

18 Operetta Films

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At the beginning of the chapter, I should distinguish between two meanings in which the label 'operetta films' is used: one refers to film adaptations of stage works and the other to operettas specially created for the medium of film. To avoid confusion, whenever I refer to a screen operetta, it will be the latter I have in mind. Most of this chapter will, however, be concerned with film versions of stage operettas. For reasons of space, I am concentrating on American, British and German films. It would be unpardonable not to mention *Trois valse* (1938), the film of the French version of Oscar Straus's *Die drei Wälzer*, starring Yvonne Printemps and Pierre Fresnay. Yet, even in this case, I must add that its director, Ludwig Berger, had many years of experience in the German film industry and had previously enjoyed much acclaim for his silent film of an earlier Straus operetta, *Ein Walzertraum*, in 1925.

Berlin and Hollywood were not dissimilar in their approach to musical films. There had been links between the industries of both countries even before the Nazis drove many German-Jewish film directors to seek employment in the USA. As in the UK and USA, German films were, at first, short music-hall or vaudeville attractions. In the early days of motion pictures, it was common to regard the medium of film as second best to the stage. However, in the 1920s, the case for the independent artistic status of film was already being made. Cultural historian Egon Friedell argued that film had areas of activity and effects that were subject to its own generic laws (*eigentümliche Gattungsgesetze*); moreover, he believed it was the art form that represented contemporary times most clearly and completely.¹ This chapter offers an overview of operetta films, and reveals how star singers, such as Richard Tauber, responded to the dictates of film, which sometimes ran counter to stage performance practice.

Even before the advent of sound, there were film adaptations of operetta. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's (MGM) first film of Franz Lehár's *The Merry Widow*, which appeared in 1925, was silent. It was directed by Erich von Stroheim, who departed considerably from the operetta and devised what would now be called a 'backstory' of the widow as an American ex-vaudeville performer who arrives in the small kingdom of Monteblando and goes to Paris later. Lehár's music was arranged by

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William Axt and David Mendoza. The film has some erotic content, showing scantily clothed dancers at Maxim's restaurant and featuring a love scene on a bed in a *chambre séparée* with half-naked blindfolded musicians playing in an alcove. John Gilbert is Danilo, and Mae Murray the widow. There was, of course, music to be heard while the silent film was being shown; larger cinemas had orchestras, and scores were specially put together to accompany films. It was exciting, no doubt, to watch such films to the accompaniment of musical excerpts but not so thrilling as in the 1930s, when audiences flocked to cinemas to both see and hear screen stars. Films of that decade also offer valuable historical insight now into vocal practice and performance technique. In addition, they contribute important knowledge to our understanding of adaptation. The absence of singing in silent film versions of operetta did affect the way operetta was later adapted for the screen. There was always a tendency to have more dialogue than music, and there was often a desire to locate musical numbers in a context where they might plausibly have occurred. The music, when it was heard, however, often differed to some degree from that in the stage work because it was usually rearranged by a composer specifically employed for the making of the film.

The Jazz Singer (1927), starring Al Jolson, is frequently cited as the first 'talkie' or sound film,² but it remained silent in large parts, and the accolade of the first musical film with continuous sound goes to MGM's *Broadway Melody* of 1929, directed by Wesley Ruggles. The first German film with sound throughout was *Der blaue Engel* (1930), directed by Josef von Sternberg, and starring Emil Jannings and Marlene Dietrich. The first screen operetta was *Zwei Herzen im Dreivierteltakt* (1930) directed by Géza von Bolváry. The screenplay was by Walter Reisch and Franz Schulz, and the music by Robert Stolz. Apart from setting a trend for title songs, it relied too much on older models to be influential, even though they were given a modern polish. Perhaps that is why, although it began life on screen, it was soon adapted for the stage, as *Der verlorene Walzer* (1933).

In September 1930, the major German film company Universum-Film, better known as Ufa, released another film that had sound throughout, a screen operetta directed by Wilhelm Thiele called *Die Drei von der Tankstelle*.³ Although the title, 'The Three from the Filling Station', might seem unexciting, it proved to be Ufa's most commercially successful film of the 1930s. The days of the Weimar Republic are often associated with an outpouring of unruly behaviour and hedonism preceding the establishment of the authoritarian Third Reich in 1933. However, this film offers more than dance, song and frivolity. The humour is infectious, and the three best friends who are rivals for the hand of the wilful young woman (played by Lilian Harvey) finally resolve their differences amicably.

