twentieth century. While some similarities can be drawn between Karl Lueger’s “politics of feeling” and the expressive mode of twentieth-century operetta, a correspondence oversimplifies both the power relationships of both politics and theater. Yet the shifts in politics and in entertainment were motivated by many of the same forces. The audience for theater expanded along with the growth of the city and its working class. Some aesthetic parallels can be made: in the 1920s, the last few decade of its relevance, operetta turned to mass spectacle and gigantism, striving for ever-greater effects to stun its audiences. Yet one can also point to correspondences with decidedly non-mass cultural phenomena. Librettos’ increased focus on the inner subjectivity of its protagonists can be aligned with a trickling down of Wagner and Freud. In short, operetta was a nexus of all cultural concerns, both high and low, which makes it both a challenging and a fascinating subject. Turned towards different ends, it can signify drastically different things to different observers, from its own audience members to scholars today. This intentionally chimerical nature allowed it

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61 Margaret Notley makes an argument along these lines, but limits her subject to the more narrow question of public concerts rather than musical culture as a whole. Margaret Notley, “Volksconcerte’ in Vienna and Late Nineteenth-Century Ideology of the Symphony,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50, no. 2/3 (July 1, 1997): 421–53.
to adapt to changing times, and to, as its creators always intended, engage with everyone on some level.

**MUSICOLOGY, VIENNA, AND OPERETTA**

Carl Schorske introduces Maurice Ravel’s *La valse* at the very opening of his book as a prime example of Viennese iconography, the sound of “the violent death of the nineteenth-century world.” It is a curious choice. Granted, Ravel’s gradual dissolving of musical order into frenzied fragmentation maps neatly onto Schorske’s theory of the decline of rationality; Schorske uses *La valse* as an emblem of Viennese culture as a modernist narrative. But Ravel’s waltz, like those in Richard Strauss’s in *Der Rosenkavalier*, is a subjective experience or interpretation of a Viennese waltz rather than a Viennese waltz itself. Ravel was not a composer with any close relationship with Vienna, and *La valse* is not, in the most obvious sense, a Viennese waltz at all. A traditional Viennese waltz is a lowlier, more formulaic, and more functional entity, found first in ballrooms, cafés and parks—only later in concert halls. It is neatly sectionalized and regularized for spontaneous, amateur dancers. The Viennese Strausses, whose era somewhat predates the book’s main focus, are mentioned by Schorske only in passing. Functional social dance music has no obvious place in Schorske’s study, and its exclusion illustrates the choices that Schorske made.

Despite historians’ frequent challenges of Schorske’s work and influence, musicology remains steadfastly attached to the “temple of art” metaphor. In some ways this theory aligns

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62 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 3.
63 The importance of Schorske to musicologists is assessed in Benjamin M. Korstvedt, “Reading Music Criticism beyond the Fin-de-Siècle Vienna Paradigm,” *The Musical Quarterly* 94, no. 1–2 (March 20, 2011): 156–210. particularly 167-69. A recent example of scholarship that makes extensive use of
with the discipline’s broader fixation on art’s purported autonomy, less a coincidence than a reminder that this is the time and place in which Guido Adler laid much of the groundwork for the discipline of musicology and shortly before the era during which Theodor Adorno’s musical perspective was formed.\textsuperscript{64} While musicology has in recent years become increasingly interdisciplinary, for fin de siècle studies this development has more frequently entailed a focus on the connections between disparate arts under the umbrella of modernism rather than an expansion of the repertory under consideration.\textsuperscript{65} This broadening of perspectives has done much to inform and broaden understandings of musical texts. But canonical modernism’s elite club nonetheless represents only the beginning of cultural activity in Vienna, just as the liberal elite represented only a tiny portion of the city’s population. To take Schorske’s circle as the sum total of the city’s artistic output is a reduction not only of the city itself but of the sphere surrounding these very high culture artists themselves. Its essentially writes enormous swathes of Viennese cultural production out of history altogether.

Vienna hosted an astonishing number of major musical figures and debates during this era. In fact it may be high art music’s breadth and richness—and its copious documentation—that has allowed modern scholars to neglect large areas so easily. Studies of reception and criticism have long fixated on Eduard Hanslick and the reception of Wagner, Brahms, and Bruckner, while more recent historiographical works has increasingly considered the writings of

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\textsuperscript{64} This is examined in Kevin Karnes, \textit{Music, Criticism, and the Challenge of History: Shaping Modern Musical Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century Vienna}, AMS Studies in Music (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

\textsuperscript{65} Such as Kevin Karnes, \textit{A Kingdom Not of This World: Wagner, the Arts, and Utopian Visions in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Walter Frisch, \textit{German Modernism: Music and the Arts} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
Guido Adler. Studies of slightly later eras have focused on figures such as Mahler, Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School, and Heinrich Schenker.\textsuperscript{66}

Excluded from this circle, operetta has found little place in scholarship. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, fin-de-siècle Vienna provides an ideal example of Dahlhaus’s distinction between “compositional” and “social” history of music. For Dahlhaus, popular music is bereft of the sort of technical innovation that would be revealed by analysis. While he never quite explicitly says that this makes it of lesser value, the weight he places on formalism and autonomy, and the prestige of analytical approaches, suggests otherwise. As Ruth Solie writes of analysis, “perhaps there is a tacit claim here that analytic procedure serves to distinguish ‘great’ music, which responds to it interestingly, from ‘trivial music’ [Dahlhaus’s label for operetta], which doesn’t.” This privileging of complexity not only bolsters the analyst but, as Solie goes on to point out, serves as a “definition of a particular musical tradition, from a particular cultural sphere, increasingly (nowadays) identified with a particular sociocultural elite.”\textsuperscript{67} When considering Vienna, this elitism is self-evident.

The result is that only a very few musicologists have discussed operetta, and only a few more theater historians.\textsuperscript{68} A 10-page article published in 1985 by—in an irony worthy of a

\textsuperscript{66} Recent musicological studies of these figures through the lens of Viennese culture include Nicholas Cook, \textit{The Schenker Project: Culture, Race, and Music Theory in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Carl Niekerk, \textit{Reading Mahler: German Culture and Jewish Identity in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna} (Rochester, N.Y: Camden House, 2010); Karnes, \textit{Music, Criticism, and the Challenge of History}; Nicole Grimes, Siobhan Donovan, and Wolfgang Marx, eds., \textit{Rethinking Hanslick: Music, Formalism, and Expression} (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2013).


\textsuperscript{68} In English, the most thoroughly studied operetta is that of London and the US, with a concentration on Gilbert and Sullivan, Victor Herbert, and Sigmund Romberg (notably William A Everett, \textit{Sigmund Romberg} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). The immense popularity of Viennese operetta in early-twentieth century America has received some study, most notably Raymond Knapp’s fine analysis of \textit{Die lustige Witwe}. Knapp, \textit{The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity}, 20–31.
second-act operetta finale—Carl Dahlhaus is the most provocative and substantive work on the entire Silver Age. The genre remains largely the province of the connoisseur and amateur historian, most of whom are Austrian or German. They often serve as advocates for and, more problematically, unabashed fans of the genre. Many histories from the earliest to the most recent seek to legitimate operetta as an art form by concentrating on its composers and the glorification of their accomplishments. Otto Keller wrote the first comprehensive history of the genre in 1926, proscribing a two-pronged genealogy of Mozartean Singspiel and Volksstück. One of operetta’s parents is artistic, the other popular; neither carry the commercial, mass-produced stigma that afflicted operetta in the 1920s. But if operetta came from Mozart, then it must be worthwhile. (Keller’s extensive bibliography of sources, culled from Viennese and German newspapers and magazines, was one of his most important contributions to subsequent scholarship.)

In addition to Keller, another major vein of early writings comprises authorized, official biographies of composers by such journalists as Ernst Decsey’s Lehár biography and Julian Bistron’s of Kálmán. While not always reliable, they have been the foundation of virtually all subsequent biographical work. Some composers and performers, and a few librettists, also produced memoirs. Almost all them wrote (or had ghostwriters write for them) prolifically in

70 Keller, Die Operette in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung. Another early operetta history is Karl Westermeyer, Die Operette im Wandel des Zeitgeistes: von Offenbach bis zur Gegenwart (Berlin: Drei Masken Verlag, 1931).
71 Ernst Decsey, Franz Lehár (Berlin: Drei Masken Verlag, 1930); Julius Bistron, Emmerich Kálmán (Vienna: Karczag, 1932).
72 Nico Dostal, Ans Ende deiner Träume kommst du nie: Berichte, Bekenntnisse, Betrachtungen (Innsbruck: Pinguin-Verlag, 1982). Ralph Benatzky’s diaries have also been published, Ralph Benatzky, Ralph
newspapers, the primary form of public relations for their works. Operetta creators always directly courted the public, explaining their goals, intentions, and experiences in detail. Their writings, which contain many colorful and humorous anecdotes and personal details—many of them likely created purely for publicity—were an important extension of their works, shaping early reception and criticism. They provide a rich if rarely verifiable source for historians.

Postwar writings have largely targeted the still-large operetta audience in German-speaking countries.\(^7^3\) The least reliable of these books revel in backstage gossip and dramatic anecdotes, often taken directly and credulously from the creators themselves. This category, however, also includes some well-sourced books that are extremely valuable resources. Stefan Frey’s biographies of Lehár, Kálmán and Fall as well as several recent biographies of librettists should be included in this category.\(^7^4\) There are also several comprehensive guides with plot
summaries and descriptions of many works, most impressively that of Volker Klotz, whose study also contains extensive literary analysis of librettos.\textsuperscript{75}

In English, Richard Traubner’s \textit{Operetta: A Theatrical History} remains the definitive history of the subject, but it suffers from many of the same problems as the popular literature in German: it is largely a collection of narrative history and trivia centered on major figures and works rather than a work of historical analysis.\textsuperscript{76} Andrew Lamb and Bruno Gänzl’s \textit{Book of Musical Theater} provides a trove of plot summaries if little else.\textsuperscript{77} In English music history surveys, the works of Johann Strauss, particularly \textit{Die Fledermaus}, are often included as token representatives of the genre, but the its history and development, as well as the entire repertoire of the Silver Age (including the still extremely popular \textit{Die lustige Witwe}) are usually neglected.\textsuperscript{78}

Camille Crittenden’s valuable 2007 monograph on Johann Strauss II’s operettas, while only considering a single composer, is the only scholarly book on operetta in English.\textsuperscript{79} In recent years, Zoë Lang’s dissertation on Johann Strauss and twentieth-century Austrian politics and Timothy Freeze’s dissertation on the influence of operetta on the music of Gustav Mahler have expanded the understanding of operetta’s orbit.\textsuperscript{80} Jessie Ann Martin’s dissertation on Emmerich

\begin{footnotes}
\item Klotz, \textit{Operette}.
\item The book is organized by composer rather than time or place, so one must read about late Lehár before one can encounter early Kálmán, which inhibits any attempt to construct a larger historical arc. Traubner, \textit{Operetta}.
\item Kurt Gänzl and Andrew Lamb, \textit{Gänzl’s Book of the Musical Theatre} (London: Bodley Head, 1988). Lamb is also responsible for most of the articles on operetta in \textit{Grove}, which display a fairly dismissive attitude regarding twentieth-century works. A slightly different assortment of plot summaries can be found in Mark Lubbock and David Ewen, \textit{The Complete Book of Light Opera} (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962).
\item Richard Taruskin’s \textit{Oxford History of Western Music} includes \textit{Die Fledermaus}, but no twentieth-century operetta at all (except a passing mention of Lehár’s \textit{Paganini}), see footnote 6.
\item Crittenden, \textit{Johann Strauss and Vienna}. See also her dissertation, Camille Crittenden, “Viennese Musical Life and the Operettas of Johann Strauss” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1997).
\item Zoe Alexis Lang, “Light’ Music and Austrian Identity: The Strauss Family Legacy in Austrian Politics and Culture, 1918-1938” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2005); Timothy Freeze, “Gustav Mahler’s
Kálmán offers a comprehensive overview of the composer’s entire output, including plot summaries and character lists for some of his most obscure work.

The most serious work on this repertory, in fact, has mostly been performed by German theater historians. Few consider the music in detail, but their work in placing operetta within the larger context of the Viennese entertainment industry is invaluable. Historians have also considered operetta, most importantly Moritz Csáky, whose oft-cited book *Ideologie der Wiener Operette und Wiener Moderne* contains many intriguing ideas, most of them sparsely grounded in documentary evidence. Similarly, there is a small genre of sociological studies of operetta, most of which consider the music generic and concentrate on the libretto as literature. Several scholars, including Martin Lichtfuss (in his study *Operetta in Sell-Off*) and Andrew Lamb in *Grove* seem to be the judgmental heirs of contemporary critics such as Karl Kraus, dismissing twentieth-century operetta as an excessively commercial and artistically negligible foil to the “true” operetta of Offenbach and Johann Strauss II. This value judgment obscures the significant differences between the nineteenth and twentieth century’s operettas, their audiences,

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and their transmission. For aestheticist scholars who do not consider such information
important, these changes are irrelevant, and operetta has little value at all.

The most important artifact is, of course, the operetta text itself. Operetta texts are
palimpsests of their times, as Victor Léon described, written in multiple layers to appeal to
different groups at once. Behind the texts themselves is the massive discourse in the Viennese
press. Many librettists were also critics or journalists, and an agenda lies behind many of the
reviews, manifestos, diatribes and paeans on operetta that appeared on a daily basis in Vienna’s
print culture. But, biased as it may be, such a print culture was a vital organ of the Vienna of the
time, producing a prodigious quantity of material. The rapid pace and collaborative nature of
operetta composition make the documentation of compositional process difficult to recover, but
the story of operetta lies in its performance—scores, librettos, reception—and from an
understanding of the world in which these works were created and flourished.

THE OPERETTA FACTORY

Librettos and Librettists

By the turn of the century, the performance of Viennese operetta had developed into an industry
with its own economy and division of labor. This is apparent from a host of sources ranging from
newspaper and magazine stories to the memoirs and letters of librettists and composers. Though
the documentation of the creation of any individual work can range from spotty to nonexistent,
together these sources form a relatively consistent and complete picture of the composition and

86 Kurt Paupié, Handbuch der österreichischen Pressegeschichte 2: Die zentralen pressepolitischen Einrichtungen
des Staates, 1848–1959 (Vienna: W. Braumüller, 1966); Peter Fritzsche, Reading Berlin 1900 (Cambridge,
Figure 1.2: Caricature, Franz Lehár, c. 1912

In most respects the operetta industry operated in a regularized manner—a cartoon even depicts Lehár as the boss of an “operetta factory.” The wall appears to be a theater box office, which each ticket labeled after a different Lehár operetta. The latest is *Eva*, which dates the caricature around 1911-13. (Figure 1.2) But the reception of operetta was more comprehensively preserved than its production process, and some kinds of information are scarce. Financial records in particular are lacking. While general economic

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87 Pf. 4.986: C (22), ÖNB Bildarchiv. This image is also reproduced on the cover of Martin Lichtfuss, *Operette im Ausverkauf*.  
88 The primary published sources will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. The two most important sources of letters are the Victor Léon collection in the Wienbibliothek (catalogued as ZPH 906/ZPH 924/ZPH 925) and the Alfred Grünwald collection at the New York Public Library.
practices can be pieced together, it is not possible to track the box office intakes of any particular work.  

The nerve centers of production were Viennese cafés, principally the Sacher, Bauer, Imperial, Dobner, and Museum. An undated engraving by Sigmund von Skiwirczynski depicts no fewer than 24 operetta luminaries positioned around a few tables in the Café Museum, labeled “The Fixed Stars of Viennese Operetta, Surrounded by Their Satellites.” In summertime, composers and librettists decamped to the Alpine spa town of Bad Ischl (the official summer residence of the emperor, 50 kilometers from Salzburg), where they congregated at the Café Zauner.

Many operetta librettos were written inside such cafés, where ideas and information was traded and collaborations made and broken. Librettists were often polymaths, though the most successful worked in operetta exclusively. Most were typical café-goers: bourgeois, educated

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89 Insights into operetta economics can be gleaned from the scattered contracts left in archives. Information is most comprehensive for the post-World War I period, including a complete financial report on the Theater an der Wien’s operations written around 1935, after operetta was already in severe decline (found in the Österreichische Theatermuseum’s Hubert Marischka archive) as well as, despite being German rather than Austrian, Hugo Poller’s detailed 1926 economics dissertation, Hugo Poller, “Die ökonomische Bewirtschaftung eines Operettentheaters.” (Würzburg, 1920), Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (MS 20/1052).

90 The figures include composers, librettists, impresarios, and a few critics and actors, and are indeed clustered in groups that often collaborated. They are in order, Straus, Stein, Engländer, Simon, Reinhardt, Jacobson, Karczag, Wallner, Willner, Herzmansky, Lehár, Léon, Berté, Steininger, Lindau, Fall, Bodansky, Eysler, Kálmán, Schmiedell, Korngold, Nedbal, Hirsch, and Pallenberg. As reproduced in Otto Brusatti and Wilhelm Deutschmann, *FleZiWiCsa & Co.: Die Wiener Operette* (Wien: Eigenverlag der Museen der Stadt Wien, 1984), 41.

91 Several accounts of the Bad Ischl operetta scene offer a vivid picture of this closely-knit society. Lehár retired and died in Bad Ischl and left both his house and his estate to the town. His papers can still be found in the mayor’s office in the city hall, and his house is open as a museum, preserved as he left it with its rather extravagant interior decoration intact. The Café Zauner remains Bad Ischl’s most popular café today. Franz Rajna, “Von der Ischler Operettenbörse,” *Pester Lloyd*, August 28, 1927; Emil Steininger, “Wie Ischl von der Operette annektiert wurde,” *Neues Wiener Journal*, June 9, 1929.
(Gymnasium and university), and almost all Jewish. When embarking upon an operetta, most librettists worked in pairs, one taking primary responsibility for the plot structure and spoken dialogue (Prosa) and the other writing the verse song texts, and both critiquing each other every step of the way—a process that ensured a degree of quality control but also homogenization. Dialogue librettists often began their careers as playwrights and song text librettists as poets or songwriters, but the division was not absolute. Some librettos were the production of a single author (most often Victor Léon, the most influential, prolific, and experimental of all Viennese operetta librettists), and some were credited to three or more.

Relatively few operetta librettos were original ideas, though as plots became more formulaic over the course of the twentieth century newly invented librettos become more common. The most popular source was, by far, middlebrow theater, most particularly French boulevard theater such as works by Meilhac and Sardou. This genre was in fact the equivalent of operetta in spoken theater: it was targeted at a similar audience and sometimes even played in the same theaters. These plays’ tidy plots, conventional character types, and decisive endings (usually finishing with marriage) became the template for many operettas. Librettists also based operettas on short stories or novels, or fit historical figures or events into an operetta format. Sometimes the source was credited but often, in the interest of preserving more of the royalties for the new librettists, it was not—librettists hoped their sources would be obscure enough not to be noticed.

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92 The most vivid account of the intellectual fervor of this society, particularly of a Viennese boy’s education, is found in Stefan Zweig’s The World of Yesterday. In its broad outlines, Zweig’s account applies to many librettists, though many were not born into such privileged families. Stefan Zweig, The World of Yesterday (University of Nebraska Press, 1964).

Such ghosting was well known enough to be frequently joked about in theatrical circles. Shadow sources ranged from yet more French plays to a novel by a “Spanish writer who has been dead for more than thirty years.”

Were the librettists to be caught stealing, they could be greeted with legal action by the original author or their estate. The “foreign basic idea” that was credited with the plot of *Die lustige Witwe* was recognized immediately by critics as Meilhac’s familiar play *L’Attaché d’ambassade*, though Meilhac’s estate sued the librettists only after the operetta became a massive hit and there were prodigious sums to be had. Later, Franz Lehár and his librettists won a plagiarism trial brought by Ludwig Fulda with the defense that the similarities between the plots of Fulda’s *Zwillingschwester* and the operetta *Die ideale gattin* were merely universal themes of literature. In contrast, the source for Emmerich Kálmán’s *Die Herzogin von Chicago*, Thomas Mann’s early novel *Königliche Hoheit*, has never been recognized in either courts or scholarship.

In another incident, a critic accused several librettists of lifting the action of their operetta from a known play by Sacha Guitry—but the accusation does not seem to have found any traction or caused any legal entanglements.

In general, original ideas were considered a commodity of near-material status. The central incident of *Operettenkönige*, a

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94 Ludwig Hirschfeld, “Wie eine Operette entsteht,” *Komödie*, May 26, 1923. Another example comes from a theater joke book:

“Tell me, why does X write on all his librettos ‘From the French’?”

“So it doesn’t come out that they’re all from the English.”

(—Sagen Sie, warum schreibt der X. auf alle seine Libretti, “Aus dem Französischen”?
—Damit man nicht daraufkommt, daß sie alles aus dem Englischen sind.)


96 As told to the author by Charles Kálmán, Emmerich Kálmán’s son, interview, Munich, March 2011. The plots are indeed very similar (see Chapter 6).

1912 *roman à clef* about operetta theaters, concerns a waltz theme that an established composer overhears and steals from a poor, talented, unknown student. In a market where plots and songs were, in some respects, exchangeable, a new idea with commercial potential was to be guarded with great care.

**Formulas and Conventions**

The basic formula of the Silver Age operetta were largely established by the success of *Die lustige Witwe* in 1905, as were the smaller-scale genre conventions. Although the process will be considered more closely in Chapter 2, the broad outlines of operetta after *Die lustige Witwe* can be outlined here. Some of these conventions existed well before *Witwe*—as discussed above in regard to *Der Zigeunerbaron*. However, in the twentieth century their deployment became more predictable. The *fach* system of operetta was already well established, but *Die lustige Witwe* standardized the deployment and narrative arcs of each character type, as well as the larger plot formula in which they were embedded.

A Silver Age operetta generally centered on two couples. The “first couple,” played by the leading man (a low tenor or high baritone) and leading woman (soprano) are usually somewhat older and experienced in life, and given music that was relatively demanding in vocal terms.  

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98 The novel is pseudonymously authored (its true author remains unidentified, though it is clearly someone with significant experience in the operetta industry) and most of the characters are thinly-disguised caricatures of actual people—Franz Lehár is Hans Nedda, Wilhelm Karczag is Direktor Mikoczy, the Theater an der Wien is the Donautheater, Louis Treumann is Arno Springer, Victor Léon is Alfons Bonné, and so on. Franz von Hohenegg, *Operettenkönige: Ein Wiener Theaterroman* (Berlin: Lane, 1911).

99 Compared to opera of the time, however, the demands were still modest, written for competent and attractive lyrical voices but requiring little in the way of virtuosity or volume. While most actors had vocal training, only a few also sang major operatic roles. Tenor roles are usually written in the comfortable “baritenor” range of Eisenstein in *Fledermaus* (their highest note is generally an A), and women are rarely
The younger couple, a soubrette and a lighter “Bonvivant” tenor, are younger characters with less demanding singing parts, given more comic business, and are often asked to do a great deal of dancing. While the singers of these roles were often younger as well, some performers spent their entire careers in second couple roles. (*Die lustige Witwe* itself does not exactly follow this model—the man of the second couple, Camille de Rossillon, is not a bonvivant dancing tenor but a major lyric tenor role.) The supporting roles generally include several Komiker, purely comic characters both male and female, some singing and some only speaking. There were even specific divisions of Komiker and Komikerin, such as the komische Alter, the funny elderly person (such as Njegus in *Die lustige Witwe* and the Russian Count and Countess in *Der Graf von Luxemburg*).\(^{100}\)

Plot structure was also standardized. Operettas were organized into three acts, opening with an overture or prelude followed by an introductory scene in a public setting in which a supporting character introduces the situation. The leading man and woman both sing entrance songs, and the secondary couple receives some material as well. The first act closes with a large finale, usually on an upbeat note with an acknowledgement of love between each couple. The second act opens with a large dance number including local color, replicating, as will be seen, the *Vilja-Lied*, and subsequently features ornate twists and turns in the plot. In the tradition of the “well-made play,” these plot confusions often involve props or “devices” such as letters, keys, miniature portraits, fans, or lockets. There are usually one or two duets for the leading couple, and the act ends with the Silver Age’s most grandiose achievement: the eventually-infamous Act

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\(^{100}\) The *Fach* system is thoroughly explored by Eugen Brixel, “Die Ära Wilhelm Karczag im Theater an der Wien” (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1966).
II finale. This is the operetta’s most ambitious musical structure, and contains a melodramatic twist to end the act on a note of tragedy and pathos.\(^{101}\) Third acts often read as afterthoughts, vestigial structures that quickly tie up the plot. Their existence was frequently credited to a theater’s imperative to sell refreshments during a second intermission, though without them the second act finale would have been threatened as well.\(^{102}\) To keep some interest, a new character known as the “dritter Akt Komiker” is occasionally introduced, who tells topical jokes that have little or nothing to do with the rest of the plot, a throwback to the jailer Frosch in *Die Fledermaus*. A few lively musical numbers, often including dance, and a quick resolution of the plot finish up the operetta. There is no major Act III finale, merely a brisk reprise of an earlier number as a “Schlussgesang.”\(^{103}\)

These formulas were entirely self-conscious, and audiences and critics were as aware of them as composers and librettists. Operetta critics often attacked the dependence on “Schlabone,” stencils, but it seemed that this predictability was what audiences wanted. The authors’ skill was demonstrated in the use and development of these conventions. Were the waltz themes memorable? Was the instrumentation refined? How exciting was the twist in the second act finale? Audiences expected certain thrills out of the operetta, and the authors were judged based on their ability to deliver the known features in a novel or satisfying way. Dramatic

\(^{101}\) Adorno identifies this tragic second act finale as the key manifestation of late Viennese operetta’s claim to dramatic consequence. Theodor Adorno, “Arabesken zur Operette,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 19, Musikalische Schriften VI (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003), 516–19.

\(^{102}\) Marten, *Die Operette als Spiegel der Gesellschaft*.

\(^{103}\) Martin Lichtfuss lays these conventions out in a chart in Lichtfuss, *Operette im Ausverkauf*, 85–87., though his complex “prototype operetta” is based primarily on the works of only two librettists, Brammer and Grünwald, and is not as readily applicable to works by Léon, Löhner-Beda, late Lehár operettas, and many other works. While the Silver Age operetta was indeed formulaic, Lichtfuss’s method of divining a prototype from only a few works by the same authors dating from the 1920s makes it seem far more strictly formulaic and static than it was.
and musical formulas that were for critics a mark of inartistic, mass-produced products were, to operetta fans, beloved conventions of the genre. For enthusiasts, the best operetta composers and librettists were those who demonstrated creativity within these conventional constraints.

**Composers**

Nineteenth-century operetta composers had little formal training, most serving as *Kapellmeistern* in salon orchestras. In the Silver Age however, most composers came to operetta after conservatory study as art music composers and thus possessed larger compositional toolboxes. After conservatory, almost all of their biographies continue with the fits and starts and odd musical jobs that typify most early careers in composition. Along the way, they discovered a knack for writing in a popular style and turned to it full time. The first operetta composer to have a background in art music composition was Richard Heuberger, best known to scholars as Eduard Hanslick's backup as music critic of the *Neue Freie Presse* and as the director of the Singakademie and Wiener Männergesang-Verein. After training as an engineer, Heuberger studied composition with Robert Fuchs in Graz. Of his many operettas, his only major success was *Der Opernball* in 1898, one of the most important works of the transitional period between the Gold and Silver Ages. However his influence was largely felt through his teaching at the Konservatorium in Vienna later in life, where his students included Clemens Krauss. Unlike Heuberger, Franz Lehár and Leo Fall were both military bandmasters in the k.u.k. armed forces as well as orchestral composers; Fall, Oscar Straus, and Emmerich Kálmán all came to operetta after first experimenting with cabaret songs (Straus and Fall in Berlin, Kálmán in Budapest). But all had studied at conservatories and written some serious music before delving into operetta.

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It should be noted that the post-conservatory experiences that led these composers to operetta—conducting in provincial theaters, orchestrating light music, working in military bands, and playing for cabarets—were hardly unique, and in fact identical to the background of many of the era’s composers of art music. Mahler conducted numerous operettas in his early career, as did Webern. Alexander Zemlinsky worked as an orchestrator and also served as Kapellmeister at the Carl-Theater for two seasons; Zemlinsky’s orchestration of Heuberger’s *Der Opernball* amounted in some places to co-authorship, as Karl Kraus even noted publicly. (While Kraus implied that Heuberger required assistance due to a lack of technical skill, the evidence suggests that poor time management was an equal if not greater factor.) Even Arnold Schoenberg worked for the Über-Brettl cabaret in Berlin and orchestrated operetta (inspiring his *Brettl-Lieder*). (The topography of cabaret will be examined in detail in Chapter 3.)

While both Schoenberg and Mahler seem to have looked back at their periods in light music with fondness, other composers saw it as a period of indentured servitude before their true talents were recognized. Webern, for example, associated operetta with toil in the provinces,

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106 Kraus wrote in 1901, “who, other than Mr. [Max] Kalbeck [who had praised *Der Opernball’s* orchestration in a review] knows that the beguiling orchestral colours of *Der Opernball* were provided not by the composer but by Alexander von Zemlinsky, who orchestrated the greater part of the operetta?” By publishing this in *Die Fackel*, Kraus assured that many more people found out. Antony Beaumont credits Zemlinsky with the orchestration of Act 1, possibly large sections of Act III, and likely the composition of the overture. Antony Beaumont, *Zemlinsky* (London: Faber, 2000), 30.
107 Ibid. There is some dispute about whether Arnold Schoenberg also had a hand in the orchestration of Act III. While Webern and Ottilie Schoenberg claimed that he did, Schoenberg scholar Ernest Hilmar claims the manuscript score bears no traces of Schoenberg at all, citing the assistance of Helmut Heuberger for this verification. It may be time for this manuscript to receive a second look. Ernst Hilmar, ed., *Arnold Schönberg [13. Sept. 1874–13. Juli 1951.]: Gedenkausstellung 1974* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1974).
108 His contract can be seen in Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, *Schoenberg: His Life, World, and Work* (London: John Calder, 1977), 537–8. Hilmar identifies Schoenberg as an orchestrator for Robert Fischhof, Victor Holländer, and Bogumil Zepler, as well as possibly working for Heuberger, Leo Fall (who claimed to orchestrate his own works), and Edmund Eysler.
referring to operetta as “dreck.” While it should not be surprising that assistant conductors and orchestrators were not allowed space to demonstrate their creativity or that working conditions in provincial theaters were often bad, this personal animus is a vital inspiration for these composers’ later condemnations of operetta. While the terms of their criticism are often aesthetic and general, the background and context is deeply personal.

Orchestration

As noted above, many operetta composers did not orchestrate their own work, though Franz Lehár, Emmerich Kálmán, and Leo Fall, three of the four composers examined most closely in this study, did. (Oscar Straus did not.) Some abstained due to, as Kraus implied, a lack of musical education, others due to lack of interest (operetta orchestration was often rote) or lack of time (as in the case of Der Opernball). Kálmán, Lehár, and Fall all were able and managed to find the time, abetted in their later careers by the economic privilege of composing slowly. Additionally, their fame was grounded in their handicraft and original voices—in which their command of the orchestra played an important role.

The issue of orchestration was a sensitive one for operetta insiders, a delicate topic in the operetta industry’s collective quest to be taken seriously as artists. In July 1926, an article in Die Stunde asked, “Who orchestrates Viennese operettas?” The anonymous writer reports that a prominent unnamed Viennese music critic would, at the next assembly of the Association of

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Playwrights and Composers, demand that the names of anonymous orchestrators be listed in theater programs. This was motivated, the article detailed, less by a desire to give credit to the unnamed as to expose that many prominent operetta composers were not capable of orchestrating their own music (“because they cannot master the art of instrumentation,” “weil sie die Kunst der Instrumentations nicht beherrschen”) and to laud to the real masters who could—Lehár, Kálmán, and Fall, described as the “matadors of Viennese operetta.” The article goes so far as to name Vienna’s most popular orchestrators: conductor Oskar Stalla, Nico Dostal (later a successful composer himself), and “der Musiker Kopsiva.” No specific composers or works are named, though Stalla is described as having contracts with four prominent composers for the next season. While it is unclear if the promised confrontation ever came to pass, orchestrators continued to be uncredited in theater programs.

**Theaters and Productions**

The Viennese theaters where operettas were produced were licensed private commercial enterprises, designated “k.u.k. Privattheater.” Vienna had a seemingly insatiable appetite for performances, and until the economic crises of the 1920s and the spread of sound film, more and more theaters were built. Theaters rarely closed down entirely, but they changed artistic

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110 “Wer instrumentiert die Wiener Operetten?,” *Die Stunde*, July 3, 1926.
111 All three names are convincing: they all had confirmed careers on the fringes of operetta composition, though their names never appeared credited as orchestrators. Oskar Stalla is best known for arranging the Johann Strauß pastiche *Die Tänzerin Fanny Ensler*. (He is also credited by Universal Edition as the arranger of a suite of music from Paul Burkhard’s *Casanova in der Schweiz*, and in 1944 his name appeared on the notorious *Gottbegabten-Liste* of 1041 artists valued by the Third Reich.) “Kopsiva” is presumably a typographical error for Franz Kopriva, a prolific credited arranger of operetta and therefore likely also a ghost orchestrator.
112 One likely candidate for this contract is Bruno Granichstädtten (*Das Schwalbennest*, Theater an der Wien, premiere December 25, 1926).
directions frequently. While names often remained the same, programming constantly changed with fashions, ownership, and artistic direction. For example, the Raimundtheater opened as an Aryan Theater-like Müller-Guttenbrunn enterprise in 1893, became a spoken-word theater in 1896, a home for visiting operetta troupes in 1900, and finally in, 1908, was taken over by the management of the Theater an der Wien. The number and style of theaters regularly performing operettas fluctuated with the genre’s popularity. Most theaters kept on the payroll ensembles of actors who performed in all of the theater’s works (with the occasional special guest). Along with the composers and works favored by the management, the special nature of these ensembles gave each theater its individual character.

By 1900, Viennese audiences had a hitherto unprecedented choice in theatrical venues and genres of musical theater. The most important can be seen in the map that appears as Figure 1.1. Location mattered. The closer a theater was to the Innere Stadt, the wealthier an audience it could attract, the more media coverage it would receive in major newspapers, and the higher ticket prices it could command. The most prestigious operetta stages were the Carltheater (whose name was not standardized and often appears as Carl-Theater) and Theater an der Wien, located in the Vorstadt but not far from the glittering center. They typically engaged a program emphasizing operetta, sometimes interspersed with opera and serious drama. The Johann-Strauß-Theater, situated very near the Theater an der Wien joined this elite rank when it opened in 1908. Further afield in the suburbs were the Theater in der Josefstadt, Lustspieltheater, and Neue Wiener Bühne, playing similar programs with somewhat lower prices—and lower

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113 Until the 1920s, the only thing that could really stop a theater was a fire, as happened at the Ringtheater in 1881. The fire killed nearly 400 people during a performance of Les contes d’Hoffmann; impresario Franz Jauner was sentenced to a short term in prison and major changes were enacted in theater safety laws. After the fire, Les contes d’Hoffmann was not performed in Vienna for the next two decades. Yates, Theatre in Vienna, 155.
production values. Other theaters catered to an even lower-class audience with a mixed program of *Singspiele*, circus acts, revues, comic sketches, and sometimes operettas.\footnote{This landscape is described and perceptively analyzed by Linhardt, *Residenzstadt und Metropole*.}

The seating capacity of theaters varied; the Theater an der Wien was the largest at 1,859 spectators (reduced from its nineteenth-century capacity due to a renovation that replaced the roof and eliminated the top level), while the Carl Theater and Johann-Strauß-Theater both accommodated around 1,200. The orchestras of the three most important theaters hovered around 42 members, while the less prestigious theaters averaged around 35.\footnote{Operetta orchestration was standardized with double woodwinds (second flute doubling piccolo), two trumpets, four horns, and three trombones. The differences were in the sizes of the string sections. A breakdown for the Raimund-Theater can be found in *Deutsches Bühnen-Jahrbuch*, 1910 edition, pp. 674-5. Orchestras were generally all male, though a woman named Emma Mulacz-Moser was playing the harp at the Theater an der Wien in 1890. Deutscher Bühnenverein, *Deutsches Bühnen-jahrbuch; Theatergeschichtliches Jahr- und Adressenbuch* (Berlin: F.A. Günther, 1890), http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000551053.}

Choruses ranged from 35 to 50 permanent members, some of whom also played small solo roles.\footnote{Listings of orchestral and choral personnel can be found in the *Deutsches Bühnen-Jahrbuch*. The Theater an der Wien, Johann-Strauß-Theater, and Carltheater employed forces of near-identical size; smaller theaters such as the Raimundtheater featured smaller orchestras and choruses.} Theaters also kept complete musical staffs on payroll including conductors, assistant conductors (often aspiring or semi-successful composers), accompanists, and copyists.

Theaters also maintained their own workshops for the construction of sets, costumes, and props (with the occasional dramatic backdrop outsourced to one of the city’s scenic painters) and kept large stocks of items which were recycled for less prestigious premieres. Whether a work received the investment of new sets and costumes or not was taken as an indication of faith from the management in the work’s chances for survival.\footnote{Notoriously, *Die lustige Witwe*, which went on to be the most successful operetta of the twentieth century, premiered with no new costumes or sets at all. After its success was apparent, the production was completely reoutfitted. In the 1910s and 1920s, when exotic and dramatically specific settings became more common and stagings more opulent, costumes and sets were most often made to order.} Operettas were even featured in fashion
spreads in the ladies’ section of newspapers, where women could take cues on the latest styles from what glamorous stars like Betty Fischer or Louise Kartousch wore onstage.\(^{118}\)

Rehearsals for a new production lasted around a month, with the stage direction generally in the hands of one of the theater’s house directors or sometimes one of the librettists. The dancing was managed by a house choreographer. As an operetta’s audience began to decline, theaters pushed the next premiere into production. If the next work wasn’t ready when the fading work reached a critical point, an old production or productions (“repertoire”) were rotated onstage with minimal rehearsal until the new work was ready. (Repertoire would often also fill in matinees or other unpopular nights of the week.) Sometimes a successful work would be pushed out due to a previously signed contract, but if tickets were still to be sold it generally would reappear in due time. Theaters rarely went dark during the September–June season; while the ensemble was present, something would be onstage. (Sometimes touring troupes would appear for a *Gastspiel* or short engagement in between ensemble productions.) Revivals and repertoire rarely received press coverage or generated much excitement, but they could help keep theaters financially stable while new works were in rehearsal.

\(^{118}\) These reports were developed into a genre by Mizzi Neumann in the *Neues Wiener Journal*. The articles briefly introduce the work through the glittering successes of the actors appearing in them and then move on to describe in detail the clothes seen onstage, both men and women. The articles seem to have been aimed at the women who would not read the more serious drama section of the paper but still wished to take their cues from the most fashionable of theatrical entertainments, the operetta. Mizzi Neumann, “Die lustige Viererzug in ‘Clo-Clo’. Lehar-Premiere am Bürgertheater.,” *Neues Wiener Journal*, March 9, 1924; Mizzi Neumann, “Unsere Eliteveranstaltungen. Zu Marischkas großer Erfolg.,” *Neues Wiener Journal*, March 2, 1924; Ella Bermer, “‘Giuditta’. Zur gestrigen Sensationspremiere in der Staatsoper,” *Neues Wiener Journal*, January 21, 1934, sec. Unsere Mode.
Economics

At some point in the composition process of a new operetta, the composer and librettists signed a contract with a theater, or it would be determined that the operetta fulfilled a multi-operetta contract that had been signed in the past by one of the involved parties. This contract stipulated the time at which the score and text would be delivered, the percentage of the profits that would go to each party, the approximate date when the operetta would be performed (such “the fall 1904 season”), and various other details. (Sometimes an earlier, informal contract labeled a Vereinbarung, agreement, specified the most important details and committed the operetta for production at the theater before the more detailed final contract.) In a typical contract, the royalties were divided evenly between composer and librettists, with the composer receiving half and the two librettists splitting the other half. Sometimes another involved party, most frequently the lawyer who negotiated the contract, would also receive a small share of 1% or 2%. In later Theater an der Wien contracts, theater impresario Hubert Marischka negotiated himself a personal share of the proceeds.¹¹⁹

Later contracts often included provisions for profits from sheet music sales, recordings, the rights for performances outside Vienna, and film adaptations. Wilhelm Karczag and the Theater an der Wien in particular strove to create a vertically integrated operetta industry. Karczag (and his successor Marischka) ran his own publishing house, Karczag-Verlag, which printed the scores of many though not all of the operettas his theater premiered. He—and, far more lucratively, Marischka—also collected a cut from recordings.

¹¹⁹ A few contracts can be found in the Nachlass Marischka, ÖTM and the Alfred Grünwald Papers (“T-Mss 1998-30, NYPL). An excellent set of contracts for many works over the course of over a decade, including many international agreements, can be found in the Leo Fall Collection, F88 Leo Fall 281-285, ÖNB MS.
Although this method enabled the theater to reap a healthy profit from successful works, both from music sales to the public and royalties from performances outside Vienna, it eventually developed into a risky model. In the 1920s, when the expectations for visual opulence rose, the theater made extremely high investments in new productions. The high costs, though, could not be recouped by ticket sales in Vienna alone. The catch was that only a work that gained the reputation of Viennese success would bring in the plentiful revue from foreign performances, music sales, and other rights. A work that flopped or was only a moderate success in Vienna could lose the theater catastrophic sums. Ultimately, this proved ruinous.\textsuperscript{120}

Operetta’s system of artificially building buzz around a work was also risky. The reception of early performances was often distorted by a claque in the upper gallery, often hired by the librettists or by individual actors to enhance their reputations.\textsuperscript{121} A show that was sold out—for which tickets were scalped or unavailable—was instantly seen as desirable. Theaters developed an easy way of selling out right away: for the first week or two of a new operetta’s performances, many tickets were given away. Employees of the theater and their families and friends were the primary beneficiaries, enabling the theater to proclaim that tickets were sold out except for a performance several nights hence, creating an economics of scarcity for all remaining tickets. Gradually, more and more tickets would be available for sale to the public, and they were eventually readily accessible. Such a system made any operetta seem to be a popular hit,

\textsuperscript{120} This procedure is outlined in several financial documents found in the Nachlass Marischka, see particularly the 1937 accounting of the theater’s recent finances, as well as Gertrude Marischka’s manuscript memoir. Nachlass Hubert Marischka, box “Gertrud Marischka” (unnumbered), ÖTM. The economic structure is not dissimilar to a contemporary large-budget Hollywood film.

\textsuperscript{121} Brixel, “Die Ära Wilhelm Karczag im Theater an der Wien,” 122. Emmerich Kálmán, Alfred Grünwald, and Julius Bauer’s 1921 operetta \textit{Die Bajadere} includes the leader of a Parisian theater’s claque, Pimprinette, as a scheming supporting character.
independent of any actual acclaim or mass demand. In the early 1920s, however, as this strategy became common knowledge, it proved to be far less effective.

**The Publishing Industry**

Publication was an important step for lasting success in operetta. Successful composers had standing contracts with publishers and published all of their work; new composers sometimes waited until they achieved fame, and unsuccessful works by new or obscure composers were sometimes never published at all. When an operetta was published, it became available to the general public in a variety of forms, including piano-vocal scores, piano solo arrangements with the text printed above the music but without a separate vocal line (*Klavierauszug zu zwei Händen mit unterlegtem Text*—which become, in complex finales, somewhat confusing) and piano four hands with text. (Full scores and orchestral parts were rarely engraved at all and circulated only among theaters in manuscript in the hands of the theater copyists.) As well as the complete operetta, publishers also issued editions of excerpts, such as individual hit songs and short medleys of the most popular numbers. Potpourri arrangements for salon orchestra were also an important means of dissemination beyond the theater. For a major operetta, these might be published even before the premiere to build anticipation among the public. Before the era of recording, sheet music and performances by salon orchestras were operetta’s single most important form of publicity.

After an operetta’s premiere, the final version of the text was printed as a *Regie- und Soufflierbuch* (direction and prompt book) or *Vollständiges Soufflierbuch mit sämtlichen Regiebemerkungen* (full prompt book with complete production notes). These librettos were not

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122 Poller, “Die ökonomische Bewirtschaftung eines Operettentheaters.”
offered on sale to the public, as their copyright notices explicitly note (als unverkäuflicher Manuskript gedruckt or als unverkäuft. Ms. gedr.), but were rather available only on loan or rental to other theaters producing the works.\textsuperscript{123} (The public could purchase a shorter libretto containing only the song texts.) This controlled the operetta’s circulation so the publisher could better

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{promptbook.png}
\caption{Promptbook\textsuperscript{124}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{123} Since these full scripts were not widely distributed, locating them today can be a challenge. Many can be found at the Austrian National Library’s Theatersammlung and at the Wienbibliothek (formerly the Stadt- und Landesbibliothek). The New York Public Library’s Billy Rose Theatre Collection also has a significant collection. The archive of censor’s manuscripts at the Landesarchiv St. Pölten remains the most comprehensive source, but naturally only up to the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The text contains detailed notes on the original production’s design and staging details, which were to be replicated by provincial theaters to the greatest extent possible. A sample page from an early scene in Franz Lehár’s *Das Land des Lächelns* appears as Figure 1.3.

The libretto appears on the right (recto) side of each page. On the left (verso), small diagrams similar to a stage manager’s notes indicate the movement of the characters, which illustrate and add detail to the stage directions already present in the libretto. Each diagram is labeled with a number, which is keyed to a particular point in the opposite libretto text.

Choreographies were sometimes published separately. The original staging was considered an integral part of the work, akin to the words or music, and the director responsible for the staging is noted prominently on the cover. The notes, however, have their limits, and while they are particular about the layout of the stage and main actors, they leave a great deal of space for the individual actors to develop their interpretations. In addition, it is clear that for foreign stages directors adapted works for local taste and resources. This was not because direction was thought of as an independent art, but rather that operettas were not particularly fixed texts and adjustment to local taste was considered a key factor for success.

**Censorship**

Strict censorship was legally mandated for all licensed theaters until 1919. An operetta’s spoken dialogue was first prepared in a typescript that was submitted to the police censor in duplicate for approval around a month before the premiere. The censor read the libretto, underlined any objectionable portion in red pencil on both copies, and wrote a short summary and report on all. 

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125 As documented in the Marischka papers, publishers spent considerable time and resources tracking down and suing provincial productions that had “bootlegged” the operetta and were performing without paying the publisher (perhaps after having covertly copied another theater's materials).
problems. One copy was returned to the theater, the other was—thankfully for future scholarship—retained in the police’s archive. The libretto was then approved for performance on the condition that the librettists change the portions that were underlined. The directors of the theater were held accountable for any deviations from the approved script, which in theory forbade improvisation, changes, and interpolation. The law explicitly included visuals, music, and gestures as well as text, eliminating the possibility for sneaky double entendres.

Typically for the empire, the primary goal of the censor was to maintain public order and the appearance of harmony. The office had been established by an order issued during the Metternich era, on November 25, 1850. Theaters were prohibited from:

That which, in historical context, violates the need for public peace and order, that which insults public decency, shame, morality, or religion.\footnote{“Was nach den jeweiligen Zeitverhältnissen gegen die Rücksichten für die öffentliche Ruhe und Ordnung verstößt, was den öffentlichen Anstand, die Schamhaftigkeit, die Moral oder die Religion beleidigt.”\textsuperscript{126} l. [pseud.], “Der neue Zensor: Gespräch mit Bürgermeister Reumann,” \textit{Komödie} 2, no. 1 (January 1, 1921): 3.}

The censor forbade several specific categories of activity: directing the actors to perform any illegal action; displaying a lack of loyalty or respect for the state or the imperial house; disparaging patriotism, mocking, or displaying hatred of any nationality, religion, or social class; insulting public decency, godliness, or morality; any display of real Catholic vestments or imperial uniforms; and libel against any living people.\footnote{The rules are outlined in Yates, \textit{Theatre in Vienna}, 42–48; Norbert Nischkauer, “Bemerkungen zum Thema Johann Strauß und die Zensur,” \textit{Die Fledermaus} 4 (1992): 10–16.} While this may seem sweeping, few scripts show many signs of the red pencil. Librettists were familiar with what was allowed and what was not, and rarely seem to have pushed the envelope. This did not mean, however, that the censor’s rules did not play a large role in the subjects chosen.
The office of the police censor was eliminated following the empire’s dissolution. In an interview with the theater magazine *Komödie*, mayor of Vienna Jakob Reumann described the censor as “the remnant of the old police state,” now outdated, and that he believed that “the good taste of the public” would serve as sufficient regulation for stage production. Whether there was actual freedom of expression, however, was questionable: an article in *Die Stunde* from 1926 entitled “The censor is dead! Long live the censor!” pointed out that while the formal censorship process had ceased, the police still wielded the power to shut down any production deemed out of order, and that any statement against the state or offense against public decency would prompt immediate action. (The anonymous author gives no specific examples.) The writer notes that this was particularly problematic in smaller towns in Austria, where all depended on the whims of a few minor officials. The authoritarian state of the previous centuries, as could only be expected, did not immediately vanish. But operettas depicting monarchs both Austrian and French became common—such as *Im weißen Rössl*, *Madame Pompadour*, and *Kaiserin Josephine*—ironically, nostalgic reminders of an era when they would have been disallowed onstage.

**Critics**

Reviews were published in newspapers the day following premieres and were found in the theater and arts section. (A major opera premiere could make the lower *Feuilleton* half of the first page, but operetta was not generally accorded this honor.) Major premieres were often covered by the newspaper’s lead music critic or, in some papers, their the lead theater critic. Many of these critics were enmeshed in operetta society, several wrote librettos themselves and others penned

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128 l. [pseud.], “Der neue Zensor: Gespräch mit Bürgermeister Reumann.”
129 “Die Zensur is tot, es lebe die Zensur!,” *Die Stunde*, March 27, 1926.
biographies of composers.\textsuperscript{130} Their objectivity was often questioned by those who received their scorn, and conflicts of interest were not rigorously policed.\textsuperscript{131} While some reviews were anonymous, in most papers the critics were identified by their pseudonym (usually a few consonants from their surname). Their identities were not secret (though some of the more obscure are difficult to put a full name to today) and the regular critics were widely known in theatrical circles.

Vienna had an extremely large number of newspapers during this period, and nearly all featured coverage of music and theater. Most papers targeted a particular demographic: the \textit{Neue Freie Presse} was the dominant voice of the intellectual bourgeoisie, tabloids such as the \textit{Illustrierte Wiener Zeitung} were aimed at a lower-class audience, and some papers held particular political affiliations such as the Socialist \textit{Arbeiter–Zeitung} and conservative Catholic \textit{Reichspost}.\textsuperscript{132} The most frequent coverage of operetta could be found in the \textit{Neues Wiener Journal}, considered the most gossipy and female-targeted of the major broadsheets (described by historian Kurt Paupié as a “Konversationsblatt”\textsuperscript{133}). A paper’s theater coverage only occasionally betrayed the publication’s overall political orientation, and most critics did not have a prominent political agenda beyond bland centrist Liberalism. The more ideologically extreme papers are more easily labeled. The \textit{Reichspost’s} reviews have a definite German nationalist slant, the \textit{Arbeiter–Zeitung}

\textsuperscript{130} This includes Ludwig Hirschfeld and Leopold Jacobson, both librettists, as well as Ernst Decsey, author of several libretti, plays, and a partially musicalized \textit{Volkstück} about Bruckner, \textit{Des Musikant Gottes}.\textsuperscript{131} Kevin Clarke has chronicled a 1928 conflict between \textit{Neues Wiener Journal} critic Ernst Decsey and Theater an der Wien intendent Hubert Marischka in which Marischka rejected Decsey’s \textit{Lustspiel}, \textit{Der unsterbliche Franz} (Immortal Franz) and failed to hire Decsey’s son to be part of the theater’s musical staff. Decsey’s response was a tirade in the \textit{Neues Wiener Journal} entitled “An einer Ecke der Theatergeschichte (August 15, 1928), in which he accused Marischka’s theater, ironically enough, of corruption and nepotism. Clarke, \textit{Im Himmel spielt auch schon die Jazzband}, 215–217.\textsuperscript{132} The most detailed study of Viennese newspapers of this period is Paupié, \textit{Handbuch der österreichischen Pressegeschichte 2: Die zentralen pressepolitischen Einrichtungen des Staates, 1848–1959}.\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 155.
did not feature operetta prominently (the genre was not favored by the Socialists), and neither did the *Neue Freie Presse* (it was somewhat too mass-market).

The most influential critics of the first decade and a half of the twentieth century were Ludwig Karpath of the *Neue Wiener Tagblatt* and Leopold Jacobson of the *Neues Wiener Journal*, whose names and opinions are frequently cited by composers and librettists. In the 1920s, Kálmán biographer Julius Bistron and Bruckner and Lehár biographer Ernst Decsey become more prominent. Reviews by David Josef Bach in the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* offer a particularly trenchant, often sarcastic perspective, though he didn’t often write about operetta. Table 1.4 lists most of the major critics of operetta from 1900 to 1930, including those whose pseudonyms can be identified.

**Table 1.4: Major Viennese Operetta Newspaper Critics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Pen Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years Active</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Neue Freie Presse</em></td>
<td>—</td>
<td>(reviews unsigned)</td>
<td>1900s-1910s</td>
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<td></td>
<td>L. Hfd</td>
<td>Ludwig Hirschfeld</td>
<td>1920s-1930s</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Neues Wiener Journal</em></td>
<td>bs.</td>
<td>Leopold Jacobson</td>
<td>1900-c.1910</td>
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<td></td>
<td>a.e.</td>
<td>Alexander Engel</td>
<td>c.1908-1920s</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-ron</td>
<td>Julius Bistron</td>
<td>1920s</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H.T.</td>
<td>Heinrich Reinhardt?</td>
<td>1920s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Neues Wiener Tagblatt</em></td>
<td>-rp</td>
<td>Ludwig Karpath</td>
<td>1901-c.1920?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>E.D.</td>
<td>Ernst Decsey</td>
<td>1920-1930s</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dr. E.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Fremden-Blatt</em></td>
<td>st.</td>
<td>Julius Stern</td>
<td>c.1900-1919</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Österreichische Volks-Zeitung</em></td>
<td>A.L.</td>
<td>Alexander Landsberg</td>
<td>1900s-1910s</td>
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<td><em>St.</em></td>
<td>St.</td>
<td>Julius Stern 135</td>
<td>1919-20s</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Deutsches Volksblatt</em></td>
<td>Sch-r.</td>
<td>Karl Schreiber</td>
<td>until 1922</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Arbeiter-Zeitung</em></td>
<td>D.B.</td>
<td>David Josef Bach</td>
<td>1900s-1910s</td>
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<td></td>
<td>p.p.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1920s</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Reichspost</em></td>
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<td>Otto Howorka</td>
<td>1910s-1930s</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Die Zeit</em></td>
<td>bgr.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Until 1919</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Der Tag</em></td>
<td>(none)</td>
<td>Fred Heller</td>
<td>From 1923</td>
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134 (as operetta critics)

135 Stern began to write for the *Volks-Zeitung* after the *Fremden-Blatt* ceased publication.
While critics did not agree with each other on every detail, the range of opinions usually show a substantial amount of consensus as to a work’s strengths and weaknesses. The critical language has a fixed rhetoric to describe the good and bad qualities of operettas. They are first judged by their ability to fulfill the basic goals to amuse and divert (critics often mention whether the audience seemed to be enjoying themselves, and most particularly if any numbers were so successful as to be encored). Other basic requirements include the libretto’s pacing and plot twists, the composer’s ability to write a waltz, very often the quality of the orchestration (ironic since many operetta composers did not do this themselves), and the charisma, singing, and dancing abilities of the actors.

Critics also endeavor to place the operetta in the context of its creators’ previous works, and in terms of the broader trends in Viennese theatrical life. The composer receives the most attention. They are assumed to have particular strengths, weaknesses, and identities, while with few exceptions the librettists are regarded as interchangeable. The work is also put into context of the genre as a whole. Composers’ mastery of the Viennese idiom is usually remarked upon, and if the composer in question was not native Viennese (as the majority of the major Silver Age composers were not), his attempts to convince in what was considered a quintessentially Viennese language are assessed for their success. Scores are usually praised for their originality and craftsmanship, but when a composer demanded more of his performers or audience than could be expected of operetta (such as Leo Fall’s Der Rebell, see Chapter 2), their efforts are criticized as misplaced.

Critical and public opinion often converged. Some works, however, were critical successes but popular flops; the opposite (critical flops and popular successes) were not common until the growth of the much-maligned revue operetta in the 1920s. For those critical of operetta as a
whole—writers from more literary or serious musical circles who were generally not reviewing it on a daily basis—this collusion of criticism and market was one sign that marked operetta as non-art. Ultimately, it was the popular vote that determined how long an operetta would remain on the Spielplan, as critics acknowledged by their inclusion of public reaction.

Audiences

It is difficult to determine exactly the precise demographics of operetta audiences, but some details can be gleaned from contemporary accounts. Like the city of Vienna itself, operetta theaters were divided into two or three levels with each level targeted at a distinct population: in the Parkett (orchestra or stalls seating) and closest boxes were the bourgeois and nouveau riche (plus the occasional aristocrat or lower class citizen treating themselves), in the balcony or first ring the petit bourgeoisie, and in the gallery the working class. While advertisements indicate that theaters did offer some forms of subscription tickets, the vast majority of tickets were sold individually on the night of the performance. The fixed box society of major opera houses did not exist in operetta theaters, nor did the quasi-patron power of those box holders.

Some hints as to demographics can be gleaned from the magazine Komödie. Subtitled “Wochenrevue für Bühne und Film,” the gossipy, personality-focused publication covered everyone from film stars, opera singers, Burgtheater plays, and even the occasional excursion into serious music. But operetta is discussed most frequently of all. Its audience was presumably composed of devoted fans of many sorts of music and theater, interested in personalities and relatively well-educated and culturally literate, but not terribly intellectual. In 1921, Komödie published a list of readers who had correctly identified the personages in a photo published in the previous issue (identified here only as “Kuthan, Brandstetter, Seidl, Geyer, Blum”). 84 readers in
all are listed as winners, with their names and addresses supplied. Out of this number, the largest number, 57%, lived in the suburban Vorstadt, between the Ringstrasse and the Gürtel. 37% lived outside the Gürtel, and the remaining 6% lived inside the Ringstrasse in the Innere Stadt. This reinforces the oft-stated assumption that the most devoted operetta audience was the middle class bourgeois and lower middle class petit bourgeois.  

Due to the demographic changes during and following the Gründerzeit, the distribution of operetta audiences changed as well. In 1902, on the eve of the Silver Age, Max Graf recorded a transformation of operetta taste over the past few decades, powered primarily by the streetcar. Audiences were no longer tied to their local, neighborhood theaters. While nineteenth-century Vienna had been a patchwork of neighborhoods, public transportation now tied the city together, and its population was more likely to claim an identity as Viennese or as an immigrant rather than allegiance to any particular district. In Graf’s view, this had a chilling effect on operetta. While the audience had greatly expanded from a small circle of connoisseurs to a mass form, quality had decreased, and beginning with Carl Zeller, was homogenized to the lowest common denominator. What once was individual and specific—“the wit of Offenbach, the grace of Johann Strauss, the melodic cleverness of Millöcker”—had, according to Graf, become mass-produced and generic, lowered to the folk music of a Heuriger. When he attempts to predict a future revival of operetta, Graf is off the mark: his predicted revival of “Alt-Wien” spirit via Edmund Eysler did occur, but he entirely fails to anticipate the more popular group of modern and cosmopolitan operettas.

136 “Die Fünf mit der Maske,” Komödie: Wochenrevue für Bühne und Film, February 19, 1921.
Many operetta artists maintained that it was those in the gallery who made or killed an operetta, not the voices of the critics or even those who purchased the more expensive seats. Proportionately, this seems possible, since there were many more cheap seats than there were expensive ones. The Silver Age’s tendency towards *Serienerfolgen*—hit operettas that ran for years at a single theater, akin to the modern Broadway megamusical—certainly encouraged writing for mass audiences. In the nineteenth century, audiences were loyal to their neighborhood theater, but with the onset of *Serienerfolg* the theater had to count on drawing a largely new group of audience members every single night. 138 This was only one of the ways in which operetta was ill-equipped to deal with the challenge from sound film, revue, and other novel entertainments of the 1920s.

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Chapter 2

Die lustige Witwe and
the Birth of Silver Age
Viennese Operetta,
1900-1905

“...an artistic bastard, which might have been conceived by a stock exchange jobber and a Parisian cocotte.” – Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn

Viennese operetta is a genre that scavenged from many others. Containing elements of French opérette, opéra comique, German Singspiel and komische Oper, it also borrowed unabashedly from Viennese theater pieces like the Lustspiel, Schwank, and Posse, the traditional Germanic Volksstück, the French boulevard theater that bequeathed the Viennese so many librettos, and even Italian opera. Its place was chimerical and liminal, between play and opera, between high and low, between art and commerce. It crossed borders of time and place, with souvenirs of an English music hall abutting Viennese Volkslieder and Slovakian dances. Critics perennially dismissed it as the banal bastard of one of its more artistic or more ancient progenitors. But it was the breadth of this family tree that allowed operetta to build its rich vocabulary of

conventions and codes with remarkable speed, and it was the diversity of its city, theaters, and audiences that made these codes intelligible.²

Unlike the increasingly inward-looking operas of the period, whose composers attempted to create a monument that would last, operetta was created as contingent, open, disposable, and rarely aspired to revolutionary originality. As librettist Victor Léon wrote, “[Operetta] is not caviar for the people. Its function is to serve as entertainment, pur et simple.”³ Each work reacted against the successes and the failures of its predecessors, replicating what worked and excising what did not. Many operettas wear their hybrid character proudly, using stylistic variation allegorically for dramatic effect and characterization. Serious characters sing with operatic breadth, modern ones dance the cakewalk, and Balkan ones do Balkan dances. Folk song in general connotes interiority, quasi-French music the intrigues and debauchery of a night at the Folies bergère. The talents and personas of the leading actors were written into their roles. If anything didn’t make sense in a revival, it was simply adjusted to fit new circumstances, much like opera in its earlier Venetian days. That the form was commercial, dependent on market forces and the changing tastes of audiences, was not incidental, nor a liability, but rather a defining feature of the genre’s construction and development. The few operettas that survive today be hard to appreciate in isolation: much of their thrill comes from the way they manipulate the conventions and codes of the genre.

² Librettist Victor Léon acknowledged this: “What pleases the honorable in the orchestra section does not always please the female cook in the gallery, but what pleases the cook doesn’t always also suit the aristocrats in the orchestra.” (“Was der Gnädigen im Parkett gefällt, gefällt nicht immer der Köchin auf der Galerie, was aber der Köchin auf der Galerie gefällt, gefällt immer auch der Gnädigen im Parkett.”) Léon, “Bittere Operettenwahrheiten.”
³ Ibid. “Sie soll und will ja nicht Kaviar furs Volk sein. Sie macht sich vor allem dienstbar dem Unterhaltungsbedürfnis pur et simple.”
The main subject of this chapter is the founding operetta of Vienna’s Silver Age, Franz Lehár’s *Die lustige Witwe*. But to see its dramatic conventions in context, it is necessary to consider in more detail the ten years that separated Gold from Silver. The operettas examined in the first section of this chapter, *Das süße Mädel*, *Der Rebell*, and *Der Rastelbinder*, are all to an unusual extent experimental and unconventional, searching for a new tone that will catch on with audiences. But it was the great success of *Die lustige Witwe* that led to it becoming itself a model, replacing the wider vocabulary of earlier works. The pluralism of styles subsequently slipped away. Later Silver Age operettas had greater aesthetic unity, conveniently requiring no knowledge of numerous genre conventions. For some, this qualified them as art rather than product, conveniently enough it also made them ideal for the international market that *Witwe* had developed.

**IN SEARCH OF “DIE OPERETTE DER ZUKUNFT”**

Even access to operetta in Vienna was expanding rapidly (as described in Chapter 1), critics saw a genre in decline after the passing of the Golden Age. The struggles of the Theater an der Wien, the oldest an most important of operetta theaters, seemed symptomatic.\(^4\) Of the operettas of the 1890s, only Richard Heuberger’s first operetta, *Der Opernball*, had seemed to point the way to the future and to achieve lasting success, playing 152 times, around three times

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\(^4\) Built by Emmanuel Schikenader, the theater hosted the premieres of all three versions of *Fidelio* as well as many of the most important Golden Age operettas. The theater’s history is documented in Brixel, “Die Ära Wilhelm Karczag im Theater an der Wien.”; as well as in Anton Bauer, *150 Jahre Theater an der Wien* (Zürich: Amalthea-Verlag, 1952); Attila Endr Láng, *200 Jahre Theater an Der Wien: “Spectacles Müssen Seyn”* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 2); Tadeusz Krzeszowiak, *Theater an Der Wien: seine Technik und Geschichte 1801-2001* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2002); Holzer, *Die Wiener Vorstadtbühnen: Alexander Girardi und das Theater an der Wien.*
an average hit of those years. Its sophisticated yet conventional score, while prefiguring the
eroticism of Silver Age music, failed to lead to any successors. Its success was, by all accounts,
less those of dramatic innovation or newness than simply refined music with a polish that eluded
other composers. The score contains many elegant waltzes and the libretto is a relatively
conventional farce; the plot’s festivities, masked ball, and sophisticated characters recall Die
Fledermaus more than anything else. In this Der Opernball represents a break from the
aggressively earthy Austrian tone of the time, involving no adorable country girls in Dirndls or
wise old coachmen dispensing romantic advice. (Despite the prominence of the Opera Ball on
Vienna’s social calendar, Heuberger’s setting is Parisian.)

Unfortunately, the composer failed to build on its success or merits, nor did other
composers or librettists. As critic Albert Kauders wrote in 1904, “Heuberger could have become
the messiah of the genre had he not followed up his striving for reform so rashly and without
foresight.” Much later, Otto Keller added that “Heuberger had the human foible of failing to
recognize his own natural limitations,” and his follow-up works were careless and second-rate.
Likewise, by 1900 the Theater an der Wien hosted few premieres, the performances were
 provincial in quality, and the programming lacked focus. In 1901, in financial doldrums under
the direction of Karl Langkammer, it was closed and put up for sale.

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5 Statistics can be found in Bauer, 150 Jahre Theater an der Wien.
6 “Heuberger wäre nach diesem Erfolge vielleicht der Messias des Genres geworden, wenn er nur seine
Refrombestrebungen nicht allzu rasch und rücksichtslos verfolgt hätte.” Albert Kauders, “Die Wiener
Operette,” Bühne und Welt, 1904.
7 “Heuberger hatte den menschlichen Fehler, die natürlichen Grenzen nicht zu erkennen.” Keller, Die
Operette in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung, 240.
Critical Perspectives

Critics and composers were acutely aware of the problem, and published many essays on the “crisis” of operetta. Granted, according to its detractors, operetta was in a perpetual crisis, and in this era were at least four articles published under title of “Operettendämmerung.” But the shortage of established, major name composers around 1900 did make the situation seem particularly dire. A survey of criticism published between 1900 and 1905 written both by operetta creators and aficionados and by critics reveals several common threads. All agree that operetta’s “Glanzzeit” (heyday) is past, but there is dissent as to how or whether operetta can reclaim its lost glory.

The origins of operetta are inevitably identified as French. Some writers baldly state that Offenbach invented operetta in Paris (usually assigning the genre a French heritage even as acknowledging Offenbach’s German ethnicity), others trace its origins to the eighteenth-century French vaudeville and then through the German Singspiel, a heritage that conveniently allows it to be associated with Die Zauberflöte and Die Entführung aus dem Serail. The purpose of operetta is identified as pleasure and entertainment: Berlin theater critic Erich Urban describes its virtues as “likeable superficiality” and “cheerful, easy-going essence.” Critic Ferdinand Scherber, writing in the Neue Musik-Zeitung, writes that operetta should be effortless, “music that goes

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9 Many of these polemics are collected in Linhardt, Warum es der Operette so schlecht geht.
into our ears without pain, and without exertion brings new excitement to our nerves.”¹¹ After years of condemnation of Offenbachian wit by conservative and nationalist factions, there is an active attempt to rehabilitate French works and style.

Scherber assigns the ease of operetta music a social function as “music that accompanies people in the workshop and office, that sustains the monotony of division of labor, that helps the dark minutes of many minutes fly by.”¹² Critic Theodor Antropp also doubts that those who criticize operetta as useless have seen its place in its audience’s lives: “Who seriously would opine that operetta has no right to exist and fills no requirement has never had a living relationship between stage and audience.”¹³ Composer Franz Lehár similarly writes that many writers condemn operetta music as lacking worth, but most people do not have the privilege or time to enjoy and understand difficult music, while anyone can enjoy operetta for “recuperation after the day’s trouble and toil.”¹⁴ But whatever its function, the writers agreed that operetta was suffering hard times. Critic Erich Urban goes so far as to say: “Offenbach began, fulfilled, and finished operetta. He is simultaneously its beginning. Apex. And end.”¹⁵ Like Urban, Eugen Thari finds the true purpose of operetta to be merry parody and political satire, exemplified by Offenbach, and argues that current composers had abandoned their purpose for mere business concerns.¹⁶

¹² “Eine Musik muß es ja geben, die den Menschen bei seiner Arbeit in der Werkstätte, im Bureau begleitet, ihm die durch das Prinzip der Arbeitsteilung gewordene Monotonie seiner gewohnten Beschäftigung erträgen, die trübe Stimmung mancher Minuten überwinden hilft.” Ibid., 45–46.
Operetta’s arrival in Vienna, all agree, marked the beginning of its reimagining. (None consider Paris except as the place of operetta’s origin. Through this Hegelian view of history, operetta can seemingly only exist in one city at a time.) In Vienna, critics suggest, operetta gave way to three temptations: the waltz and dance music in general, operatically overscaled apotheoses, and dependence on dramatic cliché. (These critiques would persist until the genre’s end in the 1930s.) Urban identifies Johann Strauss as the source of both the first and the last tendencies, arguing that the Waltz King brought the closed forms of dance music to operetta instead of writing music that was dramatically motivated, a decidedly peculiar charge considering Strauss’s pioneering use of large finales. Scherber, Mello, Kauders, and Antropp all identify operetta’s music as suffering from an excess of waltzes and a shortage of variety. Nearly all the writers note that operetta plots have become prone to cliché and formula as well.

It is the question of opera, and what direction operetta should take in the future, that is the most intriguing. Lehár and Scherber both identify Austria’s proximity to Italy as a factor in its Viennese development towards more extended forms and vocal breadth, a “southern air” (Scherber) that makes the Viennese, “with their love of aria put the highest demand on the vocal talent of the singers” (Lehár).17 Urbann and Antropp evoke Wagner, writing that he restored to opera the dramatic use of music, a move away from the closed forms of earlier styles that they decry in operetta. Lehár says something similar when he writes that the more operatic forms of Viennese operetta allowed for “through-composed finales, so it will gradually evolve to an ever-higher art form.” The future of operetta, Lehár proclaims, is “that it will win more and more on

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17 “mit ihrer Liebe zur Arie an die Gesangkunst des Sängers oft die höchsten Anforderungen stellten.” Lehár, “Die Zukunft der Operette.”
content, and become closer to the comic opera.”\(^{18}\) This tendency towards operatic forms will be one of the most contentious issues in operetta in the early twentieth century, and is usually traced back to *Fledermaus* and *Zigeunerbaron*.\(^{19}\)

One name is inevitably invoked in discussions of operetta and opera: Richard Wagner. Sometimes he is alluded to only in a general sense, such as when Urban declares the need for an “Operette der Zukunft” and Antrop’s comment that “when opera was in greatest peril, Richard Wagner appeared as its savior and brought us the music drama.”\(^{20}\) Operetta, they imply, is in need of a revolution similar to the one Wagner instigated in opera. In their view, Wagner restored to opera the dramatic use of music and moved away from the closed forms of earlier styles, just the problem they argue plagues operetta. Lehár says something similar when he argues that operetta will evolve into the higher life form of opera through larger and more ambitious musical structures.

