Operetta:
A Sourcebook
Operetta:
A Sourcebook,
Volume I

By

Robert Ignatius Letellier

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING
Jacques Offenbach in middle age
Wer hat die Liebe uns ins Herz gesenkt?
(Who put [this] love into our hearts?)
—Fritz Löhner-Beda, Das Land des Lächelns
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## VOLUME I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>xxxiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>xxxv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. French Operetta (1855-1870)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Imperial Operetta (1855-1870)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacques Offenbach (1819)</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florimond Rongé (Hervé) (1825)</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bourgeois Operetta (1870–1890)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandre-Charles Lecocq (1832)</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clément Philibert Léo Delibes (1836)</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Lacôme (1838)</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claude-Firman Bernicat (1842)</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmond Audran (1842)</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Léon Vasseur (1844)</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Varney (1844)</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaston Serpette (1846)</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean-Robert Planquette (1848)</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor Roger (1853)</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operetta of the Belle-Epoche (1890-1914)(1890-1914)</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>André-Charles-Prosper Messager (1853)</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis-Gaston Ganne (1862)</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Operetta in the Twentieth Century</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Comédie Musicale (1918-1930)</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henri Christiné (1867)</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reynaldo Hahn (1875)</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Cuvillier (1877)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
L’Opérette Marseillaise (1930-1939) & L’Après-Guerre (1945-1960)

- Vincent Scotto (1874) ...................................................... 372
- Jósef Zygmunt Szulc (1875) .................................................. 386
- Gaston Gabaroche (1884) ...................................................... 389
- Henri Goublier (1888) ......................................................... 391
- Maurice Yvain (1891) ......................................................... 393
- Raoul Moretti (1893) ......................................................... 399
- Louis Beydts (1895) .......................................................... 400
- Werner Richard Heymann (1896) ....................................... 401
- Roger Dumas (1897) ......................................................... 403
- Jean Boyer (1901) ............................................................ 405
- Marguerite Monnot (1903) .................................................. 406
- Francis Lopez (1916) .......................................................... 406
- Claude-Michel Schönberg (1944) ...................................... 416

2. Austro-Hungarian Operetta ................................................. 417

The Golden Age (1845-1900)

- Adolf Müller, Sr. (1801) ...................................................... 418
- Heinrich Proch (1809) ......................................................... 419
- Carl Binder (1816) ............................................................ 420
- Franz von Suppé (1819) ...................................................... 421
- Johann Strauss II (1825) ...................................................... 471
- Adolf Müller, Jr. (1839) ....................................................... 517
- Carl Joseph Millöcker (1842) .............................................. 518
- Alphons Czibulka (1842) ..................................................... 531
- Carl Johann Nepomuck Adam Zeller (1842) ...................... 533
- Karl Michael Ziehrer (1843) ................................................. 537
- Richard Heuberger (1850) .................................................. 552
- Alfred Grünfeld (1852) ....................................................... 554
- Joseph Hellmesberger (1855) ............................................. 555
- Heinrich Berté (1858) ......................................................... 556
- Karl Rudolf Michael “Charles” Weinberger (1861) .......... 557
- Johann Strauss III (1866) .................................................... 558

The Silver Age (1900-1930)

- Heinrich Reinhardt (1865) .................................................. 560
- Hugo Felix (1866) ............................................................. 563
- Georg Jarno (1868) ........................................................... 564
- Oscar Straus (1870) .......................................................... 567
- Franz Lehár (1870) ........................................................... 579
- Leo Fall (1873) ................................................................. 609
Table of Contents

Edmund Eysler (1874) ................................................................. 622
Oskar Nedbal (1874) ................................................................. 626
Fritz Kreisler (1875) ................................................................. 629
Anselm Götzl (1876) ................................................................. 632
Emmerich Kálmán (1882) ......................................................... 632

The Revue-Operetta (1920-1960)
Leo Ascher (1880) ................................................................ 645
Robert Stolz (1880) ................................................................. 647
Ludwig Rochlitzer (1880) ......................................................... 657
Oskar Jascha (1881) ................................................................. 658
Rudi Gfáller (1882) ................................................................. 659
Heinrich Strecker (1893) ......................................................... 660
Jara Beneš (1897) ................................................................. 661
Hanns Jelinek (1901) ................................................................. 663
Frank Fox (1902) ................................................................. 664
Franz Josef Reiml (1903) ......................................................... 665
Josef Beer (1908) ................................................................. 665
Hans Lang (1908) ................................................................. 668
Franz Ferdinand (Ferry) Zelwecker (1911) ......................... 668
Igo Hofstetter (1926) ................................................................. 669
Charles Kálmán (1929) ......................................................... 670
Udo Jürgens (1934) ................................................................. 670
VOLUME 2

3. German Operetta

The Berlin Operetta (1900-1920)

Bernhard Triebel (1847) ........................................................................ 671
Hermann Zumpe (1850) ....................................................................... 672
Rudolf Dellinger (1857) ....................................................................... 673
Paul Lincke (1866) .............................................................................. 676
Léon Jessel (1871) .............................................................................. 678
Leo Blech (1871) ............................................................................... 684
Franz Wickenhauser (1872) ............................................................... 686
Walter Kollo (1878) ........................................................................... 686
Jean Gilbert (Max Winterfeld) (1879) ............................................. 691