It is the end of the film that is most surprising because it reveals that Bertolt Brecht was not alone in his ideas about breaking frame in dramatic representations nor in his desire to remind audiences of the mechanics of construction of representational forms. After the apparent happy conclusion, the stars of the film step through theatre curtains and react with sudden surprise, as if seeing the 'real' audience in the cinema staring at them. They wonder why no one has gone home because the show is over. Then they realize that the audience wants a proper operetta finale and will only then be satisfied that the film has ended. In the later twentieth century, this kind of self-referentiality and exposure of the means by which a narrative code, dramatic meaning and illusion are constructed would be termed 'postmodernism'.

Not everyone was ready to applaud operetta films, however. Siegfried Kracauer argued that analysing German films of 1918–33 reveals 'deep psychological dispositions' that 'influenced the course of events during that time'.⁴ He accused most operetta films of the early 1930s of romanticizing the past and representing an enchanted Vienna with gentle archdukes, tender flirtations, baroque decors, Biedermeier rooms and customers drinking and singing in suburban garden restaurants. Psychologically, he claimed, it had the effect of suggesting such people presented no threat.⁵ He recognized that *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* did not fit this mould, but it was still to be mistrusted because of its escapism: it was a 'playful daydream' that shifted 'the operetta paradise from its traditional locales to the open road'.⁶ Instead of perceiving the innovative way in which music and sound is used in this film, he complained that the score was eccentric and full of whims, that it interfered with 'the half-rational plot', and he gave the example of a waltz that invites the workers who are clearing out the friends' unpaid furniture 'to transform themselves into dancers'. Even the clever use of the sound of the heroine's car horn – an imaginative example of turning noise into a leitmotiv – does nothing but attract his scorn.⁷

Ufa was created in 1917, and although it was to absorb other companies, it did not enjoy any kind of monopoly. Nonetheless, it was the only serious European challenge to Hollywood, and Ufa's international success lay firmly in operettas and comedies. Versions were often shot in three languages: German, English, and French, *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* being an example. The music to that film was by Werner R. Heymann, who was also the composer for Ufa's *Der Kongreß tanzt*, released in 1931. Once more, the star was Lilian Harvey, who had been born in London to a German father and English mother. On the strength of the acclaim he had received for his revue operettas at the Großes Schauspielhaus, Berlin, Erik Charell was engaged as director, and he immediately established

himself as one of the most skilful directors of operetta on film, making use of Carl Hoffman's unusually flexible camera movement to demonstrate how camera mobility and sound film could work together. The lengthy scene in which Lillian Harvey travels through the wood by carriage and is greeted by singing onlookers caused a sensation and was much imitated.⁸ This film also had the services of the influential set designer Walter Röhrig, who had created the expressionist sets for Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (1920). Being of Jewish descent, Charell's career in Germany came to an end in 1933; it was, however, resumed after World War II.

Three original screen operettas were released in 1931: *Die Privatsekretärin*, with music by Paul Abraham; *Ronny*, with music by Emmerich Kálmán; and *Die große Attraktion*, with music by Franz Lehár. Lehár was to compose another two screen operettas during the Weimar years (as well as seeing film adaptations made of three of his stage operettas: *Das Land des Lächelns*, *Friederike* and *Der Zarewitsch*). Abraham had first made a name for himself with music for film in 1929. In the later film of his operetta *Die Blume von Hawaii* (1933), spectators were given sight of what was an unattainable destination in the Depression years. For people who could not afford to travel anywhere, it must have been exciting to see palm trees, the sea hitting the rocks and so forth brought to life on screen. A halfway house between stage operetta and screen operetta was *Die 3-Groschen Oper* (1931), directed by G. W. Pabst, with Theo Mackeben as musical director. It omitted a lot of Kurt Weill's music, but it was common for German films of the 1930s to include four or five numbers only. Lotte Lenya played Jenny, Carola Nehr was Polly and Macheath was a non-singing role played by Rudolf Förster. In Pabst's film, there is non-mimetic delivery of songs by characters, most strikingly 'Seeräuber Jenny' sung by Lenya. Her blank expression operates as a mask, and its effect is to force a critical position on to the viewer, something Brecht constantly strove for in his epic theatre. At the same time, the film credits make clear that the screenplay is a free adaptation of Brecht, and not his stage play. In the film, for instance, there is a burglary at the large London department store Selfridges, absent from the original play.