Camille Crittenden has examined the influence of “Zukunftsmusik” and Wagner on operetta in the nineteenth century, mostly in terms of parodies of specific works of Wagner and Johann Strauss II’s operatic aspirations.\(^{21}\) The parodies continued, as explored in Chapter 3 with Oscar Strauss’s *Nibelungenlied* parody *Die lustigen Nibelungen*. But the influence of Wagner was

\(^{18}\) “Sie gibt Gelegenheit zur größten Entfaltung von Solo-, Chor- und Ensemble-Sätzen und ermöglicht breit angelegte, wohl durchgearbeitete Finales, so daß sie sich allmählich zu einer immer höheren Kunstform entwickelte…. daß sie mehr und mehr an Gehalt gewinnen und sich der komischen Oper nähern wird.” Ibid.


\(^{21}\) One of the key figures in her account of Johann Strauss’s Wagnerisms is Victor Léon, whose experiments with the boundaries of the genre will continue to be important throughout the Silver Age. Crittenden, *Johann Strauss and Vienna*, 210–256.
not limited to the direct references and large-scale innovations described by Crittenden. Concurrent and even implicit in the turn towards affective, dramatically cohesive scores was the addition of a psychological dimension to operetta. The Offenbachian figures of parody and satire singing modest set forms are replaced by complex characters who serve as figures of identification for the audience. Their music grows in complexity and they increasingly express themselves in music that depicts their inner psychological states.

This was not welcomed by all critics. Those who sought a return to Offenbach saw dramatic detachment as a defining feature of operetta, the key to its irreverent attitude. (The assumption that the absence of dramatic mimesis necessarily indicated the presence of satire will be examined in more detail in Chapter 3.) The turn to identification led, they argued, would lead inevitably to sentimentality and mindlessness. What should be done? Most conservatively, Thari proposes that operetta should return fully to its Offenbachian roots, a model of a “satyr play” that would seduce with “human, artistic, and political humor.” Urban thinks the solution is to look to the artists of his city, Berlin, for a fresh “joyful, brash, satirical spirit.” These critics are already resistant to the ambitions expressed by Lehár, whose flowering would ultimately define the Silver Age. Proper operetta, the writers seem to think, should not aspire to operatic scale but rather restrict itself to the modest dimensions best suited for comedy. While these voices would

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22”Satirspiel… Menschliches, Künstlerisches, politische und soziale Welt mit Humor vorführen.” Thari, “Warum es der Operette so schlecht geht.”
23 “Heiteren, kecken, satirischen Geist.” Urban, “Die Wiedergeburt der Operette.” Urban was partly right. While the composers he names—Paul Linke and Victor Holländer—became far better-known internationally as song composers than as dramatic composers, two of the most important Silver Age Viennese operetta composers, Oscar Strauss and Leo Fall, were both Austrian but spent their early careers in Berlin. Berlin’s real time would come in the 1920s, when the booming Weimar Republic surpassed Vienna and its revue-style operettas came into fashion.
continue throughout operetta’s life, they were increasingly drowned out by the ever-grander scorings of the Silver Age. Many of these were by Lehár himself.

**English Operetta**

The most popular works of the 1895–1905 period were in fact not Viennese at all but rather imported English operettas, translated into German like their Offenbachian predecessors. Their sudden rise to popularity marked the end of the xenophobic period in Viennese theater. The D’Oyly Carte Company first visited the Carltheater in 1886, but the real breakthrough came in the mid-1890s with the works of the English music hall composer Sidney Jones (1861–1946). Jones’s “dance operettas” grew out of the music hall tradition of London, a cousin to the growing industry of the variété in Vienna. The settings of dance operettas were usually exotic (another big success was German-American composer Gustav Kerker’s *The Belle of New York*, translated as *Die Schöne aus New York*) and the focus, as the review suggests, was on superficial sensory amusement and dazzle. Jones’s *The Geisha (The Story of a Tea House)* was first performed in Vienna in October 1897, and became the most popular operetta in some time. Compared to “Golden Age” Viennese operettas, or even to Gilbert and Sullivan, Jones’s music is simplistic and generic. (Though the operetta preceded Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* by nearly a decade, the plot of a naval officer falling in love with a geisha probably owes the same debt to Pierre Loti’s 1887 novel *Madame Chrysanthème*. While the exotic plot was picturesque and titillating, what made

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25 The plot of *The Geisha* “tells the story of a British naval officer stationed in the orient who falls in love with a geisha. His fiancée learns of their developing relationship, comes to Japan, and disguises herself as a geisha to win him back. A local overlord aims to disperse the geishas and possess the new arrival, but the British entourage rescues her. In the end, the naval officer marries his fiancée, the geisha marries an
The Geisha a sensation was its energetic dancing and dazzling visuals. The Fremden-Blatt wrote:

Nothing in this “Japanese teahouse story”… is in itself new; once again the Mikado décor… But the conglomeration of these visual and aural stimulations nevertheless do in fact give a new image: nowhere will the erratic bon vivant will find his favorite sensory amusements so prettily united as he will in The Geisha.26

While The Geisha copies the setting of its predecessor The Mikado (the Fremden-Blatt critic may have intended the “Mikado décor” comment literally, meaning the production used the same set pieces), it lacks Gilbert and Sullivan’s satirical edge, which perhaps explains its exponentially larger Viennese success.27 The Victorian English culture so thoroughly lampooned in Gilbert and Sullivan was foreign to the Viennese, and Jones’s work, with a simple opposition between Japanese and European, required no England-specific cultural knowledge.28 Unlike the deliberately quaint and conservative völkisch operettas that had dominated the previous two decades, they offered something fresh and new.


28 “Jones’s musical, eschewing satire and verbal ingenuity, concentrates much more straightforwardly on romance and the exotic.” Jeffrey Richards, Imperialism and Music: Britain, 1876–1953 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 266.
Most of the numbers of *The Geisha* are simple strophic forms.\(^{29}\) **Example 2.1,** “Chin-Chin-Chinaman,” is a good example. It is an adaptation of the Offenbachian *couplet,* a form also common in the works of Gilbert and Sullivan and occasionally found in nineteenth-century Viennese operetta. Unlike most numbers designated “song,” couplets prioritize textual intelligibility over melody, and often include a chorus echoing the soloist (such as in “When I was a lad I served a term” from *H.M.S. Pinafore,* in which the chorus echoes Sir Joseph Porter at the end of each verse, e.g. “he polished up the handle so carefully/that now he is the ruler of the Queen’s Navee!”). The text is almost always comic, and the performance maintains a presentational quality (while a song might be more serious and sincere).

In **Example 2.1a,** from the verse, the text setting is syllabic, and often features only minimal stepwise melodic motion and many repeated pitches.\(^{30}\) The chorus repeats the refrain in **Example 2.1b,** which may have been staged for comic effect.

**Example 2.1:** Sidney Jones, *The Geisha* No. 25, “Chin Chin Chinaman” (Wun-Hi and Chorus)
a) Entrance of voice

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\(^{30}\) This kind of writing can be sped up to produce a patter song, in which many words are sung very quickly to a simple melodic line. (Such numbers are still most commonly associated with Gilbert and Sullivan, such as “I am the very model of a modern Major General” from *The Pirates of Penzance.*)
b) Choral echo of refrain

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\begin{align*}
\text{S} & \quad \text{Chin chin Chi-na-man Much-ee much-ee sad! He a-fraid Al-lo trade Well-ee well-ee bad!} \\
\text{A} & \quad \text{Chin chin Chi-na-man Much-ee much-ee sad! He a-fraid Al-lo trade Well-ee well-ee bad!} \\
\text{T} & \quad \text{Chin chin Chi-na-man Much-ee much-ee sad! He a-fraid Al-lo trade Well-ee well-ee bad!} \\
\text{B} & \quad \text{Chin chin Chi-na-man Much-ee much-ee sad! He a-fraid Al-lo trade Well-ee well-ee bad!}
\end{align*}
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c) Dance