The Revue-Operetta (1920-1980)

Rudolf Nelson (1878) ........................................................................ 703
Bruno Granichstaedten (1879) ........................................................... 705
Walter Wilhelm Goetze (1883) ............................................................ 710
Hugo Hirsch (1884) ........................................................................... 713
Robert Winterberg (1884) .................................................................. 714
Ralph Benatzky (1884) ....................................................................... 715
Eduard Künneke (1885) ..................................................................... 720
Walter Bromme (1885) ....................................................................... 729
Edmund Nick (1891) .......................................................................... 731
Paul Abrahám (1892) ........................................................................ 732
Rudolf Kattnigg (1895) ...................................................................... 738
Nico Dostal (1895) ............................................................................. 739
Will Meisel (1897) ............................................................................. 744
Kurt Julian Weil (1900) ..................................................................... 745
Fred Raymond (1900) ........................................................................ 749
Willy Richartz (1900) ........................................................................ 759
Willy Czernik (1901) .......................................................................... 759
Josef Rixner (1902) ........................................................................... 759
Just Scheu (1903) ............................................................................. 759
Günter Schwenn (1903) ..................................................................... 761
Arno Vetterling (1903) ....................................................................... 762
Ludwig Schmidseder (1904) ............................................................... 762
Gerhard Winkler (1906) ..................................................................... 763
Eberhard Schmidt (1907) .................................................................. 764
Franz Grothe (1908) .......................................................................... 766
Fritz Ihlau (1909) .............................................................................. 766
Hans Friedrich August Carste (1909) ............................................... 767
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table of Contents</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friedrich Schröder (1910)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans-Martin Majewski (1911)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norbert Arnold Wilhelm Richard Schultze (1911)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerhard Jussenhoven (1911)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Maria Siegel (1911)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Moltka (1911)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Burkhard (1911)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Werner Stamm (1912)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franz Josef Breuer (1914)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guido Masanetz (1914)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans-Henrik Wehding (1915)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erwin Halletz (1921)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siegfried Köhler (1923)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerhard Kneifel (1927)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerd Natschinski (1928)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reiner Bredemeyer (1929)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Spanish Operetta (Zarzuela)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariano Soriano Fuertes (1817)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joaquin Gaztambide (1822)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafael Hernando (1822)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco Asenjo Barbieri (1823)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pascual Juan Emilio Arrieta (1823)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cristobal Oudrid (1825)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel Fernández Caballero (1834)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro Miguel Marqués (1843)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joaquin Valverde (1846)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federico Chueca (1846)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomás Bretón (1850)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruperto Chapí (1851)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerónimo Giménez (1854)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomás Lópes Torregrosa (1868)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amadeu Vives (1871)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicente Lléo (1873)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Serrano (1873)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo Luna (1879)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reveriano Soutullo (1880)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Vert (1890)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel Penella (1880)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesús Guridi (1886)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Maria Usandizaga Soraluce (1887)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francesco Alonso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Padillo Sanchez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federico Moreno Torroba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafael Millán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacinto Guerrero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo Sorozabal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilhelm Meyer Lutz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick Clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Seymour Sullivan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfred Cellier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Goring Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Solomon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Henry Maunder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Talbot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Alfred Rubens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montague Phillips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lionel John Alexander Monckton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Frederick Norton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold Fraser-Simson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivor Novello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noël Pierce Coward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivian Ellis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Leigh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Heneker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Britten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Galbraith ‘Sandy’ Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Morton Sherman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian Penkivil Slade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lionél Bart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard O’Brien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claude-Michel Schönberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy Miles Bindon “Tim” Rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Lloyd Webber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. American Operetta ................................................................. 1010
   Calixa Lavallée (1842) .......................................................... 1012
   Adolf Heinrich Anton Magnus Neuendorff (1842) ................. 1013
   Ludwig Engländer (1853) ..................................................... 1014
   John Philip Sousa (1854) ....................................................... 1017
   Oscar Ferdinand Telgmann (1855) ......................................... 1022
   Gustave Adolph Kerker (1857) ............................................... 1025
   Henry Louis Reginald de Koven (1859) .................................. 1029
   Victor Herbert (1859) ........................................................... 1032
   Ivan Caryll (1861) ............................................................... 1040
   Gustav Luders (1865) ............................................................ 1044
   Viktor Holländer (1866) ....................................................... 1046
   J. Rosamond Johnson (1873) ............................................... 1046
   Karl Hoschna (1876) ............................................................. 1047
   Paul Tietjens (1877) ............................................................. 1049
   George Michael Cohan (1878) ............................................. 1052
   Rudolf Friml (1879) ............................................................. 1055
   Jerome David Kern (1885) ..................................................... 1062
   Sigmund Romberg (1887) ..................................................... 1069
   Irving Berlin (1888) ............................................................. 1077
   Cole Albert Porter (1891) ....................................................... 1081
   Ray Henderson (1896) .......................................................... 1086
   George Gershwin (1898) ..................................................... 1088
   Vincent Millie Youmans (1898) ............................................. 1098
   Kurt Julian Weill (1900) ....................................................... 1100
   Frederick Loewe (1901) ....................................................... 1103
   Robert Meredith Willson (1902) ........................................... 1109
   Vernon Duke (1903) ............................................................ 1111
   Richard Charles Rodgers (1902) ......................................... 1113
   Jule Styne (1905) ............................................................... 1123
   Harold Jacob Rome (1908) ................................................... 1127
   Frank Henry Loesser (1910) ................................................. 1130
   Burton Lane (1912) ............................................................. 1132
   Benjamin Britten (1913) ....................................................... 1133
   Leonard Bernstein (1918) .................................................... 1136
   Albert Hague (1920) ............................................................ 1144
   Richard Adler (1921) ............................................................ 1146
   John Kander (1927) ............................................................. 1149
   Charles Strouse (1928) ....................................................... 1153
   Richard Morton Sherman (1928) ....................................... 1156
   Jerrold Lewis (Jerry Bock) (1928) ....................................... 1156
7. Yiddish Operetta ................................................................. 1173
   Sigmund Mogulesko (1858) .............................................. 1173
   Lev Pulver (1883) ............................................................... 1173