Film was a hugely popular medium in Weimar Germany, and cinema numbers grew in this period from 2,000 to 5,000.⁹ It was a similar story in Britain: by February 1930, there were 1,000 cinemas wired for sound, and at the end of 1934 over a thousand cinemas had a capacity of between 1,000 and 2,000 seats, although cinema numbers themselves exceeded 2,000 only in the mid-1930s.¹⁰ German films lost a lot of talented people as a consequence of Nazi 'racial purity' laws (*Rassenreinheit Gesetze*). Richard Traubner cites the publication of lists in the 1930s that were designed to reveal how strong the Jewish influence was on German cinema:

one list claimed 45 per cent of film composers and 48 per cent of film directors had a Jewish background.¹¹

From 1933 on, Jewish artists began to be omitted from film credits. The Ufa film of *Die Csárdásfürstin*, directed by Georg Jacoby, was a huge box-office success in 1934 but made no reference to its Jewish composer Emmerich Kálmán or its Jewish librettists Leo Stein and Béla Jenbach. Hans-Otto Borgmann is credited for the musical adaptation, and Jacoby, along with Hans Zerlett and B. E. Lühge, for the script (Figure 18.1). However, the star was Marta Eggerth, whose mother was Jewish. It was soon found necessary to replace Jewish singers. Fritzi Massary was associated with recent leading stage roles in *Eine Frau, die weiß, was sie will* and *Der letzte Walzer* but did not appear in the films of those operettas. The next step was to remove 'Jewish music' and rewrite 'Jewish lyrics', as happened in Carl Lamac's film of *Im weißen Rössl* (1935).¹² Finally, persecution of Jews increased to the extent that even a famous singer such as Eggerth had to flee Austria for New York in 1938 (the year of the *Anschluss*).

Die Csárdásfürstin
 Nach der gleichnamigen Operette
 mit
Marta Eggerth, Hans Söhnker, Paul Hörbiger
Paul Kemp, Ida Wüst
 Drehbuch: Hans Zerlett, B. E. Lühge, Georg Jacoby
 Bild: Karl Hoffmann / Bau: Robert Herlth, Walter Röhrig
 Ton: Dr. Carl Heinz Becker / Schnitt: Herbert Fredersdorf / Aufnahmeleitung: Eduard Kubat
 Musikalische Bearbeitung: Hans-Otto Borgmann
Herstellungsgruppe: Max Pfeiffer
Spielleitung: Georg Jacoby
 Darsteller
 Sylva Varescu Marta Eggerth
 Edwin, Prinz Weylersheim Hans Söhnker
 Graf Boni Kancsianu Paul Kemp
 Feri von Kerekes Paul Hörbiger
 Komtesse Stasi von Planitz Inge List
 Fürstin Weylersheim Ida Wüst
 Fürst Weylersheim Friedrich Ulmer
 Der Kommandeur Hans Junkermann
 Der Manager Edwin Jürgensen
 Der Zigeunerprima Andor Heltai
 Weiter wirken mit: Ilse Fürstenberg, Marina von Dittmar, Charlott Daudert, Hedi und Margot Höpfner, Karin Lüsebrink, Liselotte Heßler, Olga Engl, Josef Karma, Tomy Bonsch, Sauter-Sarto, Carl Walther-Meyer und Meyer-Falkow
 Aufgenommen auf Klangfilm-Gerät / Añfa-Tonkopie
Ufa **Ufaton-Film im Ufaleih** **Ufa**

Figure 18.1 Film cast of *Die Csárdásfürstin*. *Illustrierte Film-kurier*, Vol. 16, 1934

In Georg Jacoby's remake of *Die Csárdásfürstin* (1951), his wife Marika Rökk played Sylva Varescu, and Johannes Heesters was Edwin von Weylerheim. Both singers were admired by Hitler and suspected of being Nazi sympathizers. However, when secret intelligence documents were declassified in February 2017, there was a surprising revelation about Rökk: they revealed that she had been, in fact, a Soviet agent.¹³

During the early 1930s, it is interesting to see the impact on performers when they move from a theatre stage to a film studio and are faced with a camera instead of a live audience. There are some significant differences between theatre and film: in the theatre, the whole space of the action is seen, but the spectator's position and angle of vision is fixed. Béla Balázs observes that, in film, four new devices take over: a scene can be broken into several shots, the spectator can be given a close-up, the angle of vision can be changed and montage can be used.¹⁴ In film, the camera does the focussing. Moreover, there is a need to consider the editing of shots, for example, the speed of change from one to another. There was a range of conventional shot positions in the 1930s, the most common being the long shot, the mid-shot (often used for two actors in the same scene) and the close-up (head and shoulders). The relationship of the performer to the camera was important. If the performer sang to camera, it emphasized the performance act, breaking with naturalistic illusion. There were many differences between working to camera and working with a live audience. In a theatre, a performer could turn unexpectedly to a section of the audience in any part of the auditorium. Film-makers liked to edit shots; they did not like a performer suddenly deciding which camera to speak to.