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\begin{align*}
\text{DANCE.} \\
\text{\small chopsticks} \\
\text{\small \small chopsticks} \\
\text{\small \small \small \small chopsticks}
\end{align*}
```
The song’s dance postlude is seen in Example 2.1c. After eight measures of new material, themes heard in the verse and refrain are reprised with slight variations, including some extra syncopation. At forty measures total, the dance postlude is long compared to those in most scores—though it is likely that performances did not correspond to published editions and included considerably more dance music. Few concrete details about the choreography survive, but its prominence in contemporary descriptions suggests that it was key to the popularity of English operetta. The dance style associated with English operetta was, after around 1900, known as “eccentric dance,” a broad term found in many European and American writings, described variously as grotesque and extreme and presumably involving cartoonish, intentionally ungraceful motion and acrobatics. This dance was often thrown off rhythmic balance in line with the music’s many syncopations (the dance for this number was described by British critics as involving “contortions”31).

Marion Linhardt traces eccentric dance’s origins through both French music halls and touring African-American musicians, some of whom had already reached Vienna. But it was in the works of Sidney Jones, and particularly as played by the actor Louis Treumann, where eccentric dance reached a broad public.32 Actor Louis Treumann created a sensation when starring in Sydney Jones’s follow-up to *The Geisha*, another exotic operetta entitled *San Toy*:

> I can modestly say that I lay the foundations for eccentric dance onstage… [in *San Toy*] because something grotesque was required, I pushed myself so far onstage as to do a

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31 Richards, *Imperialism and Music*, 265. The charm of Sidney Jones’s score is sufficient to move Richards to personal reminiscence. He recalls “Chin-Chin-Chinaman” as “the most enduring of the songs… deeply politically incorrect but with an irresistibly catchy tune. My grandmother was still singing it in the 1950s, half-a-century after she had first heard it.”

“Salto mortadella” in the dance after my couplet (the Chinese soldier). This sparked such a frenetic ovation in the audience that I often had to encore it. Many came to the theater just to see if I would make it through unscathed. The desire for thrills and stimulation.\textsuperscript{33}

The number in question is near the end of \textit{San Toy}, and dance music does not appear in any published editions.\textsuperscript{34}

The dance numbers did not advance the operetta’s drama but rather stood apart from it. (The same can be said of some of the musical numbers entire, which are often directed at the audience rather than the other characters.) The spectator is aware of the spectacle, there is no mimesis or identification with the performer. In this respect, as well as the general buffo character of the music, dance operetta extended Offenbachian style. What had been dropped, for the most part, was satire. While the works, and even the numbers themselves, are described as “parodic,” it is never clear what is being parodied other than a more conventionally graceful aesthetic or more recognizably human motion. The dance displays eccentricity for the sake of oddness and curiosity, with exotic settings to add to the effect. Except for their foreign origin, there were no political or even topical messages to be found in \textit{The Geisha} or \textit{San Toy}. There also was no prior knowledge required, which is what made them so easily exported.


\textsuperscript{34}The song in question is No. 14, entitled in the English original “Chinee Soge-Man,” sung by Li. See for example the 1899 edition published by John Church. Presumably the dance music repeated the theme of the song in an instrumental arrangement. Jones, Sidney; Morton, Edward. \textit{San Toy: A Chinese Musical Comedy}. London: John Church, 1899.
Heinrich Reinhardt and *Das süße Mädel*

According to Austrian and German critics, the English craze was a fad without lasting importance for operetta, whose core resided on the Continent. What a new age of operetta required was new Viennese composers to reclaim what they considered rightfully theirs. This was a challenge accepted by the Hungarian Wilhelm Karczag. In 1901, he was appointed the new director of the Theater an der Wien, which had been languishing in near-bankruptcy. Karczag revolutionized the program almost overnight, reopening with a string of operettas by a visiting Russian troupe (probably members of the Moscow Operetta Theater), following them with a visit by the ensemble of the Theater in der Josefstadt and performances by visiting Italian opera groups. In the meantime, he to assembled an ensemble of operetta actors (starring his wife, soubrette Julie Kopasci), and the theater produced its first new operetta production under his direction in November, a staging of *Der Zigeunerbaron* with now-legendary Alexander Girardi. Most importantly, Karczag embarked on a mission to discover a new generation of operetta composers, aggressively taking on new works by unknown composers.

Karczag later claimed that he never intended to make operetta his focus, and that he had little prior expertise in the genre except through his wife but made the decision based on his new audience’s demands. Indeed, local critics and writers—though less so audience members—were most invested in works they saw as part of the city’s operetta tradition. But too often critics were

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35 The theater was sold in 1901 to a new consortium of investors, who hired the playwright and journalist Karczag for the job. Due to Karczag’s lack of business experience, the owners of the theater obliged him to hire a co-director with greater financial acumen. The first co-director was Georg Lang, who was replaced by Karl Wallner in 1902. Both seem to have had inferior status to Karczag.


disappointed with local composers and librettists’ post-Golden Age offerings. (The lack of works enjoying long runs during this period suggests audiences weren’t overly enchanted either.) As conductor Hans Stieber wrote in 1903,

> Every day we receive another memo about the health condition of operetta. Then Herr X or Herr Y appears with the muse-consecrated work on the plans—we mean the calendar of a Viennese theater—there’s a rustling in the leaves of the newspaper: “No, the operetta isn’t dead, Herr X has revived it. Charming melodies, a sparkling mood, stirring rhythms, etc.” But that doesn’t prevent the fact that eight days later at the same place there follows the revival of a Strauss operetta.\(^\text{38}\)

Marion Linhardt has identified two opposing poles in the operetta of this period, *Residenzstadt* and *Metropole*. The former is the small old Vienna that was the seat of the empire, the latter the large new Vienna that could count itself as a worldwide metropolis.\(^\text{39}\) The *Residenzstadt* produced and attended conservative, Germanic, traditional, *Volksstück*-influenced works that glorified Old Vienna, including folk-influenced music, local dialect and familiar legendary and historical figures and tales. The *Metropole* was consciously modern, internationalized, and ethnically diverse. (Very few pre-1905 operettas that originated in Vienna are fully *Metropole*, with *Der Opernball* and Lehár’s *Der Rastelbinder* being notable exceptions.) While Linhardt uses this classification largely as a binary, labeling works either *Metropole* or *Residenzstadt*—for example, the works of composer Edmund Eysler are *Residenzstadt*, while Lehár and Sidney Jones are *Metropole*—her methodology can also be employed to consider works that combine elements

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\(^{39}\) Linhardt, *Residenzstadt und Metropole*. Particularly 139-146.
and influences from both perspectives. Two examples from this period, Heinrich Reinhardt’s *Das süße Mädel* and Leo Fall’s *Der Rebell*, illustrate this mixture.

Heinrich Reinhardt (1865-1922) was a Bruckner student turned music critic who wrote his first operetta in 1901. Entitled *Das süße Mädel* and set to a libretto by Alexander Landesberg and Leo Stein, it was one of the bigger successes of the 1900-1905 period. Despite a score comprising simple waltzes, Ländler, and Viennese dialect, the libretto is up-to-date and contemporaneous; its perspective described by critics satiric (“So, a satirical operetta! Good!”).40

The plot centers on a group of Bohemians (of the artistic rather than Czech variety) led by the painter Florian Lieblich, a caricature of the real-life artists of the Secession.41 The opening scene in fact explicitly recalls that of *La bohème* with a modern art twist: the subject depicted in the blue and green splotches that adorn Florian’s canvas cannot be identified.42 The title character is a nightclub singer by the name of Lola Winter, played at the premiere by Mizzi Günther, the future Hanna Glawari in *Die lustige Witwe*. In Lola, we can see the tension between Reinhardt’s conservative and modest *Residenzstadt* musical style and the moderate *Metropole* raciness of Landesberg and Stein’s libretto.

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40 “Also eine satirische Operette! Glück auf.” “Carl-Theater [review of *Das süße Mädel*],” *Neue Freie Presse*, October 26, 1901.

41 Details on the script are drawn from the censor’s manuscript and reviews. Leo Stein und Alexander Landesberg, *Das süße Mädel*, NÖ Reg. Präs Theater TB 267/5, NÖLA. Dagmar Lorenz also identifies Mimi and Musetta of *La bohème* (or rather its source material *Scènes de la vie de Bohême* by Henri Murger) as examples of the *süßes Mädel*. Dagmar Lorenz, *Wiener Moderne* (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 1995), 148.

42 Details on the script are drawn from the censor’s manuscript and reviews. Leo Stein und Alexander Landesberger, *Das süße Mädel*, Police censor’s manuscript, 1901, Z 234/Sig. 267/5, Landesarchiv Niederösterreich. The opening scene features the Bohemians examining Florian’s painting. While Marcello in *La bohème* is painting the Red Sea, the blue and green streaks on Florian’s canvas are too abstract for his companions to identify. Dagmar Lorenz also identifies Mimi and Musetta of *La bohème* (or rather its source material *Scènes de la vie de Bohême* by Henri Murger) as examples of the *süßes Mädel*. Lorenz, *Wiener Moderne*, 148.
The operetta’s title references the known character type of the “süßes Mädel,” According to the Neues Wiener Tagblatt’s review of the operetta, “The ‘sweet girl’ has over time become a specific Viennese notion, meaning one who is pleasure-loving, good-hearted, and has all the sweetness and charm that shines from the Viennese woman’s eyes.” Made popular by Arthur Schnitzler, the sweet girl is a vivacious, fun-loving lower class young woman who was sexually accessible to richer, higher class, and often older men, typified by Annie in Schnitzler’s Anatol (1893), Christel in Liebelei (1895), and the nameless “süßes Mädel” of Reigen (1900). As acknowledged by Schnitzler, the sweet girl was less an individual than a projection of masculine desire, usually seen in juxtaposition to a wife or bourgeois fiancée. She promised to men, as Dagmar Lorenz writes, “the ‘natural’ authenticity’ of loving affection, neither crudely purchased (a whore) nor a refined calculation (a courtesan). Her world seems like a refuge of undistorted reality.” From a süßes Mädel, men expected unconditional, uncomplicated love and admiration.

The operetta actually doesn’t include a classic example of a sweet girl at all, and one suspects the title was chosen just to be fashionable. But the female lead is a cabaret singer (“Brettdiva”) named Lola Winter, and her signature hit is the “Lied vom süßen Mädel.” (Lola is a more mature and jaded operator than a real süßes Mädel.) The cabaret was considered a modern

43 “Das ‘süße Mädel’ ist im Laufe der Zeit ein specifisch Wiener Begriff geworden im Sinne des Leichtlebig-Guten, Treuherzigen, wobei man auch all die Lieblichkeit und Anmuth [sic] der Wienerin im Auge hat.” rp [Ludwig Karpath], “Carl-Theater [review of Das süße Mädel],” Neues Wiener Tagblatt, October 26, 1901. Karpath also notes the excellent conducting of Herr Zemlinsky, the Carltheater’s then-music director.

44 The süßes Mädel of Reigen is suspected by both her lovers, first a married man and then a poet, of being a prostitute, that is to say not a true sweet girl at all but a professional innocent, and both interrogate her naïveté. They both eventually believe her guilelessness, but since the audience sees her tell varying stories to both men, we eventually believe that she is lying. Arthur Schnitzler, Reigen (Vienna: Wiener Verlag, 1903).

and dubious locale—four years later, Léon and Stein would decide that the Viennese audience was not ready to see the “Nachtklub” of Maxim’s put onstage in Die lustige Witwe.⁴⁶ By presenting Lola as a performer herself, they can give their audience the piquancy of a cabaret inside the respectability of an operetta theater, while simultaneously acknowledging the type of the sweet girl as a contemporary trope or concept rather than as an embodied character. They, of course, never depict a cabaret onstage either.

Lola enters virtually unannounced and immediately sings her song. It is not, in fact, in the first person, but merely narrates the story of a sweet girl in Viennese dialect. The waltz refrain is a good prototype for the operetta waltz song conventions of the period (Example 2.3).

Example 2.2: Heinrich Reinhardt, Das süße Mädel No. 2 Das Lied vom süßen Mädel, refrain

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be-sten Lau-ne der Herr-gott g'schaff en hat, das ist das sü-sse

Brummehor. (Mitt offenem Munde zu singen)

Tremolo Streicher

Mit del, das just so ac-cu-rat in sei-ner be-sten

in sei-ner be-sten

in sei-ner be-sten
The symmetrical phrases are broken only by a hemiola on “so accurat,” their repetitive rhythm and melodic contour building through the addition of a wordless humming chorus. Reinhardt’s music was praised as sincere and heartfelt, possessing “Viennese character” and “an abundance of waltzes and marches that flow flatteringly into the ear; the melodies effortlessly impress themselves.”47 One suspects the Viennese qualities would include the casual dissonances, most of them occurring when the vocal line slips down a half step (B natural on “süße,” G sharp on “just,” C sharp on “sei-”), as well as the imitation of a zither in the tremolo strings.

But one exception to the music’s old Viennese ease was the oddity and liveliness of the Act 3 “English song” given to Florian the painter, played by Louis Treumann of The Geisha and San Toy fame. Attempting to cheer up Fritzi (who has been saddened due to obscure machinations of the plot), Florian conveniently slips into the perky English style to cheer her up (Example 2.3).

47 “Wienerisches Charakter” with “ein Fülle von Walzern und Marschen fließen schmeichelnd ums Ohr, anspruchlos prägen sich die Melodien ein” “Carl-Theater [review of Das süße Mädel],” Fremden-Blatt, October 26, 1901.
Example 2.3: Heinrich Reinhardt, *Das süße Mädel*, No. 13 Englisches Pardie-Duett

a) Refrain

[Schneller.]

Ob Messer, ob Wasser, ob Gift oder Kugel, will sternben für immer, o weh! dem e-len-den, quä-len-den,

Moderato.

schau-ri-gen, trau-ri-gen Le-ben sagt ich jetzt A-de! O yes, o yes, o yes, o lin-ger, lin-ger loo, die


Trau-rig keit, die Trau-rig-keit nimmt immer, immer zu, o yes, o yes, o yes, o

Hbl. H.

Fag. Pos. 3

Pno.

lin-ger, lin-ger loo, die Trau-rig keit, o yes, o yes im-mer, im-mer zu!
b) Andante section

Maestoso.
(Florian.
(Mit tief melancholischem Ausdruck.)

Das Leben ist so voller Frohsinn und Freude, und wer's nicht geniesst ist ein

Engl.

Fl.

Ob.

Blechharmonie.

F/F

Thor! Drum sein wir euch lustig jeder Zeit von

Pno.

F/F

(sehr düster und dumpf)

echten englisch Humor! Ich lache ha, ha, und ich

Pno.
In case the audience was not aware that the number is entitled “Englisches Parodie-Duett,” Florian begins in English, explicitly referencing an English style: “My girl, was bist du so traurig?” (My girl, what makes you so sad?) The comedy of much of the number is generated by a vast discrepancy between the cheery music and gloomy text. After contemplating methods of suicide in a happy patter (knife, drowning, poison, pistol), Florian and Fritzi move into a bouncy, quasi-English language refrain of “o yes, o yes, o yes, o linger, linger loo, die Traurigkeit, die Traurigkeit nimmt immer, immer zu” (sadness always increases). This is followed by a dance. No description of the choreography survives but Treumann’s trademark eccentric dance was likely involved.

The next section reverses the music-text relationship. To a sunnier text (life is full of happiness and joy, and those who do not enjoy it are fools), Florian sings with “deeply melancholic expression” to a jerky variation on the “o yes, o yes” theme, accompanied aptly enough by a dour English horn. The number has dramatic irony—only a few simple plot twists are standing between Fritzi, Florian, and marital bliss—but the affect is more Offenbachian than Viennese, calling attention to the performative nature of the music. The operetta is a hybrid of distanced music and moments of mimesis. The audience observes Florian and Fritzi rather than sympathizing with Fritzi’s torment. For the Viennese, English style was all absurdity and delight.

Ambitions Dashed: Der Rebell

Despite Das süße Mädel’s promise, Reinhardt would, like Heuberger, never produce another major hit. Even as Heuberger and Reinhardt’s subsequent operettas failed to maintain favor with audiences, theater impresarios did not abandon hope that they would be the one to
discover the next Strauss (as Heuberger and Reinhardt began to write for less and less prestigious theaters). The hype and curiosity generated by promoting a composer as the next big thing could bring business, but, as Stieber noted, began to have a boy who cried wolf quality. Of one overhyped work, entitled Der Rebell, the Deutsches Volksblatt critic wrote, “For weeks now the veritable marvels of this operetta have been told in public and in social circles. Yesterday the upmarket audience showed up at 7:00 at the Theater an der Wien with the highest expectations—and after 10:00 left disappointed.”

In many ways Der Rebell was exactly what Thari and some of the other critics were looking for: a return to an Offenbachian musical style set to a satiric libretto with minimal sentimentality and not too many waltzes. It was the first full-length operetta by composer Leo Fall, who would become one of the most important operetta composers of the era. Though he and librettists Ernst Welitsch and Rudolf Bernauer were native Austrians, all three had launched their careers in Berlin, Urban’s preferred site for the future of operetta, and all had backgrounds in the modern satirical genre of cabaret (discussed in detail in Chapter 3). 

Der Rebell was in a few important ways prescient. The setting was the court of an imaginary Balkan republic called “Balkonien,” a southern Ruritania. An ugly, middle-aged princess named Eudoxia has connived to become engaged by post to an unwitting Viennese man.

48 “Vor Wochen wurden schon in der Öffentlichkeit und in Gesellschaftskreisen wahre Wunderdinge von dieser Operette erzählt und mit den höchstgespannten Erwartungen erschien gestern um sieben Uhr rein vornehmes Publikum im Theater an der Wien—um es nach 10 Uhr enttäuscht zu verlassen.” Schr. [Karl Schreder], “Theater an der Wien [review of Der Rebell],” Deutsches Volksblatt, November 30, 1905.

49 Bernauer, Strauss, and Welisch had together founded the cabaret “Die bösen Buben” in Berlin, conceived as an alternative to the more established “Über-Brett” of Ernst von Wolzogen (where Oscar Strauss, later an important operetta composer, served as music director). While there were cabarets in Vienna, most notably Felix Salten’s “Jung-Wien,” the scene was comparatively small. In this period in Vienna, cabaret, often referred to as “Über-Brett,” is often associated specifically with Berlin. These issues will be examined in more detail in Chapter 3. Peter Jelavich, Berlin Cabaret (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Harold B Segel, Turn-of-the-Century Cabaret: Paris, Barcelona, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Cracow, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Zurich (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).
Franzl. But upon arriving in Balkonien the fiancé falls instead for Eudoxia’s Viennese seamstress, Anna. Through a large number of plot contrivances, Eudoxia eventually gets married to the titular rebel, a long-lost criminal who has become rich in Argentina, and the Viennese lovebirds can also marry.\textsuperscript{50} The operetta is cluttered with supporting characters and plot twists, and the leading male and female singer, a couple named Nicola and Irene, barely figure in the plot (though, typically for their Fach, they receive the most lyrical music).\textsuperscript{51} A tyrannical and hapless police inspector named Schmulos is lifted out of The Pirates of Penzance, and the entire claptrap kingdom recalls the settings of Offenbach’s operettas.

Several other parameters also recall Offenbach. Parody of major operas is prominent, with references to Tristan und Isolde (the chord), Der Freischütz, and the Fidelio Prisoner’s Chorus.\textsuperscript{52} The tone is light and cheerful throughout. Most of the score moves at fast tempo and addressed directly to the audience, such as the opening sewing chorus in which the seamstresses helpfully inform us that they are sewing (“Wir nähen”), or the “Ballade der Rebelle,” in which the complicated backstory is relayed to the audience in the form of a ballad. The music only rarely serves a narrative function but rather an illustrative one. In many cases it simply reiterates what the prose sections of the text have already told us (for example, Princess Eudoxia’s entrance aria retells the exposition already provided by Franzl and Anna in the first person).

\textsuperscript{50} The similarities to Oscar Straus’s Ein Walzertraum (see Chapter 2) are self-evident. 
\textsuperscript{51} The exclusion stems from the casting system, which dictated that any role taken by Alexander Girardi, for whom Franzl was written, would be the leading one even though his role in the plot was as a comic sidekick. The libretto fails to find a plausible dramatic solution for this extra-dramaturgical demand. (The fact that Girardi had retired by this point and the role of Franzl was taken by Louis Treumann did not help—while increasingly popular, Treumann was not yet the star presence or box office draw that Girardi had been.) 
\textsuperscript{52} Unfortunately the music for this latter reference has been lost. The sewing chorus at the opening betray a certain similarity to the spinning chorus of Der fliegenende Holländer.
The Viennese characters offer opportunities for a certain amount of local color. The male half of the couple, Franzl, played by Louis Treumann, is a throwback. The role was originally named Xandl (a nickname for Alexander) and obviously written for Alexander Girardi, who had unexpectedly retired after playing the lead in Lehár’s *Die Juxheirat* the previous December. Franzl speaks in a thick Viennese dialect not understood by the other characters and is prone to singing waltzes. (The character’s name, in a rare concession to subtlety, was later changed to Franzl.) He and Anna immediately love each other due to their shared Viennese heritage. They proceed to sing a waltz duet, whose combination of specific references to Viennese geography and proclamation of Vienna’s ineffable uniqueness places it within the “Wiener Lied” genre of popular song:

**Der Rebell, Wiener Lied**

| Es liegt ein Zauber auf der Wiener Stadt,  | A magic lies on the city of Vienna |
| Was eigenes ist's man kann es nicht erklären. | What is its own and cannot be explained |
| Wer nur amal in Wien geatmet hat, | Those who have breathed only once in Vienna |
| Der kann die Wiener Luft nicht mehr entbehren. | Can never again resist the Viennese air |
| Und findet er wo anders auch sein Glück, | And those who find their luck far away |
| Der Heimat fern, in einem fremden Lande | The homeland far away, in a foreign land |
| Es zieht ihn immer doch nach Wien zurück, | Vienna always pulls them back |
| Zur lieben stadt am stolzen Donaustrande. | The beloved city on the Danube’s proud banks |
| Doch fragt man uns, worin der Reiz besteht? | Yet one asks us, what is its charm? |
| Das mus ma fühlen, sagen last's fis's net: | One must feel it, words don’t suffice |
| Den die Wiener Stadt | The Viennese city |
| Hat was Fesches, | Has something posh |
| Was Gemütliches, | Something comforting |
| Und was Reiches. | And something rich |
| Was Persönliches, | Something personal |
| Ungewöhnliches, | Unusual |
| 's kann man net erklären— | One can’t explain it |
| 's is halt Wean. | It’s Vienna. |

But the Viennese music is treated as a color, completely dispensable in the plot.

The novel setting of an imaginary, bankrupt Balkan court would be repeated only months later in *Die lustige Witwe* to much greater effect. Writing many years later, librettist

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53 Rudolf Bernauer and Ernst Welitsch, *Der Rebell*, NÖ Reg. Präs Theater TB 214/215 (1906) and 16 (1906), NÖLA.
Rudolf Bernauer notes that the setting of *Der Rebell* was “not yet as played out as it is today.” With the benefit of hindsight, Bernauer went on to note that Fall “easily fell into the mistake of only thinking about the musical construction, without taking sufficient account of the character of the libretto… a song, for example, that was conceived as lyrical, loses its effect when stomps along as a march.” But indeed it is a dissonance between words and music that marks the Offenbach style, and Bernauer may be seeing the situation with the retrospective view of later Silver Age operetta that favored a unity of music and words.

Unsurprisingly, some of the more conservative, nationalist-leaning papers took exception to the revival of French style, such as *Deutsches Volksblatt* quoted above. The critic of the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* wrote, “One recognizes the mixture of scoundrels and idiots from French comedies.” The critic of the *Neue Wiener Journal*, more favorably, compared the parodic elements to Offenbach and noted moments parodying *Freischütz* and the Rhinemaidens of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. The *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (an unidentified critic signed “E.”) noted that the composers and librettists “would like to break templates,” the *Neue Freie Presse* critic argued that it was part of “a gratifying new attempt… in the music, one has become weary of the ever-present sequences of waltz and Posse.” (Most of the reviews are unsigned; few of the

newspapers seem to have sent their first-string critics to see this work by an unknown.) Critics were tough on its weaknesses, particularly the cluttered book and poorly paced second and third acts, but they praised Fall highly, particularly his orchestration.  

Audiences felt differently. After three nights of exceedingly bad business, the creators decided not to delay the inevitable and withdrew the work from the theater in the hopes of a chance at revision. This has generally been interpreted as a clear signal that an Offenbach revival was, despite the support of critics, dead in the water. Due to the undeniable weaknesses of the work and the success of other Offenbach-inspired works around the same time (most notably Oscar Straus’s Die lustigen Nibelungen, to be discussed in Chapter 2), this is difficult to accept as inevitable. But it is true that the predominant character of the Silver Age would be very different. Due to Der Rebell’s encouraging reviews and Karczag’s trust in Fall’s talent, its creators planned to revise the work and try again several months later. They did begin work on these changes, and indeed this partially revised version is the only form of the score that survives (neither score nor libretto was published; both versions of the libretto survive in the theater censor’s archive), in which the ill-taken Fidelio parody is already excised. But the revised version would never take the stage, for the work that Karczag chose to follow Der Rebell would prove a watershed which would render the faltering innovations of the last five years irrelevant.  

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60 Some operetta composers did their own orchestration and others did not. All of the major composers in this dissertation did orchestrate their own works, but Richard Heuberger, Edward Eysler, Carl Michael Ziehrer, and many others farmed it out. One of the most common mentions of operetta in the mainstream musicological literature is its utility as a paycheck for composers such as Schoenberg and Zemlinsky, who both orchestrated several operettas. Zemlinsky orchestrated Heuberger’s Der Opernball, among others.

61 Almost a decade later, they would perform far more drastic revisions and revive the score in Berlin as Der liebe Augustin. While much of the music is recognizable, the libretto is very different. It premiered at the Neues Theater am Zoo in 1912.
FRANZ LEHÁR AND DIE LUSTIGE WITWE

In 1905, Franz Lehár was already established among operetta-watchers as an unusually talented and unconventional composer. Albert Kauders, in his critique of contemporary operetta, wrote that he put his hopes most fervently “in Franz Lehár, who through all the popular hash can’t hide a superior musical education.” The son of a Slovakian military bandmaster, Lehár had studied with Fibich and Dvořák at the Prague Conservatory. After a short period playing violin in a provincial theater, he entered the army, first joining his father’s band in the 50th Regiment alongside the future composer of Der Rebell, Leo Fall. He continued to compose and hoped to leave military service upon the 1896 Leipzig premiere of his nationalist opera Kukuška, but it failed to bring the fame and fortune he had anticipated. (It was later submitted to and promptly rejected by Mahler for performance at the Vienna Hofoper, but its composition and submission were nonetheless often subsequently cited to bolster Lehár’s credibility as a serious composer.) After the success of several compositions for his band, most notably the waltz Gold und Silber, Lehár finally left the military in 1902 and turned fully to the composition and direction of light music.

Lehár spent the summer of 1902 conducting in the Prater at Venedig in Wien, and then took a position at the Theater an der Wien as an assistant conductor. His first duties were part of “Jung Wien,” an ill-fated attempt by Wilhelm Karczag to bring a cabaret program to the large

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63 Later revised as Tatjana, it is a credible if unoriginal work that strongly recalls Dvořák. Max Kalbeck revised the libretto around 1903; the revised version premiered on February 21, 1905 in Brno. Frey, Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg, 393.
64 The best short and accurate Lehár biography is Norbert Linke, Franz Lehár (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2001). The definitive longer (and less strictly chronological) treatment is Frey, Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.
theater, as conceived by Felix Salten and bringing together an eclectic group of artists. Lehár debuted alongside Frank Wedekind, writing one musical number to a text by Rudolf Hans Bartsch (later known for his part in the Schubert pastiche *Dreimäderlhaus*). The sets and costumes were designed by Koloman (Kolo) Moser. While advertised as a celebration of popular Viennese spirit, the result was more modernist than traditional, and by all accounts did not find the right audience, or succeed in communicating its customarily intimate form in the large theater. But the effort typified Karczag’s adventurous, experimental approach and attempts to bring in new talent and genres to a theater that had lost its sense of mission.  

Lehár became a part of Karczag’s plan to restore the Theater an der Wien’s glory days. That same autumn, Lehár established himself as an important operetta composer with the dual hits *Wiener Frauen* and *Der Rastelbinder*, the former at the Theater an der Wien’s rival Carl-Theater and the latter at the Theater an der Wien itself. Even considering the relative ease and speed of operetta production, two successes in a single season at the two most important theaters in the city was a remarkable start. The two works also showed a composer both interested in traditional operetta conventions and one not restricted by them when presented with a nontraditional libretto.

On November 21, *Wiener Frauen* premiered at Karczag’s theater. It starred Alexander Girardi, the old style of operetta incarnate, and the operetta was a traditional vehicle for his

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66 Stefan Frey casts Lehár as a Parsifal figure, a naïve lost in the *Zaubergarten* of operetta, remaking a genre without knowing its rules (“erlöst er die seit Jahren siechende Gattung—durch Unkenntnis wissend, ein reiner Tor”). Frey, *Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg*, 68–69.
Residenzstadt charm. Girardi, playing a piano teacher, proved the work’s sole raison d’être and it had little afterlife without him (with the exception of the tuneful “Nechledilmarsch” and occasional performances of the overture). Its fifty performances were a modest success but not notable or unusual in any way. Yet it was enough to quickly land Lehár another commission, this time at the Theater an der Wien’s rival the Carl-Theater. He was, at the time, still on the musical staff of the Theater an der Wien, and avoided a confrontation only by quickly resigning that position in favor of full-time composition.

Victor Léon’s libretto for the Carl-Theater work, Der Rastelbinder, is radically unconventional, including a Slovakian setting, a prologue set twelve years before the first act, and a cast entirely of peasant characters. Lehár wrote a score full of Slovakian color, and the operetta became one of the biggest hits in years. The cast of Slovakian characters who scattered to seek their fortunes in Vienna resonated with the city’s increasingly diverse theater audience. It is an ingenious project, lacking the international appeal of Lehár’s later works but recasting the traditional cozy and endearing Viennese play among Slavs. The music is, like the Viennese works of Reinhardt, Heuberger, and Zeller, largely simple, tuneful, and presentational, but its strongly Slovakian tone made it something quite new. Louis Treumann had great success in the comic role of Pfeferkorn, a Jewish peddler, one of the first Jewish characters to be represented in an operetta in a stereotypical yet not purely unsympathetic and demeaning way. His entrance song is typical of the type, a strophic number in two sections with a refrain, set to a presentational text. The introduction identifies it as Slavic: droning open fifths in the strings, the characteristic

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thirds motion in the oboe, the two-bar phrases (Example 1.4a). The refrain modulates to the parallel minor, as Pfefferkorn unnecessarily identifies himself as a Jew (Example 1.4b).

Example 2.4: Franz Lehár, Der Rastelbinder No. 3 Entrélied der Pfefferkorn
a) Introduction

Allegro moderato.

The text-setting, usually nearly entirely syllabic, becomes extremely melismatic, its meandering scales, and harmonic minor mode in a slow tempo imitating the singing of a cantor. The song’s text explicitly recalls Treumann’s song in The Geisha, “Chin-Chin-Chinaman,” in which his character also complained that business was going badly. This was certainly intentional, and
would follow Treumann to *Die lustige Witwe*, where the process of building Treumann’s stage persona would be explicitly thematized by Léon.

While Lehár’s first two works clearly point to the opposing ways of *Residenzstadt* (*Wiener Frauen*) and *Metropole* (*Der Rastelbinder*), his final two operettas prior to *Die lustige Witwe*, both dating from 1904, fit less neatly into this paradigm. *Die Göttergatte*, written to a libretto by Stein and Léon, who would provide *Witwe*, is an Offenbach throwback, a domestic adventure among gods set to light, French-style music with none of the regional color of either of Lehár’s previous works. It was not particularly successful, with a slightly shorter run than *Wiener Frauen* (Lehár would rework the music to changed librettos several times later in his career), but the other 1904 operetta, *Die Juxheirat*, failed even more quickly despite another star performance by Alexander Girardi. Critics suggested that Lehár’s increasing cosmopolitanism and interest in modern dances were not compatible with the rustic, lowbrow style of his leading actor. Shortly after *Die Juxheirat*, Girardi announced his retirement from the stage, a move that would complete the generational shift that had begun with the departure of Johann Strauss and the other Golden Age composers. *Die Juxheirat* and *Wiener Frauen* were the past and *Der Rastelbinder* was the future. *Die lustige Witwe* would be where these trends coalesced.

**Die lustige Witwe: Conception and Composition**

*Die lustige Witwe* was conceived by librettists Victor Léon and Leo Stein. Léon was one of the most adventurous and influential figures in operetta, the creator of Johann Strauss II’s opera *Simplicius*, Lehár’s *Der Rastelbinder*, and many other librettos. Léon’s works often defied operetta

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conventions in both subject matter and dramaturgy. Sometimes he worked alone and sometimes with collaborators, and like most operetta librettists he did not have an exclusive collaborator relationship but worked with many other writers. With Stein, he had previously written *Wiener Blut* in 1898 and *Die Göttergatte* in 1904, the latter composed by Lehár. Stein wrote the song texts while Léon created the work’s road map and spoken dialogue.

Their heroine is Hanna Glawari, a down-to-earth Pontevedran peasant girl raised to exalted status after catching the eye of and marrying Pontevedro’s richest man, who, before the operetta begins, promptly dies and leaves her all his money. This makes Hanna a hot commodity on the Parisian marriage market, but the Pontevedrans are intent on her wealth remaining in Pontevedro to prop up the national bank—so she must marry a fellow Pontevedran. At the operetta’s start, the embassy staff is desperately trying to play matchmaker. They identify the lazy diplomat Count Danilo Danilowitsch as the most eligible Pontevedran bachelor in Paris (and indeed he and Hanna had had some sort of romance years before, foiled by her low social standing at the time). But the Pontevedran banker Baron Zeta’s French wife, Valencienne, wants Hanna to marry her own French would-be lover, Camille de Roissilon. Danilo and Hanna love each other, but he cannot face proposing to her if she would believe he is only attracted to her money. After this exposition, the plot largely concerns itself with Hanna and Danilo cautiously circling each other, and Camille and Valencienne interfering. After a dramatic falling-out at the end of Act 2, Danilo and Hanna finally successful declare their love in the third act.

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69 For more on *Simplicius*, see Crittenden, *Johann Strauss and Vienna*, 210–256. The fascinating career of Victor Léon remains largely unexamined by scholars. His extensive archives can be found at the Handschriftsammlung and Musiksammlung of the Wienbibliothek (Stadt- und Landesbibliothek), cataloged as ZPH 906, ZPH 924, and ZPH 925.
Léon and Stein described the libretto as “partly based on a foreign basic idea,” without naming the specific source. But Henri Meilhac’s *L’Attaché d’Ambassade*, first performed at the Théâtre de Vaudeville on 12 October 1861, was a known quantity in Vienna, and still performed on occasion. The librettists probably avoided crediting it solely so they would not be obliged to pay royalties to Meilhac’s estate; indeed the lack of attribution would lead to legal action in 1909. Léon and Stein changed many details of Meilhac’s setting and plot, but most critics noted, as Leopold Jacobson dryly put it in the *Neues Wiener Journal*, that “the basic idea is, however, not entirely foreign.” But Jacobson thought the old comedy made a fine operetta libretto: “the authors have lifted from Hackländer’s [sic] comedy *Die Attaché* and made a very entertaining, well-built libretto.” Similarly, Julius Stern wrote in the *Fremden-Blatt*, “already after the introductory scenes of the exposition it comes to one: ‘Pretty mask, but I recognize you!’ It is in fact *Der Attaché*—a beloved comedy, created as if for a proper operetta.”

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73 The mention of Hackländer, a prolific translator and adapter of French plays, was probably an error—Hackländer never wrote a play entitled *Der Attaché*, which was (almost) the title of Alexander Bergen’s adaptation of Meilhac, *Der Gesandtschaft-Attaché*. The description of a libretto as “built” or “constructed” like a house is very common in operetta reviews and recalls Scribe and Sardou’s concept of the “well-made play,” here not intended in a derogatory sense. “Die Autoren haben aus Hackländers Lustspiel *Der Attaché* geschöpft und daraus ein sehr unterhaltsames, gut gebautes Libretto gemacht.” Henri Meilhac, *Der Gesandtschafts-Attaché, Lustspiel in 3 Acten.*, trans. Alexander Bergen (Wien: Sommer, 1864); bs [Leopold Jacobson], “Theater an der Wien [review of *Die lustige Witwe*].”

But critical changes were made from Meilhac’s play, ones that would have significant
importance for the operetta’s musical style. The operetta, like the play, takes place in Paris, but
the key location of the imaginary bankrupt state has changed. A small Germanic state made little
sense in the wake of a unified Germany, and the shift to the imaginary “Pontevedro” relocated
the cast of characters within the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s orbit. Moreover, Pontevedro was
an obvious stand-in for the actual state of Montenegro. (In fact, Léon and Stein had originally
named the setting as Montenegro, but the censor, extremely sensitive on matters of nationality,
had disallowed its use.\(^75\)) The male lead is called Danilo (the name of the crown prince of
Montenegro at the time) and Baron Zeta’s name references Montenegro’s largest river, the Zetà.
The royal house of Montenegro was itself called Petrovic Njegos, the name of the embassy’s
attaché in Léon and Stein’s libretto.\(^76\)

The use of Montenegran costumes was apparently obvious. (See Figure 2.1.) Politically,
it was a somewhat provocative choice (considering the perennial instability in the region), while
musically the choice of Eastern Europe invited a musical style that contrasted with the Parisian
one. Critics were not fooled by the kingdom’s pseudonym. The critic of the Deutsches Volksblatt
described “a very transparent paraphrase of nationality, whose truth is fully revealed by the

\(^75\) Victor Léon and Leo Stein, *Die lustige Witwe*, NÖ Reg. Präs Theater TB K 338/27, NÖLA. It was
also published, though available only by rental from the publisher: Franz Lehár, Victor Léon, and Leo
Stein, *Die Lustige Witwe. Vollständiges Soufflierbuch Mit Sämtlichen Regiebemerkungen* (Vienna: Doblinger,
1906). It seems likely that the operetta’s costumes were determined before the censor intervened. Other
operettas with Balkan settings are discussed in Christian Glanz, “Das Bild Südosteuropas in der Wiener
Operette” (PhD diss., Universität Graz, 1988).

\(^76\) Elizabeth Roberts, *Realm of the Black Mountain: A History of Montenegro* (London: Hurst & Company,
2007).
costumes.” Julius Stern dryly noted, “Pontevedro is the theater-official name of the country where all the people wear Montenegrin caps and dance the kolo.” In the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, David Josef Bach wrote, “‘Montenegro,’ or, as the daftness of our theater censor wants it, ‘Pontevedro.’” The etymology of “Pontevedro” is unknown, though in the 1890s Lehár’s entry

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79 “Dem Pontevedro heißt theateroffiziell das Land, in welchen alle Leute montenegrische Mützen tragen und den Kolo tanzen.” st [Julius Stern], “Theater an der Wien [review of Die lustige Witwe].”
80 “‘Montenegro’ oder wie die Albernheit unserer Zensur es will ‘Pontevedro’.” D.B. [David Josef Bach], ‘Theater an der Wien,’ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 31 December 1905.
in the Sonzogno opera competition had been bested by an opera by Josef Forster entitled Die Rose von Pontevedra.\textsuperscript{81} (Pontevedra is a real town on the coast of northwest Spain.)

The libretto was given first to Richard Heuberger; presumably the many sexually charged party scenes of Die lustige Witwe reminded the librettists of Heuberger’s sole great success, Der Opernball, which was similarly based on a French sex comedy.\textsuperscript{82} After composing several songs—which appear not to have survived—he was fired by the librettists because, as leading actor Louis Treumann wrote, “despite all his talent and significant technical ability [he] lacked two elements that were essential for this composition: the exotic and the erotic.”\textsuperscript{83} Emil Steininger, the secretary of the Theater an der Wien, suggested Lehár as a replacement. The match was canny—both Léon and Lehár had shown their proficiency and interest in a wide range of new and old operetta styles, and in Die lustige Witwe they would put this expertise into action.

**Musical Dualities**

With a precision unmatched by other operettas of its era, the score and libretto of Die lustige Witwe stage the plight of the fin de siècle resident of Vienna. The Pontevedrans are ethnic outsiders from the provinces now in the center of a dazzling metropolis, forced to balance the boredom of wage labor work and the pull of urban temptation against the weight their homeland traditions. Of course the ending is happy: traditional dance and racy nightclub can coexist, as can political expediency and romantic love. Like many operettas, Die lustige Witwe is wish

\textsuperscript{81} Lehár’s entry was a one-act opera entitled Rodrigo. Franz Lehár, “Mein Werdegang,” Die Zeit, October 13, 1907; Frey, Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg, 36.
\textsuperscript{82} The source is Alfred Delacour and Alfred Hennequin’s 1884 play Les dominos roses, known in German as Die Rosa-Dominos.
fulfillment, displaying an opulently staged, romantic solution to problems found in its audience’s everyday lives.

The music dramatizes the libretto’s duality between Paris and Pontevedro. Carl Dahlhaus explored the idea of a musical duality in Die lustige Witwe in his provocative 1985 article, “Zur musikalische Dramaturgie der Lustigen Witwe,” in which he argued that Lehár’s music operates according to a principal of Stilmischung, style mixture, with the two predominant strains being a buffo Parisian tone to stage the external outer plot—the political intrigues and farcical action—and a sentimental, romantic folksong-influenced style used to portray the characters’ internal psychological states.  

Dahlhaus considers the gap between Paris and Pontevedro primarily as temporal spaces (Paris representing modernity and the folkloric numbers timelessness). But the split is geographical as well. Witwe’s external, presentational numbers might be understood to represent the public and political life in Paris in all its superficiality, while the numbers portraying the characters’ inner feelings and love of country are sentimental, folkloric, and nationalistic, that is to say, Pontevedran.

Moritz Csáky interprets the Parisian setting, carried over from the play, as a straightforward code for the operetta’s tale of affairs and lust: “Paris became a topos for erotic freedom, for the “sweet tête-à-tête” in a “chambre séparée” [quoting Der Opernball, which also takes place in Paris]. Paris became a metaphor for the only recently openly articulated longings of the new generation.”

The city’s symbolic role in Die lustige Witwe is more specific, and stands

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84 Considering the contemptuous tone of his dismissal of operetta in Nineteenth-Century Music (see note 27), it is ironic that Dahlhaus also wrote this piece. One suspects that, like Hanslick, he harbored some personal affection for the genre. Dahlhaus, “Zur musikalischen Dramaturgie der Lustigen Witwe.”

85 “Paris wurde zu einem Topos für erotische Freiheit, für das “tüße tête-à-tête” im “chambre séparée” [quoting Der Opernball], Paris wurde zur Metapher für die nun schon offen artikulierten Sehnsüchte einer
for a certain form of dramaturgy as well as a moral code. This is revealed in the element of
operetta most frequently ignored by the historian Csáky: the music, which dramatizes the
contrasting world of the Pontevedrans and the Parisians. It suggests that the operetta is less a
break with nineteenth-century tradition than a synthesis of several competing strains that had
been fighting for supremacy since the passing of the Golden Age, with the conflict of
innumerable polemics thematized in the plot. *Die lustige Witwe* dramatizes the contrast between
Pontevedro and Paris as, in short, the contrast between Parisian and/or English and Austro-
Hungarian operetta styles. It is a synthesis of the Austrian/French dialectic, but one whose
drama is generated by the friction between the two schools.

**Table 2.1** shows the distribution of the opera between the Parisian/Offenbach-style
numbers and the Pontevedran/Volkston ones. Several numbers do not fit clearly in either category
or mix the two; these are included in the third column. As is immediately apparent, the first act
is dominated by the Parisian numbers, the second by the Pontevedran ones (most importantly
the extended Vilja-Lied), and the last again by Parisian (though it is quite short and serves more
as a coda than anything else).

**Table 2.1: Musical Numbers, Die lustige Witwe**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parisian/Offenbach</th>
<th>Pontevedran</th>
<th>Mixed/Ambiguous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACT I</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduktion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Duett Valencienne-Camille “So kommen sie”</td>
<td>3. Entreelied Hanna “Bitte, meine Herren” (some mixture)</td>
<td>1. Introduktion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Aufrittslied Danilo “O Vaterland”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The texts of the Parisian numbers, such as Danilo’s entrance song “O Vaterland, du machst bei Tag,” the septet “Wie die Weiber” and the Grisetten-Lied “Ja, wir sind es, die Grisetten,” speak of big city ambivalence, cynicism, and showmanship. The national and folkloric ones such as Hanna’s “Vilja-Lied” and Danilo’s “Es waren zwei Königskinder” articulate patriotism, sincerity, enthusiasm, and genuine emotion. For both Danilo and Hanna, the plot’s
challenge is to put the Offenbachiaide of Paris in its proper, external place, to not permit the
intrigues compromise their relationship, and to allow for the triumph of the true self, nation and
love, as exemplified by the operetta’s finale. The operetta is not so moralizing as to assign an
explicitly negative value to the frivolity of Paris—after all, it is a fun and enjoyable spectacle. But
ultimately it is the sentimental Volkston that prevails. Hanna marries Danilo and the homeland is
saved; Valencienne and Camille are foiled. Lehár, Léon and Stein found a way to revive
Offenbach and yet inter him again, a way to have their satiric and sentimental cake and eat it
too.

The operetta begins by setting the tone with Parisian music, but it is almost immediately
juxtaposed with the Pontevedran. The short prelude (in lieu of an overture) is a galopp marked
Presto (No. 1) (Example 2.5).

Example 2.5: Lehár, Die lustige Witwe, No. 1, Introduktion, beginning

The Offenbachian tone is obtained with near-unison use of the large orchestra, maniacally
repeating figures, extremely fast tempo and even the genre of the galopp itself (closely related to
the cancan). But when the curtain rises, the focus soon turns to the Pontevedran partygoers, and
the tone of the music shifts as well. Pontevedran Baron Zeta notes that that party is being held
to celebrate the birthday of the unnamed Pontevedran Fürst, “to whom we patriotically dedicate ourselves.”

No sooner does Zeta proclaim his patriotism and duty as he switches into a mazurka and recalls his status as a senior representative of rustic Pontevedro in urban Paris (Example 2.6).

Example 2.6: Lehár, Die lustige Witwe, No. 1, Introduction

![Example 2.6: Lehár, Die lustige Witwe, No. 1, Introduction](image)

Though the oboe figure over “bin Landesvater per procura” recalls the repeated mordent motive of the prelude, the easygoing tempo and wind solos give the section a small-scale, rustic tone despite the official nature of his proclamation. (Pontevedro is evidently not a nation that can be taken very seriously.) Thus, while the celebrations of social Paris are marked with the explicitly Parisian music of French operetta, Zeta’s responsibilities to home and country are depicted with the more Eastern European music of the mazurka.

This association is strengthened when it is repeated in Hanna’s entrance song (No. 3). She is greeted by Cascada and the other Parisians in a waltz, but then introduces herself by

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86 “dem patriotisch wir uns weihn.”
proudly proclaiming her Pontevedran soul and incomplete adjustment to Parisian life. On the line "I haven’t yet completely acclimated to Paris," she falls, like Zeta, into a mazurka. When the male choir reenters she shifts back to a waltz, noting with Parisian cynicism, “I have often heard, well, that we widows are coveted!” For the Pontevedrans, the mazurka is the music of their home identity while the waltz is identified with a new Parisian attitude.

Lehár made no attempt to achieve any ethnic unity in his folk music influences. The folk dances are, however, all found in either Austria or Eastern Europe, which is to say the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Only the kolo in Act 2 (No. 10) is native to the Montenegró region specifically. Dahlhaus describes this eclecticism as innate to music-theater in general, comparing it to the plurality found in ballet music. It, he claims, gives national music a symbolism that is coloristic rather than specifically referential and trades in familiar clichés in a way that had become ritualized. The waltz that provides the apotheosis of Hanna and Danilo’s relationship, “Lippen schweigen,” (No. 15) is the principal example of Viennese color.

But the waltz was not the only dance music of 1900 Vienna. Indeed, Lehár’s mixture of ethnicities in fact seems to be the most authentically Austro-Hungarian usage of regional music possible. Lehár himself was ethnically Slovakian, technically resident for much of his youth in Hungary as he moved from garrison to garrison with his family, and educated in Prague. In the

87 “Hab’ ich in Paris mich noch nicht ganz acclimatisiert”
88 “Gar oft hab’ ich gehört, wir Witwe ach, wir sind begehrt!”
89 The kolo, a folk dance that over the course of the nineteenth century was domesticated into a ball dance for the aristocracy (in a manner similar to that of the mazurka) is an apt choice. See Nancy Lee Chalfa Ruyter, “Dvorsansko Kolo: From the 1840s to the Twentieth Century,” in Balkan Dance: Essays on Characteristics, Performance and Teaching, ed. Anthony Shay (Jefferson, NC; London: McFarland & Company, 2008), 239–249.
91 Lehár referred to himself as a “Tornisterkind,” or “backpack child,” a child who grows up between military bases. Lehár, “Mein Werdegang.”
army, he had been stationed in Poland, Breslau, the Balkans, and many other locations. He was
not atypical: while nationalism sought to sort people into clear-cut categories, in practice few
people or places would ever be so purebred. Pontevedro, as an imaginary country, possesses no
distinctive sound. In his sonic world, the Pontevedrans stand in for all expatriates in Vienna who
could hear one, or likely more than one, of the musics as their own. Throughout the score, the
ethnic dances are associated entirely with the Pontevedran characters and never the Parisians.
(Both Parisians and Pontevedrans can enjoy the waltz.)

The score’s eventual tour of regional music—including, as well as multiple mazurkas, a
polonaise, the kolo, and the use of a tamburizza band at the beginning of Act 2—recalls the
“Fünf-Kreuzertanz” chapter of Felix Salten’s Wurstlprater, in which the narrator strolls through
the titular amusement park and hears a medley of different dance music from Austria, Bohemia,
and Hungary. Salten writes:

Here no one revolted against the song of another… whether the music was a waltz, a
Ländler, a polka, or a Csárdás, all the people here have one thing in common: that they
are foreigners in this giant city that devours their toil.92

The various musics exist in involuntary harmony, assuaging the homesickness of the alienated
expatriates and diverting them from their difficult, poorly paid work. While nationalism dictates
that they were, as members of different groups, all different, here their homesickness unites
them. The Pontevedran music does not speak to one specific group of immigrants but, like that
of the Prater, all groups.

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92 “Hier lehnt sich keiner gegen das Lied des andern auf... Und ob nun die Musik einen Walzer spielt,
einen Ländler, eine Kreuzpolka oder einen Csárdás, allen diesen Menschen hier ist eines gemeinsam: daß
sie fremd sind in dieser riesigen Stadt, von deren Arbeitsmühlen sie verschlungen, in ihrem Wesen
entfärht, zerrieben und verbracht werden.” Salten, Felix Salten—Wurstelprater, 76.
While Hanna’s entrance song only adopts Parisian language when she is self-consciously voicing Parisian sentiments, her would-be paramour Danilo slips into it all too readily. Upon his entrance, the operetta makes an auspicious return to Parisian style. His entrance song immediately follows hers and stands in stark contrast to it (No. 4) (Example 2.7).

Example 2.7: Lehár, *Die lustige Witwe*, No. 4 Auftrittslied (Danilo), refrain

In a jaunty tone without significant lyricism, he laments the woes of his bureaucratic job and celebrates the glories of the nightclub Maxim’s (Examples 2). The form is a modified version of Offenbach’s couplets (lacking the choral interjections). In the refrain, a descending scale insistently repeats, and the litany of his favorite showgirls’ pet names (Lolo, Dodo, Joujou/Cloclo, Margot, Froufrou) sounds like the nonsense syllables of an Offenbach operetta.

The role of Danilo was tailored to the particular talents of Louis Treumann, the Theater an der Wien’s new leading man and the self-proclaimed inventor of eccentric dance in Vienna. Previously known for portraying comic, non-aristocratic characters, Treumann engineered a
change of Fach when he moved to the Theater an der Wien from the Carl-Theater in the fall of 1905. Treumann’s first role at his new theater was in September as the aristocrat-turned-beggar in Leo Ascher’s Vergelt’sgott! which was the first step in his transformation from comic relief to leading man.93 Victor Léon was the engineer of this shift, and wrote a long letter of advice to him on September 20, 1905, before the Vergelt’sgott! premiere, telling him that he must no longer rely on comic dance duets with “die Günther” but that he “must appear as a completely different person, a new and unexpected Treumann.” He encouraged Treumann to develop the character with “interiority” and through “temper” (“Stimmung”) (all emphases original), and repeatedly assured Treumann that following this advice would lead to “artistic” acclaim, rather than just popular success.94 The association of interiority with artistic worth and merit and comedy with mere popularity is one that would be made by many advocates for Silver Age operetta, and one which its critics, longing for a return to Offenbach, would declare was exactly backwards.

Yet Danilo’s speech is capped with a jagged ritornello that suggests an eccentric dance, and the pattering rhythm of his vocal writing recalls the English style—all typifying the old Treumann, not the new one.95 The difference is significant, because Danilo is merely awaiting reformation. Soon enough his purported true self—a patriot who is desperately in love with Hanna—is revealed. Léon, in creating this role specifically for Treumann, thematizes the actor’s

93 In Vergelt’sgott!, Treumann played an aristocrat fallen on hard times who finds a lucrative career as a beggar in New York. Vergelt’sgott!, “God bless you,” is what beggars say when someone gives them money.
95 A comparison to “Chin-Chin-Chinaman,” Treumann’s big hit in Sidney Jones’s San Toy, is suggestive, both in musical character and text. Treumann’s numbers in San Toy, Die lustige Witwe, and also his entrance song in Der Rastelbinder, “A jeder Mensch, was handeln tut” all deal with characters who dislike their work or feel that their business is going badly. As Bogumil Graf Karinsky in Vergelt’sgott!, Treumann’s character was too aristocratic to be customarily employed, but his entrance song nonetheless proclaimed that he is out of money and wants to shoot himself.
own evolution from comic, distanced, eccentric dancer to soulful lover (conveniently allowing Treumann to display his dramatic range as an actor and dancer). The “real Danilo” is the new Treumann, a figure of identification for the audience and later a major operetta celebrity. He is also the new operetta.96

The Parisian tone is epitomized most of all in second act ensemble number “Wie die Weiber” (No. 9) and the third act “Grisetten-Lied” (No. 14). Both are marches, and both include the percussive nonsense syllables familiar from Offenbach, which provide rhythm and motion, chatter without meaning—sequences of “zippel zippel zippel zapp” and “und so und so und so” that mean nothing in particular (Example 2.8). The numbers are explicitly externalized, for a large ensemble, and deal with generalizations and types rather than individual characters—the over-the-top performing personae of showgirls and the men’s view of the entire female gender respectively. They are spectacular production numbers of the sort that would be found in the varieté, unnecessary to the plot but adding gloss and panache to the score that has little relation to the inner states of the main characters. The perspective is essentially distanced, offering the audience a non-mimetic spectacle to admire and enjoy without emotional commitment.

The Pontevedran numbers, on the other hand, are united not in ethnicity but in earnestness. They come in two forms: first national dances and dance-like songs for fast numbers and second the folksong-like strophic forms. The most popular number of the entire score, the *Vilja-Lied*, includes both (No. 7). Framed in the libretto as part of Hanna’s “true Pontevedran party” and performed in Pontevedran national costume (as seen in Figure 2.1), it is introduced by a polonaise including a Balkan tamburizza banda of triangle, cymbals and various other clamorous instruments. The chorus makes its entrance on a long melisma on ‘ah,’ then continuing “Mi velimo da se veslimo” (“we like to celebrate”)—for once forced to ethnically commit, Léon and Stein have the chorus singing in Bosnian-Serbian-Croatian. (Example 2.9a).
In contrast to Dahlhaus’s view that the score shows no technical innovation, a closer look at this number reveals some eccentricities that differentiate it from the extremely diatonic Parisian numbers. In the melisma, the harmonic movement from a g-minor chord to an A-major chord is surprising and non-functional, though the strange A major is resolved as a V/V to D major in the fourth bar. Hanna’s following strophic song is less marked “declaimed like a folk song,” and has a simple, flowing rhythm and harmony, but the hovering on the seventh degree of the scale gives the theme a haunting instability, as does Hanna’s cadence in the final chorus on a high B, the third degree of the scale (Example 2.9b).
The text is similarly unstable: it tells of a forest spirit, or Willi, and replicates the plot of the ballet *La Sylphide*. (Willis are also familiar from *Giselle*, and even Lehár’s teacher Dvořák’s 1901 opera *Rusalka.*) Yet for a folksong the story is oddly unresolved: in the first strophe the hunter sees the nymph and longs to be her lover, in the second strophe she beckons to him, he enters her house, but after one kiss she disappears forever. That is all, the hunter is left lovesick and the dance music returns. Even without the missing ending, the song is an obvious parable for Hanna and Danilo, with Hanna as the mysterious forest girl who disappeared years ago from Danilo’s life. The folkloric aspects are laid on thickly, including not only the music but the national costume seen onstage.

The conflict between the Parisian and Pontevedran styles comes to a head in the second act finale (No. 12). After being caught in the gazebo with Camille (actually covering for Valencienne), Hanna proclaims that she will marry Camille without any love or expectation of faithfulness, “ganz nach Pariser Art,” celebrated with a bright 6/8 march. After this merry salute against romantic love, Danilo proclaims that he will tell a story. Like the Vilja-Lied, it’s a story of a failed romance, a prince and princess who love each other. The prince is unable to state his love openly, and the princess leaves him for another. (Example 2.10)

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97 This strophe would later be copied as “Er geht links, sie geht rechts” in Lehár’s *Der Graf von Luxemburg*, which also takes place in Paris.
Example 2.10: Lehár, *Die lustige Witwe*, Finale II (Danilo)

The song is itself a quotation of a German folksong, a fact that has not been noted by previous scholars. “Es waren zwei Königskinder” appears in many major nineteenth-century German folksong collections, and its appearance in *Witwe* amounts to both a textual and musical quotation, albeit somewhat altered to fit into triple time. ([Example 2.11])

In the folksong version, the two children are separated by a lake, but their love is betrayed by a ‘treacherous little nun’ [ein falsches Nönnchen] and the prince drowns when trying to reach the princess. Danilo begins with the first three lines of the poem:

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Es waren zwei Königskinder,  There were two royal children
Die hatten einander so lieb,  They loved each other
Sie konnten beisammen nicht kommen  They could not come together
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Example 2.11: Die Königskinder (folk song)

But instead of continuing with “The water was far too deep,” he notes the quotation, “as a poet once described.” The parallels with Hanna and Danilo’s own relationship are obvious, and Danilo even slips into the first person at one point and corrects himself—“I couldn’t ever dream that—the prince said that, not me! And then the prince continued...” The musical setting is of the utmost moderato folksong simplicity, accompanied by strings and harp. The ending, as Danilo becomes more and more agitated and unable to keep up the fiction that he is not, in fact, the prince himself, collapses into a kind of Sprechstimme on the words “Then take him whom you desire!”

Next, Danilo ironically recapitulates the refrain of his entrance song, “Ich gehe zu Maxim,” a gesture that would become virtually mandatory in subsequent Silver Age operettas.

What was previously superficial fun has now been exposed through the “Königskinder” folksong

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99 “Im Traume ich nicht daran denke,—das sagte der Prinz und nicht ich! Und weiter sagte der Prinz noch...”

100 “Da nimm ihn, der sie Dir vergönnt!”
as a defense mechanism. The line “they let me forget the dear Fatherland” has now become “they let me forget that which I find so frightening!” Hanna’s reaction is an aside, but jubilant: “me alone! He loves me alone.” Danilo has allowed his Pontevedran soul and true love for Hanna escape.

Example 2.12: Lehár, *Die lustige Witwe*, No. 10, Spielszene und Tanzduett, vocal entrance

![Musical notation](image)

All that remains in the third act is for him and Hanna to untangle their confusion. This is in part because their love had in fact already been articulated, albeit wordlessly. Before being split up by escapades in the gazebo, Hanna and Danilo had already declared their love in the “Tanzduett,” No. 10. The music is Pontevedran, a few dances followed by the main Viennese waltz of the work, first played instrumentally and then humming the theme that will in the third act become their love duet, “Lippen schweigen.” (Example 2.12). This wordlessness is as important an element of the Pontevedran numbers as the frequent nonsense syllables are to the Parisian ones. If the Parisian numbers are linguistically typified by the percussive nonsense of “trippel trippel” and “zippel zippel,” the Pontevedran numbers are defined by the melismatic sighs of the Tanzduett and Vilja-Lied. The Parisian noises are markedly mechanistic, articulation without melody, while the Pontevedran are organic, melody without articulation.
The Parisian yelps imply rhythm, motion, dance, and externality without a deeper significance, while the Pontevedran sighs imply an emotion that is too internalized to apply the external medium of speech.\textsuperscript{101}

The plot's challenge for Danilo and Hanna is to embrace this inner desire, to give it words beyond parable and humming without surrendering to the superficiality of the Parisian sounds. At the very end of the operetta, they finally put words to their wordless waltz, but they are, ironically, words about the need to remain silent, for the music has already spoken. How they reached this point, like many of the other emotional high points of the score, was through pure farcical plot mechanics, this time the almost laughable trick of Hanna's to claim that should she remarry she will have to give up all her money. The Frenchmen are put off and Danilo promptly proposes, now believing he can do so without the stigma that he is doing so solely in pursuit of her fortune. She accepts and says that her wealth will remain but now pass into his hands. But that was all it took. The \textit{Neue Freie Presse} found this unconvincing, writing, "she speaks to him so nicely with her eyes, in the wild tenderness of Slavic dances, that he finally kisses her, the house applauds encouragingly."\textsuperscript{102} But the essential battle, the struggle to bring Danilo to do his Pontevedran duty and sing in their style and acknowledge the fraud of his Parisian Maxim song, had already been achieved in the second act.

\textsuperscript{101} Dahlhaus calls the Pontevedran ahs (he does not consider the Parisian zipps) "tönende Schweigen," "sounded silence," a quintessentially Wagnerian device (though, he hastens to note, the Witwe never reaches Wagnerian levels of pathos due to differences in style level). Dahlhaus, "Zur musikalischen Dramaturgie der Lustigen Witwe,” 663.

Premiere and Legend

Myth clouds the history of *Die lustige Witwe*. The historical consensus has long viewed the operetta as a victorious underdog, succeeding despite minimal support from the theater and an unsuccessful first night. Close examination reveals that the former is largely true and the latter mostly false, or at least in context more complex. The operetta’s rehearsal process was indeed inauspicious. Originally planned for the spring, it was rushed into production after the abrupt withdrawal of *Der Rebell*, even as Bernauer, Welisch, and Fall were busy revising their work.  

The costumes and sets were not newly constructed but drawn from the theater’s stock—in part a function of rehearsal time, but, as Léon points out, the fact that the rehearsal time was very short was itself not a vote of confidence.  

Léon served as the stage director himself. Frustrated with the quality of the set, he bought new lampshades out of his own pocket. Due to a shortage of stage rehearsal time, the first stage rehearsal took place at night after an evening revival performance of, naturally, *The Geisha*. After major problems with choreography, a dance rehearsal took place the next day behind the iron curtain while the orchestra rehearsed in front of it. After one more stage rehearsal with orchestra and the general rehearsal, the operetta was as ready as it was going to be.

According to Bernauer’s possibly fanciful recollection, Karczag feared the worst, describing the new operetta as a “sentimental, boring business with an impossible title.” Lehár’s latest, Bernauer wrote, was “openly a fiasco,” and a few days after its premiere Bernauer received another telegram from the theater management: “Completion of *Rebell* allows no delay. New

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103 The first version’s libretto is catalogued as NÖ Reg. Präs Theater TB 214/15 (1905) and the revised version NÖ Reg. Präs Theater TB 16 (1906), both NÖLA.

104 Léon, “Die wahre Wahrheit über Die lustige Witwe.”

105 Ibid.
operetta as feared catastrophic revenue. Reminding you of your promise. Yours, Karczag Wallner.” Similarly, by both Léon and Wallner’s accounts Die lustige Witwe’s first few weeks of business were modest at best. Wallner estimates the number of free tickets—given out to “paper” the house and create the appearance of a sold-out theater—as 40% of tickets, a dangerously high percentage.

Yet other indications were more positive. Bernauer’s account of the despairing Karczag and Wallner is at odds with the reviews and other descriptions of Die lustige Witwe’s first night, which depict a strong success at least comparable to accounts of the premierses of Das süßes Mädel and Vergeltsgott!. The subsequent phenomenal success came as a surprise, but its start was hardly a catastrophe. Reviews were entirely positive—the highly respected Ludwig Karpath’s notice even opened, “Finally an operetta like it should be.” While that did not by any means promise commercial success as well, several critics note that a few numbers in the first act and nearly all the numbers in the second act were encored.

By Bernauer’s account, he and his Rebell collaborators continued to work, but after struggling through more revisions, the telegrams from Karczag ceased; the problematic new operetta had apparently “suddenly received a jolt and now brings only sold out houses.” Apparently it was word of mouth that led the operetta to become such a success, and it

eventually racked up 483 performances, a record for the theater and for operetta as a whole. It also became an international phenomenon as no operetta prior, a major success in London, Paris, New York and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{110}

This underdog narrative had taken hold by the 1920s, most prominently in an anecdote that supposedly repeated Karczag’s first reaction to the sound of Lehár’s score: a cry of “Da ist ka Musik! [That ain’t music!]”\textsuperscript{111} In 1931, Karczag’s former co-director Karl Wallner protested the popular notion that the theater management had had no faith in Lehár’s work, and wrote, “it is often asserted that the management of the Theater an der Wien was skeptical of Lehár’s masterpiece. This is not the truth and I want to for the first time put the matter right.” Karczag and he, Wallner wrote, had taken on the \textit{Witwe} in the summer of 1905 with the faith that Lehár was an “Operettenmeister der Zukunft.” He and Karczag had heard some of the music and were enchanted.\textsuperscript{112} This drew a sharp response from Victor Léon five days later in the same paper, who repeated the “Da ist ka Musik” story yet again.\textsuperscript{113} Karczag had died in 1923 and could no longer give his side of the story.

All wanted to be the one who first recognized the international juggernaut that \textit{Die lustige Witwe} became. Its success was a multimedia one. The thousand marketing tie-ins were

\textsuperscript{110} A comprehensive account of \textit{Die lustige Witwe}’s international reception is found in Frey, \textit{Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg}, 78–103.

\textsuperscript{111} The anecdote seems to have first been published by Ernst Decsey in 1924, and further popularized in his 1930 Lehár biography: Decsey, \textit{Franz Lehár}, 1930; Ernst Decsey, “Franz Lehár,” \textit{Komödie} 5, no. 21 (May 25, 1924): 11–12. The same incident—albeit without Karczag’s much-quoted quip—was also related by Lehár himself more than a decade earlier in Franz Lehár, “Vom Schreibtisch und aus dem Atelier,” \textit{Velhagen & Klasings Monatshefte}, 1912.


\textsuperscript{113} Léon, “Die wahre Wahrheit über Die lustige Witwe.”
byproducts of the public’s fervor for the work.\textsuperscript{114} For those who want to portray \textit{Die lustige Witwe}’s success as a triumph of commercialism (with an attendant crassness), the operetta’s success was primarily one of these endorsed products, fashionable hats, and cigarettes speaking louder and with more money than the operetta itself. In this view, the operetta itself recedes in importance behind its tie-ins, a demonstration of its supposed artistic bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{115}

Indeed, impresarios soon realized that operetta was a business that extended beyond the stage. Operetta music had long been disseminated to café orchestras and into individual sheet music sales, and now spread to endorsements of everything from fashion to cigarettes to interior decoration.\textsuperscript{116} Wilhelm Karczag would become, in the years following \textit{Witwe}, something of an operetta oligarch, controlling both the Theater an der Wien and his preeminent publishing house Karczag-Verlag, responsible not only for printing and selling sheet music but also for managing royalties. Success meant not only sold-out theaters in Vienna but the media buzz that would sell sheet music and launch productions on provincial and foreign stages. If Karczag published the work, he received a cut from all these profits. (To his eternal regret, Lehár’s publishing contract was with rival Doblinger-Verlag.) In 1905, Viennese ticket sales were still the most important revenue stream, but other sources were growing rapidly.

But which came first: the products or the operetta? In the case of \textit{Witwe}, sheet music sales were strong from the beginning, starting with a 500-print run of the \textit{Ballsirenen} waltzes,

\footnote{These accounts, such as Bernard Grun, \textit{Die Leichte Muse: Kulturgeschichte Der Operette} (Munich: Albert Langen Georg Müller Verlag, 1961); Keller, \textit{Die Operette in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung}; Otto Schneidereit, \textit{Franz Lehár: eine Biographie in Zitaten} (Innsbruck: Pinguin-Verlag, 1984); Decsey, \textit{Franz Lehár}, 1930. usually cite Wallmann. The dispute goes back to the Wallmann-Léon arguments described in Chapter 1.}

\footnote{Lichtfuss, \textit{Operette im Ausverkauf}.}

\footnote{Later operettas often specified the atelier responsible for an operetta’s decor on its poster. Enthusiastic audience members could go buy the furniture or curtains for their own.}
which sold out immediately. This was followed by a 1,000-print run on February 1, then 10,000 on February 28, finally amounting to the formidable number of 62,500 by the end of 1906.\footnote{Andrew Lamb, *The Merry Widow at 100* (Croydon: Fullers Wood Press, 1995).}

But from January to mid-February the theater struggled to fill the seats, with the show only barely evading a closing in favor of the next item on the *Spielplan*. The contradictory indicators—weak audience and strong sheet music sales—suggests that the sheet music sales eventually led more audience members to the theater. Music sales, both to private citizens and to café orchestras, were a publicity tool for the real deal, the operetta. The more unexpected *Witwe*-themed products—the hats and cigarettes—proliferated later, after the operetta was established as a hit.\footnote{For a detailed and illustrated description of the commercial spin-offs of *Die lustige Witwe*, see Stefan Frey, “O, ihr verfluchten Millionen!": Kult und Kommerz der Wiener Operette,” in *Welt der Operette*, ed. Marie-Therese Arnbom, Thomas Trabitsch, and Kevin Clarke (Vienna: Brandstätter, 2011), 103–14.}

Ironically for those who wish to dismiss *Witwe* as artistically negligible and such commercial sidelines as corrupting the art form, it seems that the most artistically prestigious element of the operetta—its original score—was actually a key factor to its success as distributed via this very same derided commercial network. In the case of *Witwe*, it appears that the auxiliary products at first bolstered the success of the operetta rather than profiting off it.

*Witwe* then ventured abroad. Germany was the most profitable foreign market for operetta. (By around 1910, London and New York would rival Munich and Berlin in importance and potential profit, though Berlin regained preeminence after World War I.) *Die lustige Witwe*’s second production opened on March 3, 1906 in Hamburg, and the Hamburg company took their production on tour to Berlin in May. Meanwhile, the Viennese production saw a number of cast changes in smaller roles, and finally left the Theater an der Wien on April 26 to make room for touring companies (whose contracts had presumably been signed before *Witwe* had become...
such a success). It did not disappear, though, decamping to the smaller Jubiläums-Theater—ironically, considering the ideological content, the former home of Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn’s Aryan theater, which had by this point folded. The theater’s summer break started at the end of June, and on September 10 the operetta returned in triumph to the Theater an der Wien, to a newly cleared schedule. By this point it was clear that this was no ordinary operetta hit, and a number of foreign premieres followed in the fall of 1906, including Munich’s Theater am Gärtnerplatz, Oslo, Budapest, and eventually Paris, London, and New York.

Influence

Die lustige Witwe’s success doomed the stylistic plurality that it had celebrated. Most Silver Age operettas followed Witwe’s model in one or more particulars. English operettas faded, no full-fledged Offenbach revival occurred, and a mixture of waltzes, folksong, and non-parodic buffo writing became the most popular model for composition. Structural and plot features such as a large dance number opening the second act, the “tragic second act finale,” the previously acquainted lovers, the juxtaposition of city and country also became extremely common. This can be seen in Oscar Straus’s Ein Walzertraum, Lehár’s Der Graf von Luxemburg, Emmerich Kálmán’s Die Csárdásfürstin, and more, many of which will be explored in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Not every operetta copied Witwe entire, such as Lehár’s operatic Zigeunerliebe, “socially conscious” Eva, and Leo Fall’s explicitly modern Dollaprinzessin and Die Rose von

119 Located on the Gürtel that separated the Vorstadt from the outer districts, this was a more downmarket space than the elegant Theater an der Wien. The Jubiläums-Theater survives today as the Volksoper. Its seating capacity is now greater than that of the Theater an der Wien, but only because renovations and changes in regulations have reduced the latter’s capacity.
120 These productions are described in detail by Frey, Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg, 78–103.
Stambul, but even all of these contain at least one of Witwe’s most popular markers. **Die lustige Witwe** bestowed upon operetta a stylistic unity—its own style—that it itself did not possess.

When this model became codified, and when operetta had become a product for syndicated international export, the genre had taken a step towards the realm of autonomy retroactively bestowed upon **Die lustige Witwe** itself. It became easier to speak of “operetta” rather than “operettas,” and to consider works independent of their place and time of origin. For Theodor Adorno, **Die lustige Witwe** represented a kind of last bastion of true art in the operetta, after which all subsequent efforts were mere commercial copies. **Witwe**, he wrote in 1934, “stands on the border, one of the last operettas that still had something to do with art and one of the first that unthinkingly renounced it.” ¹²¹ But previous operettas had been just as commercial, and just as apt to copy previous hits. It was the scale of **Die lustige Witwe**’s success that had the homogenizing effect. For Karl Kraus, its success opened the floodgates for a succession of sentimental, materialist works that neglected the social satire he considered the essential function of true operetta. **Die lustige Witwe**’s ubiquity and repetition dulled any political message it initially contained. For audiences, **Die lustige Witwe** was, despite the dubious novelty of some of its innovations, the beginning of a new modern era in mass operetta entertainment.

The age was, arguably, defined by Felix Salten’s feuilleton essay “The New Operetta,” published in December 1906 and declaring **Die lustige Witwe** the music of the era, with a new rhythm befitting the spirit of an age that was no longer that of Johann Strauss II. “It is hard to say what defines the sound of an age,” Salten writes. “It is ten thousand tiny truths, a country’s

air, a language’s accent, the steps and gesticulations of a people.” All art must change to remain in step with its time and place,

Every country sounds different, every race sounds different, and every generation sounds different. Recklessness, sentimentality, irony, and pathos were sung differently around 1860 and around 1890... in Die lustige Witwe all is intoned, everything that resonates and hums along in our age, what we read, write, think, discuss, and what our emotions wear as new, modern garments, this sounds in this operetta, echoes in it.\textsuperscript{122}

Yet, like many subsequent historians, Salten was unable to say exactly why Die lustige Witwe was so right for its time. Lehár had “unconsciously” found the “sound of the era,” in music with “ten thousand small, strong truths.”\textsuperscript{123} For Salten, Die lustige Witwe now represents not multiple worlds but a single one. If Witwe embodied a diverse, cosmopolitan world it is the ultimate irony that its success begot greater homogeneity.

\textsuperscript{122} “Jedes Land klingt anders, jede Rasse anders, und jede Generation klingt anders. Leichtigkeit, Sentimentalität, Ironie und Pathos haben um 1810 anders gesungen als um 1860 und um 1890... In Die lustige Witwe, wird sie angestimmt. Alles, was so in unseren Tagen mitschwingt und mitsummt, was wir lesen, schrieben, denken, plaudern, und was für neue, moderne Kleiden unsere Empfindungen tragen, das tönt in dieser Operette, klingt in ihr nach.” Salten, “Die neue Operette.”

\textsuperscript{123} “Zehntausend kleine, starke Echtheiten.” ibid.
Chapter 3

Between Fantasy and False Consciousness, 1907-1911: *Ein Walzertraum* and *Eva*

The “new operetta” assimilated Vienna’s increasingly cosmopolitan and diverse culture, broadening the vocabulary of a local genre to speak to a larger world. Expanding its scope beyond strictly Viennese appeal gave operetta far greater international marketability. Operetta was still closely associated with Vienna, but left behind the thick dialect, local jokes, and other material that confined its appeal to the city itself. The new operetta also reflected a Vienna that was not nearly as homogenous as it had been only a few decades earlier. Much to the despair of old-timers, Biedermeier-era humor was no longer a common Viennese tongue. Operetta simultaneously acknowledged its home city’s diversity and provided it with a shared topic of conversation. Texts thematized the turmoil of everyday modern life. Industrialization, political conflict, and its attendant social upheaval had resulted in a city full of poverty and uncertainty, and most Viennese did not have the luxury of retreating from the world that surrounded them.
Even as art music retreated from public action operetta engaged with public life. While operetta was only very rarely an activist form, it was consistently socially and politically conscious. Operetta gave its audience shiny dreams that spoke directly to their quotidian material and psychological worries, from romance to money to homesickness. Its appeal became dependent on a careful balance of relevance (realism) and escapism (pleasure). Yet not all considered this escape to be harmless fun. For many critics, the popularity and ubiquity of operetta was a threat to the cultural prestige and preeminence of high art. For those on the Left, operetta’s indulgence and manipulation of its audience’s sentiment, and the sometimes heavy-handed nature of this address, was a sign of a culture industry at work, serving to hypnotize its audience into submission.¹ For anti-Semites, operetta represented a degeneration of traditional Viennese values, a triumph of Jews and their questionable urban values over its more proper German antecedents of komische Oper and folk play, as well as the increasing visibility of women and their emotions in public life. For both, it represented an unfortunate triumph of feminine values of irrationality, sentimentality, and romance.

These criticisms reveal fault lines of the Viennese and other cultural elite, and suggest that operetta appeared to pose a threat to the longstanding hegemony of various dominant groups. But how real was this threat? And did operetta actually represent any group other than the capitalist establishment? The creators of operetta were hardly the city’s most powerful: the theater business offered a rare welcoming place for Vienna’s Jewish population, providing reliable and lucrative artistic employment for musicians, actors, writers, composers, journalists, and impresarios to operate in relative freedom. While culturally bourgeois, they often explored

¹ The critics of the Frankfurt School critiques rarely addressed operetta specifically and the critics included in this chapter largely predate their work. For Adorno’s only concentrated essay on operetta, see Adorno, “Arabesken zur Operette.”
themes of identity and difference that were intimately relevant to Jewish life, and were topical for
many non-Jewish Viennese as well. Even as the city’s politics lurched in ever more conservative
directions, operetta stages were a haven of Jewish expression well into the 1920s.

Silver Age operetta’s potential for subversion and social commentary has often been
treated in a binary way, as if activism and complete conservatism were the only possible options.
Moritz Csáky and Stephen Beller have followed in the footsteps of Felix Salten to describe it as
an organ of liberal values, progressivism, and cosmopolitanism. More commonly, it is labeled as
archconservative, such as in the narratives of Karl Kraus and later Adorno, and recently scholars
such as Volker Klotz, Thorsten Stegemann, and Martin Lichtfuss. Both sides fail to account
for the diversity of operetta as well as the multivalent nature of its reception. Although sporadic
attempts at large-scale political statements were not successful, considerable tension could be
generated by brief, drastic departures from convention, adding titillation to a genre whose
broader outlines were, indeed, predictable.

This chapter will examine the relationships between operetta and its audiences,
particularly the extent to which these works are “escapist” and what that might mean. First, I will
examine the implications of sentimentality in popular culture as well as operetta’s gendering as
female and classification as Jewish. I will then consider two spheres of popular music parallel to

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2 Csáky, Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne; Steven Beller, “The Tragic Carnival,” in European
Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914–1918, ed. Aviel Roshwald and

3 Theodor Adorno, “Zur gesellschaftlichen Lage der Musik,” in Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 18,
Musikalische Schriften V (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984), 729–77; Karl Kraus, “Grimassen über Kultur und
Bühne,” Die Fackel 10, no. 270–71 (January 19, 1909): 1–18; Klotz, Operette; Stegemann, Wenn Man Das
Leben Durchs Champagnerglas Betrachtet--; Lichtfuss, Operette im Ausverkauf. Stegemann considers
operetta subversion to be limited to the nineteenth century.

4 This balance of formula and novelty can easily be compared to modern entertainment genres such as the
romance novel or police procedural television show. A key study of the audiences for such genres is Janice
A. Radway, Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature (Chapel Hill: University of
operetta, the supposedly satirical cabaret and the frankly sentimental Damenkapelle (or ladies’ orchestra). Finally, I will consider two operettas in which these concerns play central roles. In Oscar Straus’s 1907 operetta Ein Walzertraum, the creation of an escapist realm defined in explicitly musical and feminine terms succeeded in carrying its audiences away into a new realm of sound and feeling. On the other hand, Franz Lehár’s 1912 Eva, a socially conscious Cinderella tale of a factory girl, failed to win its audience over, despite a seemingly more realistic story.

FROM SENTIMENTALITY TO CLASS CRITIQUE

Diversion, pleasure, sentimentality, and the visual splendor of fine clothes and furnishings—the most conventional attractions of operetta—are all associated with women and their social sphere. In operetta, though, the analogy carried even further, from an appeal to feminine feelings to the alignment of operetta along a host of assumed abstract feminine characteristics. To the men who wrote about it, operetta was, like women, positioned as essentially passive, unimportant, and decorative, as well as being popular among female audience members. Men regarded as a source of pleasure, to be enjoyed much in the nature of a beautiful woman. But it could also be perceived as an unwelcome sign of the feminization of public society, when a more manly art would be preferable. While the works of Offenbach had offered a pointed perspective from

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which to view the real world, Silver Age operetta made an appeal to nostalgia, identification, and romance that was not rational but rather sentimental.

The association of sentimental culture with women and inferiority had hardly begun with operetta. The prototypical nineteenth-century depiction of the danger of sentimental popular culture is Gustave Flaubert’s Emma Bovary, who seeks relief from her dull bourgeois life in the romance of cheap novels and at the opera. Her emotionally charged attendance of *Lucia di Lammermoor* and fateful identification with the title character are a turning point of the novel, suggesting that music can be even more potent, and more ambiguous, than words. Emma’s inability to recognize these adventures as impossible fantasies and her unbounded emulation of the star-crossed lovers of fiction leads to her ruin, bankruptcy, and suicide. Flaubert notoriously identified with this character (proclaiming, “Emma Bovary, c’est moi”). But, as pointed out by Andreas Huyssen, despite his sympathy with Emma’s predicament, Flaubert’s creation evinces many of the nineteenth century’s more pernicious notions of the feminine. With the benefit of his masculine moderation and intelligence Flaubert is able to partake of the same dubious literature, and is regarded as a creator of high literature; the same taste in entertainments quite does poor Emma in.

Like Emma, women in fin-de-siècle Vienna were associated with weakness, emotionalism, and an inability to tell fantasy from reality. There were few places for women as active producers or consumers of culture, and their acceptable roles were circumscribed. The era’s particular brand of quasi-scientific misogyny is most spectacularly manifest in the work of social

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theorist Otto Weininger, author of the 1903 bestseller Geschlecht und Charakter [Sex and Character].\(^8\) Weininger defined individuals as composed of various ratios of masculine and feminine essence. The womanly essence is inherently submissive, irrational, and weak, and thus a woman’s desire for emancipation os driven by whatever essence of masculinity she may possess. (The exceptional women who managed to achieve public roles were assumed to be in essence mostly male.) Karl Kraus, who would emerge as the most influential and vocal critic of operetta, would, under the influence of Weininger, similarly deem women’s status to be as muse or stimulant for the more important purposes of male desire (along the lines of Les Contes d’Hoffmann—a popular opera in Vienna at the time—or, later, Die tote Stadt). For Weininger the feminine principle had no positive potential. For Kraus it was essential, but only as a fantasy to stimulate male creation.\(^9\)

The definition of masculinity and femininity as essences or constellations of characteristics allowed operetta to be classified as feminine regardless of the composition of its audience. Though men attended it with great enthusiasm, in media accounts the reactions of women are often highlighted. While women were more prominent in operetta theaters than at the Hofoper (where women were disallowed from the standing room section), their prominence in the reception history reaffirms operetta’s cultural identity. Almost every account of a trip to the theater records their laughter, their smiles, and their looks.\(^10\) In his 1927 tourist’s guide to

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\(^9\) Nike Wagner, Geist und Geschlecht: Karl Kraus und die Erotik der Wiener Moderne (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982).

\(^10\) They are a major highlight of Karel Jeréb’s trip to the operetta quoted in Chapter 1.
Vienna, the theater critic Ludwig Hirschfeld discourses at length on various theaters in Vienna, eventually interrupting his discussion of the Burgtheater with “yes, yes, yes, gracious lady. You are already somewhat impatient?” when finally discussing operetta.\textsuperscript{11} The operetta, a proper amusement, was a safe place for respectable women who would not set foot in the dodgier realms of the varieté or the summer theater. Yet even the operetta was considered to be in some senses over their pretty heads: as in Paul Koretz’s description of “women [at an operetta theater] who laugh at jokes without understanding what they mean.”\textsuperscript{12}

Perhaps the most explicit on this point is Franz Lehár himself, who wrote in a 1936 essay in the \textit{Neues Wiener Journal}:

Nietzsche says that every man contains something childlike, and this applies even more to the woman, the powerful ally of operetta. The wonderfully beautiful prima donna—that’s she herself, the veneration, admiration that men pay tribute to, applies to her. All operettas should, in her opinion, have a name: “what do you think of the men?” She extensively studies all the variations of the game of love, and arrives at home, sits at the piano, and begins to play. The woman follows the melodies of operetta and is their most powerful propagandist—and also their most successful, because she is their most charming.\textsuperscript{13}

The simple emotions of operetta speak easily and directly to Lehár’s woman, and even schools her in the ways of love and attraction. The woman can simultaneously be operetta’s most useful audience member due to her naïve enthusiasm and also, the most attractive for the male audience


members. Additionally, Lehár is one of the only critics to specifically note that women seemed to watch men as closely as men watched women. Similarly, for Victor Léon, the female audience member has paid for her ticket just as the man has, and deserves a satisfying show.\textsuperscript{14}

To others, however, women’s presence was of ambiguous value. For most writers the woman’s primary role is rhetorical, an illustration of both the best and worst of operetta. Should the author wish to glorify the operetta, the spectacularly dressed women onstage and in the audience (sometimes little distinction is made) provide further visual pleasure and decoration for the gratification of the male critic. Should he wish to condemn the operetta, the woman’s presence, and moreover her active participation in the spectacle (not only in her ridiculous dress but in her visible, audible enjoyment of the performance), is an indictment, a mark that the happenings onstage are not to be taken seriously.

The prominence of feminine charms pointed to a larger problem: sentimentality. Silver Age operetta appealed to the “tender feelings” of its audiences, short-circuiting reason in favor of irrationality, emotionalism, and “manipulation” of the audience’s sympathies. This attraction marked operetta as feminine and artistically inferior—appeal to the feelings being a barrier to the rational appraisal of the music and theater’s form, undermining the autonomy of the audience.\textsuperscript{15}

This was, for critics, a form of deception, both cheapening the artistic experience and, more severely, concealing it from critical examination. From this point of view, the estranged drama of Offenbach was ideal, while the emotional effusiveness of the Silver Age was suspect.

\textsuperscript{14} Léon, “Bittere Operettenwahrheiten.”

The femininity of operetta was closely related to a class critique. For Marxist critics, operetta was particularly guilty of promoting false consciousness. Unlike the operettas of the nineteenth century, Silver Age operetta paid little heed to matters of social class, and encouraged its audience members to sympathize with the plights of all characters, no matter their place in society. By depicting its characters living in a world of comfort and luxury, operetta not only encouraged commodity fetishism but also obscured the social relations that produced the luxury seen onstage, namely the daily exploitation of the poorer audience members, to whom such luxury was an impossible dream. It thus led to inaction and complacency, as well as satisfaction with exploitation. It idealizes material comfort and conceals the apparatus that led to this inequality (a sort of phantasmagoria).16

This is particularly evident in Theodor Adorno’s slightly later treatment of popular music (as formulated in the 1930’s). Adorno positioned operetta, along with film and “Schlager” songs, at the center of his theory of popular culture, positioning music as an instrument of anesthetization.17 Yet the complexity of the relationships governing operetta’s production and reception make such a conception oversimplified and limited. Operetta was controlled by the forces of capitalism, but its power was hardly held by the economic and social elite of Vienna, rather by a liminal class of mostly-Jewish artists, whose perspective and interests were hardly

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17 The cultural period examined by Adorno was more crucially that of the Weimar era and not specifically Viennese, but the similarities are great. The culture industry of Weimar Republic popular music is examined in great detail in Brian Currid, *A National Acoustics: Music and Mass Publicity in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).
monolithic or identical to that of the power establishment (except in anti-Semitic conspiracy theories). While the culture industry theory treats all popular works as if they were identical, varying fortunes of various operettas and the complex discourse surrounding them suggests that audiences were far more particular and its works more distinct than Adorno’s theory would suggest. And indeed, the most successful operettas are those that can vividly articulate their audience’s most human concerns, suggesting that audiences desired a very particular kind of entertainment, and demanded a certain kind of escapism, one that offered beauty but also credibility to their lives.

Jews and Viennese Life

The overwhelming majority of Viennese operetta composers and librettists, as well as a large portion of the actors, were Jewish. Unlike in art music, few converted to Catholicism, and the commercial theater offered a haven and community that the government-subsidized theater and opera did not (for example, Gustav Mahler).\(^{18}\) The extent to which the “fin-de-siècle Vienna” artistic phenomenon itself was a Jewish one has been the subject of considerable scholarship. Steven Beller has argued that Carl Schorske’s construction of a fin-de-siècle ethos conspicuously ignores the high proportions of Jewish figures, and he has attempted to provide as a corrective

\(^{18}\) Mahler and the discourse of anti-Semitism in Vienna in general are considered in K. M. Knittel, *Seeing Mahler: Music and the Language of Antisemitism in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2010). Many Jews did, however, change their names, such as Emmerich Kálmán (born Imre Kopppstein) and Louis Treumann (Alois Pollitzer, though “Alois” is not a distinctly Jewish name). The only major operetta composer to convert was Edmund Eysler, who became Catholic in 1898 (before he had achieved any significant success). Eysler’s choice of subjects and musical style were, for his entire life, more provincial and Viennese-specific than any of the composers considered in detail here, and the audience for these more traditional works would have likely been less friendly to a Jewish composer. Yet Eysler’s conversion did not prevent his operettas from being banned by the Nazis. Norbert Nischkauer, *Edmund Eysler: 12. März 1874 – 4. Oktober 1949* (Wien: self-published, 2000).
concrete numbers and proportions of Jews in various professions, as well as surveying the religion of the most notable figures of the movement.\textsuperscript{19}