8. Russian Operetta ............................................................... 1175
   Isaak Iosifovich Dunayevsky (1900) ................................. 1175
   Yury Sergeyevich Milyutin (1903) ................................. 1177
   Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich (1906) ..................... 1179

9. Croatian and Serbian Operetta ........................................ 1183
   Ivan Zajc (1832) ............................................................... 1183
   Petar Stojanović (1877) .................................................... 1187

10. Hungarian Operetta ........................................................ 1189
     Ede Donáth (1865) ............................................................ 1189
     Pongrác Kacsóh (1873) .................................................... 1189
     Zsigmond Vinceze (1874) .............................................. 1192
     Jeno Huszka (1875) ....................................................... 1193
     Albert Szirmai (1880) ..................................................... 1196
     Victor Jacobi (1883) ....................................................... 1198
     László Lajtha (1892) ....................................................... 1199
     Mihályi Erdélyi (1895) .................................................... 1199
     Ference Farkas (1905) .................................................... 1200

11. Czech Operetta ............................................................... 1202
     Eduard Ingris (1905) ...................................................... 1202

12. Danish Operetta ............................................................. 1203
     Emil Reesen (1887) ........................................................ 1203
13. Italian Operetta ................................................................. 1204
  Vincenzo Valent (1855) ...................................................... 1204
  Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857) ............................................... 1204
  Pasquale Mario Costa (1858) ............................................. 1206
  Giacomo Puccini (1858) .................................................... 1211
  Pietro Mascagni (1863) .................................................... 1213
  Carlo Lombardo (1869) .................................................... 1215
  Enrico Toselli (1883) ....................................................... 1247
  Virgilio Ranzato (1883) .................................................... 1248
  Giuseppe Pietri (1886) ...................................................... 1252
  Vito Lo Re (1906) ............................................................ 1255

14. Greek Operetta ................................................................. 1258
  Spyridon Samaras (1861) .................................................. 1259
  Theophrastos Sakellariou (1883) ....................................... 1261
  Nikos Xatziapostolou (1884) ............................................ 1264
  Konstantinos Giannidis (1903) ......................................... 1265

Conclusion .............................................................................. 1266

Discography ............................................................................. 1268

Index ..................................................................................... 1280
  1) General Index ............................................................. 1280
  2) Index of Singers ......................................................... 1432
  3) Index of Theatres ....................................................... 1445
INTRODUCTION

Opéra-Bouffe/ Operetta/ Light Opera/ Musical Comedy

Operetta and its Origins

Operetta (It., diminutive of ‘opera’; Fr. opérette; Ger. Operette; Sp. opereta), refers to a light opera with spoken dialogue interspersed with songs and dances. In the 17th and 18th centuries the term ‘operetta’ had been applied in a more general way to a variety of stage works which were shorter or otherwise less ambitious than opera, such as vaudeville, Singspiel and ballad opera. The mainstream form of operetta flourished in Europe and the USA during the second half of the 19th and much of the 20th centuries. The term is still in use on the Continent for new works akin to the Musical Comedy, which evolved from operetta in English-speaking countries.

Operetta developed in the second half of the 19th century from very similar antecedents in different countries: the opéra-comique of France and the more light-hearted Singspiel of German-speaking lands. As the century progressed, the serious concerns of mainstream opera were sustained and intensified. In Paris, the policy of the Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique tended also to favour works of more serious pretensions, leaving a gap between opéra-comique and vaudeville, a gap which the operetta filled. Jacques Offenbach, son of a Cologne synagogue cantor, established himself in Paris with his series of opéras-bouffes. The success, indeed popular acclaim, accorded this new form of entertainment led to the operetta becoming established as a separate genre. Operetta increased in stature until it was considered to be an artform of its own, and no longer simply a “little opera”. Attempts to emulate Offenbach’s success abroad generated other national schools of operetta and helped to establish the genre internationally.

Performances of the opéras-bouffes in Vienna introduced a vogue there, inspiring work by Franz von Suppé and by Johann Strauss, whom Offenbach encouraged. Viennese operetta was in essence coterminalous
with the Habsburg Empire. After 1918 Berlin assumed the position once held by Vienna, and as popular musical tastes diverged more and more with the advent of new influences, like modern dance music and the cinema, the genre took on new guises, especially in the form of the musical comedy of Broadway and its imitators.