Beller's statistics confirm what appeared obvious: there were many Jews in operetta, and many of them were the leading and most influential figures of the genre, enough to call operetta a specifically Jewish art form. Operetta's originator, Jacques Offenbach, was a Jew—a fact that was, like his German ethnicity, only identified when convenient to the author. And Offenbach's works were popular with Jews and Gentiles alike. Most musicologists and historians concentrating on Jewish studies, however, have considered operetta only peripherally, favoring Yiddish theater or other forms that played to a particularly Jewish audience and dealt with Jewishness directly.\textsuperscript{20} Marion Linhardt argues that the social background and experience of Jews in operetta was too diverse to be considered in general terms, and she only considers the importance of Jewishness in a few isolated cases and—like musicologists—the portrayal of specifically Jewish characters on stage. She notes that Jewish characters are often not portrayed as outsiders despite great emphasis on their ethnicity, which is often depicted in heavily stereotypical ways.\textsuperscript{21} There are only a few explicitly Jewish characters in operetta, in works such as \textit{Der Rastelbinder}, \textit{Frühling am Rhein}, and \textit{Die Herzogin von Chicago}. Indeed, such characters could be unpopular with anti-Semites and Jews alike: The Jewish \textit{Neue Freie Presse} critic Ludwig Hirschfeld notoriously criticized the depiction of Jewish peddler Pfefferkorn (played by Louis Treumann in his days as a comic supporting player) in Léon and Lehár's \textit{Der Rastelbinder},

\textsuperscript{19} Beller, \textit{Vienna and the Jews, 1867–1938}.
\textsuperscript{20} For example, Philip Bohlman, \textit{Jewish Music and Modernity} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
writing that songs were not only sung but also “gejödelt” as would befit a Yiddish theater in the Taborstrasse, to which Lehár should repair should he wish to continue in this vein.\(^{22}\)

Yet some elements of Jewishness were important in shaping operetta’s composition and reception. Not only did the industry employ many Jewish writers and composers, operetta featured starring roles for Jews who no longer hid their Jewishness. The relative scarcity of characters specifically identified as Jewish meant that Jewish actors often played characters in social roles inaccessible to them in real life. But their Jewish identities did not necessarily go unnoticed. Indeed, Felix Salten suggests that Judaism could even be attractive. He wrote of Louis Treumann’s Danilo, “like this operetta he is un-Viennese… delicate and slim and limber and a bit feminine.”\(^{23}\) These terms, as Marion Linhardt points out, are a conglomeration of anti-Semitic descriptions of Jews of the late nineteenth century.\(^{24}\) The Jewish Salten aligns the Jewish Treumann as a racial and gender Other, but triumphantly so, for, as Salten says, his “noblesse is so lyrical, all the girls must fall in love with him.”\(^{25}\)

The Habsburg Empire offered an unusually secure and emancipated home for Jews. They were allowed to settle in Vienna starting in 1848, and all restrictions on geography were lifted in 1867. The enormous wave of immigration in the late nineteenth century Vienna (discussed in Chapter 1) was in part a Jewish one: the population of Jews in Vienna increased from around

\(^{22}\) L.Hfd [Ludwig Hirschfeld], “Carl-Theater [review of Der Rastelbinder],” Neue Freie Presse, December 21, 1902.

\(^{23}\) “wie dieser operette is er unwienerisch.. Fein, und schlank und biegsam und ein wenig feminin.” Salten, “Die neue Operette,” 42.

\(^{24}\) Linhardt, Residenzstadt und Metropole, 191.

\(^{25}\) “mit seiner Noblesse so lyrisch, daß sich alle Mädchen in ihn verlieben müssen.” Salten, “Die neue Operette,” 43.
6,000 in 1857 to 175,000 in 1910, at which point they comprised 8.5% of the city’s population. While most Viennese Jews were assimilated and led largely secular lives, they were still marked as members of a culturally specific, often suspect group. Marsha Rozenblit has argued that life in Vienna allowed the Jews to realize a “tripartite” identity that gave them a relatively stable role in society: as Jews, as members of one of the empire’s nationalities (most of them as Germans), and as subjects of Franz-Joseph. They were able to balance their identities as Jews with membership in the larger umbrella of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This gave them a fervent loyalty to Franz-Joseph and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Did this identity manifest itself in operetta? Stephen Beller writes that the disproportionate representation of Jews in some fields invites the question of whether their “history and experience provides traditions and ways of looking at the world.” He argues that the relevant traditions for Jews are the value placed on education and the emphasis on ethics and individualism in Jewish thought. Indeed, the Jewish background of operetta is a plausible explanation for the coexistence in operetta of old-fashioned imperial images and themes alongside cosmopolitan pluralities: both were important elements of Viennese Jewish identity, which could embrace the accommodation of the imperial house but were often excluded from a narrow nationalist identification. Jews were, Beller continues, both at the margins and center of culture.

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Operetta had obvious appeal on these grounds. The new operetta was also welcoming to newcomers in a way that the old Viennese guard rarely was. Operetta assimilated the new Viennese’s cultural background (as in Die lustige Witwe) and, conversely, assimilated Jews and other newcomers in the cultural vocabulary of their new hometown. The theater politics of the 1870s and 1880s—as well as the growing currents of anti-Semitism in the subsequent decades—defined Jews in opposition to traditional Viennese life. But in the twentieth century Jews led this most Viennese of genres, and at times explicitly thematized this conscious assumption of a strongly Viennese spirit. The Die lustige Witwe librettists Léon and Stein took on this assimilative project in their 1898 operetta Wiener Blut. The score was constructed of the most purely Viennese material imaginable: extant, famous music by Johann Strauss II. (The arrangements were by Adolf Müller II; Strauss gave his blessing to the project shortly before his death.) The sources are largely popular ones, including the title waltz, the Kaiserwalzer, and Wein, Weib, und Gesang.

The libretto, however, combines the traditional Wiener Typen with a new moral. The plot concerns a playboy count who has trouble balancing his proper Viennese wife, his Hofoper ballerina mistress, and a would-be liaison named Pepi, a seamstress (she is a character type known as a süßes Mädel—see Chapter 2). In addition, the subplot contains several long scenes based on communication problems between an old Viennese man’s thick dialect and an equally elderly German diplomat’s Hochdeutsch. The action is pure farce. But the main sticking point is the Viennese countess’s frequent claim that her husband, a provincial count from a Germanic

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principality, lacks “Viennese blood.” After witnessing the élan with which he juggles his various mistresses, it is concluded that Viennese blood is passed not through ancestors or place of residence but rather is question of state of mind. On these grounds, Count Balduin excels.

Volker Klotz considers the operetta pure “Heimatkitsch,” but its message is that the identity as a provincial Viennese could potentially be accessible to all, no matter their origin—including Jews like Stein and Léon.

Critical Reflections

The first prominent celebration of operetta as a subversive and progressive art form was Felix Salten’s 1906 Feuilleton on Die lustige Witwe, already introduced in the previous chapter. Salten invokes then-accepted origin history of the cakewalk as the music of a male slave and a female cook mocking their masters. In this metaphor, the slaves’ master is the older, conservative Viennese school of Strauss, Millöcker, and company while the “new operetta” is Die lustige Witwe:

[Lehár’s score] does not have much Viennese in it… It has seen the modern silhouette of the Barrison Sisters the bravura of Saharet, the terrific grace of Tortajada and the lurid tempo of the Varieté. In this music, the colors (not appeal) of the cakewalk, colors of the machiche, something from the knocking, greedy, glowing rhythm of the maxixe.

30 Klotz, Operette, 700.
32 The references are to popular vaudeville performers. The Barrison Sisters were a saucy act promoted as “The Wickedest Girls in the World,” Saharet an Australian dancer (Clarissa Rose, b.1879), Tortajada the
Salten defends *Witwe* as the music of a new generation, more internationalized than its predecessors. Those who think operetta should adhere only to the sound of Johann Strauss should realize that their time has passed. He positions operetta as a genre that operates synchronically rather than diachronically, that is to say he places a higher value on its compilation of its particular moment than its continuance or development of an independent artistic tradition over time. Operetta’s unstable position between popular and art culture meant that this was not a criterion upon which all critics agreed.

Salten argues that *Witwe’s* relevance is due to its articulation of a particular historical moment rather than its popularity with audiences, yet he gauges the success of that connection largely based on the scale of audience response. He is somewhat equivocal on this point. The relationship between a work and a public, he writes, is an elusive and mysterious thing, and sometimes should simply be celebrated. For Salten, operetta is a genre too immediate and fleeting to be analyzed independent of its time, and to assess it as an independent, autonomous artwork would be missing the point. The ephemeral nature of operetta’s appeal was, for him, what gave it its piquancy and power.

For high art music critics, this ephemerality was a marker of operetta’s inferiority. They often perceived operetta’s massive popularity as an affront, casting a shadow over their own more serious and ambitious efforts. Prime among these is an essay published in November 1910 in *Die Zeit*—the same newspaper that first published Salten’s essay. The “young writer” Erich Eckertz’s

description of operetta, originally given as an address in the elite setting of the Universität Wien, is a scathing yet vague attack.\(^{33}\) The racial nature of his attack is particularly notable considering the Jewish character of much twentieth-century operetta. Terms familiar from fin-de-siècle racial theory abound.\(^{34}\) Operetta is associated with evoking disease, bodily impurity, and bastardization: Entartung, (degeneracy, the term later adopted by the Nazis), unausrottbar wie die Pest (as ineradicable as the plague), a Kulturübel (cultural malady), Giftkeim (poisoned embryo), Mißgeburt von Schmutz (filthy monstrosity), and a Müllgrube (garbage pile). The civilized world, Eckertz’s lecture argued, must be cleansed from this filthy music. While most pre-Witwe polemics looked back to the good old days of Offenbach, Eckertz’s ideal models are Lucian, Aretino, Mozart, and Goethian Singspiele. Johann Strauss is also a “refined” composer, but Offenbach’s efforts “a miscarriage.”

Eckertz’s condemnation obviously aroused public debate, prompting an anonymous polemical response in the Berliner Börsen-Courier and an elaboration by Eckertz accompanied by essays by Walther Kellerbauer and Oswald Kühn in the august Neue Musik-Zeitung.\(^{35}\) Die Zeit continued the discussion a month later by asking a number of prominent personalities what they thought of Viennese operetta, and assembled their responses, a common format known as a


\(^{35}\) These are collected in Linhardt, Warum es der Operette so schlecht geht, 61–91.
Rundfrage (survey, or, more relevantly, roundtable). The respondents were given the following prompt, a tidy summary of operetta’s success and Eckertz’s criticism:

In recent years, Viennese operetta has celebrated world triumphs. Viennese music has been victoriously transmitted to all parts of the world. It exercises its great powers of attraction and constantly fills theaters anew. Its massive success naturally should be considered. For a long time voices have been raised against the new Viennese operetta… one always criticizes its artistic qualities, finds it nonsensical, sentimental, or frivolous, or all three together, describes it as destroying taste and sees in it a danger for culture.

The diversity of opinions, the editor writes, will “bring some objectivity to the operetta discussion,” presumably a conciliatory gesture after the publication of Eckertz’s harsh rhetoric.

But the choice of respondents stacked the deck. Out of the seventeen answers, only three are from operetta artists—Lehár, Charles Lecocq, and French actor Felix Galipaux—while eight are art music luminaries—Eugen d’Albert, Ferruccio Busoni, Karl Goldmark, Lilli Lehmann, Ruggiero Leoncavallo, Max Reger, pianist Moriz Rosenthal, and Felix Weingartner. Three are from theater artists associated with elite culture: actor Bernhard Baumeister, Berlin intendant Graf Georg Hülson, and “Bernhard Shaw” [sic!]. The remaining respondents are Nietzsche’s sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, author Heinrich Mann, and apparent Polish aristocrat Princess Marie Adam Lubomirska.

The results make clear something that is implicit in most critiques of operetta: the elite still fought for the idea of a unified cultural life with a single ideal mode of listening, and were

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37 Ibid. “Die Wiener Operette hat in den letzten Jahren Welttriumphe gefeiert. Sie hat sie wienerische Musik in alle Erdeile hinausgetragen. Sie übt allabendlich ihre große Anziehungskraft aus und füllt Tausende Theaterräume immer von neuem. Ihr Riesenerfolg gibt natürlich zu denken. Längst schon erhoben sich Stimmen gegen die neue Wiener Operette… Man kritisierte ihre künstlerischen Qualitäten, fand sie unsinnig, sentimental oder frivol, oder alles zusammen, bezeichnetet sie als geschmackverbildend und erblickte in ihnen geradezu eine Gefahr für die Kultur.”
38 “in die Operettendiskussion einige Objektivität zu bringen.”
hostile to the increasing visibility of popular and mass culture in media and the public. Operetta, which aped high culture but enjoyed low culture’s audience and opportunism, was uniquely offensive on this front. Max Reger placed this in the starkest, most direct terms: “The colossal success of this genre can be ascribed to the bad taste of the great masses.” Ferruccio Busoni seemed offended by the mere question, writing a single sentence: “For me, from an artistic standpoint, modern operetta is not worthy of discussion.” Princess Marie Adam Ludomirska offers a similarly curt dismissal: “Operetta is the most effective enemy of real opera and all serious music.” Lilli Lehmann offers a more diplomatic condemnation, admiring the talent and spirit of the performers but confessing a personal antipathy to operetta due to its lascivious nature, with the qualification that one cannot argue on matters of taste (and, it is implied, the inclinations of those less morally upright than herself). Karl Goldmark writes that he does not believe that he can be objective, so he will abstain from opining at all.

Heinrich Mann allows for a plurality of musical styles, though in a decidedly condescending fashion, describing operetta as ungeistig (unspiritual), suitable for those for whom great musicians present an overwhelming quantity of Geist: “the people (das Volk) also require a theater for the petit bourgeois of the intellect, for whom theater of quality is inaccessible, posing impossible demands.” George Bernard Shaw makes a similar argument in far more positive terms: “What artistic worth do Viennese operettas possess? Exactly the worth that so enchants the audience, who fill the theater and amuse themselves there. And the pleasure they provide

39 “Der riesige Erfolg dieses Genres ist auf den schlechten Geschmak der “großen Masse” zurückführen.”
40 “Die modern Operette ist für mich vom künstlerischen Standpunkt indiskutabel.”
41 “Die Operette ist der wirksamste Feind der wirklichen Oper und jeder ernsten Musik.”
42 “So braucht dies Volk auch ein Theater für Kleinbürger des Intellekts, den das Theater vom Rank ihnen verschlossen, es stellt unmögliche Ansprüche.”

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their audiences is also the reason for their success.” He dismisses the idea that operetta corrupts, since “the audience corrupts the artists, not the artists the audience.”

In the longest response by far, Franz Lehár takes it upon himself to defend all of operetta, though the terms by which he does so are equivocal. He sets the other writers of the Rundfrage and critics in general apart from his target audience, writing that while operetta has, particularly in recent times, been confronted with “attacks that are nothing less than rabid.” But he knows that as long as composers devote themselves to their craft and choose good texts, the attacks will have no effect and the “unbiased audience [will] remain on our side.” He defends the public’s taste, observing that it has grown more refined in recent years and approaches the contemplative mode of high art. Yet Lehár also comments that he shows every score to a “serious musician” before revealing them to the public (silently ceding that some would not consider him a serious musician himself), never rushes with his work, and thinks of art first and the audience second. He characterizes operettas as approaching high art in quality, citing the growth of orchestral forces in operetta, in particular the example of the harp’s appearance in operetta orchestras. This desire to have it both ways—to assume the artistic mantel of a serious composer while also valuing the audience response of a popular one as the most important verification of that status—was a particular crux of operetta reception.

The problem is in part historiographical: the most prominent and visible sources who deal with operetta elide its real reception. As Lehár pointed out, the Rundfrage is not

43 “Was für künstlerischen Wert die Wiener Operetten besitzen? Gerade den Wert, der das Publikum so sehr entzückt, daß es die Theater füllt und sich dort amüsiert. Und eben diese Vergnügen, das sie dem Publikum bereiten, ist auch die Ursache ihres Erfolges.”… “Das Publikum korrumpiert die Künstler, nicht der Künstler das Publikum.”
44 “geradezu wütenden Angriffen”
45 “vorurteilslose Publikum auf unserer Seite steht”
representative. It records a high culture debate that, however lively, was irrelevant to the vast majority of operetta’s audience. Defenders of operetta were self-appointed representatives of a gallery audience of which they were not themselves members. The musicians queried by Die Zeit are, as Goldmark recognized, largely extraneous for operetta as a whole, and ultimately tell more about the authors themselves than about operetta at all. These most visible relics of criticisms thus are, for the historian peripheral to the genre’s primary goals. The people for whom operetta was written did not have access to the same literary and public discourse as the elite, and their reactions are more difficult to recover. The gulf between Die Zeit and the operetta audience was—as condescendingly depicted by Heinrich Mann—one of class, education, gender, and, to some extent, religion. As we have seen, operetta appealed to and made visible the presence and pleasures of the poor, the female, and, often, the Jewish.

Perhaps the problem was that operetta was too big and too capricious to belong to or speak to any one group. It chased not ideologies or aesthetic importance but rather bodily, sensual pleasure and profit. That it was predominantly the product of Jews and prominently featured women only added to its degeneracy in the eyes of the high art critics. Operetta allowed a space these marginal groups, both onstage and in creative capacities, but one that was still mostly circumscribed according to social norms of representation. The envelope would be pushed, indeed the genre traded on the threat of mild provocation and titillation, constantly approaching the boundary between respectability and dispute, but, as noted above, was rarely activist or revolutionary. The few cases in which operetta took on major social issues were controversial and remained the exception rather than the rule.
OSCAR STRAUS AND THE NEW WORLD OF UNTERHALTUNGSMUSIK

Most of the principal composers of the Silver Age first emerged in chaos of the 1900-1905 period. Four can be said to comprise the elite and most consistently popular over the entire Silver Age: Lehár, Leo Fall, Oscar Straus, and Emmerich Kálmán. Lehár was the first to graduate from “promising” to established, as has already been seen. Kálmán’s career began somewhat later; in 1906 he was still writing music criticism in Budapest. Leo Fall had already made his debut in Vienna in 1905 with the ill-fated Der Rebell. Despite its aborted run, Fall’s music caught the eye of Victor Léon, who provided the librettos for his next two operettas. These works, Der fidele Bauer and Die Dollarprinzessin (1906 and 1907) would put him at the side of Lehár as the most popular of operetta composers. Many of the period’s would-be operetta messiahs never achieved large-scale international success. Richard Heueberger, Edmund Eysler, and Heinrich Reinhardt, all hailed as potential revolutionaries in the early days of their careers, never became household names outside city limits.

Oscar Straus remains the least-studied of the quartet, and only a few of his works remain in the modern repertory. A native of Vienna, he had been recommended by no less than

46 Der fidele Bauer was deemed by Léon to be too rustic for the Viennese taste and premiered not in Vienna but Mannheim, later enjoying a short Viennese run but more crucially cementing Fall’s relationship with operetta star Louis Treumann, who sang the leading, Girardi-like role (a major step backwards from his turn as Danilo) and Hubert Marischka, then an unknown who would eventually become Victor Léon’s son-in-law and later the director of the Theater an der Wien. Die Dollarprinzessin, whose New York-set plot and inclusion of technology such as typewriters and cars made it the most overtly “ultra-modern” work of the decade, was an enormous hit in Vienna.

47 There is no proper scholarly biography of Oscar Straus. Franz Mailer worked closely with the composer near the end of his life to write his memoir-like biography, but some of the facts fail to line up and Mailer rarely consulted sources beyond his subject. Bernard Grün’s biography, Prince of Vienna, is largely fable, leaning heavily on imagined dialogue. Straus’s Ein Walzertraum and Die lustigen Nibelungen are still occasionally performed; Die Perlen von Cleopatra has also been revived and recorded by the Lehár-Festspiele in Bad Ischl. Franz Mailer, Weltbürger der Musik: Eine Oscar-Straus-Biographie (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1963); Bernard Grun, Prince of Vienna; the Life, the Times, and the Melodies of Oscar Straus (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1957).
Brahms to study with Hermann Grädener in Vienna. A few years later he left Austria to study with Max Bruch in Berlin. He then held conducting and musical assistant positions in theaters in several smaller cities, among them Bratislava, Brno, Teplitz, and finally Mainz. His opera *Die Weise von Cordoba* premiered in Brno in 1895, but at some point during this period his focus shifted to lighter genres. In 1898, he decamped for Berlin. According to the fanciful biographer Bernard Grun, Straus shared a train compartment with Leo Fall, also on his way to Berlin, who praised the work of his friend Lehár. Straus, in turn, promised that all three men’s time would come. The anecdote is probably an invention, but its very creation and retelling indicates the popular tradition of seeing these composers as a cohesive school with similar backgrounds and aims.⁴⁸

A Cabaret Dream

Straus and Fall both markbegan their careers in the world of Berlin’s cabarets, a fast-moving, ragtag scene of artists, impresarios, and controversy into which Lehár never ventured. Straus served as music director for the seminal *Überbrettl*, the first major Berlin cabaret, and Fall for *Die bösen Buben*, which began soon afterwards. Cabaret was a crucible for these composers’ craft, particularly in writing short and catchy numbers, but its broader influence on operetta is not clear-cut. The development of cabaret, however, was a crucial element of the professionalization

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⁴⁸ The anecdote, told by the fanciful biographer Bernard Grun, places both composers in a third-class carriage between Mainz and Berlin. Straus auspiciously remarks to Fall, “All right, Herr Fall, I believe what your friend Lehár [sic] says: our time will come. The only question is, shall we last till then?” Grun, *Prince of Vienna; the Life, the Times, and the Melodies of Oscar Straus*, 40–1. Fall’s more scholarly biographers date Straus’s arrival in Berlin prior to Fall’s. Frey, Stemprok, and Dosch, *Leo Fall: Spöttischer Rebell der Operette*, 39.
of popular entertainment, and offers a case study in audience and artistic goals that is instructive compared to the larger form of operetta.

Like operetta, cabaret was a French import. Variety theaters, often known as Tingeltangeln (or Tingl Tangeln, or Tingle-tangeln, and equivalent to the English vaudeville or music hall and French variété), were already numerous in both Berlin and Vienna, but promoted a downmarket, circus-like atmosphere including animal acts and striptease.\(^{49}\) Cabaret sought to create a more sophisticated, artistic, and upscale atmosphere, using the format of a variety theater to present satire, poetry, and other more intellectual sorts of entertainment for an educated audience. This medley was, as in a variety theater, presided over by a conferencier (host), often the group’s impresario. Some cabaret troupes owned their own theaters while others rented space for occasional, sometimes very irregular evenings at various venues. While cabaret spaces usually featured tables for audience members and served drinks, some of the more upscale theaters had rows of seats facing the stage like a traditional theater.\(^{50}\)

Cabaret arrived in Germany as a concept before any theaters actually opened. The most energetic advocate was novelist and poet Otto Julius Bierbaum (1865–1910). The protagonist of his 1898 novel Stilpe establishes a cabaret theater, and describes his dream in rapturous terms:

> We want to throw a golden net over all people, over all of life. Those who come to us, in the Tingeltangel, will be those who flee the museums in fright, and flee the church as well. Those of us who are seeking only a little colorful entertainment will find what they’re looking for: a cheerful spirit to brighten life, the art of the dance in words, colors, lines, movements, a naked desire for the

\(^{49}\) Linhardt, *Residenzstadt und Metropole*, 95–103.

\(^{50}\) Peter Jelavich defines cabaret as “A small stage in a relatively small hall... the show consisted of short (five- to ten-minute) numbers from several different genres, usually songs, comic monologues, dialogues, and skits, less frequently dances, pantomimes, puppet shows, or even short films. They dealt in a satirical or parodistic manner with topical issues: sex (most of all), commercial fashions, cultural fads, politics (least of all). These numbers were usually presented by professional singers and actors, but often writers, composers, or dancers would perform their own works.” Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 2.
beautiful, the humor that takes the world by the ear...—ah, toss me a pair of fig leaves full of words, pump me full of associations, let me babble incoherently, let me blow out colored torrents of words as huge as the water sprays from the nose of an enraptured whale.\(^\text{51}\)

Never mind that this leads to disaster and ends with Stilpe killing himself onstage. What counted was the delirious vision. With Stilpe's unhappy end Bierbaum did not intend to dissuade potential impresarios, though he notably did not take the plunge himself. In 1900 he made a more direct gesture of encouragement, publishing *Deutsche Chansons*. This collection of poems by prominent writers including, among others, himself and Frank Wedekind (during the period between the composition and premiere of *Frühlings Erwachen*) was intended to serve as a model for a German cabaret repertory, even as its transnational mission was indicated in the title's mixture of languages. Indeed, many important early cabaret songs were set to verses found in this volume.\(^\text{52}\)

The first cabaret theater opened in Berlin in 1901 under the leadership and patronage of minor Bavarian aristocrat Ernst Freiherr von Wolzogen (1855-1934, half-brother of Wagner sage Hans Freiherr von Wolzogen). It officially operated as the *Buntes Theater* but is better remembered by its nickname, the *Überbrettl*. While the first name, translating as motley or multicolored theater, is self-explanatory enough, “Überbrettl” is more evocative. Wolzogen was a connoisseur of Nietzsche, and, combined with “brettl,” Southern German slang for a low class

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theater (based on “Bretter”—literally, “boards,” as in stage boards) the name suggested a variety
theater that transcended normal human limits, recalling Stilpe’s injunction that “We will give
birth to Superman [Üermensch] onstage!”

But Wolzogen’s mission, while artistic, was also bourgeois. He described his goals for the
theater as the following:

No stink of beer and wine and tobacco fumes, rather a proper theater. A stage and
a real space for the orchestra between me and the audience; a small stage for
charming small art of all sorts; no concession to the taste of the plebians; the satire
not blasphemous and hateful, serving no political standpoint; no prudery around
eroticism, but also no tantalizing sultriness or coarse innuendo…

Programs consisted of songs, poems, ballads, and short skits and plays, often parodies. Political
satire was minimal, deemed by Wolzogen not fitting to the local taste. In any case, it would not
have passed Berlin’s police censor. (A lenient censor is often cited as a reason why Munich’s
cabaret scene was the most successful in achieving Bierbaum’s mission. Berlin’s censor was
eliminated in the Weimar Republic, and then their cabaret became far more politically pointed
and debauched, as illustrated in the stories of Christopher Isherwood.)

When describing the musical mission of the Überbrett, Wolzogen’s inspiration for its
name became even more evident, for his aesthetics seem Nietzschean as well:

The music for this will be played only by German musicians who have not yet lost
their taste for melodic grace through the spasmodic search for invention.

54 “Kein Bier- und Weinverschank und Tabaksqualm, sondern regelrechtes Theater. Eine Rampe und ein
gehöriger Orchesterraum zwischen mir und dem Publikum; eine Kleinbühne für anmutige Kleinkunst
aller Art; kein Zugeständnis an den Geschmack der Proleten; die Satire nicht verletzend und verhetzend,
keinen politischen Parteistandpunkt dienend; keine Zimperllichkeit im Erotischen, aber erst recht keine
aufreibende Schwüle oder gar plume Zote…” Ernst von Wolzogen, Wie ich mich uns leben brachte:
Erinnerungen und erfahrungen (Braunschweig, Hamburg: Georg Westermann, 1922), 197.
55 Segel, Turn-of-the-Century Cabaret, 143–182.
56 “Die Musik dazu sollten nur deutsche Musikanten machen, die noch nicht in der krampfhaften Suche
nach dem ihre Erfindungskraft und ihren Geschmack für melodische Anmut eingebüßt hatten.”
The reference to musicians who have not lost their taste for melody, as well as the call for satire, echoes Nietzsche’s argument in *The Case of Wagner*, an argument for miniaturization and simplicity as an antidote for decadent hysteria.\(^{57}\) Offenbach was in fact a great favorite of Nietzsche (Allan Janik argues that he would have been a more appropriate choice for Wagner’s apposite, but Nietzsche chose Bizet instead for various political reasons\(^{58}\)). In the Überbrettl, Wolzogen attempted to create Nietzsche’s ideal of non-mimetic art, a goal that seems in some ways proto-Brechtian.

Wolzogen found these goals hard to achieve, and closed the theater in debt in 1902, only around a year after it had opened. The Überbrettl had been constantly pulled between adventurous acts and the traditional variety theater features that, Wolzogen found, were the only ones to attract sufficiently large audiences. This conflict was immanent from the very first Überbrettl program, which included a song by Oscar Straus, its music director. (He had obtained the position by frequenting the correct cafés and encountering by chance the journalist Oskar Geller—who, as well as writing theater criticism for the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, maintained a parallel career as a cabaret clown known as Spontelli and also wrote the libretto to Zemlinsky’s *Ein Lichtstrahl*—who recommended him to Wolzogen.)\(^{59}\) Set to a text from Bierbaum’s *Deutsche Chansons*, “Der lustige Ehemann” (a possible inspiration for the title of *Die lustige Witwe*), a duet


\(^{59}\) Straus was originally charged with writing Spontelli music for a pantomime number. According to the composer’s own account, Wolzogen then asked him to fill out the opening program with a setting of Bierbaum’s already well-known poem. Mailer, *Weltbürger der Musik*, 24–26.
about a happy husband and his wife, became an enormous hit, particularly for wedding ceremonies. Despite the cabaret’s purported aspiration to lofty culture and art, it was frankly escapist and not satirical or political in the least, proclaiming, “die Welt, die ist da draussen wo, Sie interessiert uns gar nicht sehr.” (The world, it’s somewhere outside of here/It doesn’t interest us very much.) More ambitious was *Das Mittagsmahl (Il pranzo)*, a short play by Christian Morgenstern in parody of Gabriele D’Annuzio, explicitly mocking both symbolism and naturalism—and presuming a rather high level of literary education among its audience. While the play was favorably reviewed, most critics noted that few of the audience members seemed familiar with D’Annuzio.⁶⁰

Despite its struggles to find an appropriate tone and audience, Berlin cabaret did acquire a signature musical style, as seen in Straus’s setting of “Der lustige Ehemann” (Example 3.1).

**Example 3.1: Oscar Straus, “Der lustige Ehemann,” first verse only**

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⁶⁰Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 45. At *Die bösen Buben*, the cabaret established by Rudolf Bernauer and eventually employing Leo Fall as music director, a great hit was a parody of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* in which the shocking final act was played out in the style of various modern playwrights. Wedekind: Nora goes to an insane asylum. Maeterlinck: she passes into the Great Beyond. Josef Lauff: she and her husband proclaim their loyalty to the Kaiser and applaud him. Bernauer, *Das Theater meines Lebens: Erinnerungen*, 131–135.
Stylistically, the music had much in common with the English operettas that had proved so popular on the continent a few years earlier: short, repetitive phrases made up of stepwise motion and arpeggios, little rhythmic variety, simple diatonic harmony, and strophic forms. The music was most notable for its propulsive energy and catchy themes. While certain rhythms and words could be underlined, the composer never aspired to more than setting the words, rather than expressing them. Expressive music was, in fact, repudiated. The music did not attempt to portray real characters or emotions but rather operated from an entirely external perspective.

This detachment has been constantly conflated with the presence of satire, most likely because both are closely associated with Offenbach. Both can be either literary (text) or musical attributes (parody of high art versus a dry musical style rejecting romantic excess). But while nonpsychological and satirical elements are often bound together, they appear independently as well. Indeed, the cabaret’s bright, happy music prefigures much of the revue-operettas of the 1920s, few of which had any satirical ambitions.

This disparity between proclaimed intention and reality was a hallmark of contemporary criticism of the Überbrettl. It was called “a family-style Tingeltangel,” which “lacked the grotesque hyperbole… expressed in the ‘Über’-prefix.” It was “entertaining and gemütlich,” but a police report even noted on February 9, “one does not see members of the upper educated classes and literary circles attending the performances in great numbers.” Indeed, it seemed few of other classes were attending either, judging by the cabaret’s short life. Later, Wolzogen blamed the theater’s quick demise on a perceived incongruity with the German temperament, which appreciated art only in its most earnest forms and humor only in its coarsest. Wolzogen, in his

fervently nationalist and frequently anti-Semitic memoirs, notes that his cabaret musicians were almost all Jewish. Germans, he wrote, have taste in music that “is deeply anchored in the racial as which it proudly stamps its uniqueness on the powers of feeling… The Jewish musician, on the other hand, is already used to being so far removed from the background of his race by virtue of thousands of years of wandering that he is able to produce even Jewish music rather as a clever imitator.”  

Self-conscious imitation was the rule. The aesthetic of cabaret was imitation of all for the purposes of mockery, with no genuine allegiance to any artistic school.

But the Überbrettl did launch a large number of imitators as an institution, some of which were more successful. The most celebrated of these was Max Reinhardt’s Schall und Rauch (Sound and Smoke), begun as a one-off in May 1901 and established permanently in October of that year, but the enterprise was likewise short-lived. Cabaret was, however, an important early site for Reinhardt’s work, serving as a laboratory for later work, as it did for Straus and Fall. The most successful cabaret in the high literary mode was Munich’s Elf Scharfrichter, eventually the artistic home of Frank Wedekind. 

Cabaret never took firm root in Vienna, though there were some successes they tended not to last long. Felix Salten headed the brief reign of Zum lieben Augustin, incorporating the works of Jung-Wien artists such as Koloman Moser, but the more successful Fledermaus and Nachtlicht relied heavily on talent imported from Munich.

63 “Denn die ist zutiefst verankert in dem Rassischen, als welches den Kräften des Gemütes vornehmlich seine Eigenart aufprägt… Der jüdische Musiker hingegen pflegt sich auf den jahrtausendlangen Wanderungen seines Stammes schon so weit von den Hintergründen seiner Rasse entfernt zu haben, daß er auch jürische Musik nur mehr als geschickter Nachahmer hervor zu bringen imstande ist.” Ibid. Von Wolzogen page 199.


65 This group enjoyed a short Gastspiel in the Theater an der Wien, discussed in Chapter 2.
Despite its inglorious reality, the legend of the Überbrettl lived on. In 1911, the American critic Percival Pollard described the space, long after it had closed:

The chief novelty, if you came to the cabaret fresh from other climes, was the appeal to the intellect... Memorable was a parody of the great Erl-King poem, in which the father, riding with his sick child through the Sieges-Allee, sees him die in agony finally when that supreme horror in marble, the Roland von Berlin statue, is reached. Berlin, careless of the imperial taste in art, roared with laughter.\[^{66}\]

This reputation depended on framing cabaret as essentially fun for the mind, cleverness and parody on an intellectual level. (Material such as “Der lustige Ehemann,” or the reality of an uneducated audience, goes unmentioned.) It aligns with Wolzogen’s own descriptions of his goals, creating a respectable place for civilized entertainment. But even as it held nothing as sacred, it remained a voice for the intellectual and social, if not necessarily the political and economic, elite. Its bite was limited to that of intra-elite ribbing, and despite its anarchic ambitions served to reinforce the distinctions of education and class that it supposed to mock. While it didn’t take its material seriously, it presupposed knowledge of their work. As subversion, it barely registers.\[^{67}\]

**Cabaret and Operetta: Die lustigen Nibelungen**

The ideals and the realities of cabaret would be key influences on Fall and Straus’s compositional styles. Both wrote operetta music that was much in the style of their cabaret work, though Straus in particular mixed in the waltzes traditional to Viennese theater. The dramatic conventions of


\[^{67}\] The uncensored, more politically charged cabaret of Weimar-era Berlin, as well as that of the Elf Schachrichter at its artistic height, are a different matter. These enterprises’ stark differences from the founding institution of the Überbrettl go largely unremarked by cabaret supporters, though historians and critics invariably note the contrast.
cabaret appeared more sporadically, but were nonetheless an important factor. Fall’s first operetta, *Der Rebell*, written to a libretto by Rudolf Bernauer, one of the *Bösen Buben* founders, evinced much of the cabaret’s satire and irreverence (as discussed in Chapter 2). Several of Fall’s works in following years had plots with modern and sometimes satiric elements that were often described by critics as cabaret-like—a description that came to connote up-to-date and opposed to the traditional *Wiener Typen*. Fall’s 1906 *Die Dollarprinzessin* takes place in New York and Canada, includes ragtime-influenced music, and even songs dedicated to two modern terrors, the automobile and the typewriter (both given colorful, “Getchen am Spinnrade”-like musical portraits—though the automobile repeatedly honks and lurches to a halt). Even more shocking was 1907’s *Die geschiedene Frau* (The Divorced Woman), taking place in Amsterdam at a time when divorce was still unrecognized in Catholic Austria-Hungary.

Oscar Straus wrote his first operetta in 1902 while living in Berlin to a libretto by the Überbrettl lyricist “Rideamus” (né Fritz Oliven, a lawyer). Entitled *Die lustigen Nibelungen*, its title preceded and perhaps even inspired *Die lustige Witwe* (and was itself drawn from “Der lustige Ehemann”). Straus and Oliven were seemingly unable to find a theater willing to produce the work in Berlin. The reasons for this difficulty are unclear—Straus biographer Franz Mailer asserts that it was due to a citywide distaste for the operetta genre, but considering the still-healthy number of operettas produced there at time this seems implausible. The unusually sharp content of the work may have been at fault. In either case when Straus returned to Vienna, he

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found a city eager for new operetta talent, and one of the most important theaters in the city, the Carl-Theater, programmed *Die lustigen Nibelungen*, finally premiering in November 1904.⁷⁰

*Die lustigen Nibelungen* is an odd duck, closer to an Offenbach imitation than anything else in the era. But in the place of Offenbach’s mythic subjects are figures of Germanic myth, namely drawn from the *Nibelungenlied*. As in Offenbach, the setting and text places these timeless figures in an unmistakably contemporary context, making fun of inflation, stuffy mores, and other sins of Wilhelminian Germany. While the plot follows that of the *Nibelungenlied* until it departs it for a happy ending, there is an additional factor, namely Richard Wagner. The inflated self-importance of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* is taken down a peg through parody in the most self-conscious of genres, operetta. While the *Ring* would seem the obvious target, its most direct references are two interpolations that hail from *Lohengrin*. In the first, Kriemhilde (Wagner’s Gutrune, given her *Nibelungenlied* name) has a vision of the approaching Siegfried in the manner of Elsa.⁷¹ The second parodies the Bridal Chamber Scene, as Kriemhilde is determined to find the one place on Siegfried’s body that is vulnerable (while this location is, as in Wagner, his back, much innuendo ensues). *Die lustigen Nibelungen* was a solid if not exceptional success; its follow-up *Hugdietrichs Brautfahrt* somewhat less of one. Straus remained in Vienna. Shortly afterwards *Die lustige Witwe* struck and gave the impression of having changed the genre entirely.

Straus’s next operetta showed that he had been paying attention to audience interests. Entitled *Ein Walzertraum*, it was the first work that seriously challenged *Witwe* for supremacy by

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⁷⁰ There may be a historical problem here, as the Police Censor’s archive catalogs the script as dating from 1903. This seems to be a mistake, as it is clearly noted in the document itself that the script was submitted for approval in October 1904, a normal date for a November 1904 premiere. Even if a contract had been signed for the work in 1903 rather than the 1904 date given by Mailer and Grün (which is possible, based on Straus’s dates on the manuscript it was already finished), it would not have been submitted to the censor a year ahead of time.

⁷¹ The episode is drawn from the *Niegelungenlied*, but the music is unmistakably Elsa’s.
the numbers as well as in the public consciousness. Like *Witwe*, it owed its success to an ability to tap into a popular *Zeitgeist*. Pure satire, it was clear, would not make an operetta a hit, but it would remain an element of operetta, added in varying amounts to dilute the Silver Age’s more serious tendencies. Straus’s *Ein Walzertraum* would mark Straus’ turn away from overtly satirical works to more sentimental ones, and while occasionally retaining the musical imprint of the satire (as well as even some Offenbachian plot tropes), it incorporated diegetically another kind of contemporary *Alltagsmusik* quite distinct from the cabaret that made no pretense about its complete sentimentality: the so-called ladies’ orchestra, or *Damenkapelle*.

### Damenkapellen

Damenkapellen (usually translated as “ladies’ orchestras”) were all-woman salon and concert orchestras that began to appear throughout Europe around 1850, and reached the height of their popularity around 1900. Around the turn of the century, there were approximately two hundred Damenkapellen playing across Europe, in theaters and most commonly cafés and restaurants. Many toured for engagements of at least a month (such as the orchestra in *Ein Walzertraum*), but some stayed put. Their repertory consisted of dance music, arrangements of larger works, and other light classics, the same repertory a male orchestra would have played in these contexts. They were not distinctly Viennese—indeed the most in-depth study of the Damenkapelle only considers groups in Germany, while another concentrates on Sweden.

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73 Dorothea Kaufmann, “... routinierte Trommlerin gesucht”: *Musikerin in einer Damenkapelle; zum Bild eines vergessenen Frauenberufes aus der Kaiserzeit* (Karben, Germany: Coda, 1997). See also Ulrike Keil, “Professionelle Damenkapellen und Frauenorchester um die Jahrhundertwende,” in *Von delectatio bis entertainment*: *Das Phänomen der Unterhaltung in der Musik: Arbeitstagung der Fachgruppe Soziologie und...*
(They were eventually followed by all-girl dance bands, such as the one depicted in *Some Like it Hot.* But many of the surviving accounts of Damenkapellen concern Viennese groups, which seemed to have enjoyed the widest renown. Perhaps this was because of the city's close association with all light music since the age of the Strauss family.

The women of Damenkapellen proclaimed themselves “Künstler,” artists performing real music (to suggest otherwise would have been fatal to the women's reputations), but the skill level of their musicians seems to have varied. The musical material was only a small part of the Damenkapelle experience. Descriptions of their performances inevitably comment on how the performance's visual pleasure matched the auditory one. Generally, orchestras are not considered to be visually stimulating phenomenon (as George Bernard Shaw wrote, “excepting only a procession of policemen at a funeral, nothing less brilliant can be conceived than the common spectacle of an “English Gentleman Orchestra”). The experience of seeing a group of men play music, whether salon or more serious repertory, rarely gives cause for comment. But the women, usually dressed in identical white dresses, were a different matter entirely.

Descriptions of Damenkapellen urge the reader or listener to imagine how the women looked, placing the reader directly in the place of a male observer watching the orchestra play.

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74 For much more on mid-twentieth century women’s bands, as well as some general comments on the phenomenon, see Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: “All-Girl” Bands of the 1940s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

75 Myers, “Searching for Data about European Ladies’ Orchestras, 1870–1950.”

Watching Damenkapelle seems to be an inherently subjective event, and many accounts are told at a remove of space and time, heightening the sense of a liminal experience. While the cabaret purported to speak solely to the intellect, the Damenkapelle spoke only to the heart. George Bernard Shaw saw an unusually large Damenkapelle on tour in England:

Fancy… the apparition in full sunlight of a charming person of the other sex in a crimson silk military tunic and white skirt. Fancy at her heels a string of nearly sixty instrumentalists, all more or less charming, and all in crimson tunics and white skirts. Fancy a conductor distinguished by a black silk shirt, and sleeves made somewhat shorter and wider than the others, so as to give free play to a plump wrist and arm…. This is no vision of an autumnal journalist at a loss for copy; it is to be seen daily at the Albert Palace… [The women] spread themselves like a vast bouquet over the orchestra… The effect of the “lady orchestra” as a whole is novel and very pleasant. They are inferior to the Strauss band in precision and perfection of detail, but the Strauss impetuosity was forced, false, and often misplaced and vulgar: these Viennese ladies seem inspired by a feminine delight in dancing… They have grace, tenderness and moderation: qualities which are very refreshing after two months of the alternate sentimentality and self-assertiveness of Eduard Strauss, than whom, by the bye, Madame Marie Schipek, the conductor, is a much more dashing violinist… There is no reason to suppose that she could use a bâton [sic], so as to produce an original interpretation of a classical work; but she marks time in the boldest and gayest Austrian spirit.⁷⁷

For Shaw, the orchestra’s femininity, as well as serving a decorative purpose, serves to enhance the actual playing, as their feminine qualities lend grace, moderation, and a love of dance to their musical expression. Undemanding, decorative light music, which did not require the interpretive skills of a “classical work,” was their ideal sphere.

Perhaps the most vivid description of a Damenkapelle was written by Joseph Roth in 1931—by which time they were very much a part of the past.⁷⁸ Roth identifies their vogue as being a few years before World War I. Their vision, he writes, provoked something like a paroxysm of ecstasy in the viewer as the women “pour all the vitality of their radiant bodies into

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⁷⁷ Ibid., 338–340.
the violin and cello.” What’s more, in his view they were representations of the emancipation of women. Unlike their “charmless sisters” in London who “cover mailboxes with gasoline and burn them… the good maidens of whom we sing here reigned over the Estrade, podium, and garden pavilion, and their shawms stirred our hearts in more than one way. They were a superb combination of nymphs and Amazons.” The privilege of having their playing perceived as a service to gratify the male gaze is hardly an unalloyed victory for women’s rights. Their virtues are projected through their white dresses as well as their service to the muses, and Roth specifies that the men were not allowed to proposition them. Yet for Roth they are still “always naked.” He is seemingly amazed that these recipients of his own projected desires, when offstage, walk rather than float, and merely order some food during their breaks.

A photograph taken at Zum Eisvogel, the Prater café that features in Ein Walzertraum’s founding myth, shows a Damenkapelle that meets all of Roth and Shaw’s descriptions. (Figure 3.1) The Prater, a large public park in the second district, was site of the Würstlprater amusement park memorialized by Felix Salten and its green space, cafés, summer theaters, and other pastimes catered to all classes of Viennese citizens. The photograph is, highly unusually, in garish color. The orchestra members sit on a stage framed by a gingerbread proscenium; the ensemble consists of nine women and one man.

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79 “gosen das ganze Temperament ihrer blühenden Mädchenleiber in Geige und Cello.” Ibid., 349.
81 Ibid.
(the latter standing behind a harmonium or spinet), and the women wear long white dresses with bright red sashes. But even this photograph that purportedly—as its title proclaims—is a representation of a Damenkapelle, the foreground is occupied not by the women but by a café table where two mustached men sit with glasses of beer. Even for Arthur von Hübl, the male photographer who arranged the composition, the presence of men at leisure mediate the

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82 Agfa-Farbenplatte, 8 x 8.2cm, Albertina. The photograph is dated at 1912 and identified by curators of Vienna’s Albertina Fotosammlung as using Agfa-Farbenplatte technology, which was not publicly available until 1916. The photographer, Arthur von Hübl, was a pioneer in color photography and most likely used a similar, experimental technique. The photograph is reprinted in Michael Ponstingl, *Strassenleben in Wien: Fotografien von 1861 bis 1913* (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter Verlag/Albertina, 2005), 63.
Damenkapelle experience, making its social function clear and provide a visual analogue to the written accounts. The ostensible subject of the photograph is in the literal background.

As transporting as it could be for the viewer, there existed in the Damenkapelle a tension between the women on display and the women who aspired to be valued and paid employment for their skill in a traditionally male art. The Damenkapelle was in some respects not dissimilar to operetta itself, offering the modern pleasures and titillation of the Parisian cabaret but—with few exceptions—never threatening traditional morality or bourgeois family values. Felix Salten noted contradictions when describing the Damenkapelle in his tour of the Viennese Prater in *Wurstelprater*. First he begins with the same vision of beauty that so enchanted Shaw and Roth:

The maidens’ white dresses spread such an illusion, the purity of a confirmation, poetic happiness. Ladies’ orchestra. When a ladies’ orchestra plays in an inn’s garden, there’s a special atmosphere. It’s something of a joke, when young women in white dresses sit on the stage and play music as one “desserts,” [sic] somehow at the same time it’s touching.  

Salten leaves the musical specifics to the reader’s imagination and moves on to the social contradictions. The Prater was a disreputable place, the *Wirtshauss* not normally a place for respectable women like these:

And somewhere there’s a compromise between piquancy and entertaining propriety, between a playboy’s freedom and bourgeois morality. Freely, when one looks at the women of the orchestra individually, it’s more a bourgeois matter than anything else.

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83 “Was für eine Illusion geben weiße Mädchenkleider, was für eine Firmungs-Sanftheit, was für eine ehrbar poetische Fröhlichkeit verbreiten sie. Damenkapelle. Es ist eine besondere Stimmung in den Wirtsgärten, in denen eine Damenkapelle aufspielt. Irgendwie ist ein Jux dabei, wenn junge Mädchen in weißen Kleidern auf dem Podium sitzen und Musik machen, während man “nachtmahlt”, irgendwie ist es zugleich auch rührend.” Salten, Felix Salten--Wurstelprater, 92.

84 “Und irgendwie ist es ein Kompromiß zwischen Pikanterie und unterhaltsamem Anstand, zwischen lebemännischer Freiheit und bürgerlicher Moral. Freilich, wenn man die Damen der Kapelle einzeln betrachtet, ist es doch mehr eine bürgerliche Angelegenheit, als etwas anderes.” Ibid.
Most authors would have stopped there, content with the slightly ambiguous fantasy of the women in their white dresses providing beautiful music, lending the dirty Prater a touch of class.

Salten alone saw that this was an illusion, and one that was slightly incomplete:

The struggle for life in white confirmation dresses. Many of these maidens are long withered, many look dissatisfied and sorrowful, many tired and bored. Earnestness and sobriety show in their faces. They work. But their work is the Tralalala! And when their little band makes its jubilant music, then we ask less, whether the maidens have this jubilation in their hearts or only on their sheet music.⁸⁵

But this dark subtext otherwise goes unmentioned. (Salten’s perception recalls that he remains the leading suspect for the authorship of fin-de-siècle Vienna’s most popular combined poverty exposé and pornography, the purportedly autobiographical *Josefine Mutzenbacher – Die Lebensgeschichte einer Wienerischen Dirne, von ihr selbst erzählt* [The Life of a Viennese Whore, as Told by Herself], published in 1906.) For most, the Damenkapelle bestowed an over-the-top beautiful visual onto music that already was entrusted with the power to conjure otherworldly beauty. The Damenkapelle, even more intensely than light music alone, represented for male writers escape, fantasy, and the comforting embrace of sentiment without specificity.⁸⁶

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⁸⁶ Scholarship on all-woman ensembles explicitly prioritizes the recovery of musicians’ voices and experiences and thus restore to them some degree of agency over their own performances. See, for example Tucker, *Swing Shift*; Myers, “Searching for Data about European Ladies’ Orchestras, 1870-1950.”
Ein Walzertraum is an operetta that, like the Damenkapelle, balances escape and fairy tale with reality. This is even embedded in the stories of the operetta’s genesis. Like Die lustige Witwe, Straus’s Damenkapelle operetta Ein Walzertraum eventually acquired a founding myth, and similarly one that conveniently mirrored its plot. While Die lustige Witwe was an unlikely success tale about a team of scrappy underdogs, Ein Walzertraum was a fairy tale conceived under the Viennese sun of the Prater in a series of magical strokes of inspiration and coincidence. After the success of Die lustige Nibelungen and the disappointment of Hugdietrichs Brautfahrt, Straus was living in Vienna in search of a new libretto. The composer claimed to have spent many evenings during the summer of 1906 at Zum Eisvogel, a café in the Prater. It was here that the two inspirations of Ein Walzertraum supposedly struck—both entirely possible, but in combination somewhat credulity-stretching.

The café was the home of a Damenkapelle (as seen in Figure 3.1). In honor of Straus’s presence, they would occasionally play his compositions. (One imagines this repertory consisted of his cabaret numbers such as “Der lustige Ehemann” and “Die Musik kommt,” rather than anything from Die lustigen Nibelungen. But operetta music has a way of becoming unstuck from its original context, often intentionally so.) Straus recalled an occasion at the café to his biographer Franz Mailer:

One evening the pretty woman conductor came to my table with a request for an autograph and asked me, wholly naively: [in Viennese dialect] “Say, why don’t you compose us a real Viennese waltz some time?” Just to please her, I sketched on a napkin a few bars of a waltz, which were later to become the principal waltz in my operetta. Thus the idea came to me totally spontaneously: such a Viennese Damenkapelle with a young woman conductor would actually be a very charming

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87 Zum Eisvogel still exists in the Prater today, but is now found in the midst of the amusement park’s hustle and bustle rather than its original pastoral location.
premise for a Viennese operetta. Viennese melodies were already swirling through my head and the thought took increasingly defined shape. It was missing only one thing: the main idea, a subject, a plot.88

But Straus found the plot soon after that. Another evening at Zum Eisvogel, he was purportedly approached by a young author, Hans Müller (1882-1950), who gave him a newly-published book of his own short stories, *Buch der Abenteuer*.89 Müller, then an unknown, would later write two librettos for Erich Wolfgang Korngold (*Violanta* and *Das Wunder von Heliane*), a successful comedy for the Burgtheater (*Die Puppenschule*), and screenplays for several film operettas.90

Straus was apparently taken with “Nur, der Prinzgemahl,” a story featuring a Damenkapelle of the same sort found in Zum Eisvogel itself (the story was dedicated to Arthur Schnitzler, “in herzlicher Verehrung”). Librettists Felix Dörmann and Leopold Jacobson adapted the story into an operetta.

More important than the historical truth of these events is the way they memorialize *Ein Walzertraum* as a quintessentially Viennese work, inspired by the sights and sounds of the Prater. This is even more important because, unlike the opening of the story, the operetta does not take place in Vienna at all. Yet the city lingers over the score, in its sound and sight of a Damenkapelle playing Viennese music. While the plot is clearly drawn from Müller’s novella, it

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also bears a surprising resemblance to Der Rebell (see Chapter 2).⁹¹ The operetta takes place in the imaginary principality of Flausenthurm. The state’s aging princess must marry and have children to maintain the royal line (though Walzertraum’s Princess Helene’s only sin is to be provincial and not the right girl, while Rebell’s Eudoxia is also old and unattractive), and a Viennese man, in this case army officer Lieutenant Niki, is recruited for the job. As the operetta begins, they are returning from their wedding. Niki happens to hear a Viennese Damenkapelle playing in the castle park and falls in love with Franzi, the Viennese woman who conducts the visiting Damenkapelle, and complications ensue. The ending of Walzertraum is bittersweet: Prinz Niki ultimately leaves his true love to do his duty for Flausenthurm. But Niki is still afforded some comfort: Franzi, the Viennese conductor, has secretly taught Princess Helene how to play Viennese music on her piano.

Flausenthurm is, like all operatic principalities (Balkanien, Wiener Blut’s Reuss-Schleiz-Greiz, Pontevedro), comically small and inept but adorably well-intentioned and homespun. The political is, as in Der Rebell and Die lustige Witwe, transformed into the bourgeois domestic. Niki, a man of the empire and Viennese through and through, finds himself bored, lonely, and homesick. In Act 1, he hears the unmistakable sound of a Viennese waltz wafting through the air, which his comrade Lieutenant Montschi says must be the Damenkapelle. Niki describes the feelings elicited by the waltz in song, in a waltz whose refrain would become the operetta’s greatest hit tune, “Leise, ganz leise.” This is the waltz Straus supposedly formulated for the ladies at Zum Eisvogel. (Example 3.2)

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⁹¹ This similarity is remarked upon by Stefan Frey in his biography of Leo Fall, noting in his plot summary of Der Rebell, “So far, so Walzertraum.” Frey, Stemprok, and Dosch, Leo Fall: Spöttischer Rebell der Operette, 49.
Example 3.2: Straus, *Ein Walzertraum*, Nr. 7 Walzerduett, end of verse plus refrain

Das Lied aus glücklichen Tagen erschoß mir das Himmel-

Piano

en solo

poco rit.

Cl., Hf.

8

etwas ruhiger

Pno.

reich!

Leise, ganz leise kling's durch den Raum liebliche Weise,

Pno.

Walzertraum! Süßester Schmerzen zärtlicher Chor dringt aus dem Herzen selig em-

Pno.

Nikl.
poco stringendo

Montchli.

por. Frühlingsverlangen, Glück ohne Ruh', Hof-fen und Ban-gen, Lie-be bist du!
The audience does not witness Niki hearing the waltz for the first time; they have only his own account of hearing it. Yet the music he sings presumably replicates the tune of the music he heard in the distance, an impression reinforced by its reflexive status as a waltz and the solo violin that joins his vocal line, suggesting that Franzi herself is playing (we see her play the violin in Act 2). The experience of hearing the music is rendered solely in the terms of that music itself; the sound of the Damenkapelle and Niki’s reaction to their sound are merged. Like the literary accounts of men hearing these orchestras, Niki’s own voice and subjectivity take the central role.
Like their mediated representations by memoirists, even onstage they first are represented only through Niki’s voice and description. As Montschi listens, he is able to imagine the experience and sing waltz himself, joining Niki in simple harmony.

The duet’s harmonic language exacerbates this sense of absence, never making radical detours from a conventional G major but repeatedly evading a strong confirmation of the tonic. Expectations are never quite defied, but nor are they completely satisfied. The final phrases of the verse and the main refrain are a case in point. Like most operetta waltzes, Straus builds harmonic anticipation to the refrain, where audiences will expect the big tune to finally be unveiled. In the final phrases of the refrain, the bass line descends chromatically to a V7 (ending measure 10) preparing the listener for a dramatic entrance of the refrain. The text builds up this anticipation, making it clear that we will be hearing the music that prompted such a reaction from Niki: “Ein Schluchzen war es und Klagen/ein Lachen und Weinen zu gleich!/Das Lied aus glücklichen Tagen/erchloß mir das Himmelreich!” (It was sobbing and lamenting,/laughter and crying alike/The song from happy days, opened heaven to me!)

While this is an excellent setup for a strong confirmation of G major, the first measure of the chorus (measure 11 of example on the line “Leise, ganz”) consists solely of a weak B-D third, a I in G major which is missing its root. The G finally sounds in the next measure, but then is weakened by a passing vii7 in the upper voices, which is only briefly resolved before the bass line moves to I6 and then I6/4. The only strong perfect authentic cadence is at the end of the second phrase, on the word, aptly enough, “Walzertraum” (measure 17). In the next two phrases, a vii7 is torturously extended over four full measures (in multiple inversions), only to resolve weakly to a I6 (on “selig empor,” measure 26). In the second iteration of the main theme, when Montschi joins Niki to sing in thirds, the harmonic evasion continues. Where the first the strong cadence
was found in the first phrase, here any cadence is avoided (appropriately on the words “Hoffen und Bangen, Liebe, bist du!”/Love, you are hope and yearning!, measure 34) The final phrase of the refrain is, at least, definitive, ending on a strong cadence on G (measure 50).

The Damenkapelle is finally revealed in the opening of Act II. No photographs of this sight survive, but reviews describe it as spectacular. A photograph of Mizzi Zwerenz

Figure 3.2: Souvenir Postcard, *Ein Walzertraum*  

as Franzi (Figure 3.2) shows her wearing a long white dress with a sash, of the sort described by Salten and Shaw and as seen in the image of the real Damenkapelle.

The clearest description of the staging is found in the manuscript full score, which indicates that the premiere production included an actual Damenkapelle onstage in addition to the pit orchestra. It is unclear whether this group played themselves or mimed to a group of backstage musicians (perhaps the male ensemble that was seen onstage in Act I, which may have been drawn from the usual pit orchestra), and none of the reviews offer definitive clarification. But the score is clearly written for two separate ensembles, one onstage and one in the pit.93

The manuscript even indicates that the Damenkapelle was originally intended to be invisible the entire time, but the note “Hinter der Scene, unaussichtbar” is crossed out, and all reviews indicate that there was an orchestra onstage. The ensemble’s orchestration was tinkered with (possibly due to casting issues), but in the end included flute, piccolo, two first violins, one second violin, one viola, one cello, percussion, and piano (a trumpet was cut). The published score includes a harmonium as well, but there is no part for it in the manuscript.

The onstage orchestra is first introduced much in the same way as it had been in “Leise, ganz leise”: as a tantalizingly invisible sound (Example 3.3). The markings indicating the stage and pit orchestras have been outlined in black. While the curtain is closed, the opening of the second act, a march, is played by the pit orchestra. Then the same music is uncannily echoed by the concealed stage orchestra (fourth system). The curtain finally rises to reveal the sight of the

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93 Oscar Straus, *Ein Walzertraum*, manuscript score, 1906. MHc 14207, WB MS. The manuscript contains both a piano-vocal score and an orchestral score, in different hands. Straus generally did not generally orchestrate his own operettas, but in this case there is no indication as to the identity of the orchestrator. The piano-vocal score is in Straus’s hand and contains clear indications of which sections of the Damenkapelle numbers are to be played by the stage band and which are to be played by the pit orchestra, which were faithfully realized.
Example 3.3: Straus, *Ein Walzertraum*, No. 9, Marsch, opening

*Soprano.*

*Choir.*

*Mädchen, sei nicht dumm!*  *Wann ich abends komm, so*

*(Johannes-Capelle) Bühnen-Musik: Zwei I. Viol., eine II. Viol., eine Flöte, ein Contrabass; Schlagzeug (Cassa, Hiati, Tambour, Klavier und Harmonium).*
Damenkapelle, which proceeds to accompany the chorus in the successive number (fifth system). At the very end, they are joined by the pit orchestra and the two ensembles play together (second to last system). While the Damenkapelle appears as a diegetic ensemble, this number is not clearly marked as diegetic. But in keeping with the instrumental format of a traditional Damenkapelle, Franzi does not sing diegetically, and indeed conducts and plays the violin onstage. (This was presumably mimed; in the manuscript score the violin solos are assigned to
Example 3.4: *Ein Walzertraum*, Nr. 14, Buffo-Duett, refrain

Franzi had, of course, already been introduced to us in the violin solo of “Leise, ganz leise.” When the Damenkapelle reappears at the end of the act, the effects are similar. While this number made the greatest impression on critics (and on Niki, who falls in love with Franzi as soon as he sees her leading her orchestra), the two most successful numbers of the operetta in excerpt were “Leise, ganz leise” and a buffo duet for Franzi and minor
comic character Lothar (this is the number depicted in Figure 3.2). This number, “Piccolo, Piccolo,” closely resembles the style of “Der lustige Ehemann” (example 3.4).

It is an interesting counterpart to “Leise”: the texts of both songs are explicitly odes to music, but if the waltz evokes something unreachable, the buffo number is comically direct. Lothar, an old man trying to seduce the uninterested and age-inappropriate Franzi, plays a duet with her violin on a piccolo; the disparity between them as partners is echoed in the disparity of their instruments. The violin is praised for its ability to sigh, and “the piccolo does exactly the same.” The refrain proclaims that the piccolo’s piping is the sound of wisdom. This is as believable as a romance between Lothar and Franzi. While “Leise ganz leise” practices harmonic evasion and chromaticism, the duet features compact and repetitive melodic cells, almost exactly the style of “Der lustige Ehemann” and not something meant to evoke mystery or romance.

This stylistic dualism closely recalls Die lustige Witwe and is characteristic of Silver Age operetta as a whole, but its application by Straus is not as consistent or clearly thematic as that of Lehár. Volker Klotz claims that a “stylistic rupture” goes through the center of Ein Walzertraum between its “wild Offenbachiade” as represented by “Piccolo, piccolo” and the more sincere numbers such as “Leise, ganz leise.” For Klotz, this leads inevitably to a (negative) value judgment. The Offenbach numbers have the positive attribute of “rash impetuosity” and satirical zest while the waltzes are downright “vulgar.” The score, he writes just barely misses the “confectionary Dudelfolklore of contemporaries Reinhardt, Eysler, Jarno, and Ascher” by its inclusion of lighter, less sugary numbers. In his rush to judge the Offenbachian as good and sentimental as bad, Klotz’s analysis is narrowly circumscribed. For one thing, it is unclear what about the cabaret-style music is actually satirical, anarchic, or otherwise subversive. It is difficult

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94 "leichtsinniges Ungestüm," Klotz, Operette, 660.
to see a “stylistic rupture” between the sentimental and the light considering their evident similarity of intention. Straus’s cabaret numbers seem less akin to Offenbachian sophistication than Oskar Panizza’s founding call, for the art of cabaret, as “something wholly naïve, set forth in full poetic freshness… folk poetry.”

Klotz’s prime example of Ein Walzertraum as satire is Flausenthurm’s national anthem. (Example 3.5)

Example 3.5: Straus, Ein Walzertraum, Nr. 3 Einzugsmarsch und Hymne

Operettas had taught audiences that tiny principalities were comic. Was this fact alone sufficient to render such a state’s anthem as parody? Klotz accounts for the words’ exaggerated emphasis on heritage: “O Jubel sondergleichen,/das junge Paar vermählt!/Zwei treue deutsche Eichen.” (Oh great cheering/the young couple wedded/Two true German oaks.) While the idea of each of the heirs as a tree is somewhat comic, it is not unequivocally so (and the line’s more relevant point is the joining of two distinct varieties of German trees, the Viennese Niki and the

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95 Segel, Turn-of-the-Century Cabaret, 120.
Example 3.6: Straus, *Die lustigen Nibelungen*, No. 6c, Hymne

Maestoso.

Volk.

Reck von Alt-Burgund,

Dankwart.

Reck von Alt-Burgund,

Hagen.

Reck von Alt-Burgund, thuet mit lautem Mund jeglichen Vorzug kund

Marcato

Gieselherr.

Ute.

Thuet mit

Reck von Alt-Burgund!

thuet mit lautem Mund jeglichen Vorzug kund jeglichen

unseres Herrn jeglichen Vorzug kund jeglichen

192
Kriemhild.

Jeglichen Vorzug künd unseres Herrn!

lautem Mund! Unseres Herrn!

Vorzug künd jeglichen Vorzug künd unseres Herrn!

Sopran.

Alt.

Chor.

Tenor.

Bass.

Recken von

Recken von
Reken von Alt-Burgund, thuet mit lautem Mund jeglichen
Reken von Alt-Burgund, thuet mit lautem Mund jeglichen
Reken von Alt-Burgund, thuet mit lautem Mund jeglichen
Reken von Alt-Burgund, thuet mit lautem Mund jeglichen

Alt-Burgund, thuet mit lautem Mund jeglichen Vorzug kund
Alt-Burgund, thuet mit lautem Mund jeglichen Vorzug kund
Prussian Flausenthurm, the same marriage as in *Wiener Blut*). Nor does the music suggest anything satiric. Straus’s hymn is certainly in the style of a national song as sung by a local *Verein*, but there are no clear indicators that it is intended to be a parody rather than a mere emulation of the style. Put into a serious context, it would hardly arouse doubt.

It is simpler to say this because of an easy point of comparison: the anthem in *Die lustigen Nibelungen*, which unquestionably is satiric. It begins with an endless succession of “Heils” (eight in comparison to *Walzertraum*’s three), followed by an absurd succession of contrapuntal entrances, asymmetrical phrases, and pounding repetition. (Example 3.6) Elsewhere in the score Klotz, deems folklike simplicity to clearly connote sincerity (as in Helene and Friederike’s duet), but here he deems a folklike sincerity to be inherently satiric. There is little evidence the anthem was received as satiric at the time. Critics described Straus’s music as *leichtsinnig*, but as a turn away from the sharper *Nibelungen* and *Hugdietrichs Brautfahrt*.96

The cabaret and the *Damenkapelle* were differentiated in their aesthetic stance and musical character. But for their audiences, they had many similarities: both incorporated a mixture of the naïve and sentimental, which finally converge in *Ein Walzertraum*. This innocence is in fact, the key to the work’s success. The operetta provides for its audience the escapism that it thematicizes for its leading character. But, despite its indulgences, bourgeois morality wins in the end. Niki stays with Helene, who does her best to transform their marriage into a love match. For Niki, just as for the audience, the pleasure with Franzi and her music is only fleeting—and this pleasure, despite operetta’s purported femininity, was told from a male perspective. For Franzi and Helene, the very concept of an escape from duty is never even mentioned.

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More recent writers have deemed *Ein Walzertraum* as preemptively nostalgic for a bygone imperial era. Richard Tauber writes that “the charm of the piece lies in its romantic yearning for Old Vienna, a Vienna that was already fading into the romantic mists at the twilight of the Austro-Hungarian empire.”97 Perhaps this is how it registered after 1919. However, it was written in 1907, when the operetta genre was newly reborn and the empire was still alive. *Ein Walzertraum’s* sad ending and melancholy mood indeed suggest that its audiences were in search of catharsis or release from sorrow. But the vagueness of this ennui is its defining feature. Like the ambiguous signifier of the Flausenthurm anthem and the invisible waltz, the pathos of its vague yearning was contingent on the viewpoint of the audience member watching it. In this, its formulation as a “dream” was entirely apt, and its fairy-tale quality adapted itself to the dreams that were present, allowing the audiences to project their own personal problems onto Niki’s vague homesickness and submission to duty. The ending is not entirely sad: Franzi teaches Helene to play Viennese music and Niki contents himself with ersatz waltzes in his provincial realm. Full escape is impossible, but he learns to make peace with his situation. For something that proclaims itself a fantasy, the ending is surprisingly realistic. You cannot live in a dream, even if you’re a character in *Ein Walzertraum*.

*Ein Walzertraum’s* bittersweet ending was new to operetta, and was not widely repeated until decades later.98 In the later 1920’s, Lehár switched to writing operettas with sad endings, a phenomenon that then received much attention and will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 6. They resonate with *Ein Walzertraum* beyond simply the unhappy ending. Like *Ein Walzertraum*, Lehár’s tragic operettas had a vague escapism at their heart. The signature of these

97 Traubner, *Operetta*, 265.
98 One exception is Franz Lehár’s *Ziguenerliebe* (1910).
works was the “Tauberlied,” an effusive love song delivered by Richard Tauber, nominally to the operetta’s soprano, but in reality directly to the audience. It is ostensibly the dramatization of an extremely specific dramatic situation in the operetta, and yet is sung to a text so trivial and general that it could address any love story at all. Ein Walzertraum’s self-admitted dream atmosphere allows for a similar vagueness about Niki’s ennui. Franzi’s position as a symbol for Vienna, music, and all that cannot be reached invites a similarly broad range of emotional antecedents, enveloping its whole audience, despite their own diversity of experience.

Frey explains Lehár’s sad-ending phenomenon with Horkheimer and Adorno’s assertion that in troubled times, audiences would identify more strongly with an unhappy conclusion, an argument that had in fact already been made specifically in terms of operetta by the theater critic Alexander Engel in 1929. According to this argument, Weimar Berlin, where unhappy endings became popular, was a measurably less happy time than 1907 Vienna, where unhappy endings were an aberration. But the specific causes of Niki’s discontent suggests that it had particular resonance for its audiences in 1907 as well. What Niki is longing for, in addition to a love match, is the pleasure of friends, leisure time and home denied by his job as Prinzgemahl, problems that have less to do with national politics than the ordinary concerns of the imperial working class. The pleasure and beauty represented by the Damenkapelle summons the geographically specific site of the Prater, where the operetta was conceived and most of the audience would have spent its spare hours and social lives. Like Die lustige Witwe, it speaks to an audience that works too much and perhaps lives far away from their home and family. For the Vienna of the relatively newly-minted wage laborer, these particular concerns were personal.

99 Frey, Franz Lehár, 159. Engel, “Der Schrei nach dem Happy end.”
Ein Walzertraum was an immediate hit. Like many operettas, its music received very favorable reviews and its libretto many negative ones. Writing as the lead critic in the Neues Wiener Journal, composer Heinrich Reinhardt praised the libretto for quickly setting the scene, and described Straus’s score as “exceptionally ingratiating, fine and also often very catchy.” He was credited as a composer of “well-credentialed Überbrettl songs” distinguished for his “rhythmic liveliness and melodious piquancy.” The choruses were “sonorous” (“klangvoll,” not parodic). Only sometimes, though, did his music find the “specifically Viennese tone” that some scenes demanded. This suggests possibly that Reinhardt, a composer of decidedly provincial Viennese works (such as Das süße Mädel, see Chapter 2), was jealous.100

Julius Stern in the Fremden-Blatt began by identifying the operetta specifically as a turn away from “fairy tale material” (“Märchenstoffen”) to the Viennese operetta “where it lives and smiles and lives a warm life.” Straus’s Viennese credentials satisfied, the operetta provided waltzes “sung by Viennese men and women.” This is, on its face, rather peculiar, since Ein Walzertraum is, while not supernatural, is hardly realistic, does not take place in Vienna, and features only a few Viennese characters. Yet it points to the work’s effective embodiment of a Viennese sound. He also found the libretto “truly good,” (“wirklich gut”) though thought the mood excessively gloomy.101

Not all agreed on the libretto. In the Arbeiter-Zeitung, David Josef Bach called it “crass,” saying of the librettist Dörmann, “who with his Single People undoubtedly displayed talent, now

evinces only the wit and spirit that, every night in the cabaret, makes a bed or sofa collapse under the force of the eroticism present. It doesn’t go this far in Walzertraum because, because—only because it’s just not possible. God, how witty the literate Herr Dörmann is!” In this Bach identifies what will be a key characteristic of Silver Age operetta: the application of proclaimed high literary and artistic ambition with material that is decidedly common. He sees it also in Oscar Straus’s score, described as music of a Heuriger (wine garden) with a phenomenal technique (presumably alien to this humble genre). He deems the music masterfully banal and clichéd, not “helpless dilettantism” as much as highly developed calculation.  

This calculation was enough to make Ein Walzertraum the biggest success since Die lustige Witwe. Straus followed it with Der tapfere Soldat, whose source material suggests a satiric spirit that would be welcome to many: George Bernard Shaw’s Arms and the Man. But this was not born out. Shaw allowed his play to be used on the condition that his name appeared nowhere near it, and he gave up all royalties. This latter decision he surely regretted: though Der tapfere Soldat was no more than a middling success in Vienna, in London and New York, given the more appetizing title of The Chocolate Soldier, it was an enormous success.

EVA, A SOCIALIST OPERETTA?

As its title proclaimed, Ein Walzertraum never claimed to represent social reality so much as fantasies. Yet for all the charges of escapism, its ending was surprisingly faithful to its audience’s experiences. This prompts the question: what would happen if operetta did attempt to depict

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something more closely resembling its audience’s lives? The result would presumably be dull, as their lives were generally dull. Since operetta cannily positioned itself as the very opposite of the toil of daily wage labor (as thematized in Danilo’s entrance song, examined in Chapter 2), why would audiences want to see that which they were trying to escape onstage? Nevertheless, there was an attempt to give a more accurate portrayal of social reality in operetta: Eva, composed by Franz Lehár in 1912. Since Die lustige Witwe, Lehár had been the foremost composer of Viennese operetta. But while many other composers sought to duplicate Witwe, the experimentalist Lehár took it as a point of pride that each successive operetta would offer something immediately recognizable as new for him and for the genre.

This experimentalism quickly took him further along the path of the sentimental and grand. While he often exploited the Heiterkeit of Offenbachian musical style, Lehár had made only a few early and minor attempts at satire, none of which approached the success of his major works (including the Offenbachian Göttergatte, a 1903 flop based on a mythological subject that he would rework twice in succeeding decades, only to see it fail twice more). His most directly parodic work was likely the one that immediately followed Witwe, Mitislaw der Moderne (premiere January 5, 1907), a cabaret-scale operetta written for Louis Treumann largely mocking his turn in Die lustige Witwe. His next major hit was in 1909, Der Graf von Luxemburg, which takes place in Paris and shows little trace of Viennese culture or music. Indeed, it was an enormous success beyond German-speaking lands. His next operetta, Ziegeunerliebe (premiere January 8, 1910), expanded into a different direction, that of the nationalist opera, with style hongrois permeating the score (much in the manner of Johann Strauss II’s Zigeunerbaron), a sad ending, and an opening storm scene that appears to be based on the beginning of Das Rheingold.
Eva followed. It is, like Der Graf von Luxemburg, written in an international style without pronouncedly Viennese influences beyond the ever-present waltzes. The plot concerns an orphaned girl brought up by factory workers in Belgium. She catches the eye of new factory owner Octave Flaubert, a Lebemann (playboy) from Paris and, while they love each other, complications of social rank ensue. When the factory workers learn about their relationship, they revolt, accusing Octave of being a vile seducer with no intention of marrying Eva, and he leaves in despair. Eva then moves to Paris and undergone a complete transformation into a demimondaine, supported by an ostensibly platonic relationship with an elderly duke. Seeing this, Octave reunites with Eva and marries her. (The source was Ernst von Wildenbruch’s play Die Haubenlerche, which was set in a paper factory near Berlin. The Brussels setting allowed for a more plausible move to operetta’s favorite setting of Paris in the last act, and corresponded with Belgium’s high degree of industrialization and strong labor unions.)

The first two acts are set in the glass factory, the final act in Paris. The combination of factory worker characters and Parisians would presumably allow for the kind of stylistic juxtapositions seen in Die lustige Witwe, but this is only partially realized. The virtuous factory workers—particularly Eva herself—receive music of cloying sweetness. The sweetness, however, is not the simple and sincere tunefulness of the Volkstück-influenced Zeller or Millöcker, but rather a complex orchestral carpet that prefigures Erich Wolfgang Korngold or Strauss’s Rosenkavalier (which premiered the same year). In Eva’s first song, there is, as in Ein Walzertraum, the sense that the music can summon a distant paradise—in this case, the figure of

103 The name suggests an allusion to another young aristocrat, Octavian in Der Rosenkavalier (which premied 10 months earlier).
104 Ernst von Wildenbruch, Die Haubenlerche: Schauspiel in vier Akten (Berlin: Freund & Jeckel, 1897).
Eva’s dead mother. Using melodrama, Eva imagines what her mother, who she never met, might have looked like. Her fantasy eventually leads her to sing in a gentle 9/8 (Example 3.7a).

But like “Leise, ganz leise,” her song takes unexpected harmonic detours, though in this case the verse is unstable while the chorus is regular. While she begins diatonically in b minor (despite some 2:3 instability between the vocal line and the orchestra), as she becomes more enraptured her vocal line climbs to the top of the staff, modulating to the distant key of E flat major before sliding into B major and then returning easily to B minor. This takes her to the refrain, a straightforward waltz in E major, singing “Wär’ es auch nicht als ein Augenblick, wär’ es auch nichts als ein Traum vom Glück.” (Example 3.7b) The waltz, as in Ein Walzertraum, symbolizes the unattainable and yet life-giving powers of dreaming, but unlike Niki and Montschi’s yearning for the Damenkapelle, Eva seems resigned to her fate. Correspondingly, her music shows none of the restlessness that characterized “Leise, ganz leise.”

Example 3.7: Lehár, Eva, Nr. 2 Melodram und Lied
a) Vocal entrance in verse
Nor are the “Tanzoperette” numbers as straightforward as they might seem. Though they do not stray as distantly harmonically, the number of sections and tempo changes, and the rich contrapuntal orchestration defy the formulaic construction of most operetta numbers as well as the traditional signification and dramatic role of music in such a light style. The first number in which the Parisians appear is a song complex for Octave and the factory man Prunelles. It begins a with a short dialogue section of irregular short phrases sung over a light theme in the flute and oboe, giving the words an inconsequential tone (Example 3.8a).105

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105 This accompanimental pattern, while seemingly novel among operetta’s small repertoire, was actually used by Lehár before, in Camille and Valencienne’s first duet in Die lustige Witwe, where it features a violin, a flute, and a clarinet (No. 2, “So kommen Sie”).
Example 3.8: *Eva*, Nr. 3 Szene und Duett

a) Opening

\[\text{(Allegretto.) Octave.}\]

Octave’s interruption

\[\text{Allegro vivace. Octave. (plötzlich unvermittelt)}\]

\[\text{Prunelles.}\]

\[\text{Par-don! Sie war'n schon in Pa - ris? Zu die - nen, komm}\]

\[\text{Clar. Corni.}\]

\[\text{Octave. (ausbrechend)}\]

\[\text{Prunelles}\]

\[\text{öf - ters hi - nü - ber Ach Gott, die Stadt ist ein - zig süß! Mir wäs}\]

\[\text{Corni (gest.) pp Tambi Glockenspiel}\]

c) Transition to chanson

\[\text{Allegretto moderato.}\]

Octave.

\[\text{In je - der Be - we-gung liegt ei - ne Welt und gra-de die hal - be, die mir so gut ge-}\]
When Octave begins to think of Paris, the music seems to anticipate his question to Prunelles, “Sie war’n schon in Paris?” (You’ve been to Paris?) The tempo quickens and the orchestra’s flute figure is transformed into a more aggressive, march-like theme under the vocal line. This grows into assertive syncopated figure that evokes the tumult of the city (Example 3.8b).

When the glass factory reminds Octave of a popular chanson he heard in the Parisian cabaret, the orchestra again anticipates him by obligingly striking up the chanson’s theme (Example 3.8c) so Octave can sing it for Prunelles and the audience. The chanson is unmistakably of the cabaret style, with simple, repetitive rhythm and melody and the onomatopoetic “klinge linge linge ling” of the tinkling glass (accompanied by a glockenspiel). The text proclaims that happiness and love are, like glass, easily broken. Elsewhere, Lehár would have set such a gloomy sentiment to appropriately gloomy music, but the disjunction between
text and words sets this number apart as a cabaret product, like Ein Walzertraum’s romantic piccolo. The number ends with a recapitulation of the “tumult of Paris” music.

The external world of Paris and cabaret exist in this number only as quasi-diegetic material. The rest of the number is much more character-specific and dramatic, with the music serving a narrative function rather than a presentational one. This is true of most of the score: it advances the plot and the music serves to deepen and expand upon the expressive meaning of the words. It elaborates upon that which cannot be seen: Paris, Eva’s mother, Eva’s desires. In its tendency to anticipate the character’s words, it suggests that it is revealing their thoughts and feelings, possibly before they themselves are aware of them. Such a relationship, while typical of post-Wagnerian opera, is antithetical to satire and Offenbachian operetta.

The glass chanson reappears as one of the reprised numbers in the Act II finale. Here, Lehár exploits the juxtaposition of the words and music to great effect. While originally meant lightheartedly, now the moral that happiness and love are easily broken carries catastrophic consequences for Eva, and the gaiety of the march becomes rather sinister. It is only because of the strength of the original signification that the reversal has such a strong effect: these are the loose morals of the cabaret put into action in Eva’s life. It is only because the operetta is populated with characters intended to be sympathetic and realistic that this effect can be attempted at all. Eva then reprises her dream music, now no longer referring to her mother but to her own seemingly impossible aspirations.

The moral calculus is, so far, clear enough: Eva is a faithful and virtuous poor girl while the Parisians are dissolute and in need of a good redemption. The classic Silver Age plot model tames the dissolute Lebemann into a married gentleman, reformed and devoted to conjugal love. While this is the ultimate ending of Eva, it takes a strange path to get there. The factory workers
are hard-working (proclaiming in chorus, “Arbeit macht das Leben süß” [“Work makes life sweet”]) and parental guardians of Eva’s virtue, and only Eva seems to find life there limiting. Octave is conscious of his privilege, remarking, (“Naja, das sieht man mir doch an,/ich hab’ noch nie etwas getan.” (“Well then, look at me,/I’ve never done anything.”) The Parisian world is portrayed as titillating but lazy and morally depraved, with little true love or faithfulness. Yet it is this world Eva longs to join, even after it betrays her in the Act 2 finale. And join it she does, in a lieto fine that is portrayed as thoroughly positive. She has, it seems, pinned Octave down into marriage, but only through becoming a Parisian society lady. These women, previously shown through the supporting character Pepi to possess no virtue at all, somehow become acceptable when Eva joins their numbers.

Stefan Frey describes Eva as the first major operetta with no aristocratic characters. Octave Flaubert is, as a Frenchman, untitled, though his world is identical to the titled Danilo’s, and he was likewise played by lazy playboy par excellence Louis Treumann. But the reality does not extend very far. If Ein Walzertraum showed a surprising truthfulness behind its fairy tale face, Eva transforms reality into a fairy tale with a ridiculous happy ending and muddled morals. The happy ending first thrusts its heroine into a world that it had previously condemned as dissolute, transforming her into a glamorous woman through morally questionable means. This ambiguity goes unacknowledged, perhaps because the dualism between Paris and sentimentality is not dealt with in the clearly allegorical manner of Die lustige Witwe but rather reflects a kind of

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106 The Graf of Der Graf von Luxemburg is not a count but merely a poor writer by the name of René Graf. Several supporting characters, however, bear more important titles.

107 The Reichspost review parenthetically notes of the premiere “welche Erzherzog Albrecht durch seine Anwesenheit auszeichnete,” that Erzherzog Albrecht distinguished the event with his presence. C.B., “Theater an der Wien [review of Eva],” November 25, 1911.
Janus-faced confusion between operetta’s cosmopolitan and provincial sides—it is again trying to be the varieté and the Volksstück at once, even as Lehár aspires to write an opera.

Some critics found *Eva* rather shocking. The key event in their minds was the Act II finale, in which the factory workers briefly revolt to stop a perceived seduction of Eva by Octave. The *Neue Freie Presse* was the most alarmed:

The thing that disturbs most in this book is the social affectation. Social consciousness is thoroughly superfluous in operetta. Blue shirts [i.e. of factory workers] and silent fists are out of place, and social politics, ethics, and labor issues are intolerable in sung texts. For the purposes of operetta these things are too serious… and when the hoards of workers appear in the dramatic climax of the second finale and begin to grumble, so the practiced operetta audience in the stalls begins to grumble inwardly as well. 108

Was it unconscious that the critic noted only the reaction of the audience members in the most expensive seats? Unfortunately there is little way to know how those in the cheaper ones—those much more likely to identify with the workers—reacted. *Eva* was a moderate success, indicating that it did arouse a respectable amount of interest in its audience, though nothing on the level of *Die lustige Witwe*.

Several critics emphasized *Eva*’s scale and ambition. The *Neue Freie Presse* wrote that, “it’s clear to see that this operetta wasn’t written in the haste of a few weeks but rather with great artistic care.” The *Neues Wiener Journal* went so far as to question whether *Eva* qualified as an

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108 “Franz Lehars Operette ‘Eva,’” *Neue Freie Presse*, November 25, 1911. “In diesem Büche stören vor allem die sozialen Allüren. Es ist durchaus überflüssig, daß sich auch in der Operette das soziale Gewissen regt. Blaue Hemden und schwielige Fäuste sind nicht die richtige Ausstattung, und Sozialpolitik, Ethik und Arbeiterfragen sind im Form von Gesangstexten unerträglich. Für Operettenzwecke sind diese Dinge doch zu Ernst… Und wenn zur dramatischen Verstärkung des zweiten Finales die Arbeitermenge erscheinen und murren muß, so beginnt auch der geübte Operettenbesucher im Parkett drunten innerlich zu murren.” Reviews in the *Neue Freie Presse* were, during this period, not given any byline.
operetta at all: “One could just as easily call this a *Volksstück* opera.”\(^{109}\) Despite questioning *Eva*’s place in the genre, the positive reviews—these two and the *Neues Wiener Tageblatt* as well—praised Lehár’s score as one of the best of his career, distinguished at the same time for its catchy tunes and complexity, particularly its fine and complex instrumentation. Its “pathos, sentimentality, and tragedy” would richly satisfy current operetta-goers, according to the *Neue Freie Presse*.\(^{110}\)

No critics once mention parody or satire in connection with *Eva*. The *Neue Freie Presse* conferred upon the score a dualism of “a serious, lyrically sentimental and dramatic” and one “light dance operetta.” These two sides are largely the same as those of Klotz’s *Walzertraum* analysis, but the light dance operetta tone no longer carries with it any connotation of parody or satire, and any social message in *Eva* is conveyed through the different, more direct means of depicting a factory rebellion onstage. Lehár’s compositional goals have moved operetta in the direction of dramatic unity, in which the content of the operetta is controlled by the compositional voice and text rather than by the genre expectations of the musical forms. These expectations still play a crucial role—seen only in the example of the glass song—but the stylistic cues that in *Die lustige Witwe* had carried thematic and intertextual meaning no longer signified anything other than a score of some variety (something supported by the framing in the reviews).

When Berlin critic Oscar Bie revived the accusations of political activism in 1914—describing operetta’s mission as creating *Unsinn*, nonsense, rather than a small opera with a political agenda—Wilhelm Karczag responded to the accusations of political activism with the


\(^{110}\) rp [Ludwig Karpath], “*Eva*,” *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, November 25, 1911., “Franz Lehars *Eva*,” *Neue Freie Presse*, November 25, 1911
insouciance of an impresario who was already turning a profit.\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Eva} made no claim to social topicality, he wrote, but merely to portray human characters:

Again and again I read that in \textit{Eva} Franz Lehár wants to solve social problems. For God’s sake, where in this operetta is there a single word about social problems? Because the workers revolt, is it socialism? Their revolt is nothing more or less than the revolt in \textit{Madame Angot}, where the women in the market want to protect Angot. In \textit{Eva}, the workers want to protect Eva from the young factory boss who wants to seduce her. That’s just a simple human matter and has nothing to do with socialism. Only a superficial, thoughtless judge could, when hearing the complaints of the worker, opine that this is a socialist demonstration.\textsuperscript{112}

In the rest of the article, Karczag argues that the public had never liked “absurd and silly operettas” and they wanted to see “a musical work mixing comic and dramatic elements” with a higher value than mere entertainment (a misstatement of Bie’s argument). Karczag asserts that his theater—the home of \textit{Die lustige Witwe}, \textit{Zigeunerliebe}, \textit{Eva}, and many others—produced art with abstract, timeless value for the masses. The satiric operetta of Bie and other critics possessed only contingent value, and held little appeal to those outside its referential orbit.

It was clear that, for many critics, operetta’s place in the dirty world of commercial theater and mass audiences doomed it aesthetically from the start. Its willingness, even eagerness, to speak of the hopes and fears not of its creators but of its diverse and common audience was both the key to both its success and critical controversy. Operetta creators saw nothing wrong in

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being everything to everyone, to giving its audience what it wanted. Each operetta was a kind of speculative act by a composer and librettists, an attempt to judge the mood of the public. During this period, no other entertainment was so widely discussed. Those who condemned it did so with a passion betraying awareness of operetta's prominence, and its importance in popular society, and often with discontent grounded less in operetta as such than one of the many anxieties, fads, and newfangled ideas that was reflected and embedded in it.
When visiting Budapest, it is essential to seek out a gypsy violinist, or so recommends the picturesque 1903 guidebook and travelogue *Budapest: The City of the Magyars*. The author advises the tourist to bypass common tourist stops and find “one of the smallest and most unpretentious coffee-houses,” for “it was in one of these that I heard Rácz Laczi play.”

There is savagery in his music, in his devilish snap virility and fire. There is the forest wind hidden within his black violin, the cry of pain, the crash of thunder; again he will draw from his magic sobbing strings notes that bring tears and a lump in the throat. He will tell you stories by the hour with that black fiddle of his—love stories and merry tales that laugh and dance along the polished neck which nestles in the trained hand of a master… Sometimes the day has gone wrong and he comes to the café in a bad humor; then his fiddle growls, venting his feelings. Again his mood changes and he suddenly
stops short, crouches low and with a shout like a lion-tamer training a refractory beast to leap he swings his band with him again into a wild czardas.\footnote{Frank Berkeley Smith, \textit{The City of the Magyars} (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1903), 202–203. A photograph shows Rácz Laczi looking quite gentlemanly, dressed in a tuxedo with a bow tie, vest and watch chain. He sports a luxuriant Austro-Hungarian mustache, hair parted in the center and slicked back. He looks frankly at the camera, holding his violin (equipped with a modern chinrest) on his shoulder but not against his neck. A photograph of “a nomad gypsy camp” several pages later shows men and women in more traditional folk costume, surrounded by chickens and clustered around houses made of bark and branches.}

In the minds of his beholders, the gypsy musician is an unmediated vessel for the expression of volatile, extreme emotions, of deepest despair or of wildest jubilation. A trope familiar from nineteenth-century Romanticism, this vision of the musical gypsy typified popular fin-de-siècle Viennese views of Hungarian culture as well. To the Viennese, Hungarians were proud, wild, old-fashioned, governed not by reason but by uncivilized passion. Hungarians had played a vital role in imperial politics since the Compromise of 1867, and Budapest was growing into an international metropolis, but in Viennese popular culture they remained the exotics next door.\footnote{An account of the fin-de-siècle period from a Hungarian point of view is John Lukacs, \textit{Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture} (Grove Press, 1994). Peter Hanak considers Vienna and Budapest in parallel in Peter Hanak, \textit{The Garden and the Workshop} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), though his chapter on operetta contains a number of factual errors.}

For operetta, the vivid and highly musical figure of the gypsy was thus the representative of Hungary, embodying a subjectivity manifest not in precise verbal expression but elemental, physical sorts of music. The revival and eventual deconstruction of this trope was the first great achievement of Emmerich Kálmán (1882-1953), the final major composer to emerge in the Silver Age. Kálmán’s varied explorations of contrasts between Viennese and supposed Hungarian music and themes—pioneered in 1912 in \textit{Der Zigeunerprimas}—reinvented a setting that had been dormant since the passing of the Golden Age. In Kálmán’s works, both sides of the Dual
Empire loomed with a geographical specificity that recalled Johann Strauss II’s *Der Zigeunerbaron* (1885).

Kálmán’s trump card was that he portrayed Hungary from a Hungarian point of view. Or did he? It was not until Kálmán left his native land for Vienna and Viennese markets that he developed this stereotypical idiom. Kálmán’s operetta Hungary was calibrated to please not Hungarian but Viennese tastes. He gave them the “gypsy fire” they expected of him, something that had been largely absent from the operettas he had written in Budapest. The style developed by Kálmán and his mostly Viennese librettists challenges many of the traditional musicological interpretations of *style Hongrois* and exoticism in Western art music.³ The “gypsy” music in Kálmán’s operettas does not represent an Other as much as it does a psychological state, one that is more instinctive and visceral than the outward-looking or nostalgic waltz.⁴ Kálmán also created a frame for musical portraits of the empire’s dual nature just before its disappearance, an emblem whose implications changed dramatically after the empire collapsed.

Even outside his *style Hongrois* moments, Kálmán cultivated a style that privileged emotionalism and unmediated, direct expression. This was part of the larger trajectory of operetta, whose composers and librettists sought to reflect and amplify the popular mood in ever more pungent ways. This chapter traces in parallel the development of the *style Hongrois* and actual Hungarians in operetta and that of Kálmán’s personal compositional voice from his beginnings in Budapest to *Der Zigeunerprimas*, his 1912 Viennese coming-of-age. Kálmán

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³ The major study on this topic, which will be considered in detail later in this chapter, is Jonathan Bellman, *The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993).
⁴ While in dance history, the waltz is famously inward-looking (literally, since each pair of dancers face each other rather than a royal presence or audience), in operetta it comes to most commonly express emotions to, if not always society, at least one other person. Gypsy music can allow a portal into a single character’s innermost thoughts with a greater degree of tension and drama than afforded by the waltz.
created a unique mixture of Silver Age operetta that incorporated both the genre’s most forward-looking, international elements with the rustic Romantic Hungarian voice that he would claim as his own. He would explore it further in some of the most popular operettas of the 1910’s and 1920’s including *Die Csárdásfürstin* (1915, see Chapter 5), *Die Bajadere* (1922, see Chapter 6), *Gräfin Mariza* (1925), and *Die Herzogin von Chicago* (1928, see Epilogue). Operetta’s imperial image was not complete without what critics often referred to as “dash of paprika.”

THE “DUAL” EMPIRE

The Compromise of 1867 had made Hungary an equal partner to Austria (technically, “Cisleithania”) in the renamed “Austro-Hungarian Empire.” Austria possessed German nationalists but no nationalist movement of its own: indeed, the “Austrian Idea” posited that, in essence, its national identity was the absence of a national identity. In contrast, the Hungarians had the organizational benefit of a perceived national imperative, and unlike the Slovaks or the Bohemians the population and resources to pose a threat to the multinational state’s existence. The compromise’s goal—to accommodate the largest, most organized and dangerous minority national group within the empire—was, in the short term, successful. The terms of the compromise granted Hungary considerable sovereignty, setting up two parallel governments with the exception of the joint Austro-Hungarian institutions designated as *kaiserliche und königliche* or *k.u.k.* (a moniker referring to the Habsburg monarch’s dual title of Emperor [*Kaiser*] of Austria and King [*König*] of Hungary). The *k.u.k.* institutions included the armed forces (both

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5 For a brief overview to the concept, see Timms, “National Memory and the ‘Austrian Idea’ from Metternich to Waldheim.” In this era, the Austrian Idea is particularly associated with Hugo von Hofmannsthal, see Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the Austrian Idea: Selected Essays and Addresses, 1906–1927* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2011).
army and navy), diplomatic service, finance ministry, and the ruling Habsburg house itself. The two halves of the monarchy maintained independent parliaments and all other governmental departments.⁶

The abbreviation, pronounced in German as “kah und kah,” would later be elaborated into the nickname “Kakania.” (This is not to be confused with “k.k.,” without the “und,” which referred to the entire empire before 1867 and only the Austrian half after it.) While the Austro-Hungarian Empire was an enormous, diverse, and densely populated region, Kakania was its elephantine, labyrinthine bureaucracy and sprawling army. These institutions and the iconography associated with them were closely linked with the Emperor himself, who sometimes seemed to be the only things tying to anachronistic state together. Kakania did not make its most famous appearance until after the empire’s demise, in Robert Musil’s Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften.⁷

While the two halves were on nominally equal terms, Austria’s significantly larger population and the sizeable industrial and educational advantages conferred by Vienna made it the empire’s dominant half. The occupants of “Austria” viewed the Hungarians as a fiercely proud and independent but not, ultimately, internationally significant minority. Hungary and its capital of Budapest were seen as slightly backwards and old-fashioned. The Empress Elisabeth’s attention to the Magyars, going as far as to learn to speak Hungarian—an interest continued by her son Crown Prince Rudolf in his relatively brief diplomatic career—was highly unusual. Yet the description by Maurus Jókai in the monarchy’s official demographic book series, Die

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⁶ The classic history of this era is Taylor, The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809–1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria–Hungary.

österreichische-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild (edited by Rudolf himself and issued in 1886), describes the Hungarian people in terms conventional to Austrians:

The Magyar’s temperament is an idiosyncratic mix of sanguine, phlegmatic, and melancholic. In the past (and also recently), the Magyar nobleman was the proudest man in the world, only in Hungary does a farmer an aristocrat, and he still is today, not only among other races but also in Hungary itself, and it is hard to believe that there exist anywhere else as many levels of rank in forms of address as there are among the Magyars.8

(The close association of both the beloved, beautiful, and doomed Empress Sisi and her clever and tragic son with the Hungarians appears only appropriate.)

Both Austrians and Hungarians were expected to simultaneously be Austrians or Hungarians while simultaneously also being Austro-Hungarians. The empire forced a collective identity on the two groups, but the effort required was unequal. Robert Musil described the issue precisely:

Their [the state’s] understandable motto in the face of such times was “united we stand” (from viribus unitis, “with forces joined”). But the Austrians needed to take a far stronger stand than the Hungarians, because the Hungarians were, first and last, simply Hungarians and were regarded only incidentally, by foreigners who did not know their language, as Austro-Hungarians too; the Austrians, however, were, to begin with and primarily, nothing at all, and yet they were supposed by their leaders to feel Austro-Hungarian and be Austro-Hungarians – they didn’t even have a proper word for it… So this was the way Kakanians related to each other, with the panic of limbs so united as they stood that they hindered each other from being anything at all.9

For Austria- and Vienna-centric historians, the voices of the Hungarians themselves have traditionally been stereotyped or repressed, or simply ignored due to the formidable barriers of

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the Hungarian language. Like in Rudolf II’s book, Hungarians are brave, loyal, fierce, and romantic but they are most frequently viewed from an external perspective.\(^\text{10}\)

**K.U.K. PARADIGMS**

**Operetta on the March**

The army was the largest institution shared between Austria and Hungary, and in operetta military music played a prominent role in defining Kakania’s sound. Military music had a prominence in operetta that rivaled that rivaled the status of the waltz. It played a central role in Emmerich Kálmán’s first operetta, and, as will be seen, was part of what helped it move from Budapest to Vienna. The connection was, at first, one of performance circumstances and personnel as much as subject matter. In Austria, operetta and the military had enjoyed a symbiotic relationship since the nineteenth century. Many operetta composers, including Lehár, Leo Fall, and earlier Carl Michael Ziehrer had served as military bandmasters, and compositions written expressly for military bands formed a major part of their early output. Band concerts (whose box office intake helped underwrite military musicians’ salaries, which were not fully funded by the army) included military music, dance music, and excerpts or potpourris from operas and operettas.\(^\text{11}\)

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\(^\text{10}\) Lynn Hooker’s recent monograph on the development of Hungarian music in this period is an invaluable contribution to the musicological literature, the rare scholarly study in English that portrays a large swathe of Hungarian music history from an “inside” perspective. Lynn M Hooker, *Redefining Hungarian Music from Liszt to Bartók* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Marches had featured in Viennese operetta since its early days. While many marches appeared in a diegetic context as settings for soldiers’ choruses (such as in Der Zigeunerbaron and Der Bettelstudent, not to mention many nineteenth-century operas), they also often appeared with no soldiers in sight. The bright energy, forward momentum, and strong rhythmic emphasis of a march made it perfectly suited for operetta. As operetta was made Viennese, a march often took the place of the similarly fast and energetic galopp or cancan. Franz von Suppé ended many acts of his operettas with marches, a habit picked up by other composers. In 1885, Karl Millöcker wrote,

> Suppé’s influence, which composers have devoutly treasured ever since, is still recognizable today in his potent act finales, into which he usually slips in at the end of the piece a melodious march, which remains in the ears of the audience long after the performance.  

This caught on, and persisted in the Silver Age (the most famous example being “Wie die Weiber” in Die lustige Witwe). In a 1910 condemnation of operetta in the Neue Musik Zeiung, Walter Kellerbauer wrote that operetta dramaturgy consisted of “purposeless dances or senseless marching around”; in 1910 Alfred Wolf wrote that operetta scores were based on “one march and two waltzes.”

> The prevalence of marches and the perceived symbiotic relationship between the military and operetta provided additional ammunition to critics who charged the genre with being overly

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7–22; Freeze, “Gustav Mahler’s Third Symphony: Program, Reception, and Evocations of the Popular,” 151.  
complacent and beholden to state powers. For critics there existed a clear counterexample:

Offenbach, who satirized the army much in the way that Gilbert and Sullivan had police officers in *The Pirates of Penzance*. For example, in *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* the comic supporting character General Boum makes an entrance that is a parody of all things military, the refrain of his *couplet* consisting of onomatopoetic sounds of drums and trumpet calls and ending with the joke of his name: “Et pif paf pouf, et tara pa pa pouma, Je suis le général Boum Boum!” (Example 4.1).

Example 4.1: Offenbach, *La grande duchesse de Gérolstein*, No. 1c, refrain

![Example 4.1: Offenbach, *La grande duchesse de Gérolstein*, No. 1c, refrain](image)

And yet the music is, notably, not a march itself, as revealed by the frequent emphases on the second rather than the first beats (both in the first full and second measure) and most markedly in the appropriately offbeat explosion of “Boum Boum!” Viennese operetta’s military figures received more literally militaristic music. The Offenbachian legacy of operettas concerning tiny, inept principalities (such as Pontevedro and Balkonien) did lend an occasional anti-militaristic strain to Viennese operetta, as in *Der Rebell* (where Balkonien’s cavalry doesn’t have any horses) and *Die lustige Witwe*.

But in Vienna, when the army involved was the k.u.k., strict reverence was the only option (as in *Ein Walzertraum*, which features a tiny principality but the army is the Habsburg
one and they are not to be mocked). This was not only patriotic but required by the censor. For many critics, operetta’s embrace of military characters and musical tropes rather than mocking them in Offenbachian fashion was a crucial and extremely negative development (as will be seen in Chapter 5’s discussion of Karl Kraus). While previous operettas challenged the establishment, writing marches and saluting the dashing Habsburg military made operetta not only complicit in but part of the k.u.k. institution.

**Style Hongrois and Operetta**

The Viennese view of Hungarian music was shaped almost entirely by visiting Roma musicians as well as the art music based on their style (such as Brahms’s *Hungarian Dances* and Liszt’s *Rhapsodies hongroises*). According to Austrians, “gypsy music” and Hungarian folk music were one and the same style Hongrois. In the nineteenth century, “gypsy music” was most extensively defined by Hungarian Liszt’s 1859 book *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie*, translated into English as *The Gipsy in Music* (“the result of the Author’s Life-long Experiences and Investigations of the Gipsies and their Music”). Liszt describes the Roma’s music as originating in Romantic inspiration: “In the very act of passing the bow across the violin strings a natural inspiration suggested itself; and without any search for them, there came rhythms, cadences, modulations, melodies, and tonal discourses.”¹⁴ Hungarians strenuously objected to Liszt’s characterization of such music as a Roma invention that was safeguarded and patronized by Hungarians. For them the conventional formulation had been the reverse: the style had been

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invented by Hungarians and was performed by the Roma.\textsuperscript{15} For Viennese operetta, this dispute was not particularly relevant; Hungarian music was gypsy music and gypsy music was Hungarian music. (Nor did the actual hardships of Roma life have any relation to any of these discussions.)

Gypsy characters in operettas are, like those found in opera, most commonly fortune-telling, colorfully dressed, loose-living women. Some are larcenous, violin-playing men.\textsuperscript{16} Yet, as will be seen, gypsy music often was utilized as a signifier independent from gypsy characters.

While gypsies in opera can sing many kinds of music, operetta gypsies were, particularly in the Silver Age, are generally restricted to a version of the csárdás, a two-part dance form in duple meter featuring a free, rhapsodic section (lassu) with prominent melodic ornamentation, followed by a fast section (friss or friska). (In operetta, the lassu is usually in a minor key and the friss in the parallel or relative major.) The csárdás was a relatively late addition to the Hungarian dance repertoire. While its origins were rural, from the nineteenth century on it was considered the Magyars’ premiere urban, middle- to upper class social dance.\textsuperscript{17} But in operetta it is known primarily as a vocal genre with quaint rural folk and gypsy associations, the dance portion most frequently confined to the second section and sometimes eliminated altogether. Kálmán’s Budapest-premiered operettas contain no such vocal csárdáses; he adopted them only after moving to Vienna in accordance with local tastes. The operetta csárdás tends to express only the


most extreme emotional states, either the deepest abjection or the most frenzied jubilation (as is traditionally associated with style Hongrois music). Some of the more elaborate versions include a stage band in the style of a Zigeunerkapelle (gypsy band) including a solo violin, usually a clarinet, cimbalom, and some metallic percussion instruments such as cymbals or a tambourine. Kálmán’s later slow-fast dances are often not marked “csárdás” in his scores, but are inevitably referred to as such by Viennese critics.

The expectations for an operetta csárdás were set by the first famous example, Rosalinde’s “Klänge der Heimat” from Johann Strauss II’s Die Fledermaus of 1874 (which she sings in disguise as a Hungarian countess). Like many of its successors, it is diegetic, and serves as a vocal showpiece with little significance for the plot. Unlike most subsequent examples, the text does not specifically mention gypsies, though the central image of a forever-lost homeland would have been understood to refer to Roma. The first few phrases show a veritable encyclopedia of style Hongrois (Example 4.2): the clarinet melisma in the first measure, the oscillating thirds in the second, the vocal line’s alla zoppa syncopation and leap of a sixth on “Heimat,” the Hungarian anapest (two shorts plus a long) on “höre” and “ihr,” ornamentation on “weckt mir das Sehnen,” the Kuruc fourth on “Auge mir,” as well as the rubato on “Wenn ich euch höre.” Later in the aria, the fast section’s scalar passages, sudden leaps, and final wordless cry are also typical of style Hongrois operetta music.19

In contrast, Strauss’s later Der Zigeunerbaron (1885) includes many Roma characters and uses style Hongrois in a more extensive, non-incidental, and creative way. While there is still a prominent csárdás (Sáffi’s entrance song, No. 6 “So elend und so treu… O habet acht,” very

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18 Bálint Sárosi describes the makeup of a typical gypsy orchestra: Sárosi, Gypsy Music, 238–243.
19 These gestures are catalogued by Jonathan Bellman in Bellman, The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe, 93–130.
similar to Rosalinde’s), the style Hongrois is not limited to this single number but rather inflects all the gypsy characters’ music. The idea of a “gypsy spirit,” familiar from Liszt, is also important in the plot, in which the titular non-gypsy character’s joie de vivre leads to his appointment as Zigeunerbaron, baron of the gypsies. The gypsy identity has already been distilled into qualities (carefree passion and freedom from social convention) which can belong to anyone, Roma or not. (Rosalinde is not an actual gypsy, either, nor even disguised as one—she introduces herself as a Hungarian countess.)

Example 4.2: Johann Strauss II, Die Fledermaus, No. 10 Csardas, opening

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20 Crittenden, Johann Strauss and Vienna, 170–209.
Despite *Der Zigeunerbaron*'s great success, gypsies largely disappeared from operetta for the next few decades. They made a comeback in 1910 in Franz Lehár’s *Zigeunerliebe*, the composer’s first major attempt to write a score of operatic breadth and complexity. *Zigeunerliebe*, written to a libretto by Alfred Maria Willner and Robert Bodanzky, features some elaborate musical “scenes” that are more complex and longer than the usual songs as well as complex orchestration and demanding vocal writing. The libretto’s romantic rustic setting and score’s sweeping orchestral scene-setting (beginning with a storm scene that references Act II of *Die Walküre*) are more also more reminiscent of opera than operetta. On the eve of her wedding to a nice but dull man, the non-gypsy heroine, Zorika, encounters a gypsy named Józsi, and in an act-long fantasy dreams of living in a caravan telling fortunes and stealing watches. For Lehár, the gypsies represent less real people than a fantasy for Zorika, a dream of freedom before she must confront an inevitable bourgeois reality. The brief sight of a gypsy in Act 1 sets off the entire gypsy dream inside Zorika’s head. But when she awakes in Act 3 she realizes that it is impossible.

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21 A plot summary can be found in Gänzl and Lamb, *Gänzl’s Book of the Musical Theatre*, 998–1001.

22 This issue is examined at considerable length, with reference to Lehár’s 1930 revision of the work, in Angerer, “Zorikas Traum von der silbernen Operette. Lehár’s originelle Konzeption des Sowohl - Als auch.”
Jonathan Bellman writes that *Zigeunerliebe* “reduces the complexities of the Gypsy stereotype to pap,” where subtext has risen to the surface and “the devaluation of the entire Hungarian-Gypsy climate is clear.” Of one csárdás, he writes:

The Hungarian-Gypsy musical conventions themselves were undergoing a leavening process… characteristic rhythms… are mixed and matched in a wholly improbable fashion that results, uncharacteristically, in even four-bar phrasing. (Actually, omitting every fourth bar, the offending half notes, would go a long way toward rectifying the problem.) Similarly, the plot reduces the complexities of the Gypsy stereotype to pap… Allusions that in an earlier time might have been oblique are now baldly stated, and a character that might have inspired both dread and desire is a long way from either… the devaluation of the entire Hungarian-Gypsy climate is clear.  

While the characters of *Zigeunerliebe* may have failed to inspire dread or desire in the discerning modern scholar, based on the reviews of the Viennese premiere they succeeded for their first audience. Bellman mildly qualifies his condemnation with the concession that Lehár’s operetta (ambitious as its scoring was) was written, unlike the works of Brahms, Liszt, and Schubert analyzed in his earlier chapters, for a “commercial market.” But the nature of Lehár’s audience and compositional project would seem to demand a rather different perspective.

Focused as he is on authentic representation, Bellman fails to acknowledge that, for Viennese operetta-goers, a “dash of paprika” was the ideal quantity. A more authentic gypsy style would be far too spicy for the operetta palate. To him, the improbable mixture of rhythms cannot help but be a problem to be solver but Bellman’s musical logic is set on the wrong genre. Lehár’s audiences expected the symmetrical phrases of operetta music, and anything else would be a violent stylistic rupture. The unconventional aspects of gypsy music—irregular phrasing, complexity in general—had become, by the twentieth century, closely aligned with high culture sensibilities, and the language of *Zigeunerliebe* follows the more foursquare conventions of

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24 A selection of reviews is found in Frey.
popular music with a few colorful borrowings from the gypsy tradition and a larger orchestra.\textsuperscript{25} By his criteria, Bellman would probably be more satisfied with the gypsy of Leoš Janáček’s \textit{Zápisnik zmizelého}, \textit{The Diary of One Who Disappeared} (1921), but it would be senseless to attribute the significant differences in style between Lehár and Janáček solely to a greater concern for authentic representation from the latter.\textsuperscript{26} Bellman also fails to acknowledge that many operettas, including \textit{Zigeunerliebe}, portray the romanticized gypsy as a self-conscious stereotype and clearly indicate that it is an outdated fiction. Zorika does wake up in Act III. Even Rosalinde’s gypsy performance does not aspire to absolute authenticity (being, ultimately, performed by a Viennese woman in disguise).

In Emmerich Kálmán’s \textit{Der Zigeunerprimas}, this self-consciousness would be taken even further. While Lehár’s Slavic heritage seemed to confer an exotic element onto some of his press coverage,\textsuperscript{27} it was Kálmán who could lend a degree of proclaimed authenticity to Hungarian music to the public. This was rarely expressed in technical, musically specific terms, but rather in expressive ones. Genuineness of feeling and rawness of expression were gypsy music’s most important attributes, and Kálmán’s Hungarian nationality and close proximity to gypsy music’s sources allegedly allowed him to channel their expressive language more directly. For a radio broadcast made shortly before his

\textsuperscript{25} It should be noted that the most popular excerpt from \textit{Zigeunerliebe}, Ilona’s csárdás (No. 16, “Hör’ ich Cymbalklänge”) was only added for the operetta’s 1930 Berlin production, after Kálmán had revived the csárdás in operetta.

\textsuperscript{26} The comparison is in apt in part because \textit{Zápisnik zmizelého} offers something of a gender-reversed telling of the typical gypsy fiction that is also the plot of \textit{Zigeunerliebe}: a village boy falls in love with a mysterious gypsy girl and leaves civilization to be with her. However, unlike Zorika, he does not return, as indicated by the title.

\textsuperscript{27} Lehár is variously described as Hungarian and Slovakian. While he was born in Hungarian territory, his family was ethnically Slovakian, he was educated in Prague and did not spend a significant amount of time in Hungarian society. While more often described in media as Slavic than Magyar, the Hungarians were, after \textit{Die lustige Witwe}, eager to claim him as their own, even referring to him as Lehár Ferenc. He serves as a prime example of the complexity of national identification in the Habsburg Empire.
death around 1950, he made the following claim, while still speaking with a strong Hungarian accent:

Hungarian music lies very near to my heart. As a young apprentice in Budapest, I was in regular contact with the best gypsy orchestras. I had also a short period before received from the Hungarian gypsy orchestra leader Pali Rácz a photo with a dedication. I made a small memorial to the family Rácz in the character of Pali Rácz, title role of my operetta Der Zigeunerprimas. 28

Whether Kálmán actually wrote more authentic gypsy music than non-Hungarian composers is debatable, though it is worth noting that he didn’t write a decidedly inauthentic operetta-style vocal csárdás until 1915’s Die Csádásfürstin, at which point his musical sphere was firmly Viennese. (Der Zigeunerprimas’s csárdáses are all instrumental.) But the more important factor is the Viennese view of the role of the outsized, proud, patriotic Hungarian heart, which was best expressed in gypsy music. The gypsy musician, in the Viennese view, serves as an amanuensis for this surplus of emotion, and it makes for a powerful display onstage.

KÁLMÁN IN BUDAPEST

The Early Years

Emmerich Kálmán followed a path to operetta composition that while beginning in Budapest is otherwise similar to those of Lehár, Fall, and Straus. Born in 1882 in the remote town of Siófok near the edge of Lake Balaton, he came from a comfortably middle-class Jewish family of merchants. He showed early musical talent as well as an interest in his town’s small theater. Born

Imre Koppstein, he began his education at a Jewish school in Siófok. When he left for a Christian Gymnasium in Budapest at the age of ten, he changed his name to the non-Jewish and explicitly Hungarian Imre Kálmán, or, in Hungarian terms, Kálmán Imre (such changes were common among Hungarian Jews as a sign of “magyarization”). He subsequently studied composition at the National Academy of Music in Budapest. Upon his move to Vienna he changed his first name as well, to the German equivalent Emmerich Kálmán (he remained Jewish).

His primary teacher at conservatory was Hans Koeßler, a cousin of Max Reger (and also the teacher of Bartók, Kodály, Ernst von Dohnányi as well as operetta composers Albert Szirmai and Viktor Jacobi). Koeßler is generally described as an instructor focused on technique and compositional craft, schooled in the German tradition of Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven, with little patience for or interest in Hungarian nationalism. It was in this vein that Kálmán’s first works were written, including an early tone poem, Saturnalia, which earned him his first good reviews in early 1904. But after this single work, he seems to have hit a dead end, and couldn’t find a publisher for any of his subsequent compositions. He spent some time studying law to no clear end, and from 1904 to 1908 wrote music criticism for Pesti napló, a daily newspaper. Like Oscar Straus, it is not entirely clear what made him turn from serious to light music, but also like Straus he began by writing a few successful cabaret songs, and then turned to operetta. For the formerly very serious composer, this took some getting used to. As he described it,

29 “Koeßler, Hans,” Oesterreichisches Musiklexicon (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003), http://musiklexikon.ac.at/0xc1aa500d_0x0001d526
30 The primary source for Kálmán’s early biography is a first-person essay by the composer himself that appears in Bistron, Emmerich Kálmán. Kevin Clarke has written a useful overview of Kálmán biographies and sources: Clarke, Im Himmel spielt auch schon die Jazzband, 28–46.
I came to my colleagues with a tragic look on my face. “If things keep going this badly, I’m going to do something terrible,” I said to them with a dark look. “Well, what then, what is it?” said my appalled friends. And I answered with a flat voice: “I… WILL… WRITE… AN… OPERETTA!!!” The reaction was deep disturbance and obvious consternation.  

Kálmán would be richly rewarded for this dread decision.

As indicated by the list of Kálmán’s classmates, by the late nineteenth century, Budapest had been transformed into a major musical center that produced and attracted significant composers and performers. Mahler had recently spent several highly experimental years as director of the Hungarian State Opera (1887-1891). Operetta was also popular, with works of Offenbach and Strauss’s Der Zigeunerbaron and Die Fledermaus (both of which feature prominent style Hongrois) particular favorites. Native Hungarian operetta was shaped by the népszínmű, a form of folk theater similar to the Volksstück but considerably more formulaic and small scale. Hungarian operettas were exported only rarely, and most of the major composers’ names remained unknown outside Budapest. While Hungarian operettas were occasionally performed in Vienna (often by Hungarian companies on tour), none of the composers made major names or wrote specifically for Viennese audiences until Kálmán.

This transmission was a one-way street. Operettas written for Budapest theaters by Hungarian composers had had no discernable stylistic influence on Viennese operetta composers. They also bore little resemblance to what the Viennese thought Hungarian music ought to sound


32 Histories of Hungarian operetta include an important recent article by Lynn Hooker, brief section in Richard Traubner and two studies by András Batta. Lynn Hooker, “Turks, Hungarians, and Gypsies on Stage: Exoticism and Auto-Exoticism in Opera and Operetta,” Hungarian Studies 27, no. 2 (December 1, 2013): 291–311; Traubner, Operetta; András Batta, Träume sind Schäume: Die Operette in der Donaumonarchie (Budapest: Corvina, 1992); Batta and Kárpáti, Music in Hungary.
like (to be discussed shortly). As Richard Traubner writes rather condescendingly of two operettas by Jenő Huszka (1875–1960), “Bob [Bob herceg, 1902] and Lili [Lili bárónő, 1919] have a certain grace about them… but they lack the fiery Hungarian csárdás strains which foreigners, if not the Budapesters themselves, admire in Hungarian operetta.” Traubner names Viktor Jacobi (1883–1921), composer of Leányvásár and Szibill, as a more exportable talent, though his extra-Hungarian success was primarily in London and New York, not Vienna. It was Kálmán who would find—or, arguably, manufacture—the Hungarian spirit that the Viennese wanted.

_Tatárjáras to Ein Herbstmanöver_

Kálmán’s first operetta, Tatárjáras, was written to a libretto by Károly (Karl von) Bakonyi, and premiered in Budapest in February 22, 1908. Kálmán was very fortunate: Wilhelm Karczag happened to be visiting Budapest, saw it, and decided to bring it to the Theater an der Wien. This was an unusual but not unheard-of event. Whether Kálmán would be able to build upon this Viennese opportunity and move his career to Austria was far from guaranteed. Other Hungarian composers had had an operetta or two performed in Viennese theaters and none had subsequently become major Viennese operetta celebrities. Karczag had the libretto rewritten by old Viennese hand Robert Bodanzky; it enjoyed modest success onstage in Vienna as Ein Herbstmanöver (Autumn Maneuvers), premiering on January 22, 1909.

But despite a text made Viennese, the music still stands apart from the prevailing winds of its time, and would have been more at home in the Vienna of 1870. The finales are relatively modest, the tone owes more to salon and folk music than opera, and the inclusion of a pants role

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33 Traubner, _Operetta_, 331. For a recent and more detailed consideration of Huszka, see Hooker, “Turks, Hungarians, and Gypsies on Stage.”
for soprano was out of date by 1909 Vienna. Indeed, the Viennese critics found the music stylistically out of step with local taste. While they would find his later, Viennese-targeted Hungarianisms charming and piquant, at this point his ethnicity and style seems to have counted against him. As the *Neue Freie Presse* critic wrote, “Kálmán’s music is nothing but Hungarian, meaning that he treasures every yearning, dragging melody or every agitated rhythm. They would enchant his countrymen for hours on end, but for the Viennese ear becomes monotonous and boring after five minutes.”

Die Zeit questioned if Hungarian sounds were appropriate for Vienna: “whether one can, in Vienna, muster up full enthusiasm for the operetta’s essential ‘joi’ [an enthusiastic exclamation that pervades Hungarian folksong] disposition, remains to be seen.” Both the *Neue Freie Presse* and Ludwig Karpath in the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* described the work as closer to a Schwank than an operetta—too sentimental, too rustic, and insufficiently dramatic.

*Ein Herbstmanöver* contains one csárdás, which in comparison to the one found in *Fledermaus* is a much closer cousin to something that might actually be heard in Hungary (Example 4.3). The song features a gypsy band onstage, who take command in the opening lassu and the friss dance at the end. The introduction is dense with Hungarian tropes: oscillating thirds, the Hungarian anapest rhythm, and the raised fourth of the “Gypsy scale” in the first and seventh measures. Yet all these features disappear once the voice enters—unlike Strauss, Kálmán has not yet brought

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the csárdás into the vocal sphere. While for Viennese composers the csárdás was a showpiece for a performer, in Kálmán’s Hungarian operetta it is still an instrumental genre.

Example 4.3: Kálmán, *Ein Herbstmanöver*, No. 13 Lied und Tanz, opening
While Kálmán’s music was criticized, the libretto was by and large warmly welcomed. As the composer himself bitterly quipped of the reviews, “the book is magnificent, but the music is rubbish.”37 Karczag’s bet that the subject of the operetta would appeal to Viennese tastes was not unfounded. *Ein Herbstmanöver* dealt with one k.u.k. institution about which Hungary and Austria could agree: the army. *Ein Walzertraum* had prompted a small trend of operettas about soldiers, and the moderate success of Straus’s follow-up *Der tapfere Soldat* (based on George Bernard Shaw’s *Arms and the Man*) at the Theater an der Wien in 1908 may have encouraged Karczag to pursue the theme further. *Ein Herbstmanöver* names its soldiers as the Hungarian regiments of the “Fourteenth and Eighteenth Hussars” (“hussars” were Hungarian cavalry).38 Hussars had a reputation has fearsome and romantic fighters, and were a popular topic for Hungarian operettas at the time, as evidenced by Victor Jacobi’s *Legvitézebb Huszár* (The Bravest Hussar, 1905) and Albert Szirmai’s *Táncos huszárok* (The Dancing Hussars, 1909),39 as well as, much later, Pául Ábraham’s very popular *Viktoria und ihr Husar* (Victoria and Her Hussar, 1930).

*Ein Herbstmanöver* was mostly remembered for its part in launching the careers of several important actors: tenor Max Pallenberg and soubrette Louise Kartousch. Kálmán wrote that, as an unknown, he was paid and treated badly by the theater, describing an old stagehand named Moritz and the stage door attendant Pepi as his only friends (Pepi was, in fact, frequently

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38 There was a Fourteenth Hussars (a regiment known as “von Kolossváry,” made up of 92% Hungarians and recruited from the Kassa area) but the Eighteenth was fictional—the army never had any hussar units numbered higher than sixteen. There were never any Austrian or joint Austro-Hungarian hussars, so to Habsburg subjects the term automatically referred to a Hungarian unit. James Lucas, *Fighting Troops of the Austro-Hungarian Army: 1868–1914* (New York: Tunbridge Wells: Hippocrene; Spellmount, 1987), 106–111.
mentioned by Theater an der Wien habitués). He was not besieged by librettists offering new works. Unlike Lehár’s rapid ascendance, which was abetted by exceptional timing and good relationships with the operetta community, Kálmán would have a difficult time becoming established. Only a few years after the start of the Silver Age, operetta had a small group of brand name A-list composers, and the ranks were not as immediately accessible as they had been for Lehár, Fall, and Straus. Kálmán lacked the personal connections Lehár had built as an operetta conductor and bandleader, and his music had not garnered the rave reviews Lehár and even Leo Fall’s Der Rebell debuts had.

Kálmán did not return to the Theater an der Wien until 1912 (with the flop Der kleine König). Though he remained in Vienna, his next premiere was in Budapest, on March 16, 1910. The subject was again military, the title Az Obistos, later adapted by Victor Léon for Vienna into Der gute Kamerad and premiered at the Bürgertheater in October 1911. Despite being set in Hungary, the operetta features even less style Hongrois than Ein Herbstmanöver. The Bürgertheater (not to be confused with the Burgtheater, the Hofoper’s dramatic counterpart) was a small theater that was considerably less prestigious than the Theater an der Wien, and the work was not successful. World War I gave it a new lease on life, as will be seen in Chapter 5, but Kálmán had his breakthrough before then.

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40 “Nach diesem Erfolge konnte ich in Wien kein Buch bekommen, keiner hat mit mir arbeiten wollen.” Kálmán, “Der Roman eines Operettentheaters,” 3. Despite proclaiming that, “ein Komponist soll komponieren, wenig reden, wenig schreiben – nur komponieren,” The years Kálmán spent in music criticism (albeit writing in Hungarian) are evident in his finely observed, wry prose, quite different from Lehár’s emphatic proclamations.
**DER ZIGEUNERPRIMAS: IRONIC INTERIORITY**

It was in 1912 in his next operetta that Kálmán would find his personal formula for Viennese success. While his previous works were Hungarian operettas for Hungarians rather than Viennese operettas about Hungarians, *Der Zigeunerprimas* was written for the Johann-Strauß-Theater to a German-language libretto by Julius Wilhelm and Fritz Grünbaum and adopted most of the conventions of Silver Age Vienna. The score is infused with large quantities of *style Hongrois*, which plays the leading role in the operetta’s plot. Moreover, the gypsy music is not treated as an exotic, interpolated color but as a structural element of the operetta on a level with the waltz.

*Der Zigeunerprimas* would fuse gypsy music and waltzes to strong effect. The success of *Zigeunerliebe* in Vienna may have inspired the libretto of *Der Zigeunerprimas*, or perhaps it was merely Kálmán’s Hungarian heritage. Either way, it offers a new perspective on “gypsy life” that suggests, like *Zigeunerliebe*, minimal interest in the authentic representation of a people or the historic trope analyzed by Bellman. Rather, it is concerned with the phenomenon of gypsy music—and thus also Hungarian music—as an expressive vehicle. It plays with the contrast between a mass-produced modern entertainment of dance rhythms and sophistication—i.e., operetta—and the Romantic gypsy image of individual genius and spontaneous creativity. The stereotype of the gypsy in the modern world, the Romantic in the land of modern technology, is played for laughs. (*Der Zigeunerprimas* was rare among twentieth-century operettas for including multiple major gypsy characters. Most others drew on the musical vocabulary with the help of

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41 While the Johann-Strauß-Theater had a brief but distinguished history as an operetta theater (lasting from 1908 to 1929), its records have been entirely lost, and its institutional history has been hardly studied at all, in stark contrast with the extremely thoroughly documented Theater an der Wien. It was located in the fourth district on Favoritenstraße, near the Theater an der Wien but somewhat further from the center of the city.
only a minor character or, best of all, a silent onstage instrumentalist who inspires a non-Roma main character to sing in a gypsy style. It is this latter solution that we see in *Ein Herbstmanöver*, as well as *Die Csárdásfürstin* and *Gräfin Mariza.*

The protagonist and title character of *Der Zigeunerprimas* is an aging gypsy violinist and bandleader, Pali Rácz, who has a rivalry with his son Laczi. Conservatory-trained Laczi plays in a new style that traditionalist Pali considers pure nonsense, and both want to marry the same woman, Julishka. While gout and old age hamper old Rácz’s playing, he is not eager to cede his role as “Zigeunerprimas,” gypsy bandleader, to his newfangled son, nor does he want to give up Julishka. The audiences of Paris, however, prefer the modern dance music of Lacz to Rácz’s ametric scrapings, and eventually Rácz senior is persuaded to hang up his treasured Stradivarius and acknowledge he is too old to marry Julishka, ceding both violin and girlfriend to his son.42

The plot has only tenuous basis in fact. For one thing, Kálmán’s story of meeting Pali Rácz related above could not have been true: Pali Rácz died in 1885 at the age of 72, when Kálmán was only three years old.43 If he met a Pali Rácz, he met the famous Pali Rácz’s eldest son, also named Pali and also a gypsy musician. He was, indeed, left his violin by his father. But the operetta clearly deals with the elder Pali (like the real Pali senior, he has many children—in the operetta, 16, reputedly historically 34) and with his youngest son, Laczi, who became far more renowned than his older brother. In 1912, Lacz was still going strong as a bandleader; he

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43 His death notice can be found in “Foreign Musical Intelligence,” *Musical Standard* 28, no. 1073 (February 21, 1885): 119–119. “The death is announced, on the 30th ult., of Racz Pali, a well-known Hungarian artist, a violinist, a conductor, and composer of national music. He was seventy-two years of age. He was married four times and had no less than thirty-four children. His fortune, including a favorite violin and a diamond ring presented by the Prince of Wales, was left to his eldest son, Racz Pali…” This is corroborated in “Musical Gossip,” *The Athenaeum*, no. 2990 (February 14, 1885): 225–225. Only the final announcement refers to Racz’s band as specifically “gipsy.”
was probably around fifty years old at the time. Several recordings made in 1907, however, reveal not a musician playing modern dance music or classical repertoire, as the operetta’s Laczi does, but a rather traditional, ametric Roma style.\footnote{Rácz Laci cigányzenekara, “De szomorú ez az élet,” recoded in Budapest in 1907, Gramophone Concert Record, 78 rpm, G. C.-70533, 5411 I. In The City of the Magyars, published in 1903, Rácz is identified as “in his fortieth year.” Smith, The City of the Magyars, 203. Considering the number of his descendants, it also seems likely that he was related to Aládor Rácz, the Roma cimbalom player discovered by Stravinsky. Richard Taruskin, Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works through Mavra (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 1239.}

While the operetta is set in the present day, it establishes a link with an earlier generation. The operetta’s \textit{raison d’être} was a triumphant return to the stage by Alexander Girardi, the living symbol of Golden Age operetta, retired on the eve of the Silver Age after Franz Lehár’s failed \textit{Die Juxheirat} (1904). He played old Rácz (the surname alone refers, in the operetta, to the father). As the senior bandleader reluctantly agrees to cede his position to his modern son, the allegory of the passage from Golden to Silver Age operetta could hardly be more obvious. The \textit{Neue Freie Presse} considered Pali “more than simply a thankful role for Girardi” but “sublimated reality.”\footnote{“mehr als eine bloße dankbare Girardi-Rolle… sublimierte Wirklichkeit” “Johann-Strauß-Theater [review of Der Zigeunerprimas],” Neue Freie Presse, October 12, 1912.} The plot’s similarities to Wagner’s \textit{Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg} are equally obvious (Rácz is Hans Sachs, Julishka is Eva, and Laczi is Walther), though, as Stefan Frey points out, the generations have been reversed for the twentieth century: it is now the elderly Rácz whose style originates in Romantic inspiration while the son Laczi produces academically polished, mass-produced music for an industrialized age.\footnote{Frey, Emmerich Kálmán, 87.} The generational shift mirrors the biographical differences between Golden and Silver Age operetta composers, with the former largely self-taught and grounded in popular and folk music, and the
latter conservatory-trained and having begun careers in art music before switching to popular entertainment.

But the gypsies of Der Zigeunerprimas are ordinary people running a family gypsy business, not a exotic or mysterious Other. While Rácz first appears, he is in tattered gypsy garb, instructing a classroom of his children and grandchildren in the art of gypsy music—the oral transmission supporting the myth of the gypsy, while Rácz’s luxurious house and self-conscious references to a “gypsy factory” showing that the romantic image of the gypsy has been put in brackets. In Act 2, he appears to perform not dressed as a gypsy but rather in a dapper tuxedo (as the real Rácz Laczi does in the pages of the guidebook The City of Magyars, described at the start of this chapter).

Musically, Kálmán demonstrates his ability to write both Viennese waltzes and style Hongrois music, but is not a fundamentalist about their placement. Kálmán offers a distillation of the differences between the father and son’s styles in a short dialogue in the Act 1 Finale (No. 6) (Example 4.4).

47 While this might seem like dramatic irony, it actually has considerable basis in truth. Lynn Hooker points out that by 1893, when Hungary conducted a “gypsy census,” the vast majority (more than 95%) of Roma were settled rather than peripatetic. Hooker, Redefining Hungarian Music from Liszt to Bartók, 37.

48 Smith, The City of the Magyars, 201.
Laczi protests that he wants to find his own style of music and not merely imitate his father, singing in in flowing triplets and quarter note-eighth note triplets whose divisions recall a waltz (orchestrated with an oboe and bassoon). His father responds that he is a good son but a bad musician, singing in duple divisions, his vocal line immediately jumping up a fifth and then descending (the melodic type of the gypsy music throughout the score) in steady eighth notes. Rácz’s line is orchestrated with a drum and an accompaniment containing a variety of melodic ornamentations—grace notes, mordents, and turns—all of which recall the style Hongrois.
In the battle between these two styles, Laczi seems to have the upper hand. Some of the diegetic music played by Laczi is later transformed into non-diegetic song, suggesting that it has greater expressive power than Rácz claims. (Laczi’s style is also, of course, that of a mainstream commercial operetta like Der Zigeunerprimas.) In No. 3a, Laczi is heard playing offstage (Example 4.5). The music begins in media res with a single phrase in 4, then moving to a slow waltz. All this material will be repurposed in ways that suggest both Laczi and Julishka remember the moment. First, the 4/4 phrase is reprised in the very next number, “Laut dringt der frommen Chor,” where Laczi uses it to declare his love—of music (Julishka complains that he is not listening to her). The waltz does not appear until Act 2, where it provides the refrain to Laczi and Julishka’s duet No. 10, “Bist plötzlich durchgegangen.” (Example 4.6)

Example 4.5: Kálmán, Der Zigeunerprimas No. 3a, opening
Example 4.6: Kálmán, Der Zigeunerprimas, No. 10 Duett, refrain (Julischka)

Tempo di valse lento.

Lang, lang währt der Som-mer nicht, Küs-se ver weh'n wie die

Blü - ten, hol' sie, eh' der Hebst sie

bricht, pflük - ke sie, eh' sie ver - glü - hen! Lang,
Now the borrowed violin music is sung by Julishka, who seems to recall the moment she heard Laczi’s music as they lament their impossible love (Julischka is still engaged to Laczi’s father). For the gypsy, the music is inspired by one’s inner spirit, but here Julischka’s emotions are given shape by preexisting music.

Rácz’s violin playing is written in a virtuosic gypsy violin idiom, and appropriately none of it is transformed into non-diegetic music. When Rácz sings, however, he often does so in a slow, nostalgic Viennese waltz suitable for the elderly Viennese eminence Girardi. In the relatable personage of Girardi, such numbers were expected, and national identity never seems an important matter in Der Zigeunerprimas. ( Appropriately, Rácz’s songs are written for a narrow, low range and the melodic line is invariably doubled in the orchestra, suggesting that Girardi’s singing voice may have been elderly as well.49) Rácz’s playing features a plot complication that becomes an aesthetic one: the old man’s violin skills are failing due to gout. Rácz’s violin music is fully written out in the score (though perhaps was further elaborated upon in performance) and at one point mid-cadenza is marked “hier soll es falsch klingen” (here it should sound wrong), making it clear that there are also expectations about how gypsy violin playing should sound.

The operetta shows respect for Ráczi’s skill and tradition (particularly in his sentimental slow waltz song addressed to his violin, No. 9 “Mein alter Stradivari”), but notes that his age has dulled his skills and fashions have changed. The operetta’s affectionate and forgiving attitude towards its characters allows for a certain amount of slippage between the plot’s literal depiction of the aging Rácz’s declining skills and its allegorical depiction of changing musical fashion: it can acknowledge that Rácz and Alexander Girardi’s days, like their music, have past while still

49 This impression is backed up by Girardi’s recording of the piece. Alexander Girardi, Meine alte Stradivari aus Zigeuner-Primas, 78 rpm (Schallplatte “Gramophone,” n.d.).
giving them their due. (If Der Zigeunerprimas is indeed the Meistersinger of operetta, it is one without a Beckmesser.) This element is foreshadows the nostalgia that would, in later decades, completely overtake the genre. That Hungarian gypsy music here represents the past is ironic considering that in the world of operetta its sound was ascendant.

Kálmán could also mix Hungarian style with modern cabaret-style dance music, which would become his signature style. This hybrid can be seen already in full form in Der Zigeunerprimas’s “Hazazaa” dance number. This was a late addition to the score, and it is not entirely clear when it was composed (it was added for the Budapest premiere, which was on January 24, 1913). “Hazazaa” seems to have been composed with an eye on usage outside the operetta. It is sung by Sári (one of Rácz’s daughters) and her French beau Gaston. The introduction presents a memorable melodic “hook” whose syncopation could belong equally to gypsy music or a cakewalk. The text, typically of dance songs, deals with dance and, in particular, the excellence of this particular dance, the Hazazaa. (The title word does not seem to mean anything at all, but it sounds exciting.)

Writing about the Berlin premiere in the BZ am Mittag, Erich Urban described it as the best number of the operetta, “which isn’t in the [published] score.” Frey, Emmerich Kálmán, 90. Both it and the number it replaced are the fifth number of the score, both duets for Sári and Gaston. The original number, the waltz “Sie wüssten eine Braut für mich,” is found in the first edition (1912), while a subsequent edition marked 1913 contains “Hazazaa,” with slight irregularities in the typesetting of the table of contents showing that the change was made on the original printing plates, as well as a separate copyright notice on the lower margin of the first page of the song. Both editions are in wide circulation. There are also changes in Act 3, with the later addition featuring an additional duet for Sári and Gaston (No. 14, “Ich tu’ das meinige”) and a reprise of “Hazazaa” (No. 15½, “Erst juckt’s mich in den Beinen”), also for Sári and Gaston, in replacement of the 1912 versions “musikalische Szene,” a reprise of “Laut dringt der frommen Chor” for Laczi, Racz, and Julishka (No. 15, “Du, du, du, lieber Gott”). The second version obviously increases the prominence of Sári and Gaston. Der Zigeunerprimas does not precisely fit the operetta fach system—it is somewhat unclear whether Sári or Julishka is the female lead, and while Laczi is the male lead, Racz and Gaston also are very important—so some flexibility was possible. The 1912 version can be found online courtesy of the University of Rochester’s Sibley Music Library (https://urresearch.rochester.edu/viewInstitutionalCollection.action?collectionId=63); the 1913 version is held by Yale University’s music library, mistakenly catalogued as 1912 (M1503 K14 Z6†).
The opening is marked “stark im Bauerton,” (strongly rustic) and this character is reinforced by the clarinet’s grace notes doubling the voice and the folk-inspired figurations echoing the voice, as well as the traditionally gypsy instruments of drum, triangle, and clarinet (Example 4.7). The Hungarian anapest rhythm appears in slightly altered form on “und da gibt’s kein Halt.” In the refrain, the Lombard rhythm on “das tanzt ihr” and “alte.” The text reinforces the music’s mixture.

Example 4.7: Kálmán, Der Zigeunerprimas No. 5 Hazazaa, opening

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Der Zigeunerprimas, Text, No 5, Hazazaa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sári:</th>
<th>Sunday after mass</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sonntag, wann die Meß’ vorüber packt die jungen Leut das Fieber, Tanzmusik erschallt Und da gibt’s kein Halt.</td>
<td>the young people feel the urge to sound out dance music and then there’s no stop!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaston: Ach weiß ich schon Polonaise, Quadrille, Mazur, Française,</td>
<td>Gaston: Ah, I already know the polonaise, Quadrille, Mazurka, Française,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sári explains the movement of the Hazazaa in terms of gypsy music: “da lernt man lachen und weinen/mit beiden Beinen,/das ist der Hazazaa!” (“so you learn to laugh and cry with both your legs, that’s the Hazazaa!”) The second strophe adds references to modern technology—Gaston comments on the dance’s physical demands (a common complaint against ultramodern dances), stating that one would need the power of sixty horses, “or a few horsepower for the big toe,” and Sári advises him to jump “like this, as if one was discovering a flea in one’s bed.”

The number gleefully mixes the old and the new. In a way, Kálmán played the role of Sári, introducing something that was old and traditional as a sexy new fashion. His Hungarian style, critics agreed, was something new and exciting. Critics seemed to find Kálmán’s perceived ability to transmit genuine gypsy feeling his strongest suit—despite the obvious lack of concern regarding strict authenticity from all concerned. While Kálmán’s short radio broadcast makes the sensible argument that his knowledge came from actual experience gleaned in Budapest, the critics tended to define his talent in the familiar terms of fin-de-siècle nationalist theory. (While the Roma themselves were perceived as racially inferior, their music was more strongly identified as Hungarian.) Additionally, many were skeptical about his ability to adopt the Viennese language of the waltz. In the *Fremden-Blatt*, Julius Stern wrote:

> Waltzes aren’t Kálmán’s strongest suit. The heat of his temperament pours out in rich gypsy music, which fills almost the entire first act, breaking out whenever the old king of the violin from the Puszta lays his bow on the fiddle, and the concertmaster again sings
out from the orchestra… in this national music, Kálmán’s talent runs free, here he thrills… the librettists did well by not expatriating their composer.  

Similarly, the unidentified critic of the *Neue Freie Presse* wrote that Kálmán’s waltzes often “turn trivial.” In the *Neues Wiener Journal*, Leopold Jacobson praised Kálmán’s waltzes, but nevertheless noted that they were not his national tongue: “As is grasped by composers of Hungarian origin, the national color is not to be found where the music demands a different character.” The *Neue Freie Presse* intriguingly posited that there was congruence between gypsies and operetta themselves:

Gypsy operettas will always eventually come back to be written again, and that’s understandable, because the real world of gypsies is almost like it was comprised of elements from an operetta: a little bit of sentimental romanticism, a little bit of frivolity and pride, and a great deal of love—seemingly everything that belongs to an operetta. Earlier, in the Johann Strauss era, it was still a romantic gypsy world. But since then the times have changed substantially, and an improved, modern gypsy doesn’t appear in rags and occupy himself with fortune-telling and tinkering, rather he wears a pristine tuxedo and untiring fiddles into the ears of the great urban beau monde between 11:00 in the evening and 5:00 in the morning—it’s less romantic, but far, far more remunerative.

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52 “Johann-Strauß-Theater [review of Der Zigeunerprimas].”


54 “Die Zigeuneroperette wird immer wieder geschrieben, und daß ist begreiflich, denn auch das Zigeunerntum der Wirklichkeit ist wie aus lauter Operettenelementen zusammengesetzt: ein bißchen empfindsame Romantik, ein bißchen Leichtsinn und Stolz und sehr viel Liebe—so ziemlich alles, was zu einer Operette gehört. Früher, in der Johan Strauß-Zeit, war es noch ein romantisches Zigeunerntum. Aber seither haben sich die Zeiten wesentlich geändert und ein besserer moderner Zigeuner geht nicht im Lumpen und beschäftigt sich mit Wahrsagen und Kesselflicken, sondern er trägt einen tadellosen Smoking und fiedelt zwischen 11 Uhr abends und 5 Uhr früh der große städischen Lebewelt unermüdlich ins Ohr—das ist minder romantisch, aber viel, viel rentabler.” “Johann-Strauß-Theater [review of Der Zigeunerprimas].”
Indeed, Kálmán would find the stage gypsies exceedingly remunerative. *Der Zigeunerprimas* launched him into the first rank of Viennese operetta composers. While *Der Zigeunerprimas* juxtaposes old and new music, the gypsy in operetta actually straddled the old and new worlds, standing in for both nineteenth-century romanticism and the very modern sphere of the varieté and entertainment industry. And it was, perhaps, Kálmán’s unique background that inspired him to combine the cabaret and the gypsy in operetta music.

But while Kálmán’s style seems to capture the empire just before its demise, its role in the revival of operetta exoticism may have been its most influential contribution. To some extent, this was merely a continuation of the Slavic music of *Die lustige Witwe* and Lehár’s *Zigeunerliebe*. But Kálmán’s immense success at establishing exotic music as the sound of an emotional, interior space (a role that *Die lustige Witwe*’s Slavic music did not exactly play) would set the tone for a large number of exotic operettas in the 1920’s, to be considered in Chapter 6. It was another means for operetta to retreat from the depiction of an exterior reality into that of a subjective fantasy, and one where the exotic was not so much a mysterious or threatening Other as a reflection of the deepest mysteries of the self.
Chapter 5

Experimental Laboratory for the End of the World:
Operetta and the Great War, 1914-1915

“No sympathy for a society in which the thieves of culture do best! The performance statistics of a modern operetta are the most bloodstained numbers, which in history books will represent a lost battle. At times, an operetta culture marches out with thirst for war. Its soldiers are writers. Wholly irresponsible subjects, who launch a premiere today and a war tomorrow.”
Karl Kraus, Die Fackel (1912) 1

“Who knows how longer the globe will spin,
Or if tomorrow will already be too late!”
Die Csárdásfürstin (1915) 2

“An order came from the town council to boil all drinking water – as a precaution. Boiled water is insipid. I would rather not drink water at all. Gypsies also drink hardly any water. I am always playing at being a gipsy, and a soldier of course. A gipsy who is a soldier.”
Elfriede Kuhr, age 12 (August 3, 1914) 3

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2 Weißt du wie lange noch der Globus sich dreht/ob es morgen nicht schon zu spät!
3 Jo Mihaly, There We’ll Meet Again: A Young German Girl’s Diary of the First World War (Great Britain: W. Wright, 1998), 7.
In Peter Konwitschny’s production of Emmerich Kálmán’s operetta *Die Csárdásfürstin*, first performed at the Semper Oper in Dresden in 1999, the operetta’s unspoken subtext was brought explosively to the foreground. When the performance reached the Act I dance number “Ganz ohne Weiber geht die Chose nicht,” in which the male habitués of a Budapest cabaret argue in song that female company is necessary for survival, bombs began to drop, indicating that soon the men would indeed be obliged to forsake womankind. According to the work’s *Soufflier- und Regiebuch*, describing the staging of the original production, in Act II the setting shifts from this cabaret to a Viennese *Palast*. But in Konwitschny’s staging, the events moved into a Great War trench. As in the second act of most operettas, the standard pair of couples threaded their way through a plot of reversals and revelations, however this time with breaks to duck and cover.4

*Die Csárdásfürstin* premiered in 1915 and is usually interpreted by historians as merry escapism for a war-afflicted people.5 Konwitschny’s staging, however, reminded its Dresden audience that its manic celebration of pleasure was the product of a perilous time. This was not what audiences in 1999 expected out of an operetta, and the staging was greeted with outrage. The fact that Konwitschny had chosen to detonate his interpolated bombs not in an Austrian theater but in the much-afflicted Dresden aroused particular consternation.6 For the elderly and

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5 Richard Traubner refers to its “genial high spirits.” Traubner, *Operetta*, 266.

6 The most sensible explanation for the location is that operetta is to this day quite popular in the former DDR, and the Semper Oper is one of the few first-rank opera houses in Germany that would stage *Csárdásfürstin*, an operetta that has not been admitted to the operatic canon as warmly as *Die lustige Witwe*, much less *Die Fledermaus*. (Konwitschny has also staged less-canonic operettas at Berlin’s...
conservative audiences who attend operetta in the late twentieth century, the horror of World War I had no place in Die Csárdásfürstin, regardless of the fact that it was composed during it.\(^7\)

Konwitschny’s interpretation suggests that a more conventional Die Csárdásfürstin has conveniently forgotten something, something that his explosions and trenches (however bombastically) restore. In so doing he stages a frequent critique of Silver Age operetta as morally and ethnically bankrupt, a condemnation proclaimed during the war itself by the satirist and playwright Karl Kraus, of whom Konwitschny is a self-proclaimed disciple. But do Konwitschny’s bombs restore something to Die Csárdásfürstin that had been present in 1915 but forgotten in 1999? Or was the war’s tragic carnage, as Kraus claimed, intentionally and conspicuously excluded from the operetta all along, its very absence the primary justification for the operetta’s existence and subsequent success? For the patrons of the Semper Oper Dresden, the question did not matter. By the second performance the opera house eliminated the more incendiary elements of Konwitschny’s production, changes the director condemned publicly.\(^8\)

Konwitschny’s Csárdásfürstin created far more controversy than it did box office success (it was not, as Kraus bitterly punned in reference to another wartime operetta, a “Bombenerfolg”—

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\(^7\) This is discussed by Marion Linhardt in her introduction to Linhardt, Stimmen zur Unterhaltung.

\(^8\) “Skandal um ‘Csardasfürstin.’”
“explosive hit”). But the state-supported Sächsische Staatsoper of 1999 is hardly comparable to the commercial Theater an der Wien of 1915.

As has been seen, operetta’s meanings were mediated—or even dictated—by circumstances of their times. Amidst the tragedies of World War I, audiences’ desires to be transported away from the quotidian acquired new urgency. The works of this period can be understood only against this backdrop. There is bitter irony in Die Csárdásfürstin’s score and libretto, and the shadow of the war is constantly present. From this perspective the Dresden production did not so much read the original text against its grain as amplify and explain it. The operetta’s denouement implies that the hypocritical social strictures of Viennese society, mocked incessantly in the second act, are on their way to the dustbin of history. All that really matters, the work seems to suggest, is the clichéd recognition of the centrality of love and human bonds, as had been suggested by the work’s initial title, Es lebe die Liebe [Long Live Love]. Yet this Dionysian spirit animating Die Csárdásfürstin now had a desperate edge.

The war would inflict tragedy on the Austro-Hungarian Empire on both a personal and national scale. The Viennese suffered enormous casualties on the battlefield as well as famine and disease at home. Ultimately, the state itself would be destroyed. Yet one thing that kept going with hardly a pause was operetta. For Karl Kraus, the most prominent of antiwar and anti-

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10 The title was changed for the simple reason that the creators wished to avoid confusion with Oscar Straus’s Rund um die Liebe, also of 1915. The original title is retained on the censor’s manuscript (Bela Jenbach and Leo Stein, Es lebe die Liebe!, NÖ Reg. Präs Theater TB 672/8, NÖLA), which suggests that the change was made very shortly before the premiere. “Csárdásfürstin” fits into the Lustige Witwe formula for operetta titles, which juxtaposes an incongruous adjective with a the place of the title character. Widows are not supposed to be merry, nor are csárdás dancers, generally speaking, also duchesses. Noble titles were particularly popular, as in Die Dollarprinzessin, Die Zirkusprinzessin, and Die Herzogin von Chicago.
operetta critics, operetta’s purportedly oblivious survival was just another symptom of the impending apocalypse—Vienna may have risen to the strains of Mozart, but it would fall to those of Lehár. In this chapter, I will consider operetta through this lens, but ultimately argue that Kraus’s portrayal was a misrepresentation of both operetta and its audiences. I will first consider the propaganda operetta Gold gab ich für Eisen and its use of the German folksong “Ich hatt’ einen Kameraden,” then I will turn to Kraus’s portrayal of an “operetta culture” and his use of this work in his antiwar writings. Finally, I will consider Die Csárdásfürstin, a more overtly escapist work, and consider how it conceives of the world inside and outside the theatrical space. I will propose that wartime operetta served a function beyond escape and the validation of official dicta of patriotism, and confronted the despair and uncertain future faced by Austrians during the war.

OPERETTA AND PROPAGANDA: GOLD GAB ICH FÜR EISEN

When the war broke out in 1914, Emmerich Kálmán had just begun work with Leo Stein and Béla Jenbach on a new operetta, entitled Es lebe die Liebe!, under contract with the Johann-Strauß-Theater. After the declaration of war on July 28, it was delayed indefinitely. The future of theater was uncertain. At the Theater an der Wien, Wilhelm Karczag dissolved the company, putting the actors, orchestra, and stage technicians on leave, and in early August wrote to actor Hubert Marischka, “I am not currently in a position to determine when and to what extent I will be able to resume business.”

11 “Wann und in welchem Umgange ich meinen Betrieb wieder wede eröffnen können, bin ich dermalen nicht in der Lage zu bestimmen.” Letter from Wilhelm Karczag to Hubert Marischka, August 5, 1914. The company was dissolved, according to Gertrude Marischka’s unpublished memoir. Both are available in the Nachlass Hubert Marischka (unnumbered), ÖTM.
Other theaters reopened swiftly with patriotic programming. On August 17, the Deutsches Volkstheater was the first to reopen, presenting Schiller’s *Wallensteins Lager*, a military drama which celebrates the power of war to bring disparate Central European populations together. Through September and early October, various theaters produced revues and “patriotic scenes” such as the spoken play *In dieser großer Zeit* (Colosseum) and Edmund Eysler and Franz Lehár’s “musical scenes” *Komm’, deutscher Bruder* (Raimundtheater). These performances posed challenges for the police censor’s office, whose usual caution around the depiction of current events and (most particularly) Austro-Hungarian uniforms seem to have been relaxed for the war effort. In fact, as documented in letters in the censor’s archive, impresarios actively sought the patronage and support of government officials to give their commercial performances the appearance of government-sanctioned propaganda. Prior to the opening of *Komm’, deutscher Bruder*, for instance, the management of the Raimundtheater even invited Count Richard Freiherr von Biennerth—a former prime minister of Austria and then governor of the province of Lower Austria—to attend the *Feststellung* premiere, as his reputation would enhance the event.

As for the Theater an der Wien and operetta, less than a week after Karczag wrote to Marischka, another rumor spread. “The opera and the Burgtheater are, at present, closed until September 1, and perhaps will be for longer,” music theorist Josef Polnauer wrote to Alban Berg on August 18. But, he added, “On that account, the Theater an der Wien wants to feature a ‘patriotic’ operetta, by a certain Kalmán [sic], who assembled the operetta *Ein Herbstmanöver*.”

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13 *Komm’, deutscher Bruder*. NÖ Reg. Präs Theater ZA 1914/25, NÖLA.

14 “Oper und Burg bleiben vorläufig bis 1. September geschlossen; wahrscheinlich auch weiter. Dafür will das Theater a. d. Wien eine „patriotische“ Operette bringen, von einem gewissen Kalmán, der die
The rumor was correct. The theater reopened on October 18, 1914 with a new patriotic war operetta, *Gold gab ich für Eisen*\(^\text{15}\) with music by Kálmán and a libretto by the always-prepared Victor Léon.

The purportedly new work was a reworking of Kálmán's second operetta, *Az Obsitos* (The Veteran), which had been first performed on March 16, 1910 in Budapest, with a libretto by *Tatárjárás* author Karl von Bakonyi. Table 5.1 records the various versions of this work.

**Table 5.1: *Gold gab ich für Eisen*'s Iterations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Genre Designation</th>
<th>Librettists</th>
<th>Theater</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of Perfs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Az Obsitos</em> (The Veteran)</td>
<td>Szinjáték, 3 felvonásban (play with songs in three acts)</td>
<td>Karl von Bakonyi, Andor Gábor, Istvan Weiner, Béla Zerkovitz</td>
<td>Vígszínház, Budapest</td>
<td>16 March 1910</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Der gute Kamerad</em> (The Good Comrade)</td>
<td>Theaterstück für Musik in zwei Akten (theater piece with music in two acts)</td>
<td>Victor Léon, Karl von Bakonyi</td>
<td>Bürgertheater, Vienna</td>
<td>27 October 1911</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gold gab ich für Eisen</em> (I Gave Gold for Iron)</td>
<td>Singspiel in 1 Vorspiel und 2 Akten (Singspiel in prologue and two acts)</td>
<td>Victor Léon, frei nach einer Grundidee Karl von Bakonyis (freely after an idea by)</td>
<td>Theater an der Wien, Vienna</td>
<td>17 October 1914</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For wartime audiences, it was not a well-known work. Its local premiere had been on October 27, 1911 at Vienna's middle-rank Bürgertheater (not to be confused with the august Burgtheater) as *Der gute Kamerad* (The Good Comrade), with von Bakonyi’s libretto translated and adapted by Léon.\(^\text{16}\) In Budapest it had lasted a mere 25 performances, in Vienna an

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\(^{15}\) This operetta’s title is given variously as *Gold gab ich für Eisen*, *Gold gab ich für Eisen!*, and “*Gold gab ich für Eisen*”, the latter including the quotation marks to indicate the phrase’s status as a motto. The simplest option is used here.

\(^{16}\) More details on this work can be found in Martin, “A Survey of the Operettas of Emmerich Kálmán,” 38–45.
unimpressive 53. As Gold gab ich für Eisen, some changes to text and music brought it in step with the new circumstances.

_Az Obsitos_ (and its German translation _Der gute Kamerad_) was a military-themed work set at “the end of the Italian war” in 1859. The war in question was presumably the Second Italian War of Independence, which lasted less than two months but inflicted 13,000 casualties, the loss of Lombardy, and great humiliation on Austria. The rural military subject and musical language are similar to its immediate predecessor in Kálmán’s oeuvre, _Ein Herbstmanöver_ (Tatárjáras), considered in Chapter 4. In the later two versions, the setting is the Austrian village of Gubendorf. Franz (a _Rittmeister_, a cavalry officer equivalent to a captain), who has been fighting in the army for fifteen years, had, while dying, told his best friend and fellow _Rittmeister_, Alwin, to return to Franz’s village to speak with his mother Karoline and and give his sister Marlene the requisite blessing to marry. When the regiment is marching through the area of the village a few weeks later, Alwin goes to return the ring and is unintentionally mistaken for the long-gone Franz himself. Afraid to tell Karoline that her son is dead, he plays along, until he falls in love with Marlene. The bittersweet truth is eventually revealed. Franz is lost, but Alwin gets married.17

The musical style of _Az Obsitos_ and _Der gute Kamerad_ is congruent with Silver Age operetta. But, like Tatárjáras, neither include Kálmán’s signature post- _Zigeunerprimas style_ _Hongrois_ musical mode, nor does the libretto feature many of the dramaturgical genre

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17 The plot recalls the sixteenth-century history of Martin Guerre. Natalie Zemon Davis argues that Martin Guerre’s wife Bertrande de Rols recognized that false Martin Arnaud du Tilh was not her husband, but said that he was for the sake of her own social standing. The plot device in the operetta is, indeed, highly unlikely. A later American version made Karoline blind, which made her credulity far more credible. Natalie Zemon Davis, _The Return of Martin Guerre_ (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).
conventions that had, by 1910, become obligatory for large-scale operetta in Vienna. These differences can be attributed to its Hungarian origin, as well as its adaptation by the experimentalist Léon. There is no “second couple” (though comic interludes are provided by a perky soubrette trousers role character, Xaverl—reminiscent of Cherubino) and the plot structure does not conform to the usual three acts with a tragic second-act denouement; instead, there is a prologue and two acts with modest finales. The most radical changes from the Silver Age ideal are, however, the sad ending and the modest and unglamorous country village setting. The characters are unassuming landed nobles and peasants who don’t have the romantic sheen given to the rustics of Zigeunerliebe. The Hungarian version is described as a “play with music”; Léon’s first version, the 1911 Der gute Kamerad, is given the genre designation not of operetta but rather Theaterstück für Musik. (This may have been a nod to Hofmannsthal and Strauss’s 1911 Komödie für Musik, Der Rosenkavalier.) Gold gab ich für Eisen is named a Singspiel, again bypassing the French-derived word Operette. Critics found Der gute Kamerad’s modest, melancholy tone at odds dreary and dull. While it was praised for originality, it was also called overly sentimental and even boring. Its run was a respectable but hardly memorable run, and was ultimately eclipsed by Kálmán’s far more successful Der Zigeunerprimas the following year.

Operetta at War

While Der gute Kamerad may have then disappeared for good, the war gave it another lease on life. In 1914, Kálmán and Léon made only relatively minor changes to transform Der gute

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18 See Léon, Victor, and Karl von Bakonyi, Der gute Kamerad. NÖ Reg. Präs Theater TB 648/16, NÖLA.

19 The reviews are summarized in Frey, Emmerich Kálmán, 78–9.
Kamerad into Gold gab ich für Eisen. The operetta was rushed into production; its libretto was submitted to the censor on September 2, barely a month after the war broke out.20 (At this point, many of the song texts were incomplete, and, as will be considered shortly, a new prologue was not yet in place.) The setting was moved up to the present day (wartime 1914) and, most importantly, a happy ending was appended, in which it is revealed that Franz didn’t die after all—he makes a propitious reappearance in a new finale.21 The musical changes primarily reinforce the patriotic character of the work, through the addition of marches in the overture and several patriotic anthems and other numbers celebrating Austria-Hungary and Germany’s might (with titles like “Österreich wird die Frauen preisen” and “Mein Vaterland, du bist in Not”). A comic number about the funny language spoken by the French, “Parlez-vous français?” (No. 4 in Der gute Kamerad) is retexted altogether. Since making sport of the French language must have seemed far too trivial now that France was the actual enemy, the music is set to a new text in Austrian dialect on the strength of the Austrian and German armies (No. 6, “Dö is Politik”). Its French-style music, however, remains the same.

Another notable and slightly morbid addition is a cheery polka about zeppelins for Xaverl and Vitus in Act II (No. 14, Duett “Zeppelin Polka”), which proudly proclaims that each “little bomb” dropped from an airship on Paris is a “greeting from Berlin and Vienna” (“Dieses Bomberl war ein Gruß von Berlin und Wien”). Although the censor let this song pass, in other instances references to actual battle locations and strategy were excised. Xaverl’s No. 7 (Marschlied), a generic celebration of the joys of fighting, was originally a more pointed salvo against Austria’s most immediate nemesis, Serbia. Only a single verse appears in the script

20 Victor Léon, Gold gab ich für Eisen. NÖ Reg. Präs Theater TB 344/3, NÖLA.
submitted for approval (in which many of the texts are incomplete), but the details it provided proved objectionable and was censored. The original text is slangy and exuberant:

Text, No. 7, Lied Xaverl, cut version

| I’ komm gr’ad von die Serbianer,         | I jus’ came from da Serbia     |
| Also g’fress’n hat mich kaner,           | But nobody gobbled me up,      |
| Vielleicht weil I’ z’mager bin!          | Maybe cuz I’m so scrawny!      |
| Aber I’ hab unterdess’n                  | But at the same time           |
| Eine Masse Serb’n g’fress’n              | I put away a ton of Serbians!  |
| Und die war’n natürlich hin!             | And they got shot up, of course!|
| Bei der Save und der Drina               | By the Save and the Drina      |
| War im Kampf ich mitten drina –          | I was in the middle of the fight— |
| Schiessen kann ich, wann ich schiess’!   | I can shoot, when I shoot!     |
| Auch bei Schabatz und Voljewo,           | Also in Schabatz and Voljewo,  |
| Na, Ihr wisst’s ja, Alle eh, wo          | Yeah, I sure know, anyway, where |
| Diese schöne Gegend is!                  | This pretty place is!          |
| Bin der Kleinste und der Jüngste         | I am the smallest and the youngest |
| Aber durchaus net der G’ringste          | But definitely ain’t the worst |
| In dem kaiserlichen Heer!                | In the imperial army!          |
| Z’erscht haben s’ich um kein’ Preis      | At first they wouldn’t have me for |
|  g’nomen                                  | anything                       |
| Aber bald da sind s’ drauf kommen:      | But soon it was clear          |
| Sakrawalt, der Bursch is wer!            | Lordy, the boy’s for real!     |

Xaverl represents the upbeat, adventurous spirit of war. Moreover, by making this a trousers role (played by soubrette star Louise Kartousch), the creators further avoided reality. The sight of a woman singing and dancing as a soldier was titillating and avoided any accusations that an able-bodied actor would be better off actually fighting rather than singing about it. The role of Xaverl, in fact, is consistently comic—the script makes a number of puns on Kartousch’s name which break the theater’s fourth wall and assure the audience that this is all in good fun. In October

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23 Southern German dialect, an oath, Hochdeutsch Sakrament.

24 For example, this passage from Act II, when Xaverl is teased by his father Vitus:
1914, such jovial militarism was commonplace—this was the honeymoon period, before the onset of mass death on the front and famine at home. It was still, in the words of Stefan Zweig, “a rapid excursion into the romantic, a wild, manly adventure.”

But *Gold gab ich für Eisen* does not present a uniformly jingoistic picture, and with these few exceptions, its war does not seem like an adventure at all. After the prologue, the perspective provided is largely a female one: the setting for the remainder of the operetta is the home front, and the plot concerns the family’s affairs rather than the military. Nonetheless, the audience, privy to the prologue, sees the story from Alwin’s perspective—they know his real identity, a crucial piece of information that remains withheld from the other characters. This focuses the sympathies of the audience not on Alwin’s loss or even the presumed-dead Franz but rather on Marlene, Karoline, and the other character’s lack of knowledge. The audience spends the entire operetta in anticipation of the moment of revelation when Karoline and Marlene’s hopes will be dashed and they discover that Alwin is not really Franz. The subject of the operetta is thus not the suffering of the soldiers but rather the suffering of their loved ones.

The operetta portrayed war as uniting the empire across lines of class and ethnicity, and conveyed this through dramatic actions with which the audience was familiar. This can be gleaned from a scene that was cut from the final performing version, one that takes place beyond

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Xaverl: Da man dadurch in den Besitz wichtiger Papiere kam, bedeutet diese Kartusch einen grossen Erfolg auf dem Kriegstheater.  
Vitus: Du, was in denn dös eigentlich a Kartusch?  
Xaverl: A Patrontascherl.  
26 The dramaturgy in which the omniscient audience follows the fates of characters whose knowledge is less complete is a common plotting device of the “well-made play.”
Gubendorf, among the common soldiers and beyond the well-to-do world of Franz and Alwin. A soldier named Müller writes typical soldier missives for his illiterate comrades. These soldiers speak in a variety of regional dialects identified with different parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: Wuperhal, a Bohemian peasant; Nagy, a Hungarian; and Klampfinger, who is Viennese. All report to their wives and fiancées that they are healthy and send their love, but they also all include unstinting support for the Kaiser. This would have been a familiar gesture for those who had family on the front and were accustomed both to receiving such letters and imaging their loved ones writing to them. The operetta thus offers a best case scenario: the soldiers in their family are healthy, thinking of them, and are working for a noble cause.

Regardless of the fact that this scene was cut, the focus here and elsewhere in the operetta on the domestic is not incidental. Women were a key audience for wartime propaganda campaigns. In the Austrian media, wartime was portrayed as an opportunity for women to take on public roles not accessible in peacetime. In Vienna in particular the Frauenshilfaktion Wien actively promoted the maternal instincts of Austrian women as a crucial resource in the war effort. Moreover, women were encouraged to see war as sacrificial and tragic before it actually became so—meaning that even in the early days of the war, when Gold gab ich für Eisen was performed, outsized public displays of grief were commonplace. Such performances did not have

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27 For example, the Bohemian letter (the librettists provided in the typescript alternatives the Czech words): “An herzgeliebte Miluschka Wuprahal—dos ise Gemahlin meinige ganz richtige—wohnhaf in Gschirotez, Bezirk Böhmni bei Deutschland. Hast es? Alsdann: Herzgeliebte Miluschka! Ich bin ich ganz g’sund, ich hoff’ ich, dass Schweindl und Kuh unsrige is auch ganz g’sund und dass Bamburi (Kartoffel) sind g’nug da und dass Du bist auch ganz g’sund und die Kinderln auch ganz g’sund! Mir marschieren sich weiter in Krieg hinein und Du sollst Gansel gut stopfen mit Nudeln, dass recht dick sind. In Krieg is so viel scheen. Ein’ recht ein grossen Hubischku (Kuss) für Dir und für die Kinderln unsirge. Mauzda! (Gruss) Wenzel Wuprahal, Dragoner Numero 14.” Victor Léon, Gold gab ich für Eisen. NÖ Reg. Präts Theater TB 344/3, NÖLA.

28 This is examined in Maureen Healy, Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 163–186.
the genuine desperation of the later years of the war, when conditions had deteriorated immeasurably both on the front and at home, but were seen as the female deportment befitting wartime. As Marsha Rozenblit writes of the home front, “conventional notions of women and war permitted women to weep over the potential loss of husbands, sons, and brothers, even in August 1914.”29

The pain seen in Gold gab ich fur Eisen is mostly the psychological toll of uncertainty and insecurity on the home front, that is to say the situation in which the audience found itself. Through the new ending, death has been eliminated, and the material loss alluded to by the title is, in the plot, purely symbolic. The operetta made perfect propaganda: it realistically acknowledged and expressed sympathy for the audience’s situation and depicted it as the worst part of the war, to be followed not by death but rather by their relations’ triumphant return home.

Such propaganda assures ordinary citizens that they can make a tangible contribution to a cause greater and more important than their own personal interests and lives (negligible as the impact of their efforts may have been).30 For Austrians, the war also afforded an opportunity to finally be part of the mighty German empire. The cut letter scene shows the camaraderie of the army uniting the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s various ethnic groups. Yet its actual causes remained confusing to many citizens. The operetta both shows the audience how they are part of the war effort and more surprisingly articulates a justification for the war. Kálmán and Léon wrote propaganda that not only stirs the hearts of its audience but also constructs a historical

30 Marsha Rozenblit posits that the war offered opportunities for Jewish women in particular to indicate their loyalty and sacrifice to the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a political cause. Ibid.
legacy for the Austro-Hungary/Germany alliance against France in both dramatic and musical terms.

The 1813 Connection: The Iron Ring and “Ich hatt’ einen Kameraden”

_Gold gab ich für Eisen_ also sought to locate the current war in a historical narrative. Because of the many commemorations in 1913 of the centenary of the epochal Battle of Leipzig, the fighting of the Napoleonic period was fresh in the memories of the Viennese. One of the striking features about the operetta is its repeated references to these Napoleonic campaigns. Some of these are held over from the operetta’s earlier incarnations, some are new, and all had much greater import in wartime than in peace. Through the key plot point of an iron ring, implicit in the title, and the repeated invocations of the folk song “Ich hatt einen Kamerad” (which lent the first German version its title), Léon and Kálmán construct a historical link between two wars against France—the present Great War and the historic wars. Even though the two conflicts are separated by a century and are fundamentally separate, by invoking a historical precedent the operetta imposed a historical narrative on the present-day war, a fight whose causes were, for many Viennese citizens, obscure.

The title of the operetta and the plot point suggested by the title evoke this era. The title refers to an heirloom iron ring held by Franz, which Alwin must return to Karoline, engraved

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31 One highly nationalist 1913 German book detailing the Napoleonic campaigns with an emphasis on the Battle of Leipzig even shared a title with the operetta, along with the colorful subtitle of “Germany’s Ignominy and Exaltation in Contemporary Documents, Letters, and Diaries from the Years 1806 to 1815.” Ernst Müsebeck, _Gold gab ich für Eisen: Deutschlands Schmach und Erhebung in zeitgenössischen Dokumenten, Briefen, Tagebüchern aus den Jahren 1806–1815_ (Berlin: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong & Co., 1913).
with the words “Gold gab ich für Eisen” (I gave gold for iron). These rings were popular relics from both the Napoleonic and World War I years, and one appears as Figure 5.1.

On March 23, 1813, Marianne Prinzessin Wilhelm of Prussia had issued a call for women living in Prussian territories to cast aside vanity and donate their gold jewelry for the sake of the war effort, for which they received in exchange just such a ring. Such a donation was, the princess proclaimed, the most beautiful and meaningful way for a woman to support the fatherland in its time of need. The iron ring donation effort had been revived in Austria in the very early days of World War I and was back in full force by the operetta’s premiere in October.

This particular ring dates from the World War I era, but the Napoleonic period relics were similar. It belonged to a Jewish woman in Innsbruck, who received it in exchange for her gold wedding band. “Ring, Austro-Hungarian, war fund,” item EPH 4477, Imperial War Museums, London.

The directive is addressed “an die Frauen im preußischen Staate” and begins, “Das Vaterland ist in Gefahr!” and describes that men and boys have gone off to fight, summoning tears from mothers everywhere. By donating jewelry, money, or any “small valuable” women could prove their worth to the fatherland, even if they could not fight. Müsebeck, Gold gab ich für Eisen: Deutschlands Schmach und Erhebung in zeitgenössischen Dokumenten, Briefen, Tagebüchern aus den Jahren 1806–1815, 216–17.

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(A poster preserved in the Austrian National Library advertises a collection in St. Veit unter den Glan in Carinthia on 28 September 1914, stating that the proceeds will go towards “cripples, widows, orphans, and those returning home.”

The sacrifice was, at the time, largely symbolic. The Aryan Theater founder Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn (see Chapter 2) resurfaced in pages of the Tägliche Rundschau of August 4 to offer a typically misogynist criticism of the donation effort as “a parody of 1813 for the sake of feminine vanity.” It was only later that calls became more genuinely desperate. The Neues Wiener Tagblatt of January 18, 1916 read, in less rousing and more urgent tones that “all dispensable gold and silver should be sacrificed on the altar of the Fatherland, sacrificed for war widows and orphans.” In the first act of the operetta, the revived iron drive is seen onstage, and Marlene and the women’s chorus sing an ode to the donation drive (Nr. 4, “Österreich wird die Frauen preisen”).

The operetta further invokes 1813 in the popular poem and folksong “Der gute Kamerad,” sometimes known by its first line “Ich hatt’ einen Kamaraden” or by its refrains, “Gloria, Viktoria!” and “In der Heimat, in der Heimat…” (Example 5.1)

Originating in the Napoleonic period, the song is a chimera of several nineteenth-century textual and musical sources. The main body of the text, “Der gute Kamerad” is an 1809 poem by Ludwig Uhland memorializing the loyalty and honor of the soldier narrator’s fallen comrade

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34 “Gold gab ich für Eisen – St. Veit an der Glan.” Poster, 61cm x 42cm, September 1914, Buchdruckerei Heinrich Schlick & Söhne, St. Veit an der Glan (Kärnten). KS 16214315, ÖNB Bildarchiv und Grafiksammlung.
36 The history of the song and poem are discussed in Harm-Peer Zimmerman, “Der gute Kamerad: Ludwig Uhlands freiheitliche Konzeption des militärischen Totenkults,” Zeitschrift für Volkskunde 95
Example 5.1: “Ich hatt' einen Kameraden,” later version

(similar to “Der Tamboursg’sell” from Des knaben Wunderhorn). The later, “Soldatenlied”
version of the song excises the last line of each stanza and interpolates at the end of each stanza a
refrain of unknown source:

**Ludwig Uhland, “Ich hatt’ einen Kameraden”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ich hatt’ einen Kameraden,</td>
<td>I had a faithful comrade,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Einen bessern findest du nicht.</td>
<td>None better you could find.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Trommel schlug zum Streite,</td>
<td>The battle drum beat gaily,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er ging an meiner Seite</td>
<td>He marched beside me daily,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In gleichem Schritt und Tritt.</td>
<td>And never fell behind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eine Kugel kam geflogen,</td>
<td>A cannon ball came flying—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilt sie mir oder gilt sie dir?</td>
<td>Is’t for me or is’t for thee?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ihn hat es weggerissen,</td>
<td>It threw him down, and dying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er liegt zu meinen Füßen,</td>
<td>Before my feet he’s lying,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Als wär’s ein Stück von mir.</td>
<td>Just like a part of me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will mir die Hand noch reichen,</td>
<td>His hand he wants to give me,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derweil ich eben lad.</td>
<td>While I must load anew;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kann dir die Hand nicht geben,</td>
<td>My hand cannot be given—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bleib du im ew’gen Leben</td>
<td>Now fare thou well in heaven,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mein guter Kamerad!</td>
<td>My comrade good and true!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**New Refrain, “Ich hatt’ einen Kameraden” (author unknown)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloria, Gloria, Viktoria!</td>
<td>Glory, glory, victory!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mit Herz und Hand fürs Vaterland</td>
<td>With heart and hand for the Fatherland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Vöglein im Walde,</td>
<td>The little bird in the forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die singen so wunderschön:</td>
<td>Who sings so beautifully:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In der Heimat, da gibt’s ein Wiederkommen!</td>
<td>“In the Fatherland, we will meet again!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wer weiß ob wir uns wiedersehen</td>
<td>Who knows if we will meet again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am grünen Strand der Spree?</td>
<td>On the green banks of the Spree.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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37 The setting of the Uhland poem is described in many collections as “after a folk song, first published by Friedrich Silcher in 1825.” Exactly when and how the “Gloria, Viktoria” refrain became attached is unclear. Max Friedlaender and Ludwig Erk, eds., *Deutscher Liederschatz, die schönsten Weisen der alten Sammlung Ludwig Erks* (Frankfurt: C. F. Peters, undated), 190. Meier, *Das deutsche Soldatenlied im Felde*, 60.


The song was also performed by soldiers marching off for war. One particularly poignant example of this was recorded by Elfriede “Piete” Kuhr, a 12-year old diarist who lived in Schneidemühl, a town located between Berlin and the Russian border (now located in Poland).40 On Tuesday, August 2, 1914, she watched the town’s only army unit, the 194th Infantry, leave for the Western Front. She wrote that she was confused about what was meant by a “western” front, since she thought they were fighting Russia, to the east. The soldiers are led by a band that plays the iconic march “Der Wacht am Rhein.” Then they play “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles.” Finally, the soldiers board the train and bid farewell, and Piete hears them singing a final song, which she quotes only by its refrain: “Die Vöglein im Walde, die singen so wunderschön.” It was, of course, “Der gute Kamerad,” in its later version. “It wouldn’t have taken much for me to burst out crying,” Piete wrote of the experience. “I went home by a roundabout way… Mummy looked sad. She said ‘How empty the town will be tomorrow!’”41 (Piete would go on to change her name to the gypsy-like Jo Mihaly and become an expressionist dancer in Weimar Berlin. She became most famous for an anti-war dance she performed while wearing military boots and a helmet.42)

For Piete, the song heightened the affect of an already emotional experience. Its rhetoric—proclaiming that a reunion will indeed come to pass, and that die Heimat is a noble cause—also confers meaning, purpose, and optimism on a war that many people could not easily

40 Elfriede’s diary is published under her later stage name, Jo Mihaly, in both German and English translation. I discovered this anecdote in the opening pages of Peter Englund’s social history of World War I, The Beauty and the Sorrow, Jo Mihaly, --da gibt’s ein Wiedersehn!: Kriegstagebuch eines Mädchens, 1914–1918 (Freiburg: Kerle, 1982); Mihaly, There We’ll Meet Again; Peter Englund, The Beauty and the Sorrow: An Intimate History of the First World War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 6–7.
41 Mihaly, There We’ll Meet Again, 12.
42 With her Jewish husband, she moved to Switzerland in 1933 and later became an author of poetry and children’s literature. Mihaly, --da gibt’s ein Wiedersehn!, forword.
understand. The act of singing such songs together created a united front, purpose, and community in a time of deep sadness and confusion. This was, similarly, the function of the operetta. The iconic status of the song, as well as its connotations of Germanic nationalism (along with “Der Wacht am Rhein,” which will also reappear in the operetta sphere), made it an apt choice for inclusion in the operetta. It instantly evoked an experience that existed outside the theater. Its text also deals with a longed-for reunion between a soldier and his comrade, a perfect parallel for Franz and Alwin. Piete’s experience illustrates the significance of the song not so much for those battlefield but rather for those who remained, like most of the audience and characters of Gold gab ich für Eisen, on the home front.

**Songs from the Front**

*Gold gab ich für Eisen* gives music a special power to link soldiers on the front with their loved ones at home, as seen in the prologue, where “Ich hatt’ einen Kamerad” makes its first appearance. The scene depicts Alwin’s pledge to Franz to return the ring to his mother, and ends with the two rushing off to fight. The subsequent battle remains offstage. The prologue—which was a late addition to the operetta—consists of only three pages of spoken text and music that largely recycles material that was already part of later portions of the score. Its addition allows the audience to meet the missing Franz before his supposed death, both clarifying the exposition of the plot and increasing their sympathies for Franz and his family. The musical sequence found at the end of the end of the prologue is reprised twice later in the operetta: at the end of Act I, when Alwin relives the moment and attempts to come to terms with what he has done, and at the end of Act II, when he tries to explain the events to the citizens of the village—interrupted by Franz’s surprising reappearance. While the prologue’s version was only added late in the
The battlefield presented in the prologue is a highly musical place. The score takes an overtly military tone from the start, beginning with a march for brass, drums, and woodwinds (No. 1. Vorspiel und Melodram). The march is interrupted at one point by a bugle call from the stage (no stage action is indicated in the score or Regiebuch, and the curtain presumably remained closed).\textsuperscript{43} The curtain then opens on an empty battlefield and an unseen male chorus sings from backstage a short “Heil” to the Fatherland, paraphrasing the text though not the music of the Austro-Hungarian Kaiserhymne, the Emperor Franz-Joseph’s personal anthem.\textsuperscript{44} This is the most specifically referential material found in the score, corresponding to actual military ceremonies, but the operetta provides no visual depiction, allowing its audience to imagine a visual analogue.\textsuperscript{45} The goal seems to be to project the home front’s images of war, not war itself. War is established as a noble cause, but the soldiers spend most of their time discussing their missing loved ones and their imminent return to them, writing letters, and otherwise enacting not conflict but its resolution. It is only later in the operetta that themes such as personal heroism, glory, and sacrifice are evoked at all.


\textsuperscript{44}The Regiebuch indicates that the curtain opens before the male chorus sings, though they are not visible. The words of the chorus are, “Heil, Heil! Gut und Blut dem Kaiser! Heil Vaterland!” The words are paraphrased from the second verse of the Kaiserhymne, “Gut und Blut für unsern Kaiser, Gut und Blut fürs Vaterland!” It is drawn from the Kaiserhymne text that was official from 1854 to 1918 (still set to Haydn’s melody, originally beginning “Gott erhalte Franz, den Kaiser” and best known for its German incarnation, “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles”), which did not name the emperor and had official versions in the many different languages of the empire.

\textsuperscript{45}The motivations may have been in part the censor’s prohibitions on military uniforms onstage.
Music is established as a reciprocal link between home and war: first, military music heard at home recalls the front and second, music heard at the front can recall home. At the very end of the prelude, for instance, the oboe introduces a slower, more lyrical theme, marked “Lento.” The dialogue then introduces the main characters of Franz and Alwin. Alwin has fallen in love with Franz’s sister Marlene based on her photograph, and has learned a great deal about Franz’s home village, Gubendorf, and his family. As Franz expresses his desire to return home, music begins again as an underscoring (melodrama), a maestoso theme in F major that will be associated with the idea of familial reunion (“reunion theme”). Franz then sings a gentle diegetic song, also in F major, that he claims he wrote himself, whose refrain is the oboe theme from the overture. The words are childish, with many Austrian dialect diminutives: “Mutterl, Mutterl, Franzerl kommt schon wieder, Mutterl, bitt’ dich, sing’ ihm schöne Lieder.” (Mommy, mommy, Franzy is still going to come back/Mommy, mommy, please sing him pretty songs.) (Example 5.2)

It is music of the barest simplicity, confined to the upper registers and total diatonicism. Franz says he wrote it himself, and the simple scalar theme does sound plausibly childlike. Its quiet, gentle character makes it stand out among the noisier music of the battlefield (as does its triple time signature from the surrounding marches). The rest of the prologue uses music in a more dramatic fashion. Music, it is claimed, is what keeps the despairing soldiers marching on. As the enemy approaches, Franz again sings of his family, again in triple time but this time in a waltz. In the climax of the song, when Franz reaches a high A, he proclaims the power of this
Example 5.2: Kálmán, *Gold gab ich für Eisen*, No. 2 Lied, refrain