Operetta: Nature and Structure

Operetta is commonly described as a theatrical performance consisting of singing alternating with the spoken word and dancing. Operetta is the daughter of the French *opera-comique*, although the boundaries between the two are not always easily defined. The same could be said of the many genres that grew out of this same origin, such as the ‘musical farce’ or vaudeville, up to the emergence of the musical. The difficulty in describing operetta is that it is often explained ambiguously, focusing on only one element or another; but in spite of this, it has its own characteristics distinguishing it from all these other forms.

Operetta has a unique nature in the theatrical world. The composer can choose to tell some of the story like a play, in spoken words only, but can then, like opera, make significant use of music. Music informs the structure of operetta, indicating emotions, taking the place of speech, commenting on the action, and helping the audience to cue in to character and plot. Music overlaps with the verbal expression of the characters, transmuting the fiction of the stage into a reality for the audience through the composer’s message. Music also has the capability of revealing the characters’ motivations, expressing their inner life and spiritual feelings.

Quite often, in order to expose the inner emotion of a character, the composer will use a solo instrument to delineate the characterization. In the score there are often musical reminiscences and recurring motifs. Reminiscences recall earlier scenes in the work, and tend to be recreated verbatim. On the other hand, recurring motifs symbolize persons or abstract concepts, and can appear at different times in different guises.

Operetta is usually divided into three acts. The first act presents the story and introduces the characters; the second act develops the plot, with complications and unexpected events; and the third act is the final solution of the story, often with a happy ending.

Usually there are four principal actors: the tenor, the soprano, the soubrette and the fool (who is sometimes a bass, but often a comic tenor). Sometimes there are two other subordinate actors. All together they express themselves in trios, quartets, quintets, and in solos throughout the three acts. They each sing a ballad, an aria or a song as a duet, often
unison, and without the sometimes harrowing concerns and conflicts of opera. Actors can appear alone on stage, in couples or with the chorus. The chorus is often incorporated with the corps de ballet. The ballads tend to express feelings shared with the majority of the characters, and appear mainly in the last two acts, often after some recitative, as a commentary, or with a characterizing function.

**Formal Matters**

The structure of operetta most clearly indicates its origins in the vaudevilles of the early fair shows, and the *opéra-comique* and *Singspiel* that were the formal popular derivatives. The short songs, ariettas and especially the strophic couplets were at the heart of these types, with duets and some other occasional concerted pieces reserved for moments of intrigue and emotional intensity. The first and especially second act finales are more extended concerted pieces, where the denouement of the action is usually reached. The last act is invariably much shorter, and often anti-climactic: the intrigue is resolved, with fewer musical numbers and a brief, sometimes almost perfunctory finale. The style of the music is light, elegant, sometimes folksy. The emphasis is on the intrigue, the unfolding of scenario through dialogue, often with great play on the social dynamics of linguistics: demotic tone, regional accents, with puns, jokes and verbal dexterity playing a crucial and often satirical part. The use of dialogue emphasizes the immediate relationship with *opéra-comique* and *Singspiel*, a situation that would intensify in the 20th century, where the term ‘musical play’ gains in popularity, until it becomes simply a ‘musical’.

**Satire, Sex and Sybaritism**

The subject matter of operetta is invariably comedic, with an emphasis on romance, sentiment and wish-fulfilment, whether the chosen setting is ancient, mythological, royal or demotic and work-a-day. Invariably the stories will involve the mixing of social elements, a subversive crossing of classes, with the success of a protagonist of the lower classes achieving love, power or status through ingenuity, skill and good fortune. The fundamental formal and thematic situation is established in the very first ballad play, *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728) by John Pepusch and John Gay, and the first of all comic operas, Pergolesi’s *La serva padrona* (1733). The blueprint, the more developed scenario and archetypical elements, characters and styles, are already present in Mozart’s *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782): two noble lovers who must find each other (soprano
and tenor), shadowed by two socially inferior types (also soprano and tenor). The secondary couple are servants or retainers, who echo the experiences of the noble characters. Further comedy is vested principally in a bass comedian (the *basso buffo* of *opera buffa*) who is sometimes a comic tenor (deriving from the French Trial tradition, after Antoine Trial, 1736-1795). Social status is reflected in the style and genre of the musical numbers, and the vaudeville finale is classic.