```
Franz sehr süß

Mut - terl, Mut - terl, Fran - zerl kommt schon wie - der,

Mut - terl, bitt' dich, sing' ihm schö - ne Lieder.
```

“Franzerl” song to lead and transport him: “Mir klang’s im Kampf und Streit wie trautes Grüßen, es war im Kampfe mein Geleit.” (It sounds to me in struggle and strife like a dear greeting, in battle it was my safe-conduct.) The choice of a slow waltz to introduce was not incidental. Kálmán uses the slow waltz to imagine hypothetical or imagined, as in Julischka and Laczi’s at-first impossible romance in *Der Zigeunerprimas*, Sylva and Edwin’s two major waltz duets in *Die Csárdásfürstin* (to be discussed later in this chapter) and Tassilo’s “Wenn es Abend wird” in *Gräfin Mariza*, among many others.

In the prologue, music is shown to forge a connection across space and time between Franz and his mother (they haven’t seen each other for fifteen years). This use of music to transport is not unusual; in operetta there are numerous instances in which such near-supernatural power has been assigned to a song. This was, the case, for instance, with the unseen orchestra in *Ein Walzertraum*. Here, however, it takes on the higher stakes of underscoring the
Example 5.3: Kálmán, *Gold gab ich für Eisen*, No. 3, song quotation and ending

```
Moderado (im Volkston).

Fr.

Al.

Tremmel schlägt zum Streite, wir gehen Seit an Sei
te in gleichen Schritt und

Langsam.

Trit!

Trit! Vorhang.