The archetypal operetta is Offenbach’s *Orphée aux enfers* (1858), which of course is directly related to the very first operas (Peri’s *Euridice*, 1600, Monteverdi’s *Orfeo*, 1607), and to the mythology of Ancient Greece. Offenbach’s work, and the myth of Orpheus, are the key symbols of this genre of musical theatre and the power of song. Offenbach’s story turns the sacred on its head in a satirical process that uses the topicalities of its times, the bourgeois affluence, values and politics of the Second Empire, and the formal structures of operatic music and melody, to create a reflection on many sacrosanct or venerated elements of culture and society. *Opéra-comique*, as in the works of Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (1782-1871), is again ever-present in the prevalence of dance-forms as a recurring feature of rhythmic construction. Some operettas in fact are characterised by suites of popular dance types (particularly in the vibrant Spanish operetta, the *zarzuela*). This also emerged in the 1840s-1850s, derived from both Italian and French comic influences. This vivid topicality and satirical dimension is a constant feature of some forms of operetta, preeminently in the early works of Offenbach and Gilbert & Sullivan, and found the highpoint of its musical expression in the so-called ‘can-can’, the whirling dance finale of *Orphée aux enfers*. Another seminal operetta is Hervé’s *Madame Nitouche* (1883) where the emphasis is altogether lighter and more superficial, and the intrigue is centred on social and amorous inversion and subversion. It typifies the tone for the unfolding of French Operetta throughout the rest of the 19th and into the 20th centuries, with a growing emphasis on somewhat ludicrous scenarios of a barely concealed erotic and often scabrous nature, invariably using older men and younger women, disguise and gender-crossing as the vectors of action.

**Sentiment and Wonderful Cities**

(“Du Himmel auf Erden”)

In the Belle Époque the focus of attention passed to a general adoration of the city of Paris, in particular as expressed in its growing and glittering nightlife, and most especially in its dance halls and nightclubs, epitomized
in the legendary Folies Bergère, with its serried ranks of can-can revues. The great operatic focus on romantic love and song is also the chief concern of operetta, and in the great Viennese School with its Gold and Silver Ages, the elements of satire and subversive eroticism give way to a more sentimental view of life, producing, in the greatest works by Johann Strauss, Carl Millöcker, Carl Zeller, Franz Lehár and Emmerich Kálmán, some of the most beautiful love music in the lyric repertory. This was without ever losing the essentially comedic spirit of operetta, and while adhering to all the conventional expectations of the genre. The city of Vienna (with its mythical Blue Danube) is of central importance in the whole history of drama, opera and operetta, and for more than a century was the only German-speaking city to sustain a theatrical life comparable to that of Paris or London. In the later 19th century, the city was the focal point of a vast cultural hegemony, where the various nations of the Habsburg lands found their true international centre, and the city itself became the progenitor of so much of modern culture. This city of dreams and song, the vibrant heart of the ubiquitous waltz, became an intellectual and spiritual icon in itself, celebrated in music and literature, a veritable ‘heaven on earth’. This would also happen in varying degrees in other national operettas, with huge emotional and symbolic focus on the cities of Paris (Gaieté Parisienne), Berlin (with its Berliner Luft), Madrid (with a género chica celebrating its own stereotypes and foibles), even Moscow (reflecting wryly on Soviet urban development, Moskva Cheremushki). Eventually the trend would be approximated by the mystique and the magnetic appeal of New York City (the Big Apple, with its West Side Story).

Lost Worlds and Cabaret

The fundamentals of the Offenbachian operetta were still the structural determinants, but with a greater emotional impegno, and increasingly influenced by the revue mentality of Paris, and the new indigenous elements of American popular culture: pilgrim, cowboy, negro and jazz. This growing trans-Atlantic influence was evident before 1914, and had already been broached in Leo Fall’s Die Dollarprinzessin (1907), where the title alone sums up the new pull between a brash new mercantilism and the enduring allure of the aristocratic Old World. After the First World War, with the advent of American troops in Europe, the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, and growing economic crisis and political threats, the operetta became a new mode of social escape, especially in the years before the cinema took over as the universal medium of popular culture.
The Parisian *follies* and American jazz influences were channelled into the new Revue Operettas, where a more flagrant sentimentality, in the context of an élite living in a world of grand hotels, cabarets and nightclubs, saw the return of a different type of social satire, with an overwhelming preoccupation with status (especially aristocratic and royal), wealth (preferably of millions), the attainment of legitimacy (after the unfair losses and deprivations of war) and the overwhelming desire for marriage (as the answer to all searches for lost worlds of order, empire, nobility, societal structure and urban idylls). Hidden identities, disguise, restitution, entitlement and ennoblement, using the basic tropes of fairy and folk tales, coupled with topical social realities, became the stuff of all operetta plots, and in turn passed imperceptibly into the new generic variant of the musical play. The preoccupation with wealth, entitlement, inheritance and legitimacy is now couched in the language of modern 20th-century dance and the general milieu of the cabaret.