Langsam.
```
comforting and uniting potential of music in times of war. The number reaches its climax with the quotation of “Ich hatt’ einen Kamerad” at the end, where it inspires Franz and Alwin to march off towards the enemy. The song is seemingly prompted by Alwin’s words of “wir bleiben Kameraden,” Accompanied by a startling modulation from D major to B-flat major, it is the first time the two have sung together, and emerges as a strongly marked musical moment even if the audience were not to recognize the extremely popular song. After the characters finish and exit, the orchestra, with another strum of the harp, moves back to the waltz’s key of D major, as well as the waltz’s theme, this time marked “langsam.” (Example 5.3)

This short sequence has presented two instances of diegetic music: Franz’s song and the folksong quotation. Both suggest the strength of familiar sounds in times of uncertainty: the childhood song reminds Franz of his younger years with a power that simple non-diegetic singing would not have done, and the folk song places the fight in the context of a larger patriotic effort, tying it both to earlier wars and to communal music experiences in general (like Piete’s memory of the song). The folk song returns twice later in the operetta. The second appearance is the only iteration that was also in the operetta’s 1911 version, Der gute Kamerad. In No. 9 (Auftritt Alwins), just before the Act I Finale, Alwin reshuffles the material from the prologue, trying to come to terms with his survival when his comrade (he believes) died. The Uhland text, this time, is not the promise of reunion but the moment of death: “Eine Kugel kam geflogen, gilt sie mir oder gilt sie dir?”

The final appearance of “Ich hatt einen Kamerad” is in the operetta’s finale. When Marlene realizes that Franz is not her son, Franz conveniently appears, singing the Franzerl song yet again. Upon the reunion, an invisible backstage chorus intones, “Ich hatt’ einen Kameraden, einen bessern findst du nit!” The song appears unprompted, like a proto film soundtrack,
providing an appropriate musical articulation of the moment’s affect. It is belatedly made
diegetic: after the singing finishes, and the same harp makes the same flourish as it had in the
prologue, and the stage directions indicate “loud celebrations, farmers, soldiers rush in” (“lauter
Jubel, Bauern, Soldaten drängen hinein”), meaning that the invisible chorus was literally a group
of farmers and soldiers observing the proceedings just out of view (onstage, they begin singing
“Jauchzend, jubelnd, laßt ihn empfangend!” to the theme of the Franzerl song). The impression
is of a collective unconscious, a reflexive utterance of patriotic songs as the occasion demands.

_Gold gab ich für Eisen_ depicts the uncertainty and grief of wartime life but it also portrays
means of relief: letters, unexpected homecomings, and entertaining music. That such an apt
(with, granted, a few canny alterations) work had been written not during but before the war was
acknowledged by several critics. The _Neues Wiener Journal_ went so far to say that the work was, in
peacetime, too “pathetisch” and excessively sentimental, but in this form has far greater
resonance.⁴⁶ Echoing some of the syntax of Felix Salten’s _Die neue Operette_, the _Fremden-Blatt_
critic Julius Stern said that the work was an “friendly evening, full of soul and comfortable
amusement, in which the day, the hour in which we are living now, with its frights and its hopes,
is reflected back to us… and the most notable thing is that this piece was not originally conceived
for this day or this hour.”⁴⁷ _Liebenswürdig_ was, in fact, the adjective of choice to describe the
operetta, best translated as “endearing” or “friendly,” and implying a sort of affectionate regard.
The _Fremden-Blatt_ distinguished between the operetta’s timeliness—what made it

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⁴⁷ “liebenswürdiger Abend, voll Gemüt und angenehmer Heiterkeit, in denen der Tag, die Stunde, die
wir jetzt leben, mit ihrem Bangen und ihrer Hoffnung sich widerspiegelt [sic]… und die Merkwürdige
ist, daß das Stück ursprünglich nicht für den Tag und nicht für die Stunde gedacht war.” st [Julius Stern],
liebenswürdig—from its more objective virtues, writing that as well as being timely it was far superior to Der gute Kamerad on the objective merits of pace and cleverness.

Several critics praised its moderation. The Neue Freie Presse wrote that the work was “never too sentimental,” and the Neue Wiener Journal specified that the cast “tried to make the pathos real and gripping but also cautious and noble.” The critic preferred the music’s Singspiel character, calling it “sympathetic simplicity,” and found that Kálmán’s occasional incursions into operatic territory were not as suited to the work’s overall character or to his compositional strengths. The music was, according to the Neue Freie Presse, “in a manner of speaking, Austro-Hungarian music” in its mix of “almost rustic rural character and Hungarian folk character,” a move away from the more urbane, cosmopolitan character that operetta, by 1914, conventionally cultivated.

Yet Gold gab ich für Eisen had a strange post-Vienna life. It was a hit in Berlin, but its greatest success would come in enemy territory. It was rewritten yet again, and opened again on December 6, 1916 in New York as Her Soldier Boy, where it ran for a stellar 204 performances. In this version, it was set among the Allies in Belgium and, in a clever twist, Karoline was made blind, making her false recognition of Franz far more plausible. Sigmund Romberg and perhaps a few other uncredited composers wrote several new numbers. The English war song “Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag and Smile, Smile, Smile” was added to considerable effect.

49 Frey, Emmerich Kálmán, 107. Some more information on this score can be found in Everett, Sigmund Romberg, 89–91.
50 The published edition bears only Romberg’s name. Sigmund Romberg, Her Soldier Boy (New York: G. Schirmer, 1916), call number “M.C. (Her soldier boy),” NYPL.
Kálmán and the Karczag-Verlag were paid for these performances only with great difficulty. Meanwhile, in Vienna, the mood seemed to have shifted: after Gold gab ich für Eisen and the Lehár-Eysler collaboration Komm', deutscher Brüder!, there were few more propaganda operettas. The theatrical public seemed to prefer a kind of euphoric celebration, often with socially adventurous elements (such as the African–American character in Ascher’s Bruder Leichtsinn and the Jewish ones in Eysler’s Frühling am Rhein). But meanwhile, operetta’s apparent complicity or indifference to the sufferings on the front began to be questioned.

KARL KRAUS AND THE OPERETTA WAR

Despite its relatively short life, Gold gab’ ich für Eisen became a frequent target for one of the war’s fiercest critics, satirist Karl Kraus (1874-1936). For Kraus, the propaganda operetta represented a kind of brainwashing practiced by the powerful to comfort the masses into compliance with an outrageous, senseless war, and music and text from the operetta reverberates through his anti-war writings and plays Kraus had long been on a noisy crusade condemning hypocrisy, pretension, superficiality, and moral laxity in Viennese literature and society. His first major foray was the satirical essay Die demolierte Literatur, published in 1897, which attacked the Café Griensteidl circle of Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, Felix Salten, and others. In 1899, he began publishing the magazine Die Fackel (The Torch), writing almost all of the articles himself. In

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51 Frey, Emmerich Kálmán, 108.
53 Die Fackel is available in its entirety online through an open-access project of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, both in images of the original pages and in text. The database is nearly complete and fully searchable at http://www.aac.ac.at/fackel. The entire run of the journal from 1899 to 1936 (Kraus’s death)
its early years, the journal’s cover depicted the titular torch dispelling clouds over the Vienna skyline, made recognizable by the outline of Stephansturm and the neighboring Hofburg dome. A complicating factor is his ambivalent relationship to his Jewish heritage: Kraus had renounced his religion in 1899 and converted to Catholicism in 1911, until he renounced that as well in 1923. Though he had internalized a great deal of anti-Semitism and is often described as a “self-hating Jew,” his relationship with Catholicism was hardly less fraught. Anti-Semitic stereotypes run rife through his condemnations, particularly when he discusses operetta.\\(^{54}\)

Few were safe from Kraus’s opprobrium. On the smallest scale, he wrote glosses: short items about any kind of current event that, in a seemingly objective fashion, dryly related an event or offered a quotation excerpted from a newspaper. In the context of \(\textit{Die Fackel}\), the report was meant to appear, almost invariably, as a sign of decay or corruption. These were juxtaposed with longer, often rather hysterical essays on topics from literature to social events to, of course, operetta. His most ambitious work was the play \(\textit{Die letzten Tage der Menschheit}\) (The Last Days of Mankind), begun during the final years of World War I and extensively revised and published in multiple versions over the course of the following decade.\\(^{55}\) It is unperformable in its full form.

Kraus’s writing in both \(\textit{Die Fackel}\) and \(\textit{Die letzten Tage der Menschheit}\) flows in a stream of consciousness style that prefigures Robert Musil, constructing a dense network of allusion and

\(^{54}\) Kraus and Judaism are examined in Paul Reitter, \textit{The Anti-Journalist: Karl Kraus and Jewish Self-Fashioning in Fin-de-Siècle Europe} (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2008).


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metaphor. Without specific knowledge of Kraus’s referents his work can be difficult to understand. He poses formidable challenges for translators, and only a few selections from *Die Fackel* and a severely abridged *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* have been rendered in English.

Several of Kraus’s pre-war essays on operetta have already been discussed (see Chapter 2). His most important work on operetta was “Grimassen über Kultur und Bühne” (Grimaces regarding culture and the stage), published in late 1908. Other important essays on this theme include “Girardi” (March 1908) and “Ernst ist das Leben, heiter war die Operette,” (Life is serious, operetta was cheerful, published 1910-11). His overarching theme is a familiar one: operetta began in the works of Offenbach as a subversive and counter-establishment art, critical of those in power and holding nothing sacred—that is, performing much the same social role as his own *Die Fackel*. But in more recent Viennese works, he argues, composers and librettists had abandoned its responsibility to unmask the powerful and now served to overwhelm audience members in a wash of over-the-top sentiment and sensory stimulation.

For Kraus, operetta was not simply a problem in and of itself but rather the key manifestation of the bankruptcy of Austro-Hungarian civil society. In Silver Age operetta Kraus saw in microcosm a world that finds obedience and conformity easier than rational, original

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58 The title of the latter references Schiller’s *Wallensteins Lager*, “Ernst ist das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst” [life is serious, art is cheerful], with a key change in the tense of the second clause. Kraus, “Grimassen über Kultur und Bühne”; Kraus, “Girardi”; Karl Kraus, “Ernst ist das Leben, heiter war die Operette,” *Die Fackel* 12, no. 313/314 (November 1910): 13–16.
thought: a society that esteems operetta tenors over more serious artists; a society that had degraded a genre with an important social function into one whose primary raison d’être was profit, namely the selling of champagne.\textsuperscript{59} Operetta served the same evil purposes as Kraus’s greatest nemesis, the mass-distribution newspaper. Both closed the floor to debate by inducing public panic and promoting the submission to authority. As Edward Timms puts it, for Kraus “an operetta culture glosses over logical contradictions, encouraging a willingness to dance to the music of time regardless of who is calling the tune. When the world comes to an end, Kraus observed in January 1908, orchestras in all European cultural centres will still be playing the song ‘Dummer, dummer Reitersmann’ from \textit{Die lustige Witwe}.”\textsuperscript{60}

The perceived failings of operetta were, to Kraus, such an effective metaphor for the failings of the empire as a whole that he condemned the decadence of 1912 Vienna as an “Operettenkultur”:

\begin{quote}
Here all is surface; we let it all stoop and inform ourselves through feuilletons, beer money, and operettas... for ten \textit{sic}, actually six] years we have rhapsodized over the world of Danilo and Njegus [of \textit{Die lustige Witwe}]... A society that devotes 75,000 Kronen a year to Herr [Louis] Treumann cannot complain about the billions that are sacrificed for military use. If society goes to pieces, it’s only because it earlier was going so well. No sympathy for a society in which the thieves of culture do best! The performance statistics of a modern operetta are the most bloodstained numbers, which in history books will represent a lost battle. At times, an operetta culture marches out with thirst for war. Its soldiers are writers. Wholly irresponsible subjects, who launch a premiere today and a war tomorrow.\textsuperscript{61}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{59} Kraus, “Grimassen über Kultur und Bühne,” 12.
\textsuperscript{60} Timms, \textit{Karl Kraus, Vol. 2}, 417. The article Timms references is Karl Kraus, “Vorurteile,” \textit{Die Fackel} 9, no. 241 (January 15, 1908): 15.
\textsuperscript{61} “Hier ist alles Obericht; denn sie läßt sich zu allem herab und alles verständigt sich durch Feuilleton, Trinkgeld und Operette... Zehn Jahre lang haben sie für das Milieu der Danilos und Njegusche geschwärmt... Eine Nation, die 75.000 Kronen jährlich an Herrn Treumann zahlt, soll sich nicht über Milliarden beklagen, die für militärische Zwecke geopfert werden. Wenn die Geschäfte schlecht gehen, so ist es nur, weil sie früher zu gut gegangen sind. Kein Mitleid mit einer Gesellschaft, in der es den Kultureinbrechern am besten ging! Die Aufführungsziffer einer modernen Operette ist die blutigste Zahl, die in der Geschichte eine verlorene
Operetta was the interface between the “culture thieves” and ordinary people. It was the exact opposite of true art (as epitomized in his pun on a typo between König Lear and König Lehár in *Die letzten Tage*): instead of raising consciousness, it encouraged unconsciousness, instead of encouraging individual thought it constructed an artificial collective consciousness dedicated entirely to forgetfulness, promoting a star culture of fascistic joy, all for the enrichment of a few (mostly Jewish) “artists” at the expense of society. Before the war he argued that operetta was a symptom of deeper disorder; during the war it became the sound of the coming apocalypse.

To Kraus, the war represented the triumph of the culture thieves—those who profited on weapon sales and gouged food prices even as the common people were slaughtered (who were compliantly under the pernicious influence of the press and entertainment industry). He describes how Vienna went from a society that was obsessed with operetta to one that was itself an operetta: an antiquated form of determined jollity with oppressive ubiquity and uniformity, and no individual craftsmanship in sight. This is most clearly seen in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*, his vast and kaleidoscopic drama of World War I. As the Grumbler (*der Nörgler*), the drama’s voice of conscience, puts it:

> And did you not notice how the tragedy [of the war] became a farce, became, through the simultaneousness of a new and hateful nuisance and a mania for fossilized forms, an operetta, one of those loathsome modern [newfangled] operettas, whose libretto is an indignity and whose music is torture?\(^{64}\)

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62 Act I Scene 1, *Die letzten Tage*
63 This is analyzed by Gerald Stieg, “*Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*: Eine negative Operette?,” in *Österreich und der grosse Krieg*, ed. Klaus Amann and Hubert Lengauer (Vienna: C. Brandstätter, 1989).
64 Translation from Karl Kraus, *No Compromise: Selected Writings of Karl Kraus* (New York: Ungar, 1977), 13. The original German reads, “Und spürtet nicht, wie die Tragödie eine Posse wurde, durch die Gleichzeitigkeit neuen Unwesens und alten Formenwahns eine Operette, eine jener ekelhaften

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Operetta creators were tantamount to war profiteers, their music equivalent to his loathed *Neue Freie Presse*, a mass deception.

Kraus’s portrayal of operetta in this drama takes on a synecdochic quality; like his other journalism it splices songs and individual lines into a new context. In the play, operetta music is heard in the streets and in a nightclub, but never in a proper operetta theater. In fact, the entire drama is a theater. When Kraus mentions a specific operetta, he quotes only fragments (usually single songs or the names of performers), their dramatic context excised or replaced. The street scenes, as well as the Act 5 nightclub scene in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* presents its audience with a panorama of voices, from unidentified citizens to soldiers (interested in heroism and operetta), journalists (ditto), newspaper readers (the least informed of all), and many others. Of course this is Kraus’s standard operating procedure—it is as if he has put *Die Fackel* onstage—but as a drama it has a particular significance for operetta. Operettas were written as pieces of theater. They were not quite a *Gesamtkunstwerk* but at least a performance with a particular story, score, staging, and performers. But they were experienced not only in theaters but also in excerpt outside them, including individual songs, potpourris, dance arrangements and other fragmented forms that do not include all of the original elements. In Kraus’s works, operetta is usually heard only in this second form.

His conception of operetta is evident in the ways in which he summons operetta composers, actors, works, and songs over the course of the play. Most of them are only

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neuzeitlichen Operetten, deren Text eine Insulte ist und deren Musik eine Tortur?” The comparison of modern times with a performance contrasts with the use of “Vorstellung” in the previous sentence, where it means “imagining” but in this context can mean “performance.” Such wordplay is what makes Kraus impossible to translate. German original: Kraus, *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit: Tragödie in fünf Akten*, 675.
referred by name in the text, while a smaller amount is heard diegetically. His usage of
operetta can be divided into three broad categories: operetta music, popular songs of Vienna and
Berlin that are not from operettas, and patriotic and folk songs. Kraus mixes operettas from
before the war with wartime ones, mentioning some by title and some only by a song. The songs
most often referenced are, unsurprisingly, those that had been heard by the young diary-writer
Piete Kuhr noted above: “Ich hatt’ einen Kamarad” and “Der Wacht am Rhein.” However, the
operetta-specific references are also numerous and are listed in Table 5.2:

Table 5.2: Operettas Mentioned or Heard in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*\(^{65}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene/Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Librettists</th>
<th>Theater</th>
<th>Premiere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vorspiel 1 (46), 1.1 (78), 2.1 (232), 5.20 (592)</td>
<td><em>Husarenblut</em></td>
<td>Hugo Felix</td>
<td>Ignaz Schnitzer</td>
<td>Theater an der Wien</td>
<td>March 3, 1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vorspiel 1 (46),</td>
<td><em>Der lachende Ehemann</em></td>
<td>Edmund Eysler</td>
<td>Julius Brammer, Alfred Grünwald</td>
<td>Bürgertheater</td>
<td>March 19, 1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 (81), 2.1 (233), 3.1 (325), 3.45 (417), 4.1 (427), 5.1 (553)</td>
<td>“Der gute Kamerad” (heard in <em>Gold gab ich für Eisen</em>)</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 (83), 2.1 (232)</td>
<td><em>Die Csárdásfürstin</em></td>
<td>Kálmán</td>
<td>Bela Jenbach, Leo Stein</td>
<td>Theater an der Wien</td>
<td>November 17, 1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30 (225), 5.43 (643)</td>
<td><em>Der Sterngucker</em></td>
<td>Lehár</td>
<td>Fritz Löhner</td>
<td>Theater in der Josefstadt</td>
<td>January 14, 1916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 (232)</td>
<td><em>Das Fürstenkind</em></td>
<td>Lehár</td>
<td>Victor Léon</td>
<td>Johann-Strauß Theater</td>
<td>October 7, 1909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.27 (611)</td>
<td>“Rondo des Brasilianers,” <em>La vie parisienne</em></td>
<td>Offenbach</td>
<td>Henri Meilhac, Ludovic Halévy</td>
<td>Théâtre du Palais Royale</td>
<td>October 31, 1866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.42 (637)</td>
<td><em>Ein Walzertraum</em></td>
<td>Straus</td>
<td>Felix Dörmann, Leopold</td>
<td>Theater an der Wien</td>
<td>March 2, 1907</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{65}\) Page numbers refer to the 1986 Suhrkamp edition of the play.
Had Kraus actually seen any of the operettas to which his play refers? He was hardly a stickler for accuracy: while the opening of Die letzten Tage is supposedly set near the very beginning of the war, it mentions Die Csárdásfürstin, which did not premiere until 1915. Moreover, he presents operetta like much of his Fackel writing, without any referential context: these are not artistic works but rather fragments of sound representing a broader culture. While he does often reference theatrical culture, he shows no interest in operettas as theatrical works with distinct dramatic identities or stories, preferring to refer to them only by one memorable song, image, or concept. His Zitâtechnik depends on the audience identifying the musical references not as particular pieces but rather as part of a culture.

But he did know something about Gold gab ich für Eisen. Near the end of Die letzten Tage's Act I Scene 1 (not actually the beginning, due to a lengthy Vorspiel), the following exchange occurs:

Two agents enter.
THE FIRST AGENT: So, today for the first time, you know, I gave gold for iron [Gold gab ich für Eisen].
THE SECOND: You know? You can persuade others. You gave it! Grown up—
THE FIRST: Who said, I gave it? Can’t you understand German? I see the poster over there from the premiere today: “I gave gold for iron.” I want to go.
THE SECOND: Good, I'll go too! Today it’s certainly the most interesting thing. Yesterday at Csárdásfürstin, Gerda Walde read out the extra edition about the 4,000 Russians threatening—you should have heard the cheers, she was called back more than ten times.
THE FIRST: Were they surprised?
THE SECOND: Also! This is certainly the most interesting thing now. Recently someone was sitting next to me. Who was it then? Yep—I had a comrade.
THE FIRST: You did?
THE SECOND: Who said, I did? That’s by Victor Léon!
THE FIRST: Good?
THE SECOND: Explosive success!
A NEWSPAPER CALLER: Belgrade bombed—!

The slangy wordplay of the passage is difficult to translate, but depends on a literal readings of the titles *Gold gab ich für Eisen* and *I had a comrade* as sentences. The latter, of course, is the song that also appears in *Gold gab ich für Eisen* when Franz and Alwin are preparing themselves for battle (as well as the title of the earlier version of the operetta). Their close proximity in the text suggests that Kraus knew the quotation, or at least the title of the earlier version.

The folksong (without its operetta associations) serves as a *Leitmotiv* in *Die letzten Tage*, both quoted and sung onstage. In most cases, it is sung by soldiers leaving for the war—precisely the situation in which diarist Piete Kuhr experienced it. Even as the song remains the same, the soldiers grow ever more feeble: at first, it is sung by a group that are simply marked “soldiers” (81), then later “reserve troops of somewhat older age” (325), then “older men” (427), then

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66 The opening depends on the pun of a theater poster that reads “zum erstenmal,” for the first time, used to advertise premieres. Kraus, *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit: Tragödie in fünf Akten*, 83.
DER ERSTE AGENT: Also heut zum erstenmal, Sie, Gold gab ach für Eisen.
Der zweite: Sie? Das können Sie wem andern einreden. Sie haben gegeben! Aufgewachsen —
DER ZWEITE: Gut, geh ich auch! Jetzt is überhaupt am interessantesten. Gestern hat bei der Csárdásfürstin die Gerda Walde die Extraausgabe vorgelesen von die vierzigtausend Russen am Drohtverhau — hätten Sie hören solin den Jubel, zehnmal is wenig, daß sie is gerufen worn.
DER ERSTE:.Warn schon Verwundete??
DER ERSTE: Sie??
DER ZWEITE: Wer sagt, ich? Das ist von Viktor Leon!
DER ERSTE: Guut??
DER ZWEITE: Bombenerfolg!
EIN ZEITUNGSAUSRUFER: Belgraad bombadiert — !

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finally simply “old men” (553). At one point, in between, the song is played by a gypsy band (417), recalling the gypsy version of Mendelssohn’s Wedding March, to be seen in *Die Csárdásfürstin*.

To Kraus, the musicalization of the war concealed its outrage, a rhythmic escape from thoughtful consideration. The old soldiers sing bravely of comrades who do not return even as they leave to become those comrades themselves, and the operetta celebrates this pointless, mindless death onstage. His favorite illustration of this in operetta comes from the finale of *Gold gab ich für Eisen*, where Louise Kartousch, as Xaverl, read out a real war bulletin to the audience. In one of his first extended and important wartime essays, “In dieser großer Zeit” (published December 1914), he wrote, as one of the symbols of hopelessness:

> And gold for iron fell from the altar into the operetta, bombing was a *couplet*, and fifteen thousand prisoners were put in a special edition of the newspaper that a soubrette read aloud so that a librettist might take a curtain call.\(^67\)

This still does not confirm that Kraus actually saw the operetta, because the incident reported here (which seems to have held special fascination for Kraus, he mentions it repeatedly), while not found in the piano-vocal score nor in the printed *Regiebuch*, was detailed in Julius Stern’s *Fremden-Blatt* review:

> Indeed, even the representative of our chief of staff, Generalmajor von Höfer, also collaborated on this [second act] finale. That is to say, Miss Kartousch [as Xaverl] brought our army’s most recent victory report from the northern battleground to read out loud. Celebration on all sides and the end…\(^68\)

---

\(^{67}\) “Und Gold für Eisen fiel vom Altar in die Operette, der Bombenwurf war ein Couplet, und fünfzehntausend Gefangene gerieten in eine Extraausgabe, die eine Soubrette vorlas, damit ein Librettist gerufen werde.” Karl Kraus, “In dieser großen Zeit,” *Die Fackel* XVI, no. 404 (December 5, 1914): 2.

Ultimately it does not matter whether Kraus actually stepped into the Theater an der Wien to see *Gold gab ich für Eisen*. His condemnations do not depend on such details, which he often scrambles for dramatic effect. But the operetta experience is a key element of his critique of Viennese society, one which saw theater as controlled by a small group of capitalists who could use it to manipulate large groups through the powers of entertainment. For someone who wrote a great deal about music, Kraus seems to have been extremely troubled by its potential to transport its listeners. Simultaneously, his readings of operetta texts are limited, recycling the same moments ad infinitum. Kraus adopts operetta for a particular symbolic function in his constellation of Viennese malaise, and he restricts its meaning to a top-down hypnosis of the masses. What might Kraus have written about the rest of *Gold gab ich für Eisen*? He probably would have found the rest of the text more quiet and melancholy that he would have expected, but ultimately confirmed his idea of ideological comfort food. Yet other operettas presented a more complex picture, among them another that Kraus mentioned a few times: Kálmán’s next work, *Die Csárdásfürstin*.

**DIE CSÁRDÁSFÜRSTIN: APOCALYPTIC SATIRE**

The greatest operetta hit of the war period, Kálmán’s *Die Csárdásfürstin*, would seem to be a good candidate on which to test Kraus’s critique: it was an extremely popular, seemingly irrelevant pleasure. While *Gold gab ich für Eisen* offered comfort and patriotism that was never completely divorced from reality, *Die Csárdásfürstin* presented its audience with an aggressively escapist vision. But it was not purely diversionary: the operetta contains a critique of Austrian morals that is as harsh as Kraus’s, and its revelry is frequently tinged with an apocalyptic hysteria that served as a reflection of the war’s terror. While it does not include any explicit references to
war, battle, or death, *Die Csárdásfürstin* presupposes a world of enormous uncertainty. The vehicle for this Dionysian celebration should come as no surprise: gypsy music, whose wild emotionalism is contrasted with the proper social rituals of the Viennese waltz. And, by the end of the operetta, it is not the Viennese but the Hungarians who have triumphed. Out of the death and fear of war, *Die Csárdásfürstin* salvaged something positive: not only an exhortation to live in the present but a promise that the forced casting aside of social customs could have a positive effect, that the gypsy-like liberation of the cabaret promised an apocalyptic utopia.

The librettists were Leo Stein and Bela Jenbach—the former one of the authors of *Die lustige Witwe*, the latter a Hungarian emigrant to Vienna just embarking on a career as a writer. The subject was seemingly original. (Only librettist Alfred Grünwald had disputed this, claiming *La dame aux camélias*—the source of Verdi’s *La traviata*—as its basis. But the similarities are slight at best.69) The first act of the operetta’s spoken dialogue was completed before the war; the second dates from the summer of 1915. All the song texts were written afterwards by Stein, that is, in the midst of wartime.70 The operetta’s premiere was repeatedly delayed and its title changed from the original *Es lebe die Liebe!* (due to the success of Oscar Straus’s similar *Rund um die Liebe*), but it finally took place on November 13, 1915.

*Es lebe die Liebe!* would have been an appropriate title: the operetta offers a catalogue of late imperial love and courtship rituals and relationships, from romantic monogamy to arranged marriage to gleeful promiscuity. And yet *Die Csárdásfürstin’s* second and final title, expediently

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69 This accusation was made by Grünwald to Kálmán in 1944, at a time when the librettist was in deep depression from lack of work in his adopted home of New York, and he made many creative claims regarding some of his less favorite colleagues. Letter to Emmerich Kálmán, July 1944, "T-Mss 1998-030 Grunwald Series I Box 1 Folder 6, NYPL.

70 Frey, *Emmerich Kálmán*, 108. The first act was finished before the war, the second in the summer of 1915.
chosen as it may have been, was also appropriate: by featuring a Budapest nightclub singer as its heroine and an heir to a Fürst as its hero, the operetta also portrays a breakdown in class hierarchy. The central conflict of a couple separated by social inequality was familiar, and including a nightclub singer as one of the characters was also hardly unique. The romance of chanteuse Sylva Varescu and the extravagantly named Edwin Ronald Karl Maria von und zu Lippert-Weylersheim recalls that of Graf Balduin Liebenburg and the nightclub singer Lola Winter in *Das süße Mädel* (see Chapter 2), whose libretto was also co-written by Leo Stein. What gives *Die Csárdásfürstin* its unique character is its canny self-reflexivity and irony demonstrated in its use of local color for expressive purposes.

The first act takes place in Budapest, the second and third in Vienna (first identified coyly in the Regiebuch as “a large metropolis” but named in the score and stage directions as Vienna). In the first act, Sylva wants to tour America, but her trio of admirers can’t stand to see her leave. These include the Viennese aristocrat Edwin, young Hungarian (Romanian?) aristocrat Count Boni (Bonifacius) Kancsiánu, and old Hungarian man of indeterminate social status Féri von Kerekes. As much as Boni and Féri flirt, it is Edwin and Sylva who are truly committed to one another. As Edwin is called for military duty (it is implied that this is not wartime but merely routine), Sylva prepares to depart; however, Edwin first signs a pledge that he will marry her within ten weeks. What Boni knows—and ultimately reveals to Sylva—is that Edwin’s parents in Vienna have already arranged a marriage for him to his cousin, the Countess Stasi.

Act II takes place at the aristocratic Viennese party where Stasi and Edwin’s engagement is to be announced. Sylva turns up incognito with Boni as “Countess Kancsiánu,” claiming they have been married. Stasi, introduced as a sweet and naïve girl with the best intentions, promptly
falls in love with Boni. When Stasi finds out that Edwin loves Sylva, she wants to put things right, however Sylva resists thinking that she will never be accepted by this society (tragic second act finale). In the third act, which takes place in a Viennese hotel, the class distinctions are erased with a recognition scene: the elder Féri von Kerekes realizes Edwin’s mother is a former nightclub singer herself, a fact she has concealed for decades, thus allowing for a happy ending with the two couples appropriately matched.\footnote{Stein, Jenbach, and Kálmán, \textit{Die Csárdásfürstin: Operette in drei Akten. Soufflier- und Regiebuch}. A full plot summary can be found in Gänzl and Lamb, \textit{Gänzl's Book of the Musical Theatre}.}

\textbf{Hungarian Soul, Viennese Hypocrisy}

\textit{Die Csárdásfürstin} begins by presenting its audience with a mirror of themselves. The \textit{Regiebuch} specifies, “the first act takes place in Budapest in an Orpheum… the time is the present.” An “Orpheum” generally connotes a variety theater, a somewhat racy establishment playing revue or cabaret acts, a few ranks lower on the theatrical food chain than the more respectable and expensive Theater an der Wien or the Johann-Strauss-Theater.\footnote{Recall Wilhelm Kaczag’s possibly apocryphal dismissal of \textit{Die lustige Witwe} as a “vaudeville,” presumably fit for a variété rather than his classier establishment “Der erste Akt spielt in Budapest in einem Orpheum… Zeit: Gegenwart.” Stein, Jenbach, and Kálmán, \textit{Die Csárdásfürstin: Operette in drei Akten. Soufflier- und Regiebuch}. Wienbibliothek im Rathaus, sig. 109985a.} The set featured a segment of the Budapest theater, including boxes, tables (in the “orchestra” seating area) and a small stage, which can be seen from the side. Remarkably, there exists a photograph of this set (Figure 5.1) with the entire cast posed onstage, showing the leading actress Mizzi Günther seated at a table covered in bouquets, leaning back into none other than Kálmán himself.
The ornate onstage theater appears to be white with delicate Jugendstil figuration, presumably gold, thus reproducing the color scheme of the Johann-Strauss-Theater itself.73 The libretto makes note of an onstage band, but it is not clear from the score whether this was actually used—in most other cases, such an onstage band’s music would be noted as “auf der Bühne,” and no instrumentalists can be seen in the photograph.

Figure 5.2: *Die Csárdásfürstin*, stage photo with cast74

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73 Leopold Jacobson describes the interior as white, gold, and red (the standard colors for theaters of this time and the color scheme of the Theater an der Wien as well). bs [Leopold Jacobson], “Die Eröffnung des Johann-Strauß-Theaters,” *Neues Wiener Journal*, October 31, 1908.

74 “Mizzi Günther,” photographed by Charles Scolik, September 17, 1915. Seated at table, leaning back, with (from left to right) Max Brod, Susanne Bachrich, Josef König, Emmerich Kálmán, and Karl Bachmann. #12993097 - NB 506723-B, ÖNB Bildarchiv.

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The opera opens not with the usual expository, informative “Introduktion” presenting the setting and characters but rather a spectacular exotic production number—a song and dance for Sylva entitled, “Heia, heia in den Bergen.” Performed in the distancing space of a theater-within-a-theater, the audience immediately grasps that Sylva is a professional singer in a role and the text is not to be taken seriously as plot exposition. But Sylva is immediately established as the queen of the theater space and Kálmán’s high csárdás style as the sound of theater. Sylva’s song (Example 5.4) reproduces most of the tropes of Hungarian musical style. The entire number is in the minor mode, beginning with a rhapsodic, slow section with melismas and an emphasis on the raised sixth degree of the scale (D natural); the movement from straight eighth notes to triplets in the vocal part on the words “in den Bergen ist mein Heimatland” creates an impression of rubato. The orchestration includes a solo violin in unison with the vocal line, rapid arpeggios in the harp in lieu of a cembalo, as well as brass call-and-response style echoes of the vocal line. This moves into a fast section in duple meter with moto perpetuo eighth notes, orchestrated with a tambourine as well as scale figures in the woodwinds, decorated with mordents, and eventually some of the melodic figures traditional to the csárdás.75 The chorus, including the onstage audience members, joins in on the chorus, and a dance section includes notated hand claps.

75 The number was inevitably described as a csárdás by Viennese critics. However, it also contains elements of the Romanian doina, particularly in its rhythm, a form Kálmán probably knew much better than the Viennese. I am grateful to Jason Roberts for this suggestion.
Example 5.4: Kálmán, *Die Csárdásfürstin*, No. 1, Lied der Sylva mit Chor

a) Vocal entrance
b) Coda
The song is not intended to communicate a traditional folk music interiority, as the music of *Die lustige Witwe* does. It is later revealed that Sylva’s misrepresents herself in her song: while she proclaims that she is from the mountains and appears in folk costume from the Siebenburg region, she later proclaims that she is from Kis-Küküllö, a part of Transylvania that is not near Siebenburg at all. (Both, however, would explain why she is described as speaking with a Romanian accent.) But in other ways it articulates an important truth:

*Die Csárdásfürstin*, No. 1, Lied der Sylva mit Chor, “Heia, heia, in den Bergen ist mein Heimatland,” second section

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wenn ein Siebenbürgen Mädel sich in dich verliebt</th>
<th>When a girl from Siebenbürg loves you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicht zum spielen, nicht zum scherzen sie ihr Herz dir gibt,</td>
<td>Not playing, not joking, gives you her heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willst du dir die Zeit vertreiben such’ ein and’res Schätzelein</td>
<td>If you want to waste time, look for another sweetheart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bist du mein, mußt mein du bleiben, mußt deine Seel verschrieben,</td>
<td>If you’re mine, you must stay, must devote yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muß ich Himmel dir und Hölle sein.</td>
<td>I must be your heaven and hell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ol la la! So bin ich gebaut.</th>
<th>Oh la la! That’s the way I am</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ol la la! Auf zum Tanz!</td>
<td>Oh la la! To the dance!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Küß’ mich, ach küß’ mich,</td>
<td>Kiss me, oh kiss me,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Den wer am beste küssen kann</td>
<td>The one who can kiss best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nur der wird mein Mann!</td>
<td>Only he will be my man!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sylva introduces herself as a symbol of romantic, eternal love. While in some ways she draws on the conventional trope of the domineering, exotic, Carmen-like woman (as she is, at least, portrayed in this gypsy music number), she also preaches a near-bourgeois fidelity not normally associated with the fleeting pleasures of the theater space she occupies. While not all the love celebrated in the cabaret is made to last, Sylva is absolutely clear that she demands attraction and commitment. The alternative—the hypocritical world of aristocratic courtship—will be seen in Act II.
The onstage hand claps and the onstage audience’s chorus establish this purportedly diegetic number as a communal activity. This elision between the operetta space and the diegetic performance space is furthered when the number ends with the chorus and audience crying out bravo three times (Example 5.4b) The bravos provide rhythmic closure to the number, making its performative nature inextricable. The effect of this framing is, perhaps counterintuitively, to draw the operetta’s audience into the world of spectacle and romance, making the spectatorship an integral part of the performance. Die Csárdásfürstin’s audience sees the way Sylva’s onstage audience is participating—clapping, singing along, and even finishing the number—and absorbs some of their enjoyment and forgetfulness. Without the theater-within-the-theater staging that explains their existence, the bravos are a jarring ending for a song. But they give the number its (abruptly major-key) ending, and if left out, the song ends on an abrupt cadence that is equally or even more unsatisfying.

The first act mostly presents a vision of fun escape: The next few purportedly non-diegetic numbers express sentiments that would be more expected for the world of varieté. Nos. 2 and 4 are both songs for Boni with backup singers and dancers, written in a bouncy cabaret style: first “Alle sind wir Sünder” expresses love for the ladies of the Orpheum, who don’t take love and sex too seriously, and secondly “Ganz ohne Weiber geht die Chose nicht,” in which Boni says that he probably will never be able to give up women entirely. In fact, they are exactly the sorts of numbers one would hear onstage in a varieté such as the one in which the act is set. Both include extensive dancing, express mildly racy sentiments and show a few style Hongrois tropes. In

76 While like many operetta numbers, this song has found great popularity outside its home operetta, this coda has proved a great challenge for those who remove it from its dramatic context. Some performances simply excise the last four bars, ending the number abruptly, or sing the bravos on a neutral syllable such as “la.”
addition, the first number in particular, in its march form and salute to women, seems to be an imitation of *Die lustige Witwe*’s “Wie die Weiber.”

In contrast, Edwin and Sylva’s love duets are introspective and do not suggest the same maniacal drive or energy. The refrain of their duet is a slow waltz with long, drawn-out phrases. Their first duet, No. 3 “Sylva, ich will nur dich,” falls between Boni’s two numbers. The orchestration includes a celesta, the tempo is marked “Sehr langsam,” and the refrain moves into a slow waltz. While Boni is concerned with fleeting pleasures, the text here, in which both Edwin and Sylva proclaim that they are hopelessly love with each other, is far more serious. While Boni salutes women who don’t take love too seriously, Edwin and Sylva proclaim “for me there is only one.” Like Hanna and Danilo in *Die lustige Witwe*, Edwin and Sylva had begun the operetta with a pre-existing relationship, which gives their relationship a greater depth and adult quality than love at first sight romance. Boni will have a romance that begins this very way in Act II, but it is clear that Edwin and Sylva’s relationship is of a different order.

While the notions of romance expressed by Boni on the one hand and Edwin and Sylva on the other differ considerably, the theater created within the operetta is, paradoxically, as a place of genuine, sincere expression and feeling. In the cabaret, neither Sylva, Boni, and Edwin are able to freely pursue their partners of choice, whomever they may be. Their music is sincere and emotional, the kind of expression associated with gypsies and the *style Hongrois*. This is heard not only in Sylva’s “Heia” but also in No. 5, “O jag’ dem Glück,” another csárdás but this one for Sylva, Edwin, Boni, and Feri, largely similar to “Heia.” It takes the language and message of “Heia” offstage and into reality. Life is not taken too seriously, as evidenced by Kálmán’s most fanciful touch in the entire operetta: a gypsy music parody of Mendelssohn’s *Midsummer Night’s*
Dream wedding march in the style of a csárdás (introduced as “Zigeuner her! Vorwärts, den Hochzeitsmarsch! Den von Mendel und Sohn!”).

Although the second act, like the first, focused on courtship and performance (the Budapest chorus girls supplanted by a ball), the Vienna setting contrasts with the free-thinking world of the Orpheum. The setting is described in the Regiebuch: “a large hall in the villa of the Fürst Lippert-Weylersheim. Adjoining ballroom, from where music can be heard at the

Example 5.5: Kálmán, *Die Csárdásfürstin*, No. 7 Tanzwalzer
beginning of the act. We see young couples dancing.” The music is an old-fashioned fast Viennese waltz rather than a slow Kálmán one. (Example 5.5) It follows the model of Johann Strauss II: beginning with a fanfare-like introduction with several waltz-typical rhythms, then moving into the first strain with a punchy oom-pah-pah accompaniment under short, repeating figures that bounce along, quite different from the legato phrases of Edwin and Sylva’s duet. Indeed, the beginning of Act II is where, in the conventional Silver Age model, the exotic dance number should appear, however this number has already been seen in Act I—Sylva’s “Heia, in den Bergen”—and now Vienna is playing the part of the exotic locale. This is the first tip-off that Vienna is being treated not only as a place but also as a symbol.

Vienna is established as a world of conformity and hypocrisy through a shift in both musical style and the nature of the text-music relationship. In No. 8, the “Schwalben-Duett,” the betrothed Stasi and Edwin attempt to reconcile their feelings about marriage. Edwin proclaims Stasi to be wholly naïve, proclaiming “Ich warte auf das große Wunder tra la la, von dem man so viel spricht” (I’m waiting for the big miracle, tra la la, that people talk about so much). Edwin responds “In Wirklichkeit ist alles anders tra-la-la, die Wunder kommen nicht.” (In reality everything is different, tra la la, a miracle doesn’t happen.) But despite their difference of opinion, Stasi and Edwin settle in for a waltz refrain, operating on the dubious metaphor of

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78 A typology of typical waltz rhythms and melodic patterns can be found in Schönherr, “Modelle der Walzerkomposition: Grundlagen zu einer Theorie der Walzers.”
Example 5.6: Kálmán, *Die Csárdásfürstin*, No. 8 Schwalbenduett, beginning

“Machen wir’s den Schwalben nach, bau’n wir uns ein Nest.” (We’ll do as the swallows do, we’ll build a nest.)

This text is set against music with a delicate and inconsequential character (Example 5.6): a jumpy, staccato woodwind figuration, celesta, and violin pizzicato, marked “Allegretto grazioso.” While the music reflects the socially mandated and appropriate courtship of Edwin

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79 The conventional symbolism of swallows is that they will inevitably fly away and return home, as seen in Puccini’s *La rondine, The Swallow*, conceived around this time as an operetta for the Carltheater.
and Stasi, the text reflects the unromantic reality of which Edwin is entirely conscious—and Stasi will pick up on soon enough. The disjunction between music and text portrays, here, a disjunction between social expectations and the characters’ actual feelings, a gulf that had not been present in the free space of the Budapest cabaret.

The following number, a duet for Edwin and Sylva, reinforces the feeling of the Orpheum as a lost utopia (No. 9, Duett “Heller Jubel, Händedrücke”). The text recalls their good old days, and the music similarly recalls their duet from Act I both in broad and specific terms. Both numbers are slow waltzes, Kálmán’s preferred form for songs of wistfulness and remembrance, and the same melodic motive dominates both verses, thus causing the audience to remember those times with the characters. The figure from the first duet (“Sich verlieben kann

Example 5.7: Kálmán, Die Csárdásfürstin, duet motives
a) Act I, No. 3 Duett (Sylva, Edwin), verse

\[\text{Allegretto grazioso.}\]

\[
\text{Sich verlieben kann man öfters Lieben kann man einmal nur!}
\]

\[\text{p dolce}\]

\[\text{Celeste.}\]

\[\text{Neue Fass.}\]

b) Act II, No. 9 Duett (Sylva, Edwin), verse

\[\text{Sehr breit, schwärmereich.}\]

\[
\text{Unvergänglich schöne Feier, wie stand ich da voll Seligkeit? Im}
\]

\[\text{dolce}\]

\[\text{Solo Vi.}\]

\[\text{Ri. Fc.}\]
man”) is inverted in the second act’s “unvergeßlich schöne,” the rhythmic profile identical, both parts of a two-bar segment. The words of the second explicitly recall the events of the first act as the music recalls the moments they describe. Sylva and Edwin’s romance, they conclude, was only a “lustiger Roman” (happy fiction), not reality. (They might as well have said “lustige Operette.”) Regardless, the number is possibly the emotional high point of the operetta and its sincerity and regret stand out in particular when surrounded by the irony of the preceding and following numbers.

The Quartet no. 10 for the four leads that follows in fact contains the most bitter music of the entire work: the quartet in which Sylva believes Edwin and Stasi are truly engaged, and Edwin believes Sylva and Boni are truly married. All are furious with each other. (Example 5.8)

Example 5.8: Kálmán, *Die Csárdásfürstin*, No. 10 Quartet

![Example 5.8: Kálmán, *Die Csárdásfürstin*, No. 10 Quartet](image-url)
Again, the distance between appearance and reality are revealed through dramatic irony. The characters are paired incorrectly, yet sing, in a fast and bright Viennese-style waltz, about how much they love their respective partners. The language quickly descends into nonsensical endearments that defy any sense of logic:

| Mutzi, mich reißt es | Mutzi, it seizes me,         |
| Putzi, mich schmeißt es | Putzi, it throws me,       |
| jukkend, zukkend zu dir! | Itching, twitching to you! |
| Hupf' mit mir du süßen Mopsi! | Hop with me, my sweet Mopsi! |
| Mach' mit mir ein kleines Hopsi! | Make a little leap with me! |
| Zukkerweib, gib einen Walzer zu! | Sweet women, give me a waltz! |
| Keine tanzt Polka wie du! | No one dances a polka like you! |

The refrain, sung in unison, becomes increasingly frantic: “Hurrah, hurrah! One lives only once and once is nothing, one lives only once, yes!” While the sentiments are right, indeed not far from those of Budapest, all are aware that the situation is entirely wrong. The Viennese waltz has come here to symbolize social hypocrisy and the artifice of etiquette, when the unconstrained style Hongrois found not in the high society ballroom but in the lowly Orpheum is the real utopia of romance.

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80 “Hurrah, hurrah! Man lebt ja nur einmal und einmal ist keinmal, nur einmal lebt man ja!”
81 In the Wiener Volksoper’s 1987 production of Die Csádásfürstin, directed by Rudolf Herzl, this number was moved to the musically sparse Act III and rearranged so the couples were paired correctly, to disastrous dramatic effect.
The third act aptly features a reconciliation of the worlds of Budapest and Wien. The denizens of the Orpheum, along with Sylva and Boni, have camped out in a Viennese hotel. Sylva sings along with Boni and Feri another gypsy number, this one the most direct (No. 14, “Jaj, Mamán”) (Example 5.9), beginning “Nimm Zigeuner, deine Geige.”

Example 5.9: Kálmán, Die Csárdásfürstin, No. 14 Terzett, refrain

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82 Sylva is resigned to playing the “title role” in Die Wildente (The Wild Duck by Henrik Ibsen, whose plot suggests some vague parallels but whose title creature is merely a duck—such is typical of operetta’s sense of literary humor.
This is gypsy music in its most basic form: a plea to bury one’s sorrows in music, aided by the passion of the *style Hongrois* spirit:

**Text, No. 14, Terzett, refrain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spiel, Zigeuner, deine Geige</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>laß seh’n was du kannst,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>schwarzer Teufel, spiel’ und zeige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wie dein Bogen tanzt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiel’ ein Lied, das weint und lacht,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spiele bis dein Bogen kracht.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiele bis heran bricht hell das Morgenrot!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiele Betyár, schlage mir die Sorgen tot!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play, gypsy, your fiddle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Show what you can do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black devil, play and show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How your bow can dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play a song that cries and laughs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play until your bow cracks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play until the dawn begins to break!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play, Betyár, beat my cares away!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The music is Kálmán’s now-familiar mix of cabaret and Hungary, though this time not taking advantage of the full csárdás form. As well as the presence of the Orpheum characters, the tambourine, scales, syncopation, and gradual acceleration of tempo, as well as the obviously marked text align the number with Act I. Just like the sudden appearance of the Grisetten in *Die lustige Witwe*, the Orpheum has arrived in the Viennese hotel, and the theater itself is presented as the cure to all ills, both of the operetta’s own characters and those of the Viennese audience. Only one plot development of significance occurs in the act: Budapest regular Feri recognizes Edwin’s mother as a former nightclub singer, which means her condemnation of Sylva was invalid.

There is a persistently apocalyptic thread running through the texts of *Die Csárdásfürstin*: “weißt du wie lange noch der Globus sich dreht,” (“who knows how much longer the globe will yet turn”) “man lebt ja nur einmal und einmal ist keinmal,” (“one lives only once and once is nothing”) “ja, das waren traute Zeiten, sie sind für immer nun vorbei.” (“Yes, those were dear times, they are now gone forever.”) Genuine joy is found only in the memory of the past or the delirious present. The operetta endorses the latter. The social distinctions of Edwin’s Viennese
family are founded only on hypocrisy. Nor does the operetta advocate for the Orpheum as the future—at no point does Die Csárdásfürstin seem to provide a vision of any future at all (with the exception of Edwin’s gloomy discourse on marriage in the Schwalben-Duett). Rather, Die Csárdásfürstin is dedicated to the enjoyment of the present, uncertain and insecure as it might be.

“Not Comic Enough”

Die Csárdásfürstin was a smash hit, running for 533 performances, until May 1917.

Critics found the work somewhat puzzling. Contra Richard Traubner’s assessment of the operetta’s “genial high spirits,” almost all commented that it was very serious. The Neue Freie Presse’s Ludwig Hirschfeld wrote,

One might perhaps only mention in passing that the piece’s concept and realization isn’t comic enough. The mixture of social oppositions and psychological problems is portrayed with too much righteous seriousness, and the smiles of the audience, sympathetically following along, dissolve into tears. They are, however, radically dried in the second act.  

In the Neue Wiener Journal, Alexander Engel concurred, but extended the description of seriousness to include the second act as well:

In the first two acts the authors avoid almost all opportunities for situation comedy... giving the work a certain gravity. 

Die Zeit agreed but casts a more positive light on the development:

The contents opera, the form operetta. Tragic developments with a happy ending, that still suffers no lack of tempestuous scenes or melancholy music... yesterday’s success was,

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84 Die Autoren vermeiden im ersten und zweiten Akt fast ängstlich jede Situationskomik... gibt dem Spiel eine gewisse Schwere. a.e. [Alexander Engel], "Johann-Strauss-Theater [review of Die Csárdásfürstin]," Neues Wiener Journal, November 18, 1915.
however, a distinctly theatrical and dramatic one, that above all belongs to the librettists, who took advantage of all the proven devices as well as many new comic and tragic ones.  

The *Wiener Abendpost*’s critic perhaps came up with the best description of the operetta’s mixture of comedy and sadness: “lächelt unter Tränen” (smiling under tears).  

The reviews for Kálmán’s score were nearly universally positive, most commenting on his penchant for Hungarian national music, but this time in a positive light. Engel wrote that, “the most worthwhile numbers are the national ones,” while Hirschfeld proclaimed his Hungarianisms uniquely authentic: “Kálmán’s Hungarian music is not faked, much of it, like the opposing rhythmic movements of the instrumental voices, the embellishments and rubato tempos, seem to be taken from real gypsy music.”

Unlike some of his previous efforts, his waltzes also received good reviews. In the *Fremden-Blatt*, Julius Stern noted,

> Melodically and rhythmically, he is devoted to his homeland’s genius—one hears it gladly. But then he remembers that there is also life outside Hungary and lets out waltzes of various temperaments: melancholy, easygoing, jubilant, lyrical, created only for dancing, but no ordinary “sensational” ones.

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85 “Der Inhalt Oper, die Form Operette. Tragische Verwicklungen mit gutem Ausgang, der auch keiner noch so leidenschaftlichen Szene, keinem noch so schmerzlichen Musikstück fehlt…. Der gestrige Erfolg war dennoch ein ausgesprochen dramatisch-theatralischer, den vor allem die mit den bewährtesten und auch mit manchen neuen komischen und tragischen Mitteln arbeitenden Librettisten als ihr Verdienst in Anspruch nehmen dürfen.” ld. [pseud.], “Johann-Strauß-Theater [review of *Die Csárdásfürstin*],” *Die Zeit*, November 18, 1915.

86 s.t. [pseud.], “Johann-Strauß-Theater [review of *Die Csárdásfürstin*],” *Wiener Abendpost: Beilage Der Wiener Zeitung*, November 18, 1915.

87 “die wertvollsten Nummern sind die nationalen” a.e. [Alexander Engel], “Johann-Strauss-Theater [review of *Die Csárdásfürstin*].”

88 “Kalmans ungarische Musik ist nicht gekünstelt, manches wie die gegensätzlich rhythmisierte Bewegung der Instrumentalstimmen, die Verzierungen und Tempi rubati., erscheinen, der echten Zigeunermusik verständnisvoll abgelauscht.” “r.” [Ludwig Hirschfeld], “Die Csádásfürstin.”

89 Melodisch und rhythmisch gibt er sich dem heimatlichen Genius hin – man hört ihm gerne zu. Aber bald erinnert er sich, daß außerhalb Hungarias doch auch noch Leben ist und läßt Walzer von der verschiedenstenGemütsart hören: schmerzmüti ge, leichtleibige, jubelnde, lyrische, bloß für Tänzer
Ludwig Karpath of the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* cannily said, while mixing his metaphors, “Kálmán is, if one can say this, the proper Compromise composer [Ausgleich], always standing with one foot in the Hungarian scale and the other on the dance floor, where a Viennese waltz is playing.” Most of all, critics agreed that the music worked with the subject. Stern noted, “everything has color—and well-chosen—and it fits every scene, even every word.”

**THE WRECKAGE OF WAR**

For Karl Kraus, *Die Csárdásfürstin*’s promise of apocalyptic liberation was unforgivably irresponsible, part of a conspiracy to mollify a population that should have been outraged at the massive crimes perpetuated upon them. But, as much as Kraus wanted it to, the need for entertainment did not stop for war. If anything, as the losses and deprivation mounted it only increased. *Die Csárdásfürstin* deals not with political influence and action in favor of self-centered enjoyment and romance. By 1915, the war was not to be stopped, and *Die Csárdásfürstin* articulates a very real powerlessness and confusion felt among the general population, as well as an endorsement of itself as the solution for their woes.

Kálmán and the operetta industry as a whole were loyal to the state throughout the war. But were they, as portrayed by Kraus, part of it? As discussed in Chapter 3, operetta operated both inside and outside the mainstream. As Jews, the creators of operetta held a particular loyalty

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91 “Alles hat Farbe – und gut gewählte – und sie paßt sich der Szene, ja auch dem Worte an.” st [Julius Stern], “Johann-Strauß-Theater [review of *Die Csárdásfürstin*].”
to the Austro-Hungarian state scorned by Kraus. For many Jews, World War I was an opportunity to demonstrate patriotism and service to a state that had offered them a remarkably secure home. The empire’s collapse proved grave dangers. Kálmán and Léon’s tribute to Germanic patriotism in Gold gab ich für Eisen is, in this light, nothing less than a bid to be considered worthy citizens of a Germanic state, and Die Csárdásfürstin evinces the early premonitions of an identity crisis that would engulf Austria after the war’s end. Kraus, whose condemnation of the press and cultural figures was often laced with anti-Semitic tropes, was not sympathetic to these concerns.

While the creators of operetta may not have been as representative of a malignant establishment as Kraus often suggested, his portrayal raises other questions regarding an operetta’s status as a musical work. As described, Kraus shuffled operetta excerpts fairly indiscriminately. Kraus’s vision of operetta is, like most of his glosses, one based on an intentional fragmentation of his source material. Like most of the music of Die letzten Tage der Menschheit, Kraus’s vision of an operetta is less a work encompassing score libretto, and staging than snatches of a music he may have heard in a café—the very place most of the operetta music in Die letzten Tagen von Menschheit occurs. But which experience should take precedence: Kraus’s decontextualized excerpts or the comparatively prestigious performance inside a theater? What can properly be called operetta? Operetta advocates portrayed their works as carefully composed and individual entities, and yet simultaneously pursued this easy and lucrative trade in fragments.

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92 Marsha Rozenblit argues that the Jews were particularly loyal to the imperial state and Habsburg family in Rozenblit, Reconstructing a National Identity. See particularly Chapter 2, “Austrian Jews and the Spirit of 1914,” pp. 39-58.

93 Kraus has often been described as a self-hating Jew, notably by Sander Gilman and Jacques Le Rider. Paul Reitter argues that the issue is more complex—while Kraus often availed himself of anti-Semitic images in his writing, his own identity as an obsessive quoter and glosser was indelibly Jewish. See Reitter, The Anti-Journalist.
For critics, operetta’s life in the street—and its composers’ enthusiastic pursuit of this fame and reputation—overshadowed and even invalidated its creator’s plea for consideration as a musical work equal to an opera or a symphony.

The complexities of Die Csárdásfürstin can be illustrated by consideration of a second production. Peter Konwitschny’s bombs in Dresden, discussed at the outset of this chapter, are in a way an expansion of the work’s context and history, the recovery of an experience written into the operetta’s reception. While Konwitschny amplified these fault lines, other productions have attempted to erase them altogether. In 1987, the Volksoper endeavored to produce Die Csárdásfürstin in the light, entertaining style favored by the theater. Robert Herzl’s production, seemingly inspired by a 1930 Berlin revue version directed by Herman Haller, moved the Act II quartet moved to Act III and rearranged it. Originally portraying the lovers paired incorrectly, in the new version they appear in their final configuration—Edwin and Syyla with Stasi and Boni—and the number’s bitterly sarcastic tone, set to falsely triumphant music, is made entirely sincere. The original text, it seemed, had proved too equivocal, too difficult in tone for a contemporary entertainment. As the changes were unnoted in the program (and several were probably already familiar to audience members from the ultra-kitsch 1971 German TV film version starring René Kollo and Anna Moffo), few were likely aware that this Csárdásfürstin had been methodically de-ironicized.95

94 The Haller production is considered in Clarke, Im Himmel spielt auch schon die Jazzband, 345–355.
95 Performance of Die Csárdásfürstin, Volksoper Wien, April 3, 2011. Emmerich Kálmán, Die Csárdásfürstin, directed by Miklós Szinetár with Anna Moffó (Syyla Varescu), Rene Kollo (Edwin), filmed 1971 (Hamburg, Deutsche Grammophon, 2006), DVD.
It could be a positive review in verse. These lines succinctly summarize the appeal of exotic music: eroticism, a wondrous beauty, a charming setting, stunning visuals. As suggested by this description, Emmerich Kálmán’s 1921 operetta *Die Bajadere* fits an established exoticism.

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template. The heroine is first heard offstage, her voice tracing a high, sinuous melisma which seems lifted from *Lakme’s* Bell Song. The oft-reprised love song is entitled “Lotusblume, ich liebe dich” (Lotus flower, I love you). The verse also encapsulates what audiences sought in postwar operetta: excitement, emotional involvement, stylish costumes, and the arrival of a new star—in this case, the composer. But this isn’t a review at all: these verses are drawn from the opening scene of *Die Bajadere* itself.

The operetta’s plot concerns the production of the titular operetta-within-the-operetta whose leading actress, playing an Indian priestess, so enchants the actual Indian prince Radjami that he falls in love with her. *Die Bajadere* thus frames itself as an operetta about the pleasures of operetta. Prominent among these pleasures is exoticism—not an exoticism which seeks to portray another culture but one that seeks only the heightened thrills of extravagant, fantastic visuals and distance from the quotidian. The self-proclaimed artificiality of *Die Bajadere’s* Indian priestess—actually Odette Darimode, Parisian actress and exemplary New Woman—does nothing to diminish her charms. It is precisely this self-consciously fakeness that is characteristic of Silver Age operetta exoticism.

In the few years after World War I, the Viennese had to come to term with the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s dissolution and the city’s loss of world capital status. The new Austrian republic was beset with enormous economic and political instability, which necessarily had an impact on commercial theater. In addition, operetta now had to compete with film—newer and cheaper to attend—and opulent revues. One of the responses to this competition was to increase operetta’s visual appeal with ever more spectacular productions. These stagings often featured extravagant exotic settings, which could be juxtaposed with Vienna or another familiar location in Western Europe. The desire to put other parts of the world on display may be symptomatic of
a nation and people struggling to come to terms with their place in Europe and the world, negotiating new relationships with foreign powers and simultaneously reasserting their own greatness. Yet the exotic music heard in many works of this period can also be understood as a retreat from social reality into a near Schorske-like world of sensual feeling.

This chapter considers the prominence of these exotic spaces with the new realities of life in Vienna during and after the war. The works under discussion will be Leo Fall’s Turkish fantasy, Die Rose von Stambul; Die Bajadere (already introduced); and Franz Lehár’s tragic journey to China, Das Land des Lächelns. I argue that the exotic settings of operetta represent a conscious attempt to map the new republic of Austria’s place in the world landscape. They offered a postwar and postimperial alternative to the juxtaposition of Slavic province with a Western power center found in Die lustige Witwe. Now the Viennese had to contend with the whole world: foreign people whose ways were mysterious and whose attractions were irresistible. The drastic changes in Vienna’s fortunes necessitated negotiation and adjustment in a genre whose identity was closely bound to the city’s own glories. In fact, the absolute states included in operettas most closely recall the Austro-Hungarian police state that had abruptly been signed out of existence, a crisis internal to Austria itself. But, at the same time, these operettas conjure up a kind of sentimental universalism. Beneath cultural differences, operetta composers and librettists, insist that all people are basically the same. The result is a strange mélange of the distancing and the unexpectedly familiar, of masks assumed and removed.

AUSTRIA AND OPERETTA IN TRANSITION

In the aftermath of World War I, operetta continued to thrive even as Austria starved. As the Arbeiter-Zeitung noted in 1918, “perhaps the Viennese operetta is the apocalypse itself. The liquidation of the Austrian world is carried out alongside operetta premieres and the opening of
new operetta theaters.”

(A coal shortage shut down theaters in 1918, but only briefly.) Indeed, the empire, the Habsburg regime, and its political apparatus had all seemingly vanished overnight (as had the elderly figurehead Franz-Joseph mid-war). Unlike the other new postwar states, the Republic of Austria was created not by nationalism but by diplomatic demands, barred from union with Germany.

German-speaking Austria did not have enough of a distinctive identity to satisfy the requirements of nineteenth-century nationalist thought. Cultural leaders such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal tried to create a new Austrian culture whose strength was in part its anti-nationalism—a moderating, neutral function—but ultimately most Austrians felt a stronger allegiance to Germany than they did to their new state. The new nation was starkly divided along ideological fault lines: national politics were controlled by the conservative Christian Socials while the city of Vienna was ruled by the Social Democrats, giving this period the nickname of “Red Vienna.” Their pioneering social experiments made impressive improvements in the lives of the working class, but were hampered by economic hardship and political conflict.

The Austrian economy was also left in a shambles. Over the course of the 1920s the predominant mode was crisis and contraction. After a period of hyperinflation, the Schilling replaced the Kronen in 1925. The economic situation improved markedly, but unemployment remained high. Politics was factionalized, anti-Semitism rose sharply (a bad portent for

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2 “Vielleicht ist die Wiener Operette schon der Weltuntergang selber. Die Liquidierung der österreichischen Welt vollzieht sich jedenfalls unter Operettenpremieren und Eröffnung neuer Operettenbühnen.” “Johann-Strauss-Theater.” Arbeiter-Zeitung, October 14, 1918, p. 3. Quoted in Lichtfuss, Operette im Ausverkauf, 41. The humanitarian crisis of the late war and immediate postwar years is examined in Healy, Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire.

3 This is examined in Hofmannsthal, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the Austrian Idea; Steinberg, The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival.

4 The interwar city is examined in detail in Gruber, Red Vienna.
operetta), and a great deal of civil society revolved around German nationalist groups and their militias. Compared to Germany, the entire interwar period in Austria was precarious and economically troubled.

Theaters suffered in particular. While they initially continued to proliferate, even the most established stages went through rough patches. The Carltheater and Neue Wiener Bühne closed permanently, and the Johann-Strauss-Theater was converted into a cinema in 1931. (Silent film was a serious threat to operetta; sound film proved an existential one.) The local cause was the debilitating luxury tax (Lustbarkeitssteuer) imposed on theaters by the city government. The Socialists, who considered operetta ideologically suspect, found in its popularity a source of income for the city’s social improvement projects. In 1918, the tax rate was set at 4% for spoken theater, 8% for opera and operetta, and 10% on film and variety. In 1920 this was raised to 5/10/15%, and in 1921 raised again to double the 1920 rates, albeit with a ceiling of 20% for operetta. Theaters directors attempted to survive by any means possible.

The Theater an der Wien was still the most important theater, though it was not without its own struggles and scandals. Wilhelm Karczag died suddenly in 1924 and the management was taken over by his son-in-law, the actor Hubert Marischka. Marischka eventually bought the enterprise outright from the remaining shareholders, making him a rare sole owner (the family held the theater until the 1960s). He became, arguably, the leading personality of operetta (star

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6 See, for example, “Streik der Operettentheater: Aus Protest gegen die Nichtherabsetzung der Lustbarkeitsteuer,” Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt, January 30, 1924. More details on the taxes can be found in Yates, Theatre in Vienna, 206.
composers excluded), famous as both an actor and artistic director. By the second half of the
decade, he presided over a shaky empire of three theaters and a publishing company, and had
stakes in film, radio, and records. By this time, however, his star power as an actor had been
eclipsed by that of Richard Tauber, whose fame as a performer was amplified by the millions of
records he sold internationally.

But the threats to operetta’s survival were not merely imposed from outside: indeed,
camaraderie within the industry seems to have disappeared following the war. The 1920s
witnessed a constant succession of temporary and permanent closures; strikes; conflicts between
major composers, librettists, and impresarios both public and private; accusations of corruption,
plagiarism, nepotism, and all manner of dirty dealing. Several of these controversies are well-
documented in the letters and archives of Emmerich Kálmán, Victor Léon, Alfred Grünwald,
and above all Marischka himself. Few of these scandals will be examined in detail here, as
comprehensive and engaging historical accounts already exist.7

More relevant for this study are the effects of the economic and political crisis on operetta
in general. Theaters raised ticket prices and, since they were operating on narrower margins,
became risk-averse. Single operettas ran for much longer periods of time than they had before the
war—many for hundreds of performances in a row, sometimes transferring to a smaller theater
under the same management once interest dropped. This continued a shift that had been
unfolding since the creation of the streetcar system in the early twentieth century: audience

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7 The greatest authorities on the theater politics of this era are Stefan Frey and Kevin Clarke. See Clarke,
*Im Himmel spielt auch schon die Jazzband;* Frey, *Emmerich Kálmán.* Marischka in particular preserved
selective but nonetheless voluminous documentation of his tenure at the theater, which provides a
detailed record of this era. Important collections consulted include the Sammlung Marischka
(unnumbered, ÖTM), Nachlass Victor Léon (ZPH 906/924/925, WBH) and the Alfred Grünwald
Papers (*T-Mss 1998-30, NYPL).*

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members were rarely solely loyal to their neighborhood theater (which might play a single operetta for a whole season), but rather went to whatever show interested them in the city, wherever it happened to be playing. This led to a homogenization of style between theaters, as Max Graf had predicted in 1905 (see Chapter 1).  

Moreover, even though overhead was low on long series of performances, it became difficult to consistently fill seats with such monotonous programming, and theaters began to give out more and more free tickets. As an anonymous author wrote to the *Pester Lloyd* in 1928 (of Hubert Marischka’s management of the Theater an der Wien):

> In fact, Granichstädtens’s boring operettas and Kálmán’s not overly successful works were foisted by him [Marischka] three hundred times in a row upon the audience, which indeed is only his own fault. Therefore he must, in order to fill the theater, hand over tickets to certain students’ societies at such meager prices that the cloakroom fees almost take in more than the regular income of the theater... however, Marischka will have to break with his system, since the record numbers of performances no longer has any value.  

This system was public knowledge. Marischka preserved an amusing 1930 letter from one Dr. Robert H. Brigg, a well-heeled audience member (he identifies himself as a criminal defense attorney and pointedly remarks that he is Marischka’s neighbor in the high-priced suburb of Hietzing—and sent the letter to Marischka’s home address rather than the theater). Brigg compliments Marischka on the excellent performance of *Das Land des Lächelns*, but says that he was disturbed by his neighbors in the first row of the orchestra (where seats cost 30 Schillings

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8 Graf, “Von den Wiener Operettenbühnen.”
each): two female cooks who appeared at the last second and spent the intermission discussing the proper preparation of a hare. In the second row (behind the well-known actress Paula Wessely), Brigg notes a man in short pants and an unbuttoned collar, as well as a woman in a slovenly green camisole. Brigg is concerned that his girlfriend was unimpressed: “It did me great injury that my female companion, who I wanted to show an elegant picture of the theater, was allowed to see such a public.” He requests Marischka only give tickets to people of quality.

After the rather insulting interval of a full week, Marischka replied, writing from the theater’s return address. He wrote that according to the box office the seats in question were not given away but sold, that unfortunately many audience members no longer dress up to go to the theater, and that he has noted that women who appear to belong to the lowest classes often buy the seats closest to the stage. He further notes that “Your remark, honored doctor, that you are convinced that at series performances [i.e. long runs of a single work] we must paper the house [wattieren] here and there is unfortunately true, though not in this case.”

As evidenced by its box office, the Theater an der Wien’s empire began to teeter in the second half of the decade. In 1928, Marischka took the extreme measure of renting the theater out to Max Reinhardt, hosting a long run of plays and giving up on operetta entirely. Such a change was seen by the press as epochal, a death knell for the genre. Yet operetta would continue to attract audiences in droves for the next decade, most particularly in Berlin. Many of the works that were successful—Franz Lehár’s opera-like operettas for Richard Tauber,

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10 “Es hat mir unendlich leid getan, dass ich meiner Bekannten, der ich ein elegantes Theaterbild zeigen wollte, ein derartiges Publikum sehen lassen musste.” “Ihre Bemerkung, sehr verehrter Herr Doktor, dass Sie überzeugt sind, dass wir bei den Serienaufführungen hier und da wattieren müssen, ist leider richtig, traf aber in diesem Falle nicht zu.” Letter, Dr. Robert H. Brigg to Hubert Marischka, 3 November 1930; response from Hubert Marischka to Dr. Robert H. Brigg, 10 November 1930. Nachlass Hubert Marischka (Box Briefe 2, folder Brigg), ÖTM.

11 The rental and press debate is examined in Clarke, *Im Himmel spielt auch schon die Jazzband*, 208–230.
Emmerich Kálmán’s jazz-influenced operettas, and the revue-operettas of Ralph Benatzky and Paul Abraham, such as *Im weissen Rößl* and *Viktoria und ihr Husar*—were very different from the contemporary k.u.k. creations of the previous decade. The exoticism of the 1920s, which opposed the familiar Austria with the novel spectacle of a distant land, provided a bridge from the imperial visions of the Dual Empire era and the purely spectacular revue operettas of operetta’s last flowering.

**The Strange Orientalism of Operetta**

At first glance operetta exoticism seems similar to that of opera: it posits that Europe is superior due to its value of enlightened reason, equality, and the rule of law, as well as modern technology and cultural sophistication. The Eastern Other, however, attracts due to its sensuality and visual allure. Simply put, the West is associated with the mind and the East with the body.¹² But the West ultimately wins out due to its modern commitment to romance, exemplified in operetta’s marriage plots by its rejection of the East’s polygamy—in operetta, polygamy is rampant anywhere east of Budapest. (In this respect, operetta recalls Mozart’s *Die Entführung aus dem Serail.*) Yet there are also differences. While opera most frequently juxtaposes a European man with a foreign woman, exotic operetta more often than not pair a European woman with a foreign man, emphasizing the sexual liberation of European women.¹³ In operetta, while the

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¹² This is the paradigm considered in Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 53–80.

¹³ The plot of a soldier’s seduction by an exotic woman was popular enough in opera to be the subject of a virtual catalog by James Parakilas, but the only operetta that fits this model is Franz Lehár’s *Giuditta*, which was intended to be received not as an operetta at all but rather as an opera—perhaps proving the point. James Parakilas, “The Soldier and the Exotic: Operatic Variations on a Theme of Racial Encounter Part I,” *Opera Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (December 21, 1993): 33–56; James Parakilas, “The Soldier and the Exotic: Operatic Variations on a Theme of Racial Encounter Part II,” *Opera Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (March
foreign man and European woman might love each other, he is often obliged to marry one or more women of his own culture. Like many Silver Age tropes, this model is repeated a number of times with small variations.

When analyzing exoticism, musicologists tend to rely on two tools: Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism and the interrogation of musical authenticity. Neither of these methods is effective when dealing with operetta, whose Austro-Hungarian origin confounds Said’s framework and whose music rarely aspires to authenticity at all. In general, Austro-Hungarian portrayals of the East fail to conform to Said’s model for a simple reason: the empire had no overseas colonies and faced the challenges of considerable ethnic diversity at home. Yet there are numerous exotic portrayals of the East in Austro-Hungarian art, many of which superficially resemble Said’s examples. Robert Lemon has proposed an alternate model for fin-de-siècle Austro-Hungarian Orientalism, interpreting it not as the subordination of an exotic Other but rather as a form of self-critique. Lemon argues that East of Austrian literature is a relativistic place that is both East and West at once, located not in a distant colony but rather in the Austrian subject’s own mind. Depictions of Eastern locations in the works of Hofmannsthal, Kafka, and Musil, Lemon argues, present a metaphor for Austro-Hungarian relations. Some of the works he analyzes, such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s poem “Der Kaiser von China spricht,” trade in transparent metaphors for the author’s own empire. Most obviously, Hofmannsthal’s

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poem, written in the years following of Crown-Prince Rudolf’s suicide, prominently features a Chinese imperial succession crisis.\textsuperscript{14}

In opposition to Lemon’s view, most musicological analyses of exoticism focus on the relationships between a Western composer and the non-Western subject or music that is being evoked.\textsuperscript{15} The music is interrogated for its authenticity and the way in which it reconciles Western and non-Western traditions. (When Vienna is considered, the subject is most frequently the Turkish colors of Mozart and Beethoven.) But operetta composers and librettists rarely go to great lengths to represent another culture or its music in their works—in fact, their exotic realms are often explicitly marked as fake, as already seen in \textit{Der Ziguenerprimas} (Chapter 4). The division between East and West is ultimately revealed to be illusionary or unimportant; the main characters share a common humanity. The exotic space represents a different psychological mode, which must, like the musical dualism that dominates these scores, be resolved in terms of the characters’ relationships. (Something similar has already been evident in \textit{Die Csárdásfürstin}’s juxtaposition of Hungarian and Viennese society, and even in the French frivolity and folksong sincerity of Pontevedro.)

The problems that afflict the foreign lands seen in operetta tend to seem rather familiar. Many deal with the role of women in society. Most exotic operettas, like the Hofmannsthal poem considered by Lemon, fixate on succession. These works date from after World War I, when the empire was already history. Nonetheless, their central conceit of a young heir struggling to modernize his outmoded state was equally timely, now existing in an age when


change in Austria was no longer hypothetical or optional. Their engagement with the crumbling world around them varies; but the divisions between the self and the non-self are rarely as simple as the straightforward musical dualism of Silver Age operetta may suggest.

DIE ROSE VON STAMBUL: TURKISH DELIGHT

Leo Fall’s Die Rose von Stambul (1916) was the first important extra-imperial exotic operetta since those of Sidney Jones in the 1890s. Both scholars and critics have questioned the text’s superficial depiction of Turkey, which relies on clichés at a time when the real Turkey was both accessible and an ally of Austria-Hungary. Is the secondhand nature of the local color merely a result of poor research, or is it intentionally thin? Is the Istanbul of Die Rose von Stambul intended to be read, as one critic wrote, as Vienna with a fez? This latter interpretation has been advanced by both Stefan Frey, Christine Stemprok, and Wolfgang Dosch, the co-authors of a recent Leo Fall biography (hence referred to as “Frey et al.”), and by Markus Pyka in a recent article on this work. While many of the social issues considered in the operetta’s plot are indeed productively read as Viennese, I believe the Turkish setting serves as more than an ornamental screen to an otherwise conventional work. I will examine this work instead through the demands of both censor and audiences, which shows two librettists and a composer who struggled to reconcile their impulses towards novel themes and settings with the conventions expected of operettas and the requirements set by law, as well as limitations of their own research. This

tension is occasionally used to dramatic advantage—primarily in the plot’s depiction of a Westernizing Turkish culture.

The creators of *Die Rose von Stambul* were all known for their creativity and slightly unusual taste, but rarely strayed far outside the bounds of conventional large-scale operetta. The libretto of was written by Alfred Grünwald and Julius Brammer, who would corner the field the 1920s with their libretti for Emmerich Kálmán, including *Die Bajadere, Gräfin Mariza, Die Zirkusprinzessin*, and *Die Herzogin von Chicago*. Since the *Der Rebell* fiasco (see Chapter 2), Leo Fall had made a reputation as a composer of originality (deviating from conventional song forms) and novel subjects. He often chose librettos dealing with socially progressive or scandalous women. These include *Die Dollarprinzessin*, about an industrialist’s daughter in New York; an operetta concerning suffragettes in London entitled *Jung-England*, as well as the divorced protagonist of *Die geschiedene Frau* and *Die Studentgräfin*, based on the life of Lola Montez. Fall made a practice of working with adventurous librettists such as Victor Léon as well as Rudolf Bernauer and Ernst Welitsch, who wrote *Jung-England* as well as ill-fated *Der Rebell*. Grünwald and Brammer usually stuck to the conventional Silver Age template, but also tended to choose provocative subjects. Fall had previously worked with them on *Die Kaiserin*, which had

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17 Alfred Grünwald's life is the subject of a book edited by his son Grunwald, *Ein Walzer muß es sein*. Alfred Grünwald papers are preserved in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts's Billy Rose Theatre Collection ("T-Mss 1998-030 Grunwald) and include many drafts and copies of his work, though the collection contains little correspondence dating from before 1930—that is, the period under consideration here.

18 While the subjects of these operettas are provocative, their content is rarely incendiary. For example, *Jung-England* ends with the suffragette firebrand marrying her police chief nemesis. The suffragettes’ inappropriately masculine ways and the police’s chauvinism are mocked roughly equally throughout. Rudolf Bernauer and Ernst Welitsch, *Jung-England: Operette in drei Akten, Regiebuch*. Berlin: Harmonie, 1914. 299.422-B, ÖNB MS.
premiered on 16 October 1915 in Berlin as a vehicle for the diva Fritzi Massary to impersonate Empress Maria-Theresia.\textsuperscript{19}

In light of Vienna’s frequently violent relations with Turkey, the choice of such a domestic and humanizing Turkish subject might seem odd, even accounting for its negative elements. In 1883, the bicentennial of the 1683 Ottoman siege of Vienna had been commemorated in high style, including many dastardly depictions of the Turkish foe onstage. But during World War I, Turkish culture became a matter of great importance to the Viennese. When the Ottomans joined the Central Powers in 1914, the Austro-Hungarian state launched a major public relations campaign to convince its citizenry that Turks were their friends—usually portraying the relationship explicitly in those warm and personal terms of friendship. Books were published on Turkish culture, religion, and customs, mostly in the spirit of understanding. The goal was to humanize the Turkish people to the Viennese so they would be seen as a valuable and reliable ally.\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{Die Rose von Stambul} similarly concerns the lives of women, and also in a light-hearted and minimally activist way. It is set in modern Istanbul (the “Stambul” of the title) in a time of rapid social change. The protagonist is a strong-willed young Turkish woman named Kondja Gül, the daughter of politician Kamek Pascha. Kondja doesn’t want to submit to an arranged

\textsuperscript{19} Its portrayal of the former empress as a casual, Wienerisch-speaking personality didn’t pass the Viennese censor, and it premiered in Vienna the following February at the Carltheater in heavily edited form as \textit{Fürstenliebe}, its empress demoted.

marriage, and hates wearing a veil; instead, she enjoys Western entertainments like tennis. She would rather elope with André Léry, a French author popular among the women of Stambul, with whom she has carried on a passionate correspondence. Little does Kondja know that André Léry is a pen name for the Turkish man Achmed Bey, who coincidentally is also the fiancé chosen by her parents. The secondary plot deals with Kondja’s friend Midili and her romance with Fridolin Müller, a well-meaning but slightly dim German visitor. Fridolin is also suffering an enforced betrothal from his Hamburg industrialist father. Unlike Kondja, they successfully elope. The third act relocates to a resort in (neutral) Switzerland where Midili and Fridolin have traveled on their honeymoon and Kondja has fled her arranged marriage, unable to believe that Achmed is actually André Léry. By the end of the operetta, Kondja and Achmed have reconciled and are betrothed as well.21

The setting of Brammer and Grünwald’s libretto relies largely on popular clichés of harems and veils. Visually, they evoke a generic Orient. They even note in a stage direction that the servants appear “more Indian than Turkish in style.”22 The stage descriptions of the first act read in part,

The furnishings very luxurious, like the rooms of a young European woman, and yet it is immediately apparent that this salon is found in the Orient. In the background several large, square windows, possibly the prospect is visible only through latticework, but nevertheless the magnificent panorama of Stambul [Istanbul] with its minarets and mosques in fairylike sunlight can be seen… the entirety very decent and tasteful.23

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21 A complete plot summary can be found in Gänzl and Lamb, Gänzl’s Book of the Musical Theatre, 1048–1052.
23 “Die Einrichtung sehr luxuriös, wie die Gemächer einer jungen europäischen Dame, und doch muß im ersten Moment ersichtlich sein, daß sich dieser Salon im Orient befindet. Im Hintergrunde einige große quadratförmige Fenster, eventuell eine Aussichtsrampe, die mit Gittern versehen sind, aber trotzdem das herrliche Panorama von Stambul mit seinen Minaretts und Moscheen in feenhafter Sonnenbeleuchtung sehen lassen… das Ganze sehr dezent und geschmackvoll.” Ibid., 7–8. (Source V)
Tellingly, the only thing the authors can imagine the Turkish skyline to contain is “mosques and minarets.” The note that everything must be tasteful (geschmackvoll) was standard language for set and costume descriptions at the time, and seemed to indicate the aspirational, commodified status of operetta design, whether in Turkey or outside of it. The original title in the libretto typescript is not *Die Rose von Stambul* but *1,001 Souper* (*1,001 Dinners*, preserved as the final line of Achmed’s entrance song), perhaps an indication of the operetta’s shaky claim to authenticity, as Scheherazade isn’t associated with Turkish culture at all. Nor did the contemporary press think very much of Grünwald and Brammer’s research. As posited by the *Neues Wiener Journal*:

> In a comedy by Hermann Bahr, a boy says enthusiastically to a lady: “Your eyes are as unfathomable as the sea.” “Have you seen the sea, then?” the lady asked in response. “No,” the boy says, “but I think to myself that it must be so.” The creators of yesterday’s new operetta set their plot in modern Turkey. If one would ask them: “Gentlemen, have you been to Turkey, then?” they would probably similarly answer, “No, but we think to ourselves, that there it could be like we imagine it!”... they are less up on customs and usage in Turkey then they are on the Occidental Schwank, operetta, and joke book.24

Markus Pyka points out that, by this time, Istanbul was hardly inaccessible or unfamiliar to the Viennese; the city was subject of numerous travel guides issued in German at the time.25

> But if the visuals of the operetta relied on clichés, the characterization shows that the librettists had at least some awareness of modern Turkish politics. The name of Kondja’s father,

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Kemal Pascha—given as Kamek Pascha in some texts\(^{26}\)—was presumably intended to evoke that of Mustafa Kemal, known at the time as Kemal Pasha (\textit{Pascha} in German). After the war, he was to become the first president of Turkey, redubbed Atatürk (father of the Turks); however at the time of the operetta’s composition he was known as one of the revolutionary Young Turks—that is to say, associated with Westernization and modernization—and as a successful commander during the Balkan Wars and the Great War. Shortly before the composition of \textit{Die Rose von Stambul}, Kemal was widely recognized for heroic action in the Battle of Gallipoli in late 1915 and thus a familiar Turkish name to the Viennese at the time of the operetta’s premiere. As for the operetta’s Achmed, Stefan Frey points out that the image of a Western-oriented Turkish character may have also been based on Enver Pasha, another Young Turk who was the commander of Turkish forces during both the Balkan Wars and World War I. Like Achmed, he was for a time the Turkish envoy to both Berlin and Vienna, likely making him the Turkish politician most familiar to Viennese audiences.\(^{27}\) Yet the character of a benevolent, European-aspiring Turkish man also recalls another Western character, Bassa Selim of Mozart’s \textit{Die Entführung aus dem Serail}.

The Turkish setting was not entirely overlooked by critics. \textit{Rose’s} portrayal of the Turkish establishment as rigid, oppressive, and dehumanizing was considered by several contemporary commentators to be in poor taste in light of Turkey’s alliance with Austria-Hungary and the great losses of life they had suffered during the war. The \textit{Österreichische Volks-Zeitung} asked, “Are the brave, gallant Turks not close enough to us that we can portray their milieu only through

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\(^{26}\) Reviews consistently refer to Kemal Pascha, the spelling in the final printed libretto. The published score refers to Kamek Pascha, as do earlier versions of the libretto.

\(^{27}\) Frey, Stemprok, and Dosch, \textit{Leo Fall: Spöttischer Rebell der Operette}, 157.
false, erotic operetta effects? On the other side, *Die Bombe* called the operetta a product of the alliance: “Our alliance with Turkey, so benedictory [segensvoll] for all parties, has as a side product resulted in an operetta by Leo Fall.” Similarly, the *Fremden-Blatt* noted that Oriental settings were suddenly becoming popular, though the connection with the alliance was not made (“the Orient seems to have suddenly climbed in favor among the homeland’s authors, as there are three works with Eastern color promised for this season alone”).

Simultaneously, some elements of the onstage Turkey can be easily seen as representations of Austrian concerns. The opposition between Turkey and an enlightened Europe could just as easily be one of old-fashioned Europe and modernizers (indeed, the arranged-marriage plot is common in European-set operettas, see for example *Ein Walzertraum* and *Die Csárdásfürstin*). Markus Pyka characterizes *Die Rose von Stambul* largely as *Kriegstheater* (war theater), using the model of Martin Baumeister. The operetta specifically references common wartime problems of hunger, flour shortages, and cigarette shortages, as well as exemplifying the social liberalism Baumeister considers characteristic of wartime works.

(Liberalism has been specifically linked to wartime operettas by Steven Beller; see Chapter 5.)

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32 Pyka, “‘Von Reformen ganz enormen träumen wir am Bosporus’”; Beller, “The Tragic Carnival.”
But two additional factors mediate the operetta’s depiction of Turkey, both of which Frey et al. and Pyka ignore: the requirements of the censor and the musical depictions of the Turks in the score. The libretto’s compositional process reveals each draft becoming progressively less and less Turkish (largely due to censorship requirements), and the score’s mixture of traditional exotica with the waltzes and marches expected of a Viennese waltz confound the distinction even further. A list of the major surviving sources documenting the operetta’s composition appears as Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Die Rose von Stambul Sources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Siglum</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>ÖNB MS, F88 Leo Fall 365</td>
<td>Draft of libretto, Act 1 only (typescript with corrections)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>LNÖ Sig. 344/15</td>
<td>Libretto submitted to theater censor in 1916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>NYPL PA NCOF p.v. 287</td>
<td>Script as published by W. Karczag Verlag, 1916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>ÖNB MS F88 Leo Fall 364a-b</td>
<td>Score sketches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>ÖNB MS F88 Leo Fall 87</td>
<td>Score manuscript clean copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Published score</td>
<td>Piano-vocal score published by W. Karczag Verlag, 1916</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three different versions of the libretto survive. In order of composition, these are an early daft typescript of Act 1 only (D), the copy submitted to the censor (Z), and the final printed edition that was distributed to non-Viennese theaters producing the operetta (V). The Turkish angle, particularly references to Turkish culture which could be considered derogatory (most of them about women’s rights), recede in each successive version: a fact which suggests that the libretto first went through a process of self-censorship before being submitted to official censorship. The changes made by the censor are as clear as the red pencil slashes on the second typescript, and the cuts are largely of the same nature. The final version is assumed to be the one
appearing in the published score and *Regiebuch*, though some ambiguities between versions remain.

The libretto’s basic subject poses several obvious censorial pitfalls. The denigration of another nation—as the censor understandably interpreted most of Brammer and Grünwald’s clichéd evocations of the savage Turk—was against the censor’s rules in peacetime, and during wartime any insult of one of Austria-Hungary’s allies was certainly not to be permitted. Casualties of the censor included Fridolin’s line, “of course he has two wives, he’s a Turk!” Kondja’s father’s speech, “Around here, the only thing we recognize is a done deal! Achmed Bey, the son of the minister, offered her his hand. He doesn’t know her, she doesn’t know him, the wedding is in five days.” A song text in which the women hope for reforms but doubt they will ever come to pass was also struck both in the draft and the censor’s script, but appears in all of the published texts, and appears to have been somehow reinstated (No. 3, “Von Reformen, ganz enormen”).

In the early drafts (typescript D), the operetta began with a song by Kondja’s friend Bül-Bül, song to a text which was pronouncedly exotic and sexualized in its images, even threatening (and a somewhat unexpected opening for what is a largely harmless and non-violent operetta). No music survives for these verses.

**Die Rose von Stambul, cut version of No. 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bül-Bül:</th>
<th>Bül-Bül:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Es duften Moschus und Myrrhen,</td>
<td>It smells of musk and myrrh,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es leuchtet der Ampel Schein,</td>
<td>The lamplight glows,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33 “er hat ja zwei Frauen, er ist ja ein Türke!,” “Wir kennen hierzulande in Heiratsdingen nur fait à complis! Achmed Bey, der Sohn des Ministers, hat um ihre Hand geworben. Er kennt sie nicht – sie kennt ihn nicht, in fünf Tagen ist die Hochzeit.” Source Z.

34 Julius Brammer and Alfred Grünwald, *Die Rose von Stambul*, typescript draft of Act I libretto, F88 Leo Fall 365, ÖNB MS.
Du, Liebchen des Kalifen.
Heut heißt es fröhlich sein.
Du tanzest um dein Leben,
Drum tanze wild und schön,
Kannst du sein Herz nicht rühren,
Dann ist's um dich geschehn!
Tanze, tanze schlanke Odaliske,
Bis sein Auge trunken wird
Von dem Glanze deiner Schönheit,
Bis dein Blick sein Herz verwirrt
Tanz – du Liebchen des Kalifen,
Wecke seine wilde Lust,
Wenn dein Herz vor Angst auch zittert,
Tanz! Daß du nicht sterben mußt.

You, beloved of the caliph.
Today is meant to be happy.
You're dancing for your life
Dance wildly and beautifully
Can you not stir his heart
Then your fate is sealed!
Dance, dance, slim odalisque
Until your eyes are drunken
With the light of your beauty
Until your glance bewilders his heart
Dance—you beloved of the caliph,
Awaken his wild lust,
If your heart also shakes with fear,
Dance! So that you might not die.

It is unclear exactly why this text was cut, but it is difficult imagine it passing the censor. The final version is less intense and, while still exotic, allows Kondja to be the main attraction (and the censor nonetheless circled “Prophet” in the typescript submitted for approval). It begins with the women offstage. Bül-Bül wishes Kondja a good morning; the women’s chorus echoes each line with “schöne Kondja Gül.”

**Die Rose von Stambul, No. 1, Final Version**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bül-Bül:</th>
<th>Bül-Bül:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wonnig mögen deine Träume sein,</td>
<td>May your dreams be blissful,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sonnig möge dein Erwachen sein!</td>
<td>May your awakening be sunny!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Mädchen: Schöne Konja Gül!</td>
<td>5 Girls: Beautiful Kondja Gül!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bül-Bül: Wenn die Sonne küßt dein</td>
<td>Bül-Bül: When the sun kisses your flaxen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seidenhaar</td>
<td>hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>öffne strahlend dein leuchtendes</td>
<td>5 Girls: Your shining eyes open radiantly!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augenpaar!</td>
<td>Beautiful Kondja Gül!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Mädchen: Schöne Konja Gül!</td>
<td>Bül-Bül, You are like the untouched rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bül-Bül, Schöne Konja Gül!</td>
<td>Djamileh: That adorns the prophet’s garden!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djamileh: Du gleichst der Rose unberührt</td>
<td>Bül-Bül, May your awakening be sunny!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>die des Propheten Garten ziert!</td>
<td>5 Girls: Beautiful Kondja Gül!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Mädchen: Wonnig möge dein Erwachen sein!</td>
<td>5 Girls: Beautiful Kondja Gül!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schöne Konja Gül!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unfortunately the composition of the first act is more clearly documented than the entire work, but these examples suggest the difficulties Fall and his librettists faced: portray an attractive but frightening exotic land that actually existed in the modern Austro-Hungarian orbit without running afoul of a censor intent on respect.

The Sound of Stambul

To the musically minded, the above text suggests a particular languid exotic sound world, and on these counts Fall does not disappoint, as will be seen. These expectations point to an interesting distinction between the standards applied to text and to music. While the novel libretto was measured against the real modern Turkey, Fall’s score fits neatly into a preexisting Viennese discourse of exotic and alla turca music: jangling percussion, static repetition, and ostinatos as well as more broadly exotic musical characteristics like wordless melismas and whole tone scales. While the libretto was interrogated for cliché, Fall’s score was more frequently praised for its participation in this tradition. This is perhaps a sign of how much Viennese critics knew about real Turkish music. Yet Fall still had to reconcile this scene-setting alla turca material with the marketable Viennese sound of operetta—the compositional style that had made him famous. The score sets the modern, Westernized romance of Achmed and Kondja in the modern Viennese operetta language of the waltz. (The prevalence of waltzes is explained diegetically: Achmed Bey spent time as a diplomat in both Berlin and Vienna, where he learned to dance. During war, the librettists were not going to chance mentioning Paris.) The result is a score that, without rejecting the allure of the exotic, associates the happy feelings of romance with

35 The alla turca style is examined in detail in Bellman, The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe. On more general exoticism, see also Taruskin, Defining Russia Musically, 165.
Westernization and casts Turkish tradition in a more negative light than the censor would allow to appear in the text.

The operetta opens with a blaring theme in which the winds outline a whole tone scale, to an alla turca ostinato accompaniment of drums and tambourines (Example 6.1a). This theme will become associated with the totalitarian and conservative aspects of Turkish society, reappearing whenever Turkish customs threaten Kondja’s wishes. It is immediately juxtaposed with the perfumed exoticism of the chorus whose text is given above. The score uses the same theme (Example 6.1b), this time orchestrated with an ostinato of open fifths in the cellos, decorated by strumming harp and an arpeggio from the clarinet marked pppp “wie ein Hauch” (like a breath). The vocal line is doubled by a

Example 6.1: Fall, *Die Rose von Stambul*, No. 1, Introduktion und Lied
a) Opening

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36 The full orchestration of the prelude can be seen in the sketches and drafts collected as F88 Leo Fall 87, ÖNB MS (source H).
flute, and keeps a narrow ambitus around D to give the lines an incantatory effect, exacerbated by the repetition of "schöne Kondja Gül." The flutes and oboes join in in parallel thirds, and at the end a constant tapping of eighth notes is heard offstage from triangle, side drum, cymbals, jingle bells, and tambourine. And, like the orchestra in *Ein Walzertraum*, the women are first offstage heard and not seen.

Yet this alluring exoticism is complicated in the first scene when Kondja, now onstage with the women, narrates her life story. She begins by repeating the music from the women's chorus describing how she spent her early childhood in the country. But, when moving to Stambul, she says, needed to become more cultured and worldly, and the music shifts its orientation as well. As she describes her Istanbul education in Western arts like tennis and flirting, the music makes clear what she had been learning: European things. The section is marked "Im Walzertempo," and while the vocal line doesn’t quite have the catchy tune nor symmetrical phrases of dance
music—Kondja is evidently still learning the Westernized language—the orchestra’s oom-pah-pah accompaniment and the dotted-quarter eighth-note quarter note rhythm of the vocal line tend towards a waltz. But when she turned fourteen, Kondja says, she was told she now needs to wear a veil (Example 6.2). The waltz breaks off, and the Turkish theme from the opening bursts in, fortissimo and with a gong for good measure. The musical message is rather simple and obvious: Turkish society (as represented by the whole tone scale) maintains an oppressive hold on women’s lives.\(^{37}\) In a sketch for a cut section of the Act I finale, this was even more obvious: the same passage is reprised with the melismas that indicate exotic Turkish music underlying the line “a veil lay before my eyes.”\(^{38}\)

In contrast, the secretly Westernized Achmed Bey/Andre Léry sings in a more decisively Western idiom, marked in particular by the waltz. As Frey puts it, “the astounding thing, however, is that Die Rose von Stambul, despite all its artful exoticism, is above all a waltz operetta.”\(^{39}\) Both of Achmed’s first two songs, “O Rose von Stambul” and “Ein Walzer muß es sein,” are waltzes, the second boasting a text proclaiming the dance’s potential as an aphrodisiac.

\(^{37}\) Source S (sketches) contains an early draft of the Act I finale in which this theme once again intrudes upon Western-oriented music to indicate a forced conformity to Turkish customs.

\(^{38}\) Source D (F88 Leo Fall 364a, ÖNB MS).

\(^{39}\) “das Verblüffende aber ist, dass Die Rose von Stambul, aller raffiniert Exotik zum Trotz, vor allem eine Walzer-Operette ist.” Frey, Stemprok, and Dosch, Leo Fall: Spöttischer Rebell der Operette, 156.
Kondja is forced back into *alla Turca*, like she is forced to wear a veil, but Achmed's dual identity as French writer and Turkish man allows him to switch voices freely. The authors seem to have been somewhat indecisive about how Turkish he should appear onstage: in an early draft of the libretto, he is described thus:

> Achmed is a consummate gentleman in demeanor and appearance. Dressed in the modern style according to the latest European fashions. His face is interesting, spirited, dark-colored, small English mustache, monocle. Only the fez recalls the Ottoman.\(^4^0\)

Except for an easily removed hat of exoticism, he appears European, though “dark-colored.” In the final, published libretto, this is altered to, “a consummate gentleman in demeanor and appearance, he wears a modern Turkish uniform with Persian collar, monocle.”\(^4^1\) This second description is corroborated by actor Hubert Marischka’s notes on his costume for the operetta, which describe Act I’s costume as a “brown uniform with brown boots, saber, brown leather belt, cap, ring, wristwatch, brown gloves, monocle, handkerchief.”\(^4^2\) In Act 2, Achmed changes to a “Galauniform”; in Act 3 he finally appears in full European evening dress (both descriptions are also confirmed in Marischka’s notes).

His entrance song begins in Turkish style (Example 6.3): E minor in 6/8 time, with an accompaniment of pizzicato strings, harp, bass drum, and tambourine. While operetta accompaniments are usually quite repetitive, Fall’s Turkish accompaniments remain constant not

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\(^{4^2}\) “braune Uniform mit braune Stiefel, Säbel, brauner Ledergürtel, Kappe, Ring, Armbanduhr, braune Handschuhe, Monocle, Taschentuch.” Untitled notebook, Nachlass Hubert Marischka, Box 4, Shelf 15, ÖTM.
only in rhythm but also in pitch, providing an ostinato pedal in many numbers. He opens describing the typical view of Turkish man—from a European perspective: “Man sagt uns nach, daß wir in puncto Damen einem Princip nur treu: Der Lieb’ en gros.” ("They say of us, that when it comes to ladies we are true to one principle: love en gros.") But, he continues, this is no longer so. On the line “Viel cultivierter [sic] will’s mir erscheinen man liebt nur Eine auf der Welt,” (“It appears to me more civilized"

Example 6.3: Fall, *Die Rose von Stambul*, No. 5 Lied, opening
to only love one [woman])” he modulates briefly to the dominant major, B. While the song had previously hovered around the lower reaches of the staff, now it ascends to a series of Es and a G, already establishing a contrast of sentiment. The refrain brings us to the waltz, “O Rose von Stambul,” a declaration of love to his unknown epistolary sweetheart. This is in pure E major, frequently ascending to the high G heard on “will’s mir erscheinen.” While the verse started vaguely Turkish, Achmed’s romantic sentiments in the refrain are entirely Western.

In Act II, he teaches Kondja how to waltz in the number “Ein Walzer muß es sein.” This song was evidently the operetta’s crowning achievement, and was mentioned by all the critics: “a Tanzwalzer, one that is surely one of the best and most beautiful that [Fall] has obtained for a long time. That’s the high point of the operetta.” The Neues Wiener Tagblatt went as far as to refer to it as the operetta’s Hauptwalzer (main waltz). It was momentous enough to receive a prominent place in Gertrud Marischka’s unpublished biography of her husband, which describes him waking up in the middle of the night and working out the choreography with his then-wife, Lizzy Léon. The number is indeed an echt-Wiener waltz, full of the traditional nineteenth-century rhythmic figures of Johann Strauss II, and the text self-reflexively describes the amorous effects of the dance. While the opening women’s chorus shows a sexualized East, the sound of romance is decidedly Western.

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43 “schwingt er sich dann in einem Tanzwalzer auf, der sicher einer der besten und schönsten ist, die man von ihm seit langem beschert erhielt. Das ist der Höhepunkt der Operette” “Theater an der Wien [review of Die Rose von Stambul].”
45 Marischka had a gift for marrying well: Lizzy Léon was Victor’s daughter. After her death in 1918, he married Lillian Karczag, Wilhelm Karczag’s daughter, and effectively inherited the Theater an der Wien. He married German actress Juliana Schäfer in 1941, and finally Viennese actress Gertrud Hawel [Havel] in 1948. He died in 1959.
Otherwise, critics described Fall’s music in generic exotic terms. It “draws on the melancholy minor scale of the Orient,” it “naturally has an Oriental tone in many songs.” A reviewer for the *Fremden-Blatt* praised *Die Rose* for making the most of “the charming opportunities afforded by the setting, such as the contrast between East and West.” Other critics were less generous. For instance, the anonymous reviewer for the *Neues Wiener Journal* suggested that Fall’s “colorful” use of percussion instruments and winds merely provided him with an exotic foreign mask of “noises,” which “hinders him sometimes” but gradually slides away to reveal his true Viennese face:

The first chords that mount from the orchestra already show a thoroughly characterized color that completely suits the milieu; a refined mixture of woodwinds, xylophone, and sparingly utilized jingle bells. But everywhere, twisted and covered by distant–exotic noises, though shy and only perceptible to the trained ear, the Viennese melody, until it suddenly, tired of modesty, pulses up, triumphantly soaring.

Similarly, Ludwig Karpath wrote, “without regard to the heavy air of the magic garden of the end of an Oriental fairy tale, he considers, with a spirited haste, his Viennese-ness.” The *Fremden-Blatt* was most straightforward, describing *Rose* as a Viennese operetta wearing a fez.

The critics, and Frey, supposed that Fall uses the exotic largely for scene-setting, and once that is complete, he moves back into his more customary dialect of Vienna.

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46 “die schwermütige Mollskala des Orients,” “selbstverständlich in vielen Gesängen einen orientalisierenden Ton.” rp [Ludwig Karpath], “Die Rose von Stambul.”
47 “es nützt sowohl die reizvollen Mileumöglichkeiten wie den Kontrast zwischen Osten und Westen aus.” p.f. [Paul Frank], “Theater an der Wien. [review of *Die Rose von Stambul*].”
49 “Denn ohne Rücksicht auf die schweren Düfte in den Zaubergärten orientalischen Märchen-Endes, besinnt er sich mit einer beherzten Plötzlichkeit auf sein Wiennertum.” rp [Ludwig Karpath], “Die Rose von Stambul.”
50 p.f. [Paul Frank], “Theater an der Wien. [review of *Die Rose von Stambul*].”
Die Rose von Stambul was one of the greatest successes of the war years, rivaled only by Die Csárdásfürstin (discussed in Chapter 5), and was also a great hit in Berlin, where it starred Leo Fall’s favorite diva, Fritzi Massary. As Pyka points out, it served as first-rate wartime entertainment, imagining a luxurious and comfortable world without borders (one critic even pointed out that the Act 3 trip to Switzerland was probably only chosen because the traditional operetta choice of Paris was enemy territory\(^{51}\)). The expected dualism of operetta music is not neatly mapped onto characters’ ethnicity, and while the West is a beacon of the victorious and just, these are virtues that are attractive to all, Turk and German alike.

**DIE BAJADERE: STAGING INAUTHENTICITY**

Librettists Julius Brammer and Alfred Grünwald took another approach to the exoticism question in Die Bajadere, which premiered with a score by Emmerich Kálmán on December 23, 1921. While Die Rose von Stambul’s Turkish setting had a fraught relationship with verisimilitude, in Die Bajadere the librettists create an elaborate metatheatrical frame for their exotic material. The underlined and highlighted artificiality of their titular Indian priestess dismisses any questions of authentic representation, and offers an exoticism divested of political baggage. Its bayadere is actually Odette Darimonde, a confident, modern Parisian actress playing a bayadere onstage, while male protagonist Radjami is a homesick Indian prince. The exotic India seen onstage is less a literal place than a longing for a realm where sensory stimulation will overpower rational thought. While Die Rose von Stambul takes place in a modernizing, forward-looking social space, Die Bajadere subordinates external setting and spatial relationships at all

\(^{51}\) “…der Schauplatz der Begebenheiten zum Teil nach der Türkei verlegten, von der sie im dritten Akt in die Schweiz übersiedeln, vermutlich um Paris auszuweichen” rp [Ludwig Karpath], “Die Rose von Stambul.”
costs. It is an exoticism without nationality. The dualism of a Western and Eastern musical style set into a metatheatrical frame recalls, in some respects, *Die Csárdásfürstin*, but *Die Bajadere* lacks that work's geographical and political specificity.\(^{52}\)

*Die Bajadere* was conceived with exoticism in mind. It is an original subject, and for both librettists and composer atmosphere took precedence over plot. This is documented in the account Kálmán’s published describing the work's genesis and his early meetings with Brammer and Grünwald to discuss the operetta. They first met, Kálmán wrote, without any particular theme in mind, but discovered a mutual “predilection for exoticism and mysticism, like that of Kippling [sic], Claude Ferrard [sic, presumably Farrère], and similar works.”\(^{53}\) He continues, “the librettists admittedly didn’t have a plot in mind yet, but a title (“The Bayadere”) and the visual conception of one of the main characters… a young prince, fashionable and elegant, but one who wears instead of a top hat a silk turban with a diamond clasp.”\(^{54}\) The description strikingly recalls that of Achmed Bey in *Die Rose von Stambul*, who is “dressed in a modern style according to the latest European fashion” with the exception of a fez on his head.\(^{55}\) The hat is a conventional marker of exoticism, but one that is also proverbially mutable, suggesting that Achmed and Radjami are both not fundamentally different from European gentlemen and that

\(^{52}\) Kálmán would return to this musical style in *Gräfin Mariza* (1924) and adapt it for the jazz/European world of *Die Herzogin von Chicago* (1928), both also written by Brammer and Grünwald.