**The Rise of the Songwriter, the Heirs of Orpheus**

Attached to the rise of revue and cabaret was the phenomenal rise of the popular songwriter. Operetta itself, with its modality of set numbers embedded in dialogue, was always dependent primarily on the couplet. As the genre itself became more and more susceptible to boulevard entertainment, there was a corresponding increase in the number of composers whose first and principle fame claim to fame came not through their dramatic apprehension and setting of musical plays, but rather through their extraordinary capacity for turning out songs independent of any particular scenario. In Italy the rise of the Neapolitan art of *canzone*, represented by Pasquale Costa, was the harbinger of this trend, and was repeated in Austria where the idolatry of the city of Vienna led to the rise of the *Schrämmel* and its imitation in the songs of Heinrich Strecker, and, preeminently and on a wider scale, in the huge creativity of Robert Stolz. In America the representatives par excellence of the trend were Jerome Kern, Cole Porter and Irving Berlin, who wrote hundreds of songs, as solo entities, or for inclusion in the stage works of others. Both Kern and Berlin would, of course, find their greatest fame in the landmark works of *Show Boat* (1927) and *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), both of which provided songs that have endured in a form detached from any formal dramatic context (like “There’s No Business Like Show Business”). This tendency, startlingly apparent in the post-war era of the 1920s, fed into the shape and style of operetta across the national board, which laid less emphasis on the lyrical structure of comic opera, and more on the spoken drama punctuated
by the odd song or setpiece. By the time of the later 1940s, an operetta like Fred Raymond’s *Fließer aus Wien* (1949) would still be dreaming of the lost paradise of Old Vienna, still realized in terms of the stock types of the operetta stage, but with the sung numbers reduced to a meagre few. The emphasis was on comedy discourse in heavy dialect (of different types), with the odd ‘hit’ number (or *Schläger*) to capture a mood, but hardly to carry action. Interestingly, as the musical itself developed in this period, the opposite would take place in the 1970s and 1980s: the verbal dimension of the drama was increasingly phased out, with a resumption of an almost unbroken durchkomponiert flow of music, as in the benchmark musicals of Bernstein, Sondheim, Lloyd Webber and Schönberg.

Searching for the Dream

The ‘Ruritanian’ dimension of operetta is a particularly notorious characteristic of the genre, and one that took on a pointedly nostalgic quality with the demise of an old world order and four empires after the First World War. But this is just another guise of the recurring concerns for promise, longing and wish-fulfilment that have always characterized the operetta. These elements are given a complete re-shaping in the American manifestation of the medium. The late 19th-century form of operetta in New York was a European transplant written by migrant European authors. Only with John Phillip Sousa did a native-born American take on the tradition. The emergence of *The Wizard of Oz* (1903) by Paul Tietjens and Baldwin Sloane provides what is both a confirmation of a tradition, and the prophetic discernment of something new. The use of an American tale with characters, that would soon become part of a new mythology, spoke of a different kind of wish-fulfilment, one vested in the so-called ‘American Dream’. The allegorical implications of the story, with the ‘Yellow Brick Road’ leading into a liberated future, would achieve legendary status when the film version of the musical appeared in 1939, featuring Judy Garland singing Harold Arlen’s song “Somewhere over the Rainbow”. While the Viennese-themed ‘English Romantic’ operetta continued, and came to a regional highpoint in Sigmund Romberg’s *The Student Prince* (1924), the very epitome of Ruritanian longing, a decisive new direction was taken by Jerome Kern with *Show Boat* (1927). Kern, perhaps more than anyone, is responsible for forging a new direction, for transforming the New York operetta into the Broadway musical, different from anything that had ever come before. It broke away entirely from European traditions, implicitly tackling deeply serious and contentious social and racial issues in the story, and creating a
style of singable melody that has come be known as ‘American’, forming a source that inspired 20th-century songwriters as never before. *Show Boat* (with lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein) was ground-breaking in its integration of music and story, and some of its songs such as “Ol’ Man River” (Kern’s own favourite) and “Can’t Help Lovin’ That Man” became international classics. A few years later in 1930, lyricist E. Y. ‘Yip’ Harburg and composer Jay Gorney created the legendary “Brother, can you spare me a Dime” (part of the 1932 revue *Americana*, the melody based on a Russian-Jewish lullaby Gorney’s mother had sung to him as a child). This song captured inimitably the sorrows of the Great Depression Years, depicting the way in which prosperous society can dissolve into bankruptcy and food queues. During this period the American musical came to assume an authentic expression of the deep yearning and aspirations of operetta for safety, prosperity and fulfilment, a new take on the musical play which speaks of the American Dream. Benjamin Britten’s first stage work *Paul Bunyan* (1941) uses the mythological being who embodies the American spirit of manifest providence, while Leonard Bernstein would conclude his *Candide* (1956), contemplating the Voltarian concept of “the best of all possible worlds”, by a vision of cultivating one’s own garden of fulfilment. In *West Side Story* (1957), using Shakespeare’s universal message of reconciliation, he provided an American musical play for the whole world.

**The New Challenge of Film/ The Cinema**

Operetta has always responded almost immediately to the emergence of new trends in society. This has been the case in the continual adaptation of new dance forms, in the flourishing of songwriting and the appearance of cabaret and revue in the decades following the First World War. While the universal appeal of opera and operetta was seriously curtailed by the development of the film during this period, operetta composers also responded to this revolutionary medium, with many theatre composers also contributing to this novel form of dramatic experience. The Russian composer Isaak Dunayevsky is a good example of the trend, since composing for both the live stage and the celluloid screen was to feature in parallel mode throughout his artistic life. From 1929 to 1941 he was music director of the Leningrad Music Hall, a variety theatre, and in 1934 wrote the score for the first notable Soviet film musical *Vesyolye rebyata* (Merry Fellows), the first of some 30 sound tracks, as well as pioneering a vigorous contribution to Soviet operetta in 12 works. Alert to the outreach and propaganda potential of the various media, Dunayevsky provided one
of the most famous operettas of the era in *Vol'nïy veter* (Wild Wind/The Wind of Liberty) (Moscow 1947), with its message of proletariat solidarity in the face of social oppression, and also the scores for some of the most successful films of the Stalinist period (*Circus* and *Volga-Volga*). By the mid-century operetta composers were almost inevitably also writers of popular songs, light entertainment music and film scores (the Germans Hans-Hendrik Wehding and Siegfried Köhler are good examples; Norbert Schultze wrote “Lili Marleen” which became the anthem of the Second World War).

Some operettas transferred effortlessly from the stage to the screen, where in particular cases the film version introduced the work to a huge audience and secured a global popularity in the cinema unthinkable for the live production. Mario Lanza’s appearance in the 1954 film version of *The Student Prince* is a good example of the generic cross-over and the renown won by the singer-actor. This was even more the case with works like *The King and I* (1956), *West Side Story* (1961), *My Fair Lady* (1965) and *The Sound of Music* (1965) which became vastly famous through the cinema, as did Yul Brunner, Natalie Wood, Audrey Hepburn and Julie Andrews. In more recent years musicals such as *Cabaret* (1972), *Chicago* (2002), and *Sweeney Todd* (2007) have similarly become better known as films rather than stage works. More recently the trend has been for films to be translated to the stage as musicals. The two most notable creations of Richard and Robert Sherman, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (2003) and *Mary Poppins* (2004), are notable instances.

### A Jewish Story

One of the most interesting and puzzling aspects of the history of the operetta is the fact that virtually all the creators, composers and librettists, from Jacques Offenbach to Claude-Michel Schönberg, have been Jewish. Even the Strauss family, although Catholics, were of immediate Jewish ancestry. Why should this be so? Offenbach worked in freedom, with all the appurtenances of the French state, whether royal, imperial or republican, behind him. His followers in Vienna were also free to operate at the heart of an empire of tolerance and unity. Lehár’s second work, *Der Rastelbinder*, features the typical situation of Slovakian Jews under Habsburg rule, while his librettists and most famous star, Richard Tauber, were all Jewish. So was Emmerich Kálmán, the other great composer of the Silver Era. The cabaret era of the 1920s was entirely run by Jews, beginning with the famous entrepreneur Rudolf Nelson, and Kurt Weill’s most notable creations after *Die Dreigroschen Oper* (1928) were songs for
theatre and club entertainment. The presence of Jews in operetta and musical theatre generally emerged like the results of the litmus test after the Nazi rise to power. So many Jewish composers had to flee; some, like Leo Ascher, were arrested in the Kristall Nacht pogrom; some were incarcerated, like Eberhard Schmidt in Sachsenhausen; others were murdered, like Leon Jessel who died after being tortured by the Gestapo, or the librettist of *The Land of Smiles*, Fritz Löhner-Beda, murdered in Auschwitz III Monowitz concentration camp and nearly forgotten, although many of his songs remain popular to this day. Some were allowed to escape, like Oscar Straus, who was saved through the actions of a sympathetic German officer on his train to Switzerland, or Leo Blech, who was allowed to leave Riga on the political orders of Göring. Others risked their lives to save their Jewish colleagues, like Leo Rochlitzer in Vienna. Many ordinary musicians of the period of the Revue Operetta were victims of the Holocaust. Cabaret was played in ghettos, camps and concentration camps, in Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, in Mauthausen and Westerbork, in Börgermor and Esterwegen.

Volker Kühn (1997) has drawn attention to the play *Ghetto* by the Israeli author Joshua Sobol, performed in Berlin and Hamburg several years ago. This was not fiction brought onto the stage, but a re-enactment of the horrible reality of the year 1943: in the Ghetto of Vilna, where amidst tens of thousands of Jews, crowded together in the most cramped of spaces and guarded by the SS, dreading being taken away and killed, theatre was played. “‘Listen to me! The Germans do not want to destroy only our bodies, no! They want our soul! Do you understand? They try to enter into our soul. They are determined to let their bullets enter our bodies and their spirit our souls. Do you understand? Our fight against them must be a spiritual fight. We won’t defeat them with our fists, but with our mind!’ Suddenly, one hears songs in Yiddish, people dance and sing. The SS men in their black skull-uniforms appear to be amused, some inmates turn their backs, others clap and join in. A poster is rolled up on stage. ‘One does not play theatre in a cemetery!’ is written on it.”

Cabaret was used as an atmospheric drug to keep those destined for death quiet. It was first tolerated by the guarding troops, and later on ordered; cabaret was an opportunity for survival, a means of encouragement and an act of resistance, performed by masters in the craft, on the programme at Auschwitz, Sobibor and Treblinka until the bitter end.

The terrible series of pogroms in the Russia Empire (1881, 1903, 1905) also have their role to play in this strange history. Waves of Jewish emigrants arrived in the United States, among them the Gershowits family whose sons Jacob and Israel would achieve legendary fame as George and
Ira Gershwin, the very arbiters of the Golden Age of New York musical theatre in the 1920s and 1930s. The story of Broadway is a further extension of the history of operetta and its symbiotic involvement with Jewish creativity and enterprise. Nearly all the great composers and librettists of this brilliant era, from Jerome Kern, through Irving Berlin, Rogers & Hammerstein, Lerner & Lowe, Leonard Bernstein to Stephen Sondheim and Stephen Schwartz, have continued and developed this rich cultural association.