\(^{54}\) “sie hätten wohl noch keine zugedachte Handlung, aber einen Titel ("Die Bajadere") und die bildhafte Vorstellung einer der Hauptfiguren… einen jungen Prinzen… mondän und elegant, jedoch statt des Zylinders trägt einen seidenen Turban mit Diamantengraffe.”

\(^{55}\) “modern nach der letzten europäischen Mode gekleidet” p.f. [Paul Frank], “Theater an der Wien. [review of *Die Rose von Stambul*].”
the star actors Hubert Marischka and Louis Treumann were still the European gentlemen they customarily played.

The librettists, possessed of a title and a character but no plot, resorted to write about what they knew: operetta itself. We first meet the male protagonist, Prince Radjami, at the operetta in Paris. He is fascinated by *Die Bajadere*, an operetta about a temple dancer playing at the Théâtre du Châtelet, but he himself is none other than the heir to the kingdom of Lahore (the center of Punjab and now in Pakistan). Long resident in Europe, Radjami is an urbane playboy of the Danilo sort, fashionable but lazy. (The casting of Treumann, operetta’s ultimate idle *Lebemann*, was not accidental.) When watching the Parisian operetta diva Odette Darimonde in *Die Bajadere*, he falls in love, both with her and her appearance as an avatar of his homeland.56 (Odette’s dual identity as an actress and as the bayadere character is referenced in her name, which recalls Odette and Odile in *Swan Lake*.) Though Radjami seems to have given his life up in his pursuit of Odette-as-bayadere, suddenly a British official appears and informs him that since he is approaching his thirtieth birthday he must immediately return to Lahore, where he will be obliged to marry an Indian girl, or several—the specter of polygamy appears again—and assume the throne. (The British, it is claimed, want a progressive like Radjami in charge.) Radjami decides he must take Odette with him and marry her instead. Odette resists. When the captain of the theater’s claque, Pimprinette, installs Radjami as Odette’s partner in the operetta their romance is, finally, all but consummated on the Châtelet’s stage. She is now convinced of his love, but in the end it is never clarified whether they will be leaving for India or not. Rather, they step through the looking glass of the metatheater, into a place where such questions do not exist.

56 The Châtelet was one of Paris’s leading operetta theaters at this time.
As will be seen, the musical portrayal of this escapism is vague, drawing more on Kálmán’s usual Hungarianisms than anything else. *Die Bajadere* is in many ways a simple extension of Kálmán’s construction of Viennese and Hungarian society in *Die Csárdásfürstin*, with India taking the place of Hungary’s passionate interiority. But the frames and mirrors of its plot also allow the operetta a rare freedom to operate on a meta-theatrical level. *Die Bajadere* seems to deconstruct Silver Age operetta even as it enacts it. The setting created maximum opportunity for visual spectacle, which was, by all accounts, fully exploited with a lavish, expensive, and made-to-order staging at the Carl-Theater. The libretto simultaneously embodied and commented on the tropes of operetta composition, aware of its own formulaic nature. In this way, *Die Bajadere* accommodated two distinct modes of viewing. For the casual operetta fan, *Die Bajadere* offered visual and aural splendor without undue seriousness or pretension, exoticism with any of the baggage entailed by a more anthropological approach. For the serious connoisseur, *Die Bajadere* offered in-jokes and theatrical tricks, poking fun at the increasingly worn Silver Age plot conventions while simultaneously offering a bravura execution of the expected tropes.

**No Passage to India**

Kálmán, Brammer, and Grünwald’s collective interest in an Indian setting probably can be ascribed to an instinct for commercial appeal. 57 Indian settings were in fashion in 1921, but drew from well-established conventions that had been popular in Germanic culture since the late eighteenth century. Among the many Germanic representations, the bayadere (temple dancer) is


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the single most popular motif. The classical Sanskrit play *Shakuntala* by Kalidasa (fifth century CE) acquired particular fame in Europe, and was translated into German by Georg Forster in 1791. Goethe’s 1797 poem *Der Gott und die Bajadere* would serve as a model for many of the temple dancer stories of the nineteenth century, including Eugène Scribe and Daniel Auber’s opera-ballet of 1830, *Le dieu et la bayadère* (choreographed by Filippo Taglioni).

By 1921, India had become a popular setting for silent films, many of which centered on temple ceremonies and other spectacular events. Most notable among these were the epics *Der Tiger von Eschnapur* and its sequel *Das indische Grabmal*, which together told the story of a European architect in India commissioned to build a shrine which turns out to be a tomb in which the commissioning maharaja will bury his unfaithful lover alive. Other Indian-set films included D.W. Griffiths’s *Brahama Danger* and *Hindu Danger* (1909) and Paul Wegener’s *Der Yogbi* (1916). This vogue may have also inspired the composition of Franco Alfano’s opera *La legenda di Sakuntala*, based on Kalidasa’s play, which premiered on December 10, 1921 in Bologna, only a few weeks before *Die Bajadere*.

Kálmán claimed he was uninfluenced by previous exotic portrayals of bayaderes onstage. He wrote that he began the score by studying “relevant works out of the literature,” but quickly threw these aside to search for what he called a “personal kind of foreign rhythm for the setting.” While it is true that Kálmán’s would-be Indian music sounds suspiciously similar to his Hungarian music, traces of familiar Indian representations can be heard as well. One suspects that the “relevant works” he studied included Georges Bizet’s *Les pêcheurs de perles* and above all

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Leo Delibes’s *Lakmé*, both Parisian works that followed in the footsteps of bayadere ballets. *Lakmé* was played regularly in Vienna, totaling 58 performances at the Hofoper between 1905 and 1925. Both take place on or near the Indian subcontinent and both prominently involve Hindu priestesses, similar to Odette’s character.⁶⁰

However, as Kálmán suggested, *Die Bajadere* is more concerned with the affective potential of exotic music than its spatial, cultural, or political connotations. The “Indian” music is first presented as the operetta within the operetta, that is, a Western performance of an exotic identity. The audience is repeatedly told—even by the proxy audience seen in the operetta’s very opening, as quoted at the very beginning of this chapter—about how titillating this performance is, a kind of meta-suggestion common in Silver Age operetta. (Indeed, the allure of India is confined to stage performance—the real Indian state is embodied not in an Indian but a British diplomat and appears only as a threat to Radjami’s happiness.) Rather than merely attempting to evoke a particular feeling in its audience, the operetta thematizes and describes that feeling, modeling the response that the audience should make, but never taking it entirely seriously. In this way *Die Bajadere* seems to solve the problem that dogged *Die Rose von Stambul*: how to write operettas that combined the expected, Viennese elements of operetta with a setting that also allowed for the thrills of exotic music. Despite all the metathetrical complexities, the operetta presented its audience at times with a unified visual portrayal of exoticism, as seen in a photograph promoting the operetta (Figure 6.1). Buyers of the postcard could not have forgotten that the central, turbanned figure, Louis Treumann, had also been the original Danilo in *Die

⁶⁰ A detailed accounting of bayaderes onstage can be found in Tiziana Leucci, *Devadasi e Bayadères: tra storia e leggenda: le danzatrici indiane nei racconti di viaggio e nell’immaginario teatrale occidentale (XIII–XX secolo)* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2005).
Figure 6.1: *Die Bajadere* cast with Louis Treumann, undated [c. 1921]\(^{61}\)

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Figure 6.2: *Die Bajadere*, Dramatic Frame

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lustige Witwe, and recalled the moments in that operetta when he was surrounded by the Grisetten.

Die Bajadere’s elaborate metatheatrical frame equates the expressive power of exoticism with the pleasures of operetta itself and divorces it from its real-world associations. Die Bajadere literally stages operetta reception. The audience must keep in mind four distinct theatrical spaces: the real auditorium in which they are sitting, the real stage which they are watching, the represented audience space of the Parisian Théâtre du Châtelet, where the operetta is set, and the stage of the Châtelet theater, where the operetta’s operetta is staged. The latter remains invisible and the middle two—the real stage and the represented audience space—converge, as represented in Figure 6.2. (The Châtelet’s audience space is a corridor or lobby located just outside the boxes, with doors leading into the theater. The stage description specifies that the theater space is visible through the doors.)

In the most immediate sense, Die Bajadere presents the ancillary action surrounding an operetta as an operetta. The opening recalls the beginning of Die Csárdásfürstin, in which the curtains revealed the stage of a cabaret theater (see Chapter 5). But while that operetta opened to reveal the audience watching another stage, in Die Bajadere we are immediately presented with the transitional space of a lobby. Unusually, the operetta doesn’t even give the audience a chance to applaud an overture, moving directly into the introductory chorus without so much as a strong cadence. An ascending motive in the orchestra on the notation of “Vorhang” even offers an aural representation of a curtain rising (Example 6.4a). The audience has hardly entered the theater, their minds still occupied with tickets and coat checks, when they are presented with an audience leaving another auditorium: the one onstage. The feigned Châtelet’s audience, the Carl-Theater’s chorus, bursts out singing “Reizend war der erste Akt,” (Example 6.4b), ostensibly
praising the first act of the operetta they have just seen and declaring it to possess all the charms
one could wish for in an operetta, as apparent in the text that opened this chapter. Though the
operetta has barely begun on the stage it is already the first intermission; this onstage singing
audience is temporally displaced, an hour ahead of the real audience. Thus, they present the
Viennese audience not only with a review of an operetta they have not seen but even highlight
the hit song that they should be remembering. For some members of the audience on the stage,
however, there is still some doubt about the quality of the work, as is apparent when two women
turn to

Example 6.4: Kálmán, *Die Bajadere*, No. 1, Introduktion
a) Curtain rises (p. 4)

![Example 6.4a: Kálmán, Die Bajadere, No. 1, Introduktion, a) Curtain rises](image)

b) Choral entrance

![Example 6.4b: Kálmán, Die Bajadere, No. 1, Introduktion, b) Choral entrance](image)
Count Armand, an apparent tastemaker, to ask if the operetta will be successful—as if the effusions we have already viewed were not in themselves sufficient indication. Armand proclaims that “die kleine Ariette singt morgen ganz Paris” (“the little aria will be sung tomorrow in all of Paris”) then proceeds to sing it himself: “Lotusblume, ich liebe dich” (“Lotus flower, I love you”).

This is a sly move by Brammer and Grünwald, a novel way to introduce a major song and include its marketing within the text of the operetta itself. On the one hand, it indicates the stratified connoisseurship of operetta reception—it is one connoisseur who can read and help indicate what will become the operetta’s greatest hit, and by proclaiming its hit status in front of the crowd he helps assure that this hit will take place. (It would not be surprising if a plot twist revealed that Armand had been bribed by a composer, librettist, performer, or publisher.) But Kálmán’s score tells a more complicated story: the melody of the “kleine Ariette” revealed as the Parisian operetta’s smash song was already sung by the chorus audience in “Reizend war der erste Akt,” as they exited the Parisian operetta and entered Kálmán’s Viennese one—compare
Armand’s phrase “Nein, Herr Falter, ich lieb’ dich nicht” (Example 6.4c) with the chorus’s lines “Die Musik, Sie [warden sehen]” and “erste Akt.” Moreover, after Armand sings one phrase, the audience is already harmonizing and singing along with the second phrase, such is the power of the little song. The tune is already being sung by all of Paris, or at least by those who have been exposed to it.

The sight of Odette as a bayadere is first viewed through the eyes of another desiring character, her visual splendor withheld for as long as possible. She is first presented as a disembodied offstage voice, mediated through the eyes of Prince Radjami while she is on the invisible Châtelet stage. Her first appearance seems to reference the titular actress heroine of Cilèa’s Adriana Lecouvreur, whose first performance is similarly offstage and refracted through an onstage observer, her stardom made more glamorous by its mediation through another character’s reaction to it.\(^{62}\) She begins with a long unaccompanied melisma seemingly lifted directly out of Lakmé’s so-called Bell Song (compare examples 6.5 and 6.6a). The vocal demands are far beyond those of most operettas: Odette ascends to a high C sharp and then descends an octave in a chromatic scale. Such singing was presumably within actress Christel [Christl] Mardayn’s capabilities—she had performed, among other roles, the very high role of Blonde in Die Entführung aus dem Serail and the similarly demanding coloratura of the title role of Franz von Suppé’s Die schöne Galathée, both at the Volksoper—but the range and

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\(^{62}\) This is Act I Scene 8 of Cilèa’s opera, beginning with Michonnet’s “Ecco il monologo.” The librettists may have been familiar with the opera, or even more likely knew Ernst Legouvé and Eugène Scribe’s 1849 play on which the opera is based. This and other offstage phenomena are considered in Arman Schwartz, “Rough Music: Tosca and Verismo Reconsidered,” 19th-Century Music 31, no. 3 (March 1, 2008): 228–44.
Example 6.5: Delibes, *Lakmé*, No. 10 Scène et légende de la fille du Paria (Bell Song)

(Sans mesure)

LAKME.

Ah!

Example 6.6: Kálmán, *Die Bajadere*, No 3

a) Cadenza

b) Duet
coloratura are highly unusual. Her tessitura remains high as the orchestra returns and she intones, on a repeating figure first heard in the cadenza, “Dein will auf ewig ich sein/Komm und trink’ meiner Liebe/Feurig perlenden Wein.” (“I want to be forever yours/come and drink my love, fiery sparkling wine.”) Despite only being in the audience, Radjami joins in: “Bringt deine

63 Mardayn’s singing was universally praised by critics. She may have had a small amount of help singing this number: a footnote in the published score indicates that Odette was “supported” (unterstützt) by a solo oboe, also played from backstage. (The score suggests that the oboe doubles the vocal line in much of the song, including several complex coloratura passages, but it is not indicated in the cadenza.) However, the necessity of this assistance may have had been more related to acoustics and backstage placement than vocal requirements. Emmerich Kalman, Julius Brammer, and Alfred Grünwald, Die Bajadere: Operette in drei Akten (Berlin: Drei Masken-Verlag, 1921).
Nähe/Glück oder Weh?/ Süßestes Glück oder Weh?” (“Does your closeness bring/happiness or sorrow?/ Sweetest happiness or sorrow?”) The offstage operetta’s chorus—also invisible—helpfully adds, “Hört Ihr das Liebeslied?” (“Do you hear the love song?”)

While Radjami is only a spectator, he is able to enter Odette’s unseen world and sing along. His Indian identity makes him fit right in, and he identifies Odette’s singing as “mein Heimat Gesang” (the song of my homeland). But he also articulates the erotic attraction of exoticism in specific terms, making him a bridge between the offstage voice and the audience—just like the stage space he occupies, situated in between the audience and the invisible operetta’s stage. As the tempo of the number quickens, Odette’s melismas accelerate to sixteenth-note septuplets and Radjami’s sings (Example 6.6b), “Ja! Sie ist’s wie im Traum ich sie sah, wie ich heiß sie ersehnte, ist sie mir nah! Wie ich sah, stehst du strahlend nun da, wie’s im seligsten Traume, oft mir geschah.” (“Yes! She is like I saw her in dreams, how much I desire her, she is near to me!”) Radjami’s vision of Odette is conveyed only through his appearance, as she remains concealed. The climax of the number, appropriately enough, is Radjami’s alone: “Bist mir so nah, wie ich im Traume dich so oft gesehn’l, als Bajadere, armer Radjami, um dich ist es geschehn’!” (“You are so close to me, like you appear to me so often in dreams, as the bayadere, poor Radjami, you’re done!”) The effect of the number is rather masturbatory and exhibitionist, but the tension is cut by the following section, whose music is a quiet, rhythmic, and more contained.

The exotic mystery of Odette’s disembodied voice is brought to earth when she enters in person in the next scene. She appears not as the bayadere but as a chic, worldly Parisian actress greeting her fans (seemingly during the second intermission). Her description in the Regiebuch
suggests that her appearance is fashionable and modern, with the glitter of the bayadere only barely visible. The traces she bears of an exotic image are once again worn on her head:

She perhaps still wears the costume in which she played the second act—but with a large, magnificent evening cloak thrown over it, so one can only see the costume’s headdress… a spirited, hot-blooded woman, externally temperamental and puts up with nothing, also does not let it be forgotten for a second that she is a genuine and utter lady… she walks vivaciously, speaks somewhat nervously.64

While her disembodied voice suggested mysterious pleasure, in person she expresses herself in specific, self-conscious language and appears both down-to-earth and a proper European lady. While Radjami is sure he understands Odette from seeing her onstage, in the opening of her entrance song she begins by proposing that her audience does not in fact have any idea of what she is “really” like—“Wenn sie eine Ahnung hätten, was ich fühle, wenn ich abends angstvoll auf die Bühne trete!” (“If you had any idea what I feel, when I fearfully step onto the stage in the evenings.”) Her music here similarly suggests a different personality from her stage character. (In this metatheatrical frame, her “onstage” character is initially unseen while her “offstage” character is the one who receives a full introduction.)

Her melody is declamatory and moderate in range, in a major key instead of the exotic harmonic minor, and she sings in the conventional operetta forms of a march and a waltz. She is aware of her own powers: “Und auf einmal bin ich explodiert, und im Parkett sitz alles, alles mäuschenstill, den jetzt mach ich mit euch, was ich will, und ich weiß es und ich spür: Jetzt, ja jetzt gehört ihr mir!” (“And all at once I am detonated, and all in the audience sit, all dead quiet, I can do with them what I want, and I know and I feel: Now, yes, now you belong to me!”).

64 “Sie trägt vermutlich noch das Kostüm, in dem sie eben den zweiten Akt spielte – hat aber einen großen prachtvollen Abendmantel übergeworfen, so dass man nur den Kopfputz des Kostümes sieht… eine geistvolle, rassige Frau… äußerst empfindlich und gestattet niemandem, auch nur eine Sekunde zu vergessen, das sie eine wirkliche und vollkommene Dame ist… Sie tritt temperamentvoll auf, etwas nervös sprechend.” Brammer and Grünwald, *Die Bajadere: Regiebuch.*
Again, Odette recalls Adriana Lecouvreur, who similarly introduces herself, in “Io son l’umile ancella,” as a shy and meek actress who comes alive only when stepping onstage, where she is transformed. But Odette also acknowledges that in the world of operetta those powers are commodified, a transaction between her and her audience and nothing more: “der Bühnengehörden der Welt, geht nur zur Kasse und zahlt Euer Geld/ Kauf unser zuckendes Herz, kaufet unser Glück” (“the stage belongs to the world, only go to the ticket office and pay your money/buy our fluttering heart, buy our happiness”). And the operetta responsibly fulfills its own advertising: Radjami and Odette’s first proper duet, “Lotusblume, ich liebe dich” (No. 5), is the full song promised by the excerpt previewed in the operetta’s opening, moved from the fictitious stage to the reality of Odette and Radjami’s relationship.

While Act I presents the audience with mirrors and fakes, what follows is a textbook second act, where the false Indians are replaced with real ones. The act opens in a party at Prince Radjami’s house. The opening promises traditional operetta fun in a hymn to champagne whose text and music allude to the beginning of Die Fledermaus’s Act II finale. The Fledermaus text calls champagne “heavenly,” associated with kings and emperors. The Bajadere text goes further, praising champagne as making men “like gods,” with the power to elevate one to heaven. The surging upward line and polonaise rhythm of Kálmán’s music are also references.

65 This commodification is further developed in the figure of Pimprinette, the head of the Théâtre de Chatelêt’s claque. Speaking with a journalist named Dr. Cohen, Pimprinette says that after years of experience he is expert in gauging an operetta audience’s response and that he believes that the end of the second act of this operetta has provided them great satisfaction. He then undermines this remark by noting, “Wie es zum zweiten Aktschluss kommt und die Operette tragisch wird—schwimmen sie in Tränen, diese Tränenschwimmerei kostet 8 Francs Honorar (Für den dritten Akt hab’ ich die Lacher auf meiner Seite – kosten 10 Francs per Stück!).” (“Like when the finale of the second act of the operetta becomes tragic—they swim in tears, this bath of tears costs an 8 Franc fee [for the third act I have laughter on my side—it costs 10 francs apiece].”)
This is followed by the exotic dance that is customarily found at the beginning of Act II. While the performers are, according to the operetta, no longer Parisians but “genuine Indian dancers,” there is no discernable difference between their music or presentation and the fake Indian music of Act I, thus perhaps acknowledging that neither group of ersatz Indians are to be taken as a serious attempt to represent Indian culture. In fact, much of the exotic scoring, particularly the Act II opening, is, in short, rather Hungarian. The number proper begins with a melismatic, free introduction with a solo clarinet, in which a long descending chromatic scale. The fast dance section’s sequential scalar figures, ornamented with mordents (Example 6.7), closely recalls the fast section of Sylva’s “Heia, heia in den Bergen” from Die Csárdásfürstin. Finally, most blatantly, the B section of the tertiary dance music includes a táragató, a Hungarian folk instrument which sounds similar to a saxophone.  

Example 6.7: Kálmán, Die Bajadere, No. 8, Dance, Presto

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66 The modern version of the instrument had been developed in the mid-nineteenth century in Hungary, and was only occasionally seen outside Budapest, usually playing the role of Wagner’s Holz trompete in Act III of Tristan und Isolde, though this seems to have been a short-lived early twentieth-century fad. Zoltán Falvy, “Tárogató as a Regional Instrument,” Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae 38, no. 3/4 (January 1, 1997): 361–70.
This was noted by the critics, and they found it acceptable, one suspects, not only because *Die Bajadere* makes a point of its inauthenticity but also because Kálmán was still seen as a composer whose native musical language was essentially exotic itself. “Declared or not, the lotus flower has here and there a pinch of paprika,”\(^67\) said the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (a review perhaps written by Heinrich Reinhardt). “Kálmán has solved the problem of making Indian music in the best way in that he makes his own music,”\(^68\) said the *Neue Freie Presse*. “Kálmán’s music has real Hungarian fire, thrilling verve and drive,”\(^69\) wrote the *Illustrierte Wiener Extrablatt*, possibly just as ignorant about Indian music as Kálmán was.

But most of the operetta’s dance is found in the music assigned to the secondary couple, who are linked to Radjami and Odette’s tale in only a perfunctory manner. While Radjami and Odette’s story provides exoticism and sensuality in a world alienated by a metatheatrical frame, the secondary plot provides the bubbly frivolity of modern dances distanced through the self-conscious acknowledgement of operetta genre conventions. The situation provided is a love triangle centering on the capricious Parisian woman Marietta. At the outset, Marietta is married to Louis-Philippe and having an affair with Napoleon, but by the third act she has married Napoleon, already tired of him, and is having an affair with Louis-Philippe.\(^70\) The characters’ irrelevance is frequently signaled in the text—upon seeing the operetta-within-the-operetta,

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\(^70\) The names of French rulers are jokes. Napoleon’s actual name is Casimir, but he changed it to impress Marietta. King Louis-Philippe was, of course, forced to abdicate the July Monarchy in eventual favor of Napoleon III.
Marietta and Napoleon comment on the actors playing the roles fulfilling the same Fächer that they do themselves, soubrette and comic:

**Napoleon:** Ah, it’s better for us to stay here [in the theater’s lobby], now the comic has a scene with the soubrette. I can’t stand the fellow, he overplays so insanely!

**Marietta:** Yes, the comic—he overplays!

**Napoleon:** Yeah, and the soubrette? She perhaps doesn’t overplay?

**Marietta:** Yes, I can’t stand the soubrette either!

**Napoleon:** Nobody can stand her!

They receive, in all, an unusual wealth of numbers, seven in all, most of them duets but also one trio (Nr. 11, “Na, ist sie nicht ein süßer Schatz”) and one solo song for Napoleon (Nr. 16, “Als ich unlängst stand”). The first duet is a version of Valencienne and Camille’s first duet in Die lustige Witwe, a seduction number for the second couple in which the woman somewhat unconvincingly professes her virtue. The others are a variety of modern, American-influenced dances including a slowfox and, most memorably, a shimmy.

In contrast to Odette and Radjami’s mystical, eternal, love, Marietta and her lovers are, like Midili and Fridolin before them, modern, flighty, and dedicated to the newest fashions. The shimmy is introduced as something new and exciting (Example 6.8). This makes it another kind of outside intruder, but while the Indian world is ancient and eternal the American shimmy is pointedly timely and modern. The shimmy is an American dance that became popular in the late 1910s and 1920s; this number seems to mark its first appearance in a Viennese operetta. (It had, appropriately enough, already been heard in Parisian operettas or comédies musicales such as

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71 Napoleon: Ach, bleiben wir lieber hier, jetzt hat der Komiker gerade eine Szene mit der Soubrette. Ich kann der Kerl nicht ausstehen, er übertreibt so wahnsinnig!

Marietta: Ja, der Komiker – der übertreibt!

Napoleon: Na, und die Soubrette? Die übertreibt vielleicht nicht!

Marietta: Ja, die Soubrette kann ich auch nicht leiden!

Napoleon: Kein Mensch kann sie leiden!

Brammer and Grünwald, Die Bajadere: Regiebuch.
Henri Christiné's *Phi Phi* of 1918. The shimmy was characterized by one thing: rapid shaking of the shoulders. It was not a partner dance, making the song's invitation to dance somewhat superfluous.

Example 6.8: Kálmán, *Die Bajadere*, No. 15 Duett (Marietta, Louis-Philippe), refrain

Die *Bajadere*, No. 15, Duett (Marietta, Louis-Philippe)

| Will man heutzutage schik [sic] und modern sein, | If one wants to be chic and modern |
| Will man einer von der besseren Herr'n sein, | If one wants to be one of the finer gentlemen, |
| Muß man tanzen können alles was mondän | One must do all the fashionable dances |
| Heisst es schieben, wakkeln [sic], wedeln oder drehn | This means shuffling, wiggling, shaking, or spinning |
| … | … |
| Fräulein, bitte, woll'n sie Shimmy tanzen? | Miss, please, do you want to dance the shimmy? |
| Shimmy, Shimmy, ist der Clou vom Ganzen | Shimmy, shimmy is the highlight of it all |
| Shimmy, Schimmy ist der Schlager dieser | Shimmy, shimmy is the hit of this ball season! |
| Ball saison! | … |
| Shimmy ist heut im Salon sehr nötig | Shimmy is today vital in the salon |
| Shimmy ist der Gipfel der Ästhetik, | Shimmy is the height of aesthetics |
| Shimmy ist die aller letzte Creation! | Shimmy is the very latest creation! |
| … | … |
| Shimmy, Shimmy ist die große Mode, | Shimmy, Shimmy is the greatest fashion! |
| Shimmy ist die Sensation! | Shimmy is a sensation! |

72 Traubner, *Operetta*, 291.

The libretto defies conventional resolution. It does not end with Radjami renouncing his position as Prince of Lahore, nor with Odette resolving to leave Paris, nor with their separation due to irreconcilable cultural differences, nor any other finale that would have offered a tidy closure to their adventures. Prince Radjami takes the male lead in the fictional operetta, which the leader of the claque, Pimprinette, introduces to not the Châtelet audience but outwards to the Viennese audience as “Voilà, the third act of Die Bajadere,” and it is no longer clear of which Bajadere he is speaking. Odette and Radjami step into the operetta-within-the-operetta, and it is there that the librettists and the audience leave them, content. This finale’s resolution is determinedly theatrical, aware of its own artificiality. An important letter passed around by Pimprinette is even proclaimed, “a prop [ein Requisit] à la Sardou!” Yet Die Bajadere is no well-made play: its finale does not restore order and normalcy but rather sinks into itself, subsuming its outer world into the created one which its opening chorus acclaimed.

In this, the libretto’s mirrors and the music’s pointed rejection of an attempt at authentic representation suggest a modernism in which no authentic representation can exist. Die Bajadere is unusually frank about its commodity status. It presents itself as nothing less and nothing more than good value for the audience’s Kronen (shortly to become a more valuable Schilling). In Adorno’s formulation, the audience of Die Bajadere is not enjoying the operetta at all, but rather the money that they have paid to see it. Of a concertgoer who has bought his ticket, Adorno writes, “he has literally ‘made’ this success which he reifies and accepts as an objective criterion, without recognizing himself in it. But he has not ‘made’ it by liking the concert, but rather by buying the ticket.”74 But Die Bajadere methodically invites the audience members to see their

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roles in the operetta food chain, underlining the commodity status of transaction at every opportunity. And yet the operetta never gives the audience the opportunity to make up their own minds. Even the cynical Pimprinette, the claque leader who manufactures audience reaction for profit, proposes no audience response other than delirious delight. As Adorno argues of popular music, “to like it is almost the same thing as to recognize it.”\(^{75}\) The operetta is, in the overall trajectory of Viennese operetta, subversive, and more self-aware than most critics would believe of Silver Age operetta. This is not, however, a critical mode in any way: *Die Bajadere* is a celebration of exotic consumerism, and of the superficial pleasures the theater can bring—all you need to do, as Odette sings in her entrance song, is buy a ticket to happiness.

**Marketing and Reception**

This self-conscious commodification was embedded in the operetta’s marketing scheme, as is evident in a special issue of *Komödie* devoted to the operetta. *Komödie*, subtitled “Wochenrevüe für Bühne und Film,” was a magazine that provided glowing promotion for current stage and entertainment events.\(^{76}\) The magazine gives the impression of being for self-styled connoisseurs who have discerning taste but also want to hear the salacious backstage story (the articles are frequently written in the first person plural—“our operetta”). Articles examine the production process and the people who work both on and behind the stage: there are profiles of and amusic anecdotes related by critics, composers, librettists, and actors, and some polemical essays are even credited to operetta figures themselves. *Komödie* avoided controversial topics and often seems to be written as a publicity pamphlet (unlike, for example, *Die Stunde*, a tabloid newspaper that also

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\(^{75}\) Ibid., 30.

\(^{76}\) “Sonderheft Die Bajadere.” *Komödie* 3:2 (January 1922).
promises an insider perspective but one that includes gossip and rumors). It is not clear if any of the articles—like in those in newspapers condemned by Karl Kraus—are effectively paid advertisements, but it seems highly likely.

The *Bajadere* issue was published in mid-January, a few weeks after the operetta opened. It already refers to the work as a huge success. The issue’s articles methodically introduce the work’s creators, beginning with an interview with Kálmán himself, moving on to a series of short interviews with the librettists, actors, and *Kapellmeister*, who are asked to comment about each other. A short, jokey article follows, which is a purported glimpse behind the scenes: it describes the process in which Carltheater intendant Siegmund Eibenschütz decided he needed to hire actress Christel Mardyn from the Volksoper in order to sing the role of Odette (their reigning diva’s singing was deemed inadequate for the role’s demands). Librettists Alfred Grünwald provides the punch line, saying to Eibenschütz, “You should be like Bismarck. If Mardyn is not successful, you are guilty and it costs you your job. If she does well, you had nothing to do with it.” Those who found this anecdote funny were those who also saw the insider jokes of *Die Bajadere* itself—written by Grünwald—as a key element, recognizing the libretto’s jokes about actresses and previous productions. *Die Bajadere* was ideally suited for such a backstage treatment, since its very libretto already took operetta reception as its subject.

Finally, this copiously illustrated magazine presents the operetta as visual spectacle with an article about the costumes and shoes. (There are, unfortunately, no stage photographs.) The feature on the costumes describes ways in which the extravagant stage fashions can be adopted by ordinary women: gold and silver dresses are now so in style that “they no longer belong to a

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77 “Ich mache sie aufmerksam—Sie spielen den Bismarck. Wenn die Mardayn keinen Erfolg hat, sind Sie schuld und es kostet Ihre Demission. Wenn sie aber gefällt, haben Sie keinen Verdienst daran.” Ibid., 7.
children’s fairy tale.” The anonymous author describes three of Christel Mardayn’s dresses, after the gold dress one with jewels and a third adorned with sequins. The article names both dressmaker and shoemaker (Modehaus C. Bojko and Schuhaus Dworiansky, the latter supplied with the upscale address of Weihburggasse 26 in the first district), presumably as a form of advertising both for the house’s attention to fashion as well as their craft. The page also advertises Atelier Willinger on Kärtnerstrasse as the photography studio providing the issue’s illustrations.78

Such overt commodification sits uneasily with operetta’s attempts to proclaim its own artistic worth (though this was not a campaign in which Kálmán ever played a major part). But the two aspirational tendencies are intertwined: the magazine simultaneously provides a model of an aesthetic for readers who wish to imagine themselves in the know (giving them the picture of an intendant hiring determining his casting) and material aspiration, advertising the luxury good providers whose wares adorn the operetta (some other similar advertisements also name an interior decorator who outfitted the set). By reading Komödie, readers learn how to elevate their place in society, both telling them where to buy the material signals for wealth and fashion and the gossip to inform their conversations.

This marketing plan worked because the exoticism of Die Bajadere is not alienating or threatening. It presents a titillating exoticism premade for fashion, whose clothes and shoes could be worn outside the theater. The operetta positions its characters as objects of identification and desire for its audience members, both in the human interest stories in Komödie and the literal transposition of the stage objects into the audience member’s daily lives. Operetta had long been a marketable product beyond its scores—Die lustige Witwe had provoked a

78“Kleider auf der Bühne,” Ibid., 15.
marketing frenzy of vaguely related objects. But *Komödie* and *Die Bajadere* represent a Gesamtkunstwerk of commodification in a way that *Witwe*’s scattered hats and cigarettes did not, marketing the entire theatrical experience as a socially elevating phenomenon, through which audience members could become more fashionable and fabulous people.

Just as *Komödie* broke *Die Bajadere* into its constituent parts of backstage stories, libretto, and visuals, newspaper critics recognized the operetta’s achievement as a triumph of small parts working in concert. They similarly acclaimed Kálmán’s score for its ability to encompass the diverse demands of an operetta audience: to speak to both connoisseurs and amateurs, and to be both entertaining and artful.

He is one of the few who through personality, solid ability and artistically self-conscious ambition are justified to win, along with Lehár, great international success... every song, every dance piece, that he releases into the operetta world, is well-considered, precisely calibrated and calculated. Thus, each of his operettas, even the weak ones, have strong concentration and musical power of suggestion [Suggestivkraft], that can draw in the practiced listeners as much as the laity.  

While critics treated *Die Rose von Stambul* with great skepticism, they universally let Kálmán, Brammer, and Grünwald off the hook, noting that whatever its authenticity, it had great charm. The *Neue Freie Presse* noted, “At present India is taking its turn as the land about which hazy imaginings—like rajas, bayaderes, and lotus flowers—are being disseminated.” If they enjoyed it, that seemed, that was enough, and that was all that Kálmán sought. Despite his careful

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79 “Er gehört zu den Wenigen, die durch Persönlichkeit, solides Können und künstlerisch bewußten Ehrgeiz berechtigt sind, mit Lehár den Wettbewerb um die großen Welterfolge aufzunehmen... jedes Lied, jedes Tanzstück, das er in die Operettenwelt gehen läßt, ist wohlüberlegt, genau ausgezirkelt und berechnet. Dadurch hat jede seiner Operetten, auch die schwächeren, starke Konzentration und eine musikalische Suggestivkraft, der sich der geübte Zuhörer ebensowenig wie der Laie entziehen kann.” Hirschfeld, “Die neue Kalman-Operette Die Bajadere. Erstaufführung im Carl-Theater.”

80 “Momentan ist Indien an der Reihe, ein Land, über das zwar nur unklare Vorstellungen, wie Rajahs, Bayaderen, und Lotosblumen, verbreitet sind.” Ibid.
craftsmanship, he was not a composer who felt that he was working beneath his station, or one who heard a higher aesthetic calling. This was not universal: Franz Lehár was different.

**DAS LAND DES LÄCHELNS AND ALIENATION**

Lehár and Tauber

While Kálmán’s *Die Bajadere* transformed a depoliticized exoticism into a metatheatrical reflection on show business, Franz Lehár had more self-serious plans. His *Das Land des Lächelns* (The Land of Smiles), a revision of the 1923 operetta *Die gelbe Jacke*, takes its exoticism in earnest. Lehár saw in the musical portrayal of a forbidding China another opportunity to elevate operetta to operatic heights: a chance to write dramatically specific, locally colored music that used a large orchestra and, according to less charitable critics, often turns bombastic. What *Das Land des Lächelns* shares with previous exotic operettas is a fundamental belief that the distance conferred by exoticism conceals a deeper common humanity. The story is another cross-cultural romance, in this instance between a Chinese prince and a Viennese countess. Countess Lisa and Prince Sou-Chong are culturally opposed—her face is white to his “yellow.” Yet they are linked by a deeper affinity, both by their attraction to each other and by the greater depth of their feeling compared to those who surround them. But, in a stark difference from most operettas, the cultural differences expressed in the exotic music prove too great to overcome.

In *Das Land des Lächelns*, two kinds of exoticism—one the warmly universal operetta variety and the other a more traditionally alienating one—meet up with the celebrity cult of tenor Richard Tauber. This will be apparent in the operetta’s most celebrated moment, in which Sou-Chong drops his exotic music for an effusive, unmarked love song. In Tauber, Lehár had both a
powerful singer who could realize the composer’s operatic ambitions and a stiff actor whose
performances often suggested that the character’s expressivity was buried.

It was no surprise that the operetta would feature Tauber, whose voice had become
inseparable from Lehár’s music. Indeed, the collaboration had revived the composer’s career. Tauber was an extremely popular opera singer throughout Germany and Austria. Known first as
a Mozart tenor, he eventually performed nearly every major role in the tenor repertory, from
Lohengrin to Calaf. As described by contemporaries and preserved on recordings, his voice was
dark-hued in the middle with a somewhat strangulated vibrato and powerful at the top, and
expertly controlled. Tauber had first sung Lehár’s music in a Berlin production of Zigeunerliebe
in 1920, and Lehár first heard sing the same role at the Salzburger Stadttheater in the summer of
1921. The two became better acquainted, and discovered a mutual love of Romantic expression
and melody and wariness of more modern fare, which Lehár deemed Tüfteleien, “fiddly bits.” In
the summer of 1922, Tauber took over from Hubert Marischka the leading role in Lehár’s
Frasquita at the Theater an der Wien, and a flagging production was transformed into a major

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81 Lehár’s career in the 1910s and 1920s had been decidedly uneven. Wo die Lerche singt (1918) and Die blaue Mazur (1920) were both modestly scaled folk-influenced works, and highly successful. But
subsequent attempts to adopt the cosmopolitan, modern style of Kálmán and Fall were less successful:
among Lehár’s flops or succéses d’estime we may number Die Tangskönigin (1921), Frasquita (1922), Die gelbe Jacke (1923), Libellentanz (1923; a new libretto written to music from Der Sterngucker from 1916),
and Cloelo (1924). This period in Lehár’s career is described in more detail in Frey, Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg, 237–274; Linke, Franz Lehár, 72–103.
82 Tauber recorded prolifically, and many of his recordings are available on CD. One large collection is
Richard Tauber, Richard Tauber, Superstar, 10 CDs (Membran, n.d).
83 The encounter is described in Evelyn Steinthaler, Morgen muss ich fort von hier: Richard Tauber: Die
Emigration eines Weltstars (Vienna: Milena, 2011), 46–47.
84 Linke, Franz Lehár, 82.
hit. This career transition was not without cost to Tauber’s reputation: his pecuniary gains were incessantly mentioned by critics, who characterized him as a sellout.  

For Tauber’s outsized celebrity, Lehár wrote operettas based on outsized historical figures. The first role Lehár created specifically for Tauber was the title role of Paganini, an operetta very loosely inspired by the life of the violinist. Tauber sang the Berlin premiere on January 30, 1926, and it was here that the Tauber-Lehár legend was born. Their next two operettas, Der Zarewitsch (1927) and Friederike (1928), were premiered in Berlin. Compared to the inflation-stretched, heavily taxed theaters of Vienna, Berlin was booming, and Lehár found ample interest in the production of his work. These productions were mounted under the aegis of the Rotter brothers (Berlin’s answer to Wilhelm Karczag), who, though often criticized for their taste, knew how to produce a hit.

While Lehár and Tauber found lucrative popular success in Berlin, they also found a more skeptical critical establishment. Lehár’s turn towards quasi-opera was roundly criticized, and his reviews were less generous than those he had received in Vienna. He seems to have been undaunted: in this period he proclaimed triumphantly that his success with the public now allowed him to finally be free to write his operettas exactly as he wanted, without making any

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85 Tauber also found that he could earn 500 Kronen a night singing operetta (while he made 1,000 Kronen per month as an ensemble member of the Wiener Staatsoper). Frey, Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg, 230.
86 Due to schedule conflicts, the world premiere in Vienna had been sung by Carl Clewing, a Heldentenor and another operatic sell-out. He was not nearly as successful as Tauber.
87 The Rotter dynasty is described in Marline Otte, Jewish Identities in German Popular Entertainment, 1890–1933 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 251–255.
88 Paganini was criticized both for the overblown nature of its score and also for its casual relationship with the historical figure whose life it purported to illustrate. Friederike was dismissed for the same reasons, but the condemnation was more pointed because the historical figure it depicted was German cultural icon Goethe. Friederike was notably protested by the right and the left. One memorable account is Ernst Bloch, “Lehár - Mozart (1928),” in Literary Essays, trans. Andrew Joron (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1974), 11–14. A more general account of its reception can be found in Lichtfuss, Operette im Ausverkauf, 282–296.

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concessions—concessions which had presumably been demanded by producers and librettists, though he is not entirely clear on this point.\textsuperscript{89} The fact that this purported newfound freedom led him to become more famous and popular than he had been since \textit{Die lustige Witwe} was, presumably, merely a bonus.

On January 25, 1929, Tauber suffered an attack of what is variously described as angina or rheumatism, collapsing onstage midway through a performance of \textit{Friederike}.\textsuperscript{90} Months of cures at spas followed, with great media attention paid to every detail. \textit{Das Land des Lächelns}, Lehár's next new operetta, marked his Berlin comeback. It was a revision of an older piece, \textit{Die gelbe Jacke}, which had had only a short run at the Theater an der Wien in 1923 and had never been performed in Berlin. (It has often been suggested that the Chinese subject was proposed due to Tauber’s lingering facial disfigurement and labored walk, the former of which could have been concealed by the requisite makeup and the latter through the long robes worn by Prince Sou-Chong, Tauber’s character. But this account has been disputed by biographer Otto Schneidereit, who dates the start of the work’s development to 1928, predating Tauber’s collapse. Schneidereit suggests that it was \textit{Die gelbe Jacke}'s unknown status in Berlin that made it an ideal candidate for reworking.\textsuperscript{91})


\textsuperscript{90} Stefan Frey suggests a possible explanation for this confusion: the underlying cause may have been venereal disease. Frey, \textit{Franz Lehár}, 249.


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Like *Die gelbe Jacke*, *Das Land des Lächelns* is set in 1912. The first two acts of librettist Victor Léon’s plot remain largely the same in Ludwig Herzer and Fritz Löhner’s revision, though several of the characters receive new names and, most importantly, the third act is changed drastically. Additionally, Lehár swapped and added several musical numbers. Both operettas begin as the Countess Lisa, in search of romance and adventure, turns down a proposal from the Viennese Lieutenant Gustl, and instead falls in love with visiting Chinese prince Sou-Chong. Sou-Chong is recalled to China to take up the position of prime minister and Lisa decides to go with him. In China, Sou-Chong is inaugurated to great fanfare with the ceremonial yellow jacket worn by prime ministers (which gave the first version of the operetta its title), but insists that this will not affect his and Lisa’s relationship. Gustl travels to China to rescue Lisa, but is waylaid by Mi, Sou-Chong’s attractive younger sister. It is then revealed that Sou-Chong must, as a condition of his office, marry four Chinese women. Lisa is disgusted. In *Die gelbe Jacke*, Lisa then flees back to Vienna, where Sou-Chong eventually joins her and they live happily ever after. But in the revised third act to *Das Land des Lächelns*, the unwilling Lisa is imprisoned in Sou-Chong’s palace, where she is rescued by Gustl. But Sou-Chong catches them as they are making their escape. In an opera seria-like act of clemency, he gives Lisa and Gustl leave to return to Vienna, and both pairs of lovers are separated.

92 The two most important name changes are the female protagonist, who is Lea in the first version and Lisa in the second, and her Viennese suitor, who is Claudius in *Die gelbe Jacke* and Gustav (Gustl) in *Das Land des Lächelns*. *Das Land des Lächelns* was credited “nach Viktor Léon von Ludwig Herzer und Fritz Löhner,” some later editions of the score leave Léon’s name off entirely. Herzer and Löhner had written Lehár’s previous operetta, *Friederike*, and the experience had been, by all accounts, positive.

93 Lieutenant Gustl’s name (Graf Gustav von Pottenstein, Oberleutenant) seems to be an obvious allusion to Arthur Schnitzler’s novella of the same title, a pioneering example of stream-of-consciousness writing. In the operetta, he is a generic k.u.k. officer type. Sou-Chong’s name seems to be inspired by lapsang souchong tea (his first duet with Lisa is sung while they enjoy tea together).
Other revisions to Das Land des Lächelns tightened up the action, reducing the number of characters in the Viennese act and ending Act I and Act II with unusual duet finales for Lisa and Sou-Chong alone. On the musical side, Lehár greatly revised the finales to accord with the new text. The entire third act is new (one song for Mi has been moved from Act II). The role of Sou-Chong was rewritten to exploit Tauber’s vocal capabilities, which were considerably greater than those of Hubert Marischka (who sang Die gelbe Jacke). It was in the ambition of the score where Lehár justified his sad ending, and hoped to make an aesthetic statement.

Pentatonic Attraction

Sou-Chong claims that his individuality and emotions are hidden behind his “smiling face.” While his ornamental exotic exterior charms the Viennese, his emotional side escapes only when he is alone or with Lisa, and only in music. Sou-Chong’s singing voice becomes an intimate mode of address which resonates both with Tauber’s performance style and the changing dynamics of operetta production and dissemination. The libretto pushes its characters to unusual extremes, allowing Lehár to compose music full of the kind of drama and tension that he had sought for years. Aided by the strong voices of Tauber and soprano Vera Schwarz, he and the librettists created a cathartic, highly charged version of operetta. The focus is relentlessly on the two protagonists: the librettists also methodically reduce the role of the chorus, eliminating them from both act finales.

94 Schwarz was a well-known soprano who was a fixture in both Vienna and Berlin, performing roles like Aida, Tosca, and Sieglinde. She frequently sang operetta with Tauber, but otherwise remained in the operatic realm. She was never a star on the level of Tauber, or the most popular actresses of the era such as Rita Georg and Fritzi Massary.
The score includes a good deal of exotic music, mostly defined by its use of the pentatonic scale, which at first seems to simply indicate Sou-Chong’s exotic identity and Lisa’s fascination with it. In the second act, when the operetta’s setting moves to China, exoticism takes on a more sinister role, and the foreignness of exotic music is transformed from appealing to repugnant. But even in Act I both Lisa and Sou-Chong are musically defined beyond solely exotic characteristics. At the very opening of the operetta, Lisa arrives having just won an equestrian competition, and expresses her love of life and adventure in a rousing entrance song (No. 1, Introduktion und Lied). She wants, she says, excitement: “Heut’ hätt’ ich Lust und das Feuer/ein Abendteuer noch zu bestehn” (today I have the desire and the fervor/to have an adventure) The chorus agrees that Lisa is delightful, exclaiming, “eine reizende Frau/eine herrliche Frau, so pikant und mondän!” (a charming woman, a magnificent woman, so lively and chic!). Like Odette and Kondja before her, she is an adventurous, modern woman, which is portrayed in a positive light. The nature of her desired adventures is indicated in her music: her vocal line in the verse section is entirely pentatonic, emphasized in the orchestra by a straightforward pentatonic scale (measures 7-8, Example 6.9).

Example 6.9: Lehár, Das Land des Lächelns, No. 1 Introduktion und Entrée, verse
Her refrain shows her to still be a fine Viennese lady: it is a waltz, and not a pentatonic one.

When Lisa is alone, the provenance of her affinity with the pentatonic becomes more obvious: she sits at the piano and plays a short, bare pentatonic theme, singing along (No. 1½, Liedchen, Example 6.10). It is vocalized on an “ah,” and seems (like “Lippen schweigen” in *Die lustige Witwe*) to express something that she is unable to put into words. When her suitor Gustl enters, Lisa explains that it is a Chinese song that she learned from Prince Sou-Chong.

Example 6.10: Lehár, *Das Land des Lächelns*, No. 1½ Liedchen
Text, “Immer nur lächeln,” first verse and refrain

| Ich trete ins Zimmer von Sehnsucht erbebt | Filled with longing, I enter the room |
| Das ist der heilige Raum, | It is the sacred space |
| in dem sie atmet, in dem sie lebt, | In which she breaths, in which she lives |
| sie meine Sonne, mein Traum | She, my sun, my dream |
| Oh klopfe nicht so stürmisch, du zitterndes Herz | Oh, throb less fiercely, you trembling heart |
| Ich hab dich das schweigen gelehrt | I taught you to be silent |
| Was weiß sie von mir, von all meinem Schmerz | What does she know of me, of all my pain |
| Von der Sehnsucht die mich verzehrt | Of the longing that consumes me |
| Auch wenn uns Chinesen das Herz auch bricht | When you’re Chinese, your heart breaks as well |
| Wenn geht das was an, wir zeigen es nicht. | When it happens, we merely don’t show it. |

| Immer nur lächeln und immer vergnügt, | Always only smiling, and always delight |
| Immer zufrieden, wie's immer sich fügt. | Always satisfied, and always conforming |
| Lächeln trotz Weh und tausend Schmerzen, | Smiling despite woe and a thousand pains |
| Doch wie's da drin aussieht, geht niemand was an. | But what appears inside involves no one. |

Example 6.11: Lehár, *Das Land des Lächelns*, No. 3, “Immer nur lächeln”

a) Opening

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Allegro moderato.       Moderato.

(Dieser ab.)

Tempo rubato.

Ich trete ins Zimmer von Sehnsucht erbebt.

Das heilige Raum, in dem sie atmet, in dem sie lebt, sie meine Sonne, mein Traum! O,
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b) Refrain

Although Sou-Chong is introduced in his entrance song in the pentatonic, from the start his music suggests that he transcends its limitations. Like Achmed Bey's promise to offer a look inside the hearts of Turkish men in Die Rose von Stambul, revealing that they are not what the audience might expect, Sou-Chong similarly pulls back the curtain on the Chinese in his song. Sou-Chong enters to an imposing motive that has not been heard before, containing a prominent tritone (E in the strings and winds against a B flat in the timpani and contrabass). (Example 6.11a, measures 1-4)

This gives way to a gentler gesture, in which the exotic color of parallel fourths in the flutes and clarinets oscillate over an open fifth in the strings and horns. The vocal line of the verse, like in Lisa's entrance song, is entirely pentatonic.
But Sou-Chong, like Lisa, doesn’t stay there for his entire song. In the refrain, he begins in the pentatonic but in the second phrase moves from a G to an F sharp on “immer zufrieden” (measure 3, example 6.11b). The timing is canny. Restricted to his middle register for the rest of the number, Tauber’s true tenorial self bursts out in a shift that is both harmonic and vocal, finally revealing famous high notes and vocal strength as emblematic of his true self. By insisting in the private space of a solo song that the world does not see his “wahres Gesicht” (true face), Sou-Chong declares himself to be, beneath the smiling mask of exotic China, a lonely person with “Sehnsucht” and “Schmerz,” and the slide out of the pentatonic implies that that true face is the one unmarked by the exoticism imposed by China.

In this first act, the exotic thus serves two purposes: first, it performs the customary function of depicting the foreign culture that is embodied in Sou-Chong and desired by Lisa, and secondly it binds Sou-Chong and Lisa together through a common idiom. But the pentatonic is Janus-faced, as is revealed in the second act, when Sou-Chong and Lisa journey to China. The exotic land that Lisa imagined is now all too real, and threatening. The roles of exotic and non-exotic music are reversed: the exotic music portrays the external setting, while the character’s private feelings are expressed using non-exotic music. Lisa leaves her pentatonicism behind in favor of a nostalgic, homesick Wiener-Lied (No. 12, “Ich möcht’ wieder einmal die Heimat sehn”) and, most spectacularly, Sou-Chong abandons the exotic in his climactic love song.

The exotic takes on an additional role in Act II as well: it becomes a showcase for Lehár’s musical ambitions. The most prominent example of this is the orchestral writing. In Nr. 12a, Sou-Chong’s wedding procession, an introduction of polyrhythmic pitched gongs is followed by a duet for the piccolo and clarinet in octaves. (Example 6.12)
The antecedent is as obvious as it is surprising and nonsensical: Russia. The layering of an eighth-note string ostinato with a major theme in the horn and syncopated percussion recalls Procession of the Wise Elder from Stravinsky’s *Le sacre du printemps* (rehearsal number 67), though the specific details recall other works as well—the ostinato bells, Musorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*, the piccolo and clarinet in unison separated by two octaves various other Stravinsky passages. Lehár proves, however, uninterested in sustaining this style, and the music shortly breaks into a blaring brass band march that, without the prior section, could have worked for the k.u.k. army.
This ostentatious complexity and dramatic concentration were sensitive issues among critics. Das Land des Lächelns was repeatedly compared to two strongly pentatonic, Asia-set operas by Puccini, Turandot and Madame Butterfly. Critics described the score as “operatic” (opernhaft) and dramatic. The anonymous critic of the Neues Wiener Journal—a rare case in which a Viennese paper printed a review of a Berlin premiere, such was Lehár’s fame—wrote, “it is a thoroughly serious affair, and Lehár accentuates this with subtle, dramatic music.” The Vossische Zeitung referred to the work’s “operatic features” (opernden Züge). In the Berlin Börsen-Courier, Oscar Bie noted something similar, only framed it in less complimentary terms: “Lehár involuntarily approaches a certain operatic style, but, between us, it becomes a little boring.” The consequence of this attempt at opera, was a distinct lack of the humor they saw as the duty of an operetta to provide. “But it remains an operetta with opera scenes, with very sentimental operetta, from which humor, or what we take as such, is nearly entirely banned,” wrote the critic of Der Tag. Similarly, Edmund Kühn in Germania, “A kingdom for a good joke, for any

95 The plot is, of course, a sort of reverse Butterfly. Martin Lichtfuss even writes, “Was die Autoren anstrebten und was auch vom Publikum erwartet wurde, war die Bestätigung eines Japan-China-Klischees, wie es durch Werke wie Madama Butterfly oder Turandot im Mode gekommen war.” Lichtfuss, Operette im Ausverkauf, 218. Among critics, the writer of the Vossische Zeitung said that Lehár’s work could be more productively compared to Puccini or Goldmark (presumably referring to Die Königin von Saba) than The Mikado or The Geisha. The Neues Wiener Journal explicitly compared the score to Butterfly; in the BZ am Mittag Erich Urban also referred to Samson et Dalila. E.N. [pseud.], “Der neue Lehár,” Vossische Zeitung. Berlinische Zeitung von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen, October 12, 1929, sec. Unterhaltungsblatt; Julius Bistron, “Lehar-Premiere im Theater an der Wien,” Neues Wiener Journal, September 27, 1930; Erich Urban, “Das Land des Lächelns,” BZ am Mittag, October 11, 1929.


98 “Aber er bliebt bei der Operette mit Opernszenen, bei der sehr sentimental Operette, aus der diesmal der Humor, oder das, was dafür gehalten wird—fast ganz verbannt ist,” Hans Tessmer, “Das Land des Lächelns,” Der Tag, October 12, 1929.
joke at all! How should I reconcile so much ‘quality’—and that is the glory of today’s Metropoltheater—with the duty to entertain the Berliners in the birthplace of ‘Hoppla trallalla’? Bie wrote, “Perhaps smiles, but not laughs [das Lächeln, aber nicht das Lachen]. What this countess, who follows a Chinese man to Peking, undergoes is not very happy.”

There is, however, comic material, relegated to the second couple of Mi and Gustl. Their characters, according to Karl Westermeyer of the Berliner Tageblatt und Handelszeitung, sat uneasily with the very serious parts:

At all events, Das Land des Lächelns remains dramatically weak, and moreover the pseudo–tragedy of the plot of the dramatically exaggerated Singspiel gets out of the light operetta realm. The deep Buddhist thoughts of smiling self-conquest for the sake of the good of the collective is not made clearly enough, the characters remain stuck in cliché.

According to Westermeyer and others, the operetta relied to heavily on the talents of Tauber for its dramatic effect, and despite its composers’ ambitions to write a comic opera, he had produced something more like a Tauber vehicle.

“Dein ist mein ganzes Herz”: Technological Reproducibility Onstage

Richard Tauber made an unlikely hero. While most operetta actors were, to some extent, matinee idols, presenting an external image of beauty and elegance, the short and somewhat


100 “Wohl das Lächelns, aber nicht das Lachen. Es ist nicht sehr lustig, was diese Gräfin aus Wien, die einem Chinesen nach Peking folgt, erlebt.” Bie, “Metropoltheater: Das Land des Lächelns.”

squat Tauber’s gifts were almost entirely vocal. He nonetheless possessed enormous expressive capabilities, projected using sound alone. In contrast, his rivals Hubert Marischka and Louis Treumann’s vocal delivery tended towards *Sprechgesang*, following the rough contours of the pitch and rhythm but without great technique or particularly resonant sounds. Tauber’s palette was much larger and he could put a beautiful sound and a dazzling range of vocal effects to work on Lehár’s music. He was praised for his precision; as one Berlin critic put it, “the technique with which Tauber treats this exceptional instrument has no compare among German tenors.”

The numbers Lehár wrote for Tauber became their own genre, the “Tauber-Lied.” This was a climactic solo song sung by Tauber, appearing somewhere in the middle of Act II, and usually was an effusive declaration of love to an offstage woman. Tauber’s soprano object of affection was rarely afforded the opportunity to properly respond to this declaration; the real relationship was between Tauber and his audience. For most critics and audience members, the “Tauber-Lied” stood out as the most important moment in the performance, prompting a reaction of even greater fervor than Tauber’s delivery of it. Yet the song served a dual function: it was not only the operetta’s most cathartic and memorable moment but was also destined to be famous outside of its dramatic context. As Erich Urban wrote in *BZ am Mittag*, “The hit for the winter of 1929-1930, the successor to ‘O Mädchen, mein Mädchen’ [from *Friederike*] is born!”

Similarly, the *Vossische Zeitung* critic noted, “Yesterday, this tenorial eroticism of the big solo hit

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102 A number of early operetta recordings can be heard on the compilation LP Alexander Girardi et al., *Creators of Operetta*, LP (Pearl/Gemm, 1982). A CD accompanies Frey, *Emmerich Kálmán*, however, with the exception of Kartousch and Marischka most of the performances date from the 1930s and later.

103 “die Technik, mit der Tauber diese ausgewählte Organ behandelt, such unter den deutschen Tenören ihresgleichen.” Tessmer, “Das Land des Lächelns.”

ravished the receptive audience; it will reach the popular distribution of the tenor numbers from *Frasquita* and *Paganini*.\textsuperscript{105}

The Tauber-Lied of *Das Land des Lächelns*, “Dein ist mein ganzes Herz,” appears midway through Act II, exactly as anticipated. It is based on a segment of the Act III finale from *Die gelbe Jacke*, originally sung by Sou-Chong but excised from *Das Land des Lächelns* due to the radical change in ending. The theme’s original appearance in *Jacke* was deemed by Lehár, “badly placed in the book… three minutes before the curtain’s fall, when people already are thinking of the coat check.”\textsuperscript{106} Lehár moved into Act II of *Das Land des Lächelns*, tinkered slightly with the melodic contour, was supplied with a new text by the librettists, and wrote a B section. It follows the model of previous Tauber-Lieder.\textsuperscript{107} These numbers are musically all very similar. Unlike the conventional verse-chorus form of most operetta songs, they are in ABA ternary form (or *Rondoform*, as critics called it, though no Tauber-Lieder contain more than one middle section). The form was summarized by Tauber: “the main melody at the beginning and ending [rather than as a refrain following the verse], as a middle section a whole new melody.”\textsuperscript{108}

The similarities can also be seen as at a micro level, as seen in the opening phrases of several Tauber-Lieder: “Gern hab’ ich die Frau’n geküßt” from *Pagainini* (a paean to women in

\textsuperscript{105} “Diese tenorale Erotik des großen Soloschagers griff das Publikum gestern mit stürmischer Bereitschaft hingerissen auf; er wird die populäre Verbreitung der Tenor-Nummern aus “Frasquita” und “Paganini” erreichen.” E.N. [pseud.], “Der neue Lehár.”

\textsuperscript{106} The number appears on pages 120-121 of the *Gelbe Jacke* score, in the middle of the Act III finale. It is in the same key and immediately recognizable. “Schlecht plaziert und erklang erst im letzten Akt, drei Minuten vorm Vorhangfall, als die Leute schon an ihre Garderobe dachten.” Franz Lehár, “Wie Entsteht Einer Schlager?,” *Neue Freie Presse*, April 24, 1932.

\textsuperscript{107} Subsequent Tauber-Lieder include “Freunde, das Leben ist lebenswert” [Friends, life is worth living] from *Giuditta* (1934) and “Du bist die Welt für mich” [You are the world to me] from Tauber’s own operetta *Der singende Traum* (1934).

general rather than any particular one, Example 6.13) “O Mädchen, mein Mädchen” from *Friederike* (Example 6.14), and “Du bist meine Sonne” from *Giuditta* (which followed *Das Land des Lächelns*, Example 6.15). 109


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109 Additional examples are “Freunde, das Leben ist Lebenswert,” also from *Giuditta*, Tauber’s own composition “Du bist die Welt für mich” from *Der singende Traum*, and, less paradigmatically, “Allein, wieder allein,” the so-called “Volga-Lied” from *Der Zarewitsch*, in which a pastiche of Russian folksong overpowers some of the usual Tauber-Lieder features.

Each song begins with a surging, effusive declaration of love sung at a moderate tempo, containing long notes in the middle register (usually around B in the middle of the staff) for Tauber to display his beautiful tone, usually followed by a few eighth notes to be sung with rhythmic freedom, usually containing an unexpected fermata. For example, in the Paganini number, “hab’ ich die Frau’n” is first stretched with tenuti on the eighth notes and then broken with a written-in Luftpause before “geküßt,” allowing Tauber to seize control of the musical pulse and pause the action. Giuditta similarly includes an unexpected fermata on “süß-,” again inviting Tauber to stop the number in its tracks. In “O Mädchen, mein Mädchen,” this moment is embedded already in the first measure with the fermata on “Mäd-.” Most of the songs have a high tessitura for operetta, and sustained high notes (usually As or A flats).

**Text, “Dein ist mein ganzes Herz”**

| Dein ist mein ganzes Herz! | My entire heart is yours! |
| Wo du nicht bist, kann ich nicht sein. | Where you are not, I cannot be. |
| So, wie die Blume welkt, | As the flower wilts, |
| wenn sie nicht küsst der Sonnenschein! | when it does not kiss the sunshine! |
| Dein ist mein schönstes Lied, | Yours is my most beautiful song, |
| weil es allein aus der Liebe erblüht. | because it alone blossoms from love. |
| Sag mir noch einmal, mein einzig Lieb’, | Say to me once more, my only love, |
| oh sag noch einmal mir: | Oh, say once more to me: |
| Ich hab dich lieb! | I love you! |
| Wohin ich immer gehe, | Where ever I may go |
ich fühle deine Nähe.  
Ich möchte deinen Atem trinken  
und betend dir zu Füssen sinken,  
dir, dir allein! Wie wunderbar  
ist dein leuchtendes Haar!  
Traumschön und sehnsuchtsbang  
ist dein strahlender Blick.  
Hör ich der Stimme Klang,  
ist es so wie Musik.

Dein ist mein ganzes Herz!, etc.

I feel your presence.  
I would like to drink your breath  
And sink in prayer at your feet  
You, you alone! How wonderful  
Is your shining hair!  
Beautiful as a dream and full of longing  
Is your radiant gaze.  
When I hear the sound of your voice  
It is like music.

My entire heart is yours, etc.

Example 6.16: Lehár, *Das Land des Lächelns*, No. 11, “Dein ist mein ganzes Herz”  
a) Opening
“Dein ist mein ganzes Herz” (Example 6.16) shows little exotica at all. The first section, in fact, could belong to any Lehár operetta of any setting. The middle section promises a return to pentatonic on “Wohin ich immer gehe,” and the parallel movements of the woodwinds in sixths and strumming open fifths in the bass line resonate with the use of the woodwinds in “Immer nur lächeln.” (Example 6.16b) But after these two measures, Lehár returns decisively to the major on “Ich möchte deinen Atem trinken,” (measures 3-4 of example 6.17b) the mode underlined by the vocal line’s tracing of a scale from A flat to G flat. This brief moment seems to acknowledge Sou-Chong’s background only to almost immediately forget it; the rest of the section avoids penatonicism, modulating to F minor (on “Wie wunderbar,” measure 7) before
returning to D flat major for the return to the A section. It seems doubtful that the two measures of pentatonicicism would register as bluntly exotic without the context of the rest of the operetta. This nearly unmarked quality was both dramatically appropriate and commercially convenient. Like Sou-Chong’s slide out of the pentatonic in “Immer nur lächeln,” it suggests that he is, at heart, not foreign but the same as his European audience. It places him in opposition to the public oppressions of Chinese culture seen elsewhere in this act. But simultaneously, it prepares the song for distribution outside the operetta, where its perceived unmarked universality becomes a commercial asset and it will not require any context to be understood.

This distribution of a song independent of its context was hardly new, and even some of the methods—sheet music, performances by salon orchestras—were old. But the Tauber-Lied’s rapid spread in the form of recorded sound on radio and record, far beyond the popularity and lifespan of the operetta it contained, marked a decisive break with earlier practice. Distribution was now not in the form of a musical text to be reinterpreted by other performers but rather a sound object, namely Richard Tauber’s voice. In the operetta it was a climactic number; outside, it was simply a Schlager, a hit song.

Schlagers were portable, disposable, adaptable, and broadcast into many contexts. The moniker was first applied to the cabaret songs of the early twentieth century; by the 1920s the word entailed songs heard on the radio and on records, no longer necessarily linked to the collective theatrical experience that defined an operetta. Schlager, even more than operetta,

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sought to enter their listeners’ daily lives, a principle described by Peter Wicke as “success through the avoidance of distance,” in which the affective space between the song and the hearer is made as narrow as possible.111 The Schlager was often condemned in these exact terms: its ubiquity and intrusion into the private sphere of the home represented a destruction of Gemeinschaft and, in the views of Marxist and later Frankfurt School critics, was intended to dissuade class-consciousness and prevent critical thinking among the petit bourgeoisie.112 The Schlager’s portability and infinite reproducibility would seem antithetical to the communal theatrical experience and fervor that defined a Lehár operetta in Berlin. What is more, and has already been seen, Lehár aspired to the immortal status of high art, not disposability.

But several of the essential characteristics of the Schlager – portability, the intimacy of individual and private address, and repetition—were intrinsic in the song’s performance in the operetta itself, as is evident in the staging of the numbers and the descriptions of Tauber’s performance of it. Like in “Immer nur lächeln,” Sou-Chong entrusts the audience with a revelation of his otherwise-hidden inner world. The Chinese minister Tschang has just insulted Lisa and forced Sou-Chong to accept the “4,000 year old” tradition of marrying four Chinese women. He leaves, and Sou-Chong is alone onstage. He begins with a solo speech:

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112 The history of and conventional interpretation of the Schlager is discussed in Currid, A National Acoustics, 65–80. A typical Marxist criticism of the Schlager is Kayser, Schlager, das Lied als Ware.
Prince (alone, lifts arms towards the sky): Thou eternal gods, what I do cannot be wrong!... Thou put in humankind's breast a heart, thou hast made the heart into a vessel for love and my love and my heart belong to this one, this woman alone!¹¹³

He then begins to sing. His declarations are addressed to the intimate “du,” meaning Lisa, but no one else is present onstage and he sings directly to the audience. Tauber the star thus addresses each member of his public individually, as if they have a close relationship. In Adorno’s analysis of the Schlager, such an intimate relationship was crucial to the song’s effect: when the listener recognizes the theme of a popular song, they “become… the subject for whom the Schlager ideally speaks… he feels at once his isolation ameliorated, joined to a community of fans.”¹¹⁴ (A more conventional critic would likely have said “she.”) But in live performance, those fans actually were present in the theater. Live, this created an electric effect, but it seems also to be preparatory for the wide distribution of the Schlager, where Tauber’s voice would resonate in private spaces to an individual listener.

The repressed emotions Sou-Chong had described in “Immer nur lächeln” are finally released in “Dein ist mein ganzes Herz.” Tauber’s usual limitations as a physical performer were here put to productive use: his acting was as stiff as ever and his face and gestures were concealed by a long robe, thick makeup, and self-proclaimed smiling mask he adopted to “look Chinese.”¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Prince (allein, hebt die Arme zum Himmel): Ihr ewigen Götter, es kann nicht unrecht sein, was ich tue!... Ihr habt ja den Menschen das Herz in die Brust gelegt, ihr habt das Herz zum Gefäß der Liebe gemacht und meine Liebe und mein Herz gehören nur dieser einen, einzigen Frau!” (emphasis original) Ludwig Herzer and Fritz Löhner, Das Land des Lächelns: Romantische Operette in drei Akten nach Viktor Léon. Vollständiges Regie- und Soufflierbuch (Vienna: Karczag, 1929), 59.


¹¹⁵ Some photos and illustrations can be seen in the Berlin reviews of the operetta, for example E.N. [pseud.], “Der neue Lehár”; Schrenk [pseud.], “Das Land des Lächelns. Der neue Lehár im
In contrast to the palette afforded by his vocal skill, his character deliberately rejected visual expression. The static nature of the stage picture tightened this focus. There are no stage directions for the aria that would indicate Tauber moving around the stage or doing anything other than standing still. In the Regie- und Soufflierbuch, the last diagram before the song shows Tschang exiting stage left and Sou-Chong crossing to downstage center. The next page, where the diagrams indicating the staging of the song would appear, is entirely blank, not even indicating where Sou-Chong will exit (the text specifies that he exits left). The next diagram indicates the beginning of the next scene, in which Mi and Gustl enter stage from the right.116

The song itself is dispensable in the larger trajectory of the drama, serving no particular purpose in the plot. Tauber’s performances, by all accounts, stopped the operetta in its tracks, prompting prolonged applause, cheering, and shouting from the audience, and then “dacapos.” Tauber frequently sang “Dein ist mein ganzes Herz” and other Tauber-Lieder five, six, or more times in a single performance. One critic commented on the premiere, “I don’t how many times Tauber sang the main Schlager, but surely more than a dozen times.”117 Other critics counted five or six encores. While accounts of earlier operettas often record up to two or three encores of popular numbers, Tauber’s numbers were unprecedented. Moreover, they served as a disruption of the work, particularly discordant with Lehár’s purported high art aims. Oscar Bie, none too enchanted with Das Land des Lächelns in general, proclaimed of the endless encores, “it costs too

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116 Herzer and Löhner, Das Land des Lächelns, 58–61. The directions are from the perspective of the audience members rather than the actors.
117 “Ich weiß nicht, wie oft Tauber den Hauptschlager gesungen hat, aber gewiß mehr als ein dutzendmal.” “Die Lehár-Premiere im Metropol-Theater [review of Das Land des Lächelns].”
much patience and has something shameful in it.”\textsuperscript{118} Several critics noted the song was already ready for distribution as a record, such as \textit{Germania’s} comment, “many pungent melodies, which will create a magnificent onslaught of new Tauber records.”\textsuperscript{119} The song was itself arguably a da capo of previous Tauber-Lieder, a familiar variation on a well-established theme (as noted by Erich Urban’s comment quoted above that the song was a successor [\textit{Nachfolger}] to “O Mädchen, mein Mädchen”).

Even in live performance, then, the song became a Schlager. Like a record player, the audience could wind Tauber up and listen to him again. Tauber’s performances can be read as a repudiation of the Benjaminian aura, the determined commodification of the Tauber-Lied before such commodification was even enforced by recording and infinite distribution. The song was endlessly—even countlessly—repeated, both “Dein ist mein ganzes Herz” and the larger Tauber-Lied phenomenon from operetta to operetta. The Tauber-Lied was no longer, in Benjamin’s terms, “embedded in the context of a tradition,”\textsuperscript{120} able to be played whenever it was demanded.

But despite their adoption of the tropes of the Schlager, Tauber’s encores reacquired a sense of liveness through the singer’s interpretive abilities: he was famous for never singing the song the exact same way twice. This was, according to fans, his true mark as an artist of insight and integrity as well as a popular performer and a singer of great technical skill. He would sing the entire song piano, he would switch the phrasing, he would sing it in falsetto. He is described

\textsuperscript{118} “es kostet doch zuviel Geduld und es hat etwas Beschämendes.” Bie, “Metropoltheater: Das Land des Lächelns.”
\textsuperscript{119} “Vieler strenghafter Melodien, die auf neue Tauber-Platten einen fabelhaften Ansturm erzeugen warden.” Kühn, “Metropol-Theater [review of \textit{Das Land des Lächelns}].”
\textsuperscript{120} Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” 24.
as singing “small variations before the roaring of the house.”\textsuperscript{121} Such variations made the encores more than a series of near-mechanical reproductions, and critics considered it his mark as a true artist:

> Besides, Tauber is truly the unique standing virtuoso of the encore. He sings his number differently every time, with new vocal nuances and so makes out of every encore a delicacy for the musical listener. And at the same time every encore entices the audience to demand another encore, because they are curious what Tauber will offer now.\textsuperscript{122}

In his pianissimo variations—where he self-consciously renounced the bombast of a large, operatic sound for more technically difficult and supposedly tasteful soft singing—he forced audiences to listen carefully to his voice, requiring them to remain still and silent in his presence. He made his audience connoisseurs as they practiced fine distinction between his various interpretations. His variations refuted the near-mechanical nature of his encores, restoring to the performance both linearity and mystery (how will he sing it the next time?) and rooting it in the present moment, making it more than a performance by Tauber on the radio. Tauber’s variations prevented the depreciation of value brought on by repetition, making each rendition a new work.

Tauber’s salvo at artistic legitimacy was matched by Lehár’s. The operetta’s sad ending proclaims not only Lehár’s status as a “serious artist” but also the irreconcilable conflict between the inner romantic self and the cruelties of the external world. Operetta’s shift from \textit{Die gelbe Jacke}’s reconciliation—one might add the happy ending of \textit{Die Rose von Stambul} as well—to \textit{Das Land des Lächelns}’s separation is symptomatic of an art form seeking higher emotional stakes. On an aesthetic level, the ending marked \textit{Das Land des Lächelns} as something bigger and more

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\textsuperscript{121} “kleinen Variationen unter dem Tosen des Hauses.” Bie, “Metropoltheater: Das Land des Lächelns.”

original than a tidy, formulaic operetta marriage comedy. For Martin Lichtfuss, the new irreconcilability between Sou-Chong and Lisa reflected what he delicately calls the growing Rassenkonflikt (race conflict) in Central Europe. The operetta, he points out, never proposes that Sou-Chong and Lisa should not be together; the plot’s tragedy is that under present conditions they cannot be together. 123 Das Land des Lächelns, he says, is Lehár’s plea for racial tolerance in a precarious world. (For Lehár, a Catholic with a Jewish wife, these concerns would become timelier in the following decades. 124)

If Sou-Chong and Lisa were left in despair, Lehár, the great composer, triumphed as an artist. The success was in part one over critics and industry norms which would confine him to narrow genre expectations. To Lehár, the success of the sad ending proved that he was more in touch with his audiences than were his critics. This reflects a contradictory relationship with the high art establishment that was already present in Lehár’s relationship with modern music. He both longed for the prestige and immortality accorded to the composers whose busts decorated opera houses, and made definable steps towards this sort of serious status. But he simultaneously sought popular success and frequently positioned himself as an advocate for audiences against those same critics, and viewed modern opera as inaccessible and overly difficult. In the rapidly changing world of popular culture, Lehár wanted historic, enduring success on his own terms.

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123 Lichtfuss, Operette im Ausverkauf, 220. Lichtfuss does not mention any potential motivations of Fritz Löhner, one of the librettists and an ardent Zionist.
124 Lehár’s wife Sophie received the rare distinction of being given “honorary Aryan” status from the Nazis. But despite being very much in favor with the Nazis, his music frequently performed for the duration of the war (even works with Jewish librettists, whose names were simply removed from programs), Lehár and Sophie nonetheless spent part of the war in Switzerland out of concern for her safety.
Epilogue

Operetta in the Past Tense

The end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire marked the beginning of the end of Viennese operetta. Despite its many popular and lucrative successes during the 1920s, operetta’s identity was becoming diluted and it was seen as a relic. As Austrian society struggled to recover from the war, large-scale commercial theater went through repeated crises. Vienna faced increased competition from Berlin as a popular culture center, as Lehár and even Hubert Marischka defected, though the latter only briefly. But perhaps even graver than these material threats were the more nebulous concerns of operetta’s place in the Viennese cultural ecosystem. Operetta had come to embody the particularly diverse world of late Habsburg Vienna, both ethnic and musical. It was unclear if it had anything to say to the new Austrian republic. The most successful operettas of the 1920s either embodied this search for a new place in the world—the exotic operettas examined in the previous chapter—or worked to summon a world gone by, often in increasingly nostalgic terms. When operetta sought to be modern, it left itself, imitating revue and film. But this assimilation ultimately served to dilute its identity.

As operetta was eclipsed by revue and film, some of its greatest successes came when it embraced the anti-modern and exploited its close relationship with a retrospectively golden past.
Older operettas were given prestige revivals and reworkings—early Silver Age works like Lehár’s 1908 *Der Graf von Luxemburg* and 1910 *Zigeunerliebe* had already attained classic status—usually with extravagant productions, a few new songs, revue-like chorus lines, and extra ballets and other spectacle numbers.¹ Many of the newspaper features written about operetta composers and librettists in this period concern not new works but nostalgic stories about old ones. Sometimes the revived works were even older: In the 1920s, an influential series of revivals of lesser-known Johann Strauss II operettas spearheaded by Max Reinhardt and the young Erich Wolfgang Korngold reorchestrated the Golden Age for the richer tastes of Silver Age ears, and many works of this period similarly reference a pre-modern, ethnically homogenous, nineteenth-century Vienna or a comfortably noble aristocracy.²

The last new Viennese work whose popularity rivaled these revivals was Franz Lehár’s *Giuditta*, which premiered in 1934 at the Wiener Staatsoper. After *Giuditta*, Lehár went into semi-retirement. He remained a major musical celebrity, conducting major productions and radio broadcasts of his works and adding the odd new overture and ballet when required. Kálmán remained relatively popular and continued to compose. But the leading composers of the 1930’s were Berlin-based composers such as Ralph Benatzky and Paul Ábrahám, who wrote loosely plotted works whose appeal rested primarily on visual spectacle and inclusion of Schlager.³

Kálmán took Ábrahám’s success as a personal affront, writing to composer and orchestrator Nico

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¹ Today’s most well-known number from *Zigeunerliebe*, Ilona’s Act III csárdás “Hör’ ich Cymbalklänge,” was not added until this era. Several of these productions are examined in detail in Clarke, *Im Himmel spielt auch schon die Jazzband.*

² These revivals are examined in Peter Franklin, *Seeing through Music: Gender and Modernism in Classic Hollywood Film Scores* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 54-56. Franklin does not, however, consider the full range of operetta in the period.

³ The rich history of Berlin revue-operetta surely remains to be told. On Benatzky, see Hennenberg, *Ralph Benatzky*; Benatzky, *Ralph Benatzky*. There is no scholarship on Paul Ábrahám in particular, but he is discussed in brief in Klotz, *Operette.*
Dostal that, “this Ábrahám stole all my music.” Yet it was Ábrahám’s watered-down, sped-up, simplified operetta which suited the tastes of the 1930s.

Even some of the more innovative operetta creators tried on a nostalgic guise. In 1928, Julius Brammer and Alfred Grünwald broke off their collaboration with Kálmán to work with Edmund Eysler on Die gold'ne Meisterin, a sweet love story set in sixteenth-century Vienna which harkens back to the nineteenth-century world of the Volksstück. Kálmán’s own works of the 1920s carried nostalgia as well, most notably Gräfin Mariza (1924), in which the musical dualism of Die Csárdásfürstin is revived to portray a Hungarian count fallen on hard times. The protagonist Tassilo’s post-imperial fate has landed him a job as an estate manager. In one of Kálmán’s most popular csárdás numbers, “Komm, Zigan’,” Tassilo finds himself among a sympathetic group of gypsies and sings, “Auch ich war einst ein feiner Csárdáskavalier/hab’ kommandiert Zigeuner/g’rade so wie ihr” (I was also once a fine csárdás gentleman/I commanded gypsies just like you). Now he has been demoted to the status of servant; his genuine lament is mistaken by his employer for a pleasant evening’s entertainment, and he is

4 “dieser Ábrahám stiehlt mir meine ganze Musik.” Andrew Lamb’s strangely judgmental Grove article on Ábrahám seems to be in agreement with Kálmán: “Abraham’s operettas pandered openly to the popular musical idiom of the time, but contained strikingly effective numbers which have remained justly popular.” Ábrahám suffered badly in the war, moving first to Cuba and then to New York, where he fell into severe mental illness and spent nearly a decade in an institution, eventually returning to Germany. Dostal, Ans Ende deiner Träume kommst du nie, 121., Andrew Lamb. “Paul Abraham [Pál Ábrahám].” Grove Music Online, Oxford University Press, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/00056.

5 The pioneer in this kind of nostalgia was one of the most successful works of the war period, the Schubert bio-operetta Das Dreimäderlhaus, which was literally assembled out of nineteenth-century musical components into a contemporary shape. See Sabine Giesbrecht-Schutte, “Klagen eines Troubadours: Zur Popularisierung Schuberts im Dreimäderlhaus,” in Martin Geck: Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag, ed. Ares Rolf and Ulrich Tadday (Dortmund: Klangfarben, 2001), 109–33.

6 Richard Traubner calls it “totally predictable.” This was, in fact, the point. Traubner, Operetta, 297.

7 Emmerich Kalman, Julius Brammer, and Alfred Grünwald, Gräfin Mariza: Operette in 3 Akten (Vienna: Karczag, 1924).
outraged and insulted. Yet the dual face of operetta as lament and entertainment sustained it through most of this decade.

It is this nostalgic brand of operetta that has often overshadowed more forward-looking works. To be sure, the more sentimentally escapist operettas had always had a strong vein of nostalgia in them—of the works examined in this dissertation, this is most prominent in *Ein Walzertraum* (Chapter 3) and in alienated form in *Die Csárdásfürstin* (Chapter 5). But after the war, operetta as a whole, both new and old, served to summon this world that now was forever gone. Ironically, many celebrated the imperial pomp that had been forbidden from Dual Empire stages: Kálmán's *Kaiserin Josephine*, Fritz Kreisler and the Marischka brothers' *Sissy*, which includes the Emperor Franz-Joseph and Empress Elisabeth as main characters; and Oscar Straus’s *Drei Walzer*, which traces the lineage not of royalty but of the music of the “Waltz King” through multiple generations of theatrical families. But the operetta ends with not an apotheosis of operetta but the final generation turning to the film industry.9

**DIE HERZOGIN VON CHICAGO AND DISSOLUTION**

Such capitulation to the film industry can be found in other late operettas as well. Emmerich Kálmán’s *Die Herzogin von Chicago* is a particularly complex case of such negotiations between operetta’s traditions and new realities. Kálmán might appear to be the composer with the most to lose after the loss of the empire: unlike Lehár, he had no interest in writing quasi-operas, and as

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8 This line is quoted by Adorno as an example of the false individuality asserted by operetta characters, who display a soulfulness that is, for the resident of a modern city, delusional. Adorno, “Arabesken zur Operette.” The opposite to this pseudo-individuality is the more legitimately modern “Dingwelt” of the revue. This recalls Siegfried Kracauer’s analysis of the Tiller Girls, see Siegfried Kracauer, “The Mass Ornament,” in *The Mass Ornament*, ed. Thomas Y Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 75–88.

9 *Drei Walzer* is analyzed as nostalgia in Lang, “‘Light’ Music and Austrian Identity,” 184–229.
operetta’s representative of Hungary his style had become anachronistic with the empire’s
dissolution. Yet Kálmán proved able to adapt, and had a spectacular decade. He incorporated
elements of new, American-inspired dance music and the tableau dramaturgy of the revue along
with a fond look back at the glory days of the noble k.u.k. empire.

Freed from geopolitical realities, Kálmán’s already fantastic Hungary was now elevated to
purely symbolic status. While in some works Hungary as such did not feature—most
prominently in *Die Bajadere*, analyzed in Chapter 6—in others it took on a warm and inviting
nostalgic form that, as seen previously in *Die Csárdásfürstin*, deconstructed operetta even as
familiar tropes played out. But the legibility of these deconstructions—as well as more
conventional, simpler operetta formulations—depended on a particular audience from a
particular cultural sphere. And this was breaking down. The social hierarchies, geographical
relationships, and cultural experiences of the Viennese were transformed through the
disappearance of the empire. Operetta unevenly adapted and recalled the old system, but was
eventually eclipsed by more up to date genres, many of which were more economically viable in
the interwar period.

Kálmán’s 1928 operetta *Die Herzogin von Chicago*, written to a libretto by Brammer and
Grünwald, seems to open new pathways for operetta, but ultimately was more of a fond farewell
than a new beginning. The plot is familiar in its outlines, elements of which are borrowed from
Thomas Mann’s novel *Königliche Hoheit*: a small bankrupt state, “Sylvania,” is ruled by a
debauched king who spends most of his time on the Riviera. The practical work falls to Prince
Sandór Boris, an old-fashioned cultural conservative who sees newfangled dance and music as a
threat to his anachronistic kingdom. But the real threat is that Sylvania is, like every operetta
state before it, bankrupt. Sylvania has a potential savior in Mary Lloyd, a Chicago millionaire’s
daughter who make a bet with her friends that she can buy the most expensive and difficult to obtain thing in Europe. Mary arrives and bails Sylvania out by buying the castle, but brings her offensive jazz music with her. She and Sandór begin to fall for each other as well, despite his prejudice against her and her music. But when Sandór finds out about Mary’s bet, he is outraged, and thinks that he himself has been bought. The decrepit King of Sylvania returns from Monaco and attempts to seduce Mary himself, without success. But a movie producer arrives from the US and announces that he wants to make a movie about Mary and Sandór, and cannot do so unless they provide for him a happy ending. In a concession not to operetta but rather to Hollywood, they decide to marry.

Control of the plot has been ceded to the deus ex machina of the film producer. Operetta itself can no longer promise a happy ending, but Hollywood can force one upon the diffident protagonists. The conventions of the Silver Age operetta have been subordinated to those of another form as well, the theatrical revue. Instead of the conventional three acts, the operetta is in four parts: an extensive prologue, two acts, and a Nachspiel, epilogue. The traditional large spectacular production number at the beginning of Act 2 has become redundant because the entire score is littered with such numbers. While some moments register as more or less traditional operetta features, other numbers are unmotivated by the plot and exist solely to provide visual spectacle and appearances by the chorus line of “girls”.

Die Herzogin von Chicago’s juxtaposition of Mary’s American and Sandor’s European music is perhaps the swan song of the dualistic operetta score. Yet it never takes these differences seriously, undermining them nearly every time they are invoked and complicating them with a

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10 Mary’s name is borrowed from that of an English music hall star.
11 A full plot summary can be found in Lubbock and Ewen, The Complete Book of Light Opera, 390–394.
variety of valences of each style. While the basic split between Europe and America is clear enough, Kálmán and his librettists evoke a dizzying array of music from each continent: Beethoven, American jazz, Hungarian csárdáses, and Viennese songs all make appearances. Ernst Krenek’s *Johnny spielt auf* is even evoked with a Hungarian in blackface (whom Sandór points at while singing, “Johnny, spielt auf”). The work is a drama than a montage, a sequence of popular sounds arranged into a pleasing pattern.\(^\text{12}\)

Kálmán’s k.u.k. works had opposed a socially mediated Vienna with a visceral and soulful Hungary. In *Die Herzogin von Chicago*, this is reconfigured to juxtapose a soulful, idealistic, traditional Europe with a materialistic, forward-looking America. The Habsburg state’s chaotic mix of nationalities have been retroactively united in the purportedly independent Sylvania: Prince Sandór Boris has a Hungarian first name, Slavic last name, and a purportedly independent state of the Pontevedro variety whose cultural identity turns on both Hungarian music and Viennese waltzes.\(^\text{13}\) While a relic of the imperial era, he also represents more contemporary politics: in Act 1, actor Hubert Marischka’s costume reportedly resembled that of archconservative Hungarian regent Miklós Horthy.\(^\text{14}\) Sylvania represents the entire Habsburg

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\(^\text{13}\) Sandór’s ethnic confusion is explained in the libretto: his father is from Sylvania, but his mother is Hungarian.

\(^\text{14}\) Clarke, *Im Himmel spielt auch schon die Jazzband*, 103. Hubert Marischka joined the Nazi Party in 1938 and directed a number of propaganda films for the Third Reich. Kálmán was highly suspicious of Marischka’s politics, particularly after an incident in 1933 involving a swastika flag in the midst of the revue *O du, mein Österreich!*. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the two pages detailing his attire for *Die Herzogin von Chicago* are the only missing part of his costume notebook, neatly cut out with a knife. Untitled notebook, Nachlass Hubert Marischka, Box 4, Shelf 15, ÖTM.
legacy in miniature. (The miniaturization is even foregrounded visually with a soldier puppet prop resembling Sandór appearing in the first act.\textsuperscript{15})

While the plot presents the conflict as an economic one—American Mary's infinite funds will rob Sylvania of its sovereignty—it is dramatized as a competition between American and European music. Yet for all its complexity, the contest is rigged: it is obvious from the outset that America has already won. The operetta opens in a Budapest Tanzbar to the a chorus of dancers proclaiming, “Charleston! Charleston! Tanzt man heut’.” (Charleston! Charleston! That’s what one dances today.) The dancers proclaim that the “Herren von morgen,” (lords of tomorrow) are named Bobby and Yimmy (i.e. Jimmy), stereotypically American names. The gypsy band members, wielding jazz instruments, even offer a foxtrot arrangement by “Sammi Nussbaum” of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5, an opportunity for Kálmán to indulge his fondness for musical parody (previously seen in the Zigeunerkapelle arrangement of Mendelssohn’s Wedding March in Die Csárdásfürstin). But the band also suggests that—in a fulfillment of Der Zigeunerprimas’s prophecy—the age of the traditional gypsy folk musician has passed. At the same time, American music is presented less as an original creation than as a fun but cheapened version of European art and folk music. The Beethoven-Foxtrot would not exist if Beethoven hadn’t composed his version first.

Not only is American music derivative, Sandó attacks it as spiritually empty. The Charleston, Sandó explains, is danced with the feet, but the waltz is danced with the heart.\textsuperscript{16} In response to the Charleston, Sandó convinces the gypsy band to switch back to their traditional

\textsuperscript{15} It can be seen in a souvenir photograph of Rita Georg in the title role, Atelier D’Ora Benda, April 19, 1928, #306735 - 204956-D, ÖNB Bildarchiv.

\textsuperscript{16} “und bei Walzer, bitte schön, tanzen nicht nur Füße, sondern da tanzt auch Herz im Leib mit einerseits, anderseits und beiderseits!” (97)
Example 7.1: Die Herzogin von Chicago, No. 2, Wienerlied, refrain
instruments. They offer snippets of the Rakoczi March and the “Donauwalzer.” Then Sandór sings with them, saluting “Wiener Musik” as the sound of a more humane, lost world (Example 7.1).

The song is a waltz, saluting the music that “kehrt uns zurück” (brings us back) to happier times. This Viennese music now includes both “Lieder von Schubert” and “Walzer von Strauß”; the $E$- and $U$- genres of Vienna have been united in opposition to the foreign invader. And yet the chorus of Tanzbar patrons—who had just proclaimed the supremacy of the Charleston—is not immune to the charms of this music, first humming along and finally singing the refrain as Sandór whistles the melody. Not content to commemorate Vienna only, Sandór follows this up later in the scene with a csárdás celebrating traditional Hungarian music in similar terms (“Hör ich deine Geige wieder/die du einst gespielt hast und gefühlt hast im Mai,” “I hear your fiddle again/that you once played and felt once in May”).

But while Sandór initially finds the two styles irreconcilable, he soon learns otherwise. The prologue ends with Mary’s dramatic entrance into the club and an extended alternation of his and her music. Finally, half of the chorus dances a csárdás while the other half simultaneously

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17 “gespielt hast und gefühlt hast im Mai” echoes a line from another nostalgic number, “Leise, ganz leise” from *Ein Walzertraum* (see Chapter 3). Sandor’s csárdás seems to be based on the popular “Komm, Zigan” from Kálmán’s *Gräfin Mariza* (1924), the number quoted above.
dances a foxtrot. Despite their competition, they can be performed to the same music.\footnote{18} The implications of this become more obvious in Act 2, where Sandór learns what this finale already suggested: that the Charleston is only the “American csárdás.” As Kálmán had showed through his previous operettas, Hungarian dances could be as concerned with the body as American ones. The confluence of modern dance music and Hungarian folk style, something Kálmán had explored since the “Hazazaa” of Der Zigeunerprimas (see Chapter 4), is now made thematic. In the plot, this is even given a spin in the supporting character of Mary’s secretary, James Bondy, who was born with the name Myslowitz and whose family last hailed from “Kokotnitz bei Brünn,” an amusingly fictional location in Moravia. (When offered a cross of honor, he exchanges it for a Star of David, a rare open acknowledgement of Judaism in late Silver Age operetta.) The operetta ultimately concludes that all entertaining music is worthwhile—as secondary leads Bondy and Rosemarie say, “Im Himmel spielt auch schon die Jazzband” (in heaven, the jazz band is already playing too).

Kai Marcel Sicks argues that the Americanization of Die Herzogin von Chicago is superficial: after all, there is still a large, European theater orchestra in the pit, a written score without jazz improvisation, and a series of European-style arias and scenes.\footnote{19} While the “jazz” of an operetta like Die Herzogin von Chicago indeed has little in common with Louis Armstrong, neither did that of most of Tin Pan Alley, the material to which this work is more aptly compared (which also included a large orchestra, though perhaps not quite on Kálmán’s scale).

\footnote{18} “Choreographie zu Die Herzogin von Chicago,” directed by Otto Langer. Typescript produced by Dorit Herz-Rosenberg Theater-Verlag und Vertrieb, Vienna. *T-Mss Grunwald Box 7 Folder 7, NYPL.
And the song-dialogue format was standard to musical theater on either side of the Atlantic. More broadly, the specters haunting *Die Herzogin von Chicago* are less those of nation than those of genre. The conventions of operetta have receded in favor of those borrowed from film and revue.

The ending leans on the revue as well as the promise of film to suggest that Sylvania and Chicago can successfully resolve their differences. According to the *Regiebuch*:

In the closing song, the star banner girls from the second act dance out from the first entrance left and right and bow to the audience. On their top hats are letters that spell out the words [in English] “Happy – end!” All throw paper streamers into the auditorium.

The ending is proclaimed to be happy in English words which are conveyed to the audience in a breaking of the fourth wall, a message revealed when the chorus girls bow their heads. The words aren’t legible to the characters onstage but only visible to the audience, and the streamers thrown into the auditorium are for the benefit of the audience alone. This ending speaks only in terms external to the rest of the work.

For Theodor Adorno, this melting of operetta into the montage of revue was, while not exactly progress, at least less pretentious than some alternatives. While Viennese operettas have the appearance of autonomous dramatic form (like many others, he identifies “tragic second act finales” as their key characteristic), he writes, revues drop this appearance of pseudo-individualized personality and “deceptive interiority.” Instead, the chaos and fragmentation of

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20 The jazz heard in Europe in Germany in the 1920s is examined in J. Bradford Robinson, “Jazz Reception in Weimar Germany: In Search of a Shimmy Figure,” in *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 107–34.

the revue acknowledges its own status as a fetish object. (Interestingly, even in 1932 he already identifies recent operetta as “late Viennese operettas,” implying that they are over.) While the operetta had ambition to be considered as art, the revue’s lack of shame has a certain honesty. For Kálmán in *Die Herzogin von Chicago*, adopting these new styles was a way to stay current, even as other elements of the operetta signal nostalgia. Critic Ernst Decsey referred to the result as “demagoguery” and chaos. Kálmán, he wrote, allowed both nostalgia and Charleston triumph, a cacophony without meaning.

“VULGARIZED GENRE”

While Kálmán moved towards mass culture, Franz Lehár continued in the opposite direction. In 1933, Lehár’s youthful dream was fulfilled: he had a premiere at the Wiener Staatsoper. The work, *Giuditta*, carried the genre designation of “musikalische Komödie,” skirting the decision between opera and operetta. A *Carmen*-like tale of the romance and tragedy between an army officer and the titular Italian lady, its score represents nothing more or less than the continuation of *Das Land des Lächelns*. Yet when thrust into the Wiener Staatsoper, it was a profound disruption of the boundaries of genre. The title role was played by opera diva Jarmila Novotná, the tenor was, naturally, Richard Tauber, still the only performer who could convincingly bridge the opera-operetta divide. Operettas had, in fact, been frequently performed at the Staatsoper,

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their popularity bolstering the theater’s box office during the difficult years of the early 1930s.\footnote{The 1933 Viennese premiere of Richard Strauss’s \textit{Arabella} in fact borrowed sets from a production of Richard Heuberger’s \textit{Der Opernball} which had been mounted the previous year. See Josef Reitler, “Richard Strauss’ \textit{Arabella} in der Staatsoper,” \textit{Neue Freie Presse}, October 22, 1933.} Yet the theater’s all-out investment in the Tauber circus marked, for some, artistic bankruptcy.

The most vociferous condemnation came from, again, Ernst Decsey. He was a regular operetta critic, playwright and enjoyed a close relationship with Lehár—he had even written an authorized biography of the composer in 1930—making this not a simple external critique of the genre but a condemnation what it has become from someone with a real stake in its existence.\footnote{Decsey, \textit{Franz Lehár}, 1930.} Given unusually prominent \textit{Feuilleton} real estate in the \textit{Neues Wiener Tagblatt}, he condemns \textit{Giuditta} as evidence of a “vulgarized genre.”\footnote{Ernst Decsey, “Der Esel Aristoteles,” \textit{Neues Wiener Tagblatt}, January 27, 1934, Wochenausgabe edition, sec. \textit{Feuilleton}.} It is never entirely clear whether the debased genre in question is operetta or opera; by their dilution, both are afflicted. \textit{Giuditta}, Decsey makes clear, was popular with audiences, bringing in 40,000 Schillings for the premiere alone (Decsey does not cite a source for this figure).

Decsey notes, however, that the premiere did not attract the usual Staatsoper audience, but rather that of the Theater an der Wien (“Obwohl es nicht das übliche Opernpublikum, sondern Lehár-Publikum war, das man sonst im Theater an der Wien sieht.”). Clemens Krauss sat in his box, but was, Decsey projected, “intellectually absent.” Decsey fails to note that the Staatsoper regularly produced works like \textit{Fledermaus} and \textit{Der Opernball}, but compares the operetta’s reception to that of \textit{Wozzeck}, and notes that \textit{Giuditta}’s premiere had displaced the more Staatsoper-appropriate but less lucrative \textit{Karl V} by Ernst Krenek (whose \textit{Johnny spielt auf} had been referenced in \textit{Die Herzogin von Chicago} only a few years earlier).
Decsey can’t help but find *Giuditta* all wrong. Brought out of its appropriate home, an operetta no longer makes sense. His criticisms amount to an attack on operetta genre conventions themselves: the nonsense sprouted by the “second pair,” whose plot barely intersects with that of the principals, the absurdity of a waltz playing out in an opera set in Benghazi:

It’s operetta theater, it’s Theater an der Wien, it isn’t Staatsoper, and can only be brought there forcibly. Each space has its laws, and they shall be respected. Where is the musical comedy? *Giuditta* is an operetta, an amorous, large-scale, numbing, ambitious, occasionally charming, occasionally dumb operetta. Vulgarized genre. But “musical comedy”? Why didn’t he write a proper one?27

An operetta in the Staatsoper violates the laws of the space, promoting a kind of spectatorship and pleasure inappropriate to the dignity and gravity of the Staatsoper’s surroundings. *Giuditta* would be appropriate for the Theater an der Wien (indeed its intendant Hubert Marischka was the stage director), but in the Staatsoper it embodies reflexive genre conventions inappropriate for the “musical comedy” genre it claims to be. It brings with it an inappropriately loud and flashy audience, and its stellar box office prompts unwelcome avariciousness.

Yet Decsey is fixated on a genre distinction whose meaning has lost common currency among theater audiences. *Giuditta’s* enshrining of operetta in a pantheon of high art and *Die Herzogin von Chicago*’s dissolution of operetta signifiers reflect the same problem: a genre without a clear identity. Operetta was no longer Vienna’s favorite. As in previous eras, operetta composers sought to stay on top by incorporating the latest musical trends. But the more operetta relied on jazz, or reached towards higher artistic planes like opera, the more its association with Vienna was diluted. And that city no longer had the global appeal it once did.

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OPERETTA IN THE PAST TENSE/OPERETTA AS PRESENT

Though operetta was in decline in the early 1930s, the Third Reich eliminated the possibility of any revival. By the mid-1930s, most of the artists of the operetta industry had turned to other pursuits; the Nazis destroyed what community remained. A few figures who were not Jewish continued to prosper: Franz Lehár, the rare non-Jewish operetta composer, remained popular throughout the war (on the strength of his old works); Hubert Marischka and his brother Ernst wrote and directed a number of lighthearted films under Nazi sponsorship. Meanwhile, Emmerich Kálmán, Alfred Grünwald, Oscar Straus, Paul Ábrahám, and many others fled to the United States and sought employment on Broadway and in Hollywood with varying degrees of success. Richard Tauber took up residence in London, where he was as popular as ever. Julius Brammer died in 1943 on the Côte d’Azur even as Alfred Grünwald and other colleagues struggled to secure for him passage to the United States. Bela Jenbach, librettist of Die Csárdásfürstin, hid in a basement in Vienna for three years and died of untreated stomach cancer in 1943. Fritz Löhner, librettist of Das Land des Lächelns and Giuditta, was murdered in Auschwitz. Critic and librettist Leopold Jacobson and Louis Treumann, the Silver Age’s perennial lazy gentleman, both were killed in Theresienstadt.28

Yet even as their world was shattered, their work played on. Works by Jewish composers were off limits, but works with Jewish librettists simply had the offending names removed and were programmed as often before.29 For audiences—both during the war and after it—operetta

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28 Many of these artists are profiled in detail in the Lexikon verfolgter Musiker und Musikerinnen der NS-Zeit, edited by Claudia Maurer Zenck, Peter Petersen, and Sophie Fetthauer, Universität Hamburg (http://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de).
29 Even as some of their works were still performed, many composers and writers faced poverty in the United States, deprived of their customary royalty income. Unfortunately, Austrian composers and writers were regarded by Americans as alternately as too old-fashioned and as too representative of the enemy.
was a reminder of simpler, happier times. If some of its final works, such as *Die Herzogin von Chicago*, had revealed a world in transition, the revival of old operettas served to remind audiences of a time they remembered as whole, even if they had not been there to see it themselves. Operetta’s old-fashioned plots and celebration of imperial iconography served to memorialize. For historians, this legacy as nostalgia has served to overshadow the genre’s entire history. As part of the entertainment program of the Third Reich and later West German radio and TV, operetta scores were often brought halfheartedly up to date with new orchestrations and microphones, made into television films and special live radio concerts.\(^{30}\)

For generations, operetta has embodied an old-fashioned alternative to more current musical styles, and today operetta performances at theaters such as the Wiener Volksoper and Bühne Baden are known for attracting elderly patrons, often accompanied by their grandchildren. Production practice has remained decorative and literal, and the rare *Regietheater* foray into operetta repertoire (such as Sebastian Baumgartner’s production of *Im weisen Rößl* at the Komische Oper and Peter Konwitschny’s *Die Csárdásfürstin* in Dresden, the latter discussed in Chapter 5) has been greeted with outrage. For some directors, the comfort of operetta is symptomatic of the conservatism of contemporary Austrian culture. At times this has been turned against itself. Hans Neuenfels’s 2001 Salzburger Festspiele production of *Die Fledermaus*

Emmerich Kálmán had, as usual, the most success. In 1945, his Vienna-themed Broadway musical *Marinka* was a modest success. *Miss Underground*, however, a musical written with Lorenz Hart for Vivienne Segal about the Parisian resistance, containing numbers such as “Alexander’s Blitztime Band,” was never produced (first cancelled and then its completion cut short by Hart’s sudden death) and remains in manuscript in the ÖNB MS.

was an updated Krausian gloss on Austrian society—not least on the culture of the Festspiele itself, an affront which escaped few present.  

Neuenfels deconstructed operetta’s contemporary reputation as a middlebrow pastime (in Herbert Marcuse’s term, affirmative culture). It is this status that is a major cause of its contemporary scholarly neglect, and still conceals its richness and complexity. In some respects, operetta is seen as the opposite of what it was conceived to be. Contemporary operetta culture should, however, not serve to deter contemporary scholars. While the loyal Austrian, German, Hungarian, and Russian audiences for music of Lehár, Kálmán, and others are sometimes offered as proof of operetta’s musical value and enduring ability to entertain, they should not be invoked as a rationale for the disregard of historical complexity.

Operetta also provides a unique test case for the discipline of musicology. In a place and period when scholars and critics were laying the groundwork for the contemporary scholarly discipline, questions of cultural register, autonomy, and audience were unusually salient. For these critics, operetta, a hybrid that failed to conform to fin-de-siècle taxonomies, was a problem. It presented something that sought to be everything to everyone. This breadth and generosity of appeal, inextricably linked to the demographics and society of late Habsburg Vienna, were both operetta’s greatest asset and, ultimately, its downfall. Operetta’s persistent tendencies towards universalism and idealism even manifest a utopianism for the common people. When it convinced, operetta promised nothing less than a more harmonious, more beautiful, and happier life.

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I.

II.

Es gäbe dafür einen gewichtigen Anhaltspunkt. Nämlich die Oper, musikalisch genommen, trägt nicht so offenkundigen, spekulativen Charakter wie die Operette. Zumindest spekuliert sie nicht direkt auf die Resonanz bei der großen Menge, wie es die Operette tut, deren haranguierende Wesensart dies ist, der Urgrund ihrer Beliebtheit. Ja, wie sie es tun muß. Muß! Sie soll und will ja nicht Kaviar fürs Volk sein. Sie macht sich vor allem dienstbar dem Unterhaltungsbedürfnis pur et simple. Es kann dabei auch wohl Künstlerisches (nämlich in
Details) in die Erscheinung treten, es wird aber kaum und nur selten gewollt. Geschäft! Les affaires sont les affaires!


III.

IV.
Latent – oder um einen verständlicheren Gemeinplatz zu gebrauchen: im Unterbewußtsein – hat die Geringschätzung der Operette ihre Ursache darin, weil sie in ihrer ganzen Art nicht eine künstlerische Emanation ist, nicht das reine Produkt des Willens eines Künstlers, der das gibt, was in ihm ruht und was er durch eine psychische Triebkraft förmlich gezwungen ist zu singen und zu sagen; „wie es Euch gefällt“, weil er die Persönlichkeit – so er sie besitzt – mit Absicht, ja mit Energie hintanstellt und durch das Gefällige die unmittelbare Wirkung, den Modeerfolg anstrebt, der dann allerdings zum Weltgeschäft werden kann. Ein „Schlager“ will jede Operette sein. Ein Schlager, bestehend aus lauter Schlagern (o, über diese entsetzlichen Schlager!) der süßlichen oder gepfefferten Lockspeise für die Menge. Die Text und Musikproduzenten halten sich an die Binsenwahrheit; „Was der Gnädigen im Parkett gefällt, gefällt nicht immer der Köchin auf der Galerie, was aber der Köchin auf der Galerie gefällt, gefällt immer auch der Gnädigen im Parkett.“ Man arbeitet also in erster Linie für die Köchin, für die Galerie, für den populären Erfolg. Trotz desselben: fortwährendes Geschrei nach Besserem, nach Qualität. Steht aber einmal ein genuiner Schriftsteller auf und schreibt ein Operettenbuch, das sich in jedem Belange auf das wertigeren Theaterstücke stellt, leistet ihm ein genuiner Komponist Gefolgschaft und läßt das künstlerische Moment präpondrieren, dann ereignet sich das Merkwürdige: man hat nicht nur den Großteil des Publikums gegen sich, das gewiß mit Recht nach leichter Unterhaltung giert („sonst geh‘ ich in die Oper oder ins Schauplspielhaus und nicht in ein Operettentheater“), auch der Theaterdirektor zieht ein mißvergnügtes Schnoferl und mit ihm der Verleger der Operette, weil diese fürchten (gewiß mit Recht), kein Geschäft zu machen, und grollt selbst die – Kritik; sie verlangt (auch mit Recht), gebet dem Operettenvolke, was der Operettenvolkes ist!
V.

VI.

Das große Publikum hält sich bei einer Operette an dieser Schlager, nur an diese und bereitet ihr durch diese den großen Erfolg. Der übrige und weitaus größerer Teil der oft belangreichen und schönen Partitur ist ihm Hekuba. Und der geschmackvollere Teil des Publikums läßt sich diese Schlager, wie jeder Modetorheit, wohl gefallen, vermag sich aber gerade wegen derselben nicht zur Schätzung des Ganzen zu bekennen. Der Kunstrichter verhüllt total sein Haupt. Daß aber trotz dieser chronischen Krankhaftigkeiten in so manchen Operettenwerk (namentlich der letzten 20 Jahre) gesunde, gesündeste Kunst, vollwertige, die Zeiten überdauernde Kunst steckt, daß gerade diese letzten 20 Jahre eine geradezu klassizistische Epoche der Operette gewesen, auch in so manchen der Textbücher, lehrt die Gegenwart, bis zu der sich einige dieser Werke frisch, kraftvoll und wirksam erhalten haben, wird die Zukunft lehren, die eben diese wenige Operette – gesäubert von den modischen Auswüchsen vergangener Tage – als klassische begreifen und hochschätzen wird.
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