Ruth HaCohen (2012) has revealed how an age old Gentile prejudice, from the first centuries of the Christian era, has associated Jews with noise, a ‘musical libel’—a variation on the Passion story that recurs in various forms and cultures in which an innocent Christian boy is killed by a Jew in order to silence his ‘harmonious musicality’. She has shown how entrenched aesthetic-theological assumptions have persistently defined European culture and its internal moral and political orientations, and traced the tensions between Jewish ‘noise’ and idealized Christian ‘harmony’ and their artistic manifestations. The idea is implicitly sustained with further variation in the thesis earlier expounded by Richard Wagner in his pamphlet Das Judentum in der Musik (1850) where he maintained that the restless Jews, being of an ancient and alien racial origin, could not possibly write an authentically ‘European’ music. The irony is deepened when the manifold beauties and universal popular appeal of operetta, understood as a quintessential expression of mainstream European culture, is brought into this equation, and the musical libel turned on its head. It must not be forgotten that Adolf Hitler’s favourite theatrical work was not any opera by Richard Wagner, but rather Franz Lehár’s Die lustige Witwe—an extraordinary situation which conveniently overlooked the fact that the librettists of this universally loved work were Victor Léon and Leo Stein.

Whatever the history, the question remains why so many operetta composers and poets were Jewish, and what this means (if anything)? The outreach of this type of musical theatre to social community, the capacity for sharp even satirical observation of society so apparently friendly, yet able to turn overnight into denouncers, persecutors and killers, underlies the history of the Jewish people, their long centuries of exclusion, excoriation and massacre. Their wandering and homeless sensibilities, yearning for transformation, acceptance, restoration and earthly fulfilment, surely has something to do with the very Jewish perception of operetta as a metonym for a pastoral heritage restored and an eschatological hope reaffirmed.
Operetta Now

Modern operetta has enjoyed popularity in many countries; after its glittering birth in mid-19th century France, it was the Viennese operetta that became most admired and popular. Even today, although overwhelmed by the directly derived musical, operetta is widely accepted and enjoyed. In many countries there is a growing “rediscovery”, and operetta is very enthusiastically performed in Austria, Germany, Hungary, France, Italy, and Spain.

The legendary world of operetta has always attracted all kinds of audiences: those longing for amusement, for escape from the reality of everyday life, and for partaking in not only the lofty peaks of “serious” music, but also the kind of music that amuses in a gay, comic, and sentimental way, yet is sometimes suffused with a very real melancholy.

***

The aim of this book is to provide an overview of operetta and its derivatives, by looking at the most representative composers in the national schools of Europe and America, providing some detail about their lives and achievements, listing their main stage works, and the librettists with whom they worked. The composers are gathered under their national schools, and are arranged chronologically in their respective sections by date of birth. The inclusion of information concerning the singers and the theatres associated with their works entails a huge survey of the cultural life of Europe and America for some 150 years, and is a rich source of reference. The records of some composers are very detailed, while others are hardly remembered, and some have only the briefest of records. In many instances the achievement or popularity of the composer and his works is reflected in the presence of plot synopses, or at least some indication of the content of the story, some detail of the musico-dramatic nature of the piece, and the extent of its reception. These details have been found in many different places and from all available sources. The great studies and surveys of opera and operetta, especially the 19th century work of Clément & Larousse, and the more recent achievements of Anton Würz, Mark Lubbock, Kurt Gänzl and Andrew Lamb, as well as Amanda Holden and the Grove Dictionary of Opera, remain the touchstones of research and information.

The national groupings are laid out according to chronological criteria, with the founding French Operetta first (Offenbach, Hervé, Lecocq), followed by the great Austro-Hungarian (Suppé, Johann Strauss II,
Millöcker) and German Schools (Dellinger, Zumpe, Lincke), originating as they did in the immediate wake of the example of Offenbach. The vibrant Spanish Operetta was also active from the 1840-1850s (Fuertes, Oudrid, Barbieri, Gatzambide), while the English Operetta began emerging in the 1860s (Clay, Sullivan), and the American in the 1880s (Sousa, Engländer). The smaller national schools are then given in roughly regional and chronological association (Yiddish, Russian, Croatian, Hungarian, Czech, Danish, Italian, Greek operetta). While the aim has been to be as comprehensive as possible, such intentions will always have to remain aspirational in the amount of information and detail available and presented, within the limits and the understanding of genre. This is especially the case with the Spanish zarzuela and with the American/British musical since the Second World War, where only a selection of works has been provided.

Some composers, whose work covers many different types of musical theatre over a long period, are important figures for establishing benchmarks and giving an idea of the vigour, variety and generic fluidity of this type of music. In some cases a full chronology of their theatrical works has been provided, followed by a more selected listing of pieces overtly designated operettas (as with Franz von Suppé, Robert Stolz, Walter Kollo and Jean Gilbert). These figures demonstrate a phenomenal creative prodigality, and the record of their oeuvre over decades illustrates the impact of social history in the evolution and transformation of genre.

**Bibliography**

**History and Synopses**


General

Keller O., Die Operette. Vienna 1926.
—. Die Operette in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung. Leipzig, 1926.
Klotz, Volker. Bürgerliches Lachtheater Komödie – Posse – Schwank –