In many cases, screen adaptations of operetta were far from being filmed versions of the original stage production: the music of more than one operetta might be included, and the dialogue and narrative might change. About thirty British films made in the 1930s leaned heavily on operetta from the German-language stage, and the fondness for this genre may have been partly motivated by the thought that there was a possibility of good returns from the European box office. British International Pictures' (BIP) *Blossom Time* of 1934 was a notable success, and even Alfred Hitchcock tried his hand that year with *Waltzes from Vienna*, an adaptation of *Walzer aus Wien* (which had music of the Strauss family arranged by Erich Korngold and Julius Bittner).

Blossom Time cost BIP much more than its other films, owing largely to the expensive sets and crowd scenes.¹⁵ It was an adaptation of Schubert melodies by G. H. Clutsam and was a screen operetta that differed from his earlier Schubert operetta *Lilac Time*, which was based on Berté's *Das Dreimäderlhaus*. To add to the confusion, it differed also from Romberg's Broadway adaptation of the latter as *Blossom Time*, which is

why the film was given the title *April Blossoms* in the USA. The director, Paul Stein, was Viennese but had worked for five years in Hollywood.¹⁶ The cast included the Austrian tenor Richard Tauber, hero of many a Franz Lehár operetta, and the most famous star to work for BIP at that time. *Blossom Time* was a triumph commercially as well as being well received by the critics and encouraged BIP to follow up with *My Song Goes Round the World*, another film starring a famous tenor, this time Josef Schmidt. The coloratura soprano Gitta Alpár, who had started her career with Budapest State Opera and then joined Berlin State Opera, can be heard in *I Give My Heart* (Wardour Films, 1935), which was based on *The Dubarry* (Theo Mackeben's adaptation of Carl Millöcker's *Gräfin Dubarry*). She fled the Nazis in 1933, first to Austria, then to the UK and USA because of her Jewish heritage.

Famous singers of the stage were not always quick to adapt to the medium of film. An examination of the scene in *Blossom Time* in which Tauber accompanies himself on piano singing 'Once There Lived a Lady Fair', reveals that his mimic and gestural signs are in accord with operatic performance practice, and contrast with the naturalistic code adopted by the members of the drawing-room audience in the film. His gestures are theatrical, whereas theirs are economical. *Variety* remarked backhandedly of his acting in this film that it was 'surprisingly good – for a world-famous tenor'.¹⁷ Jane Baxter, cast in the role of Vicki Wimpassinger, the object of Schubert's affection, was a glamorous film star of the 1930s and was careful to adopt the restrained mimetic code of cinema (having already appeared in several films). Tauber is first and foremost a celebrated singer. Shots are intercut showing details of dramatic significance, such as the emotional impact his performance is having on his audience. We gauge their reactions from the use of montage, which presents us with a sequence of different shots from which we interpret what is going on and build a picture of the whole (an idea of the space of the room, for instance). In one sense Tauber's audience 'stands in' for us, the viewers of the film, since we have no presence in a film equivalent to that which we enjoy in a theatre.

British and American operetta films, when compared to German films of the same era, add to our insight into performance style and technique, dramaturgical practice, musical priorities and cultural values. British and Dominions Film Corporation released a film in 1933 of Noël Coward's *Bitter Sweet*, starring Anna Neagle and Fernand Gravey. Another film of this operetta was released by MGM in colour in 1940, starring Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. Coward described the second film as 'dreadful' and claimed it prevented him from ever being able to revive *Bitter Sweet* (adding, with his customary humour, that it was a pity, because he had been 'saving it up as an investment').¹⁸ *Mister Cinders*

(1934), with music by Vivian Ellis (from his stage musical), was produced by BIP shortly after *Blossom Time*, but it is noticeable how much more smoothly the musical numbers are integrated into the film, and, under Frederic Zelnik's direction, how at ease the singers now appear in front of the camera. A film version of Ivor Novello's spectacular Drury Lane operetta *Glamorous Night* (1937) was directed by Brian Desmond Hurst at Elstree Studios and featured two Americans in the leading roles, singing star Mary Ellis and matinee idol Otto Kruger. Its popularity encouraged Associate British Pictures to plan films of Novello's next operettas, but a financial crisis hit British films in 1938, and war broke out the next year.¹⁹ It was not until 1950 that the company released a film of *The Dancing Years*, directed by Harold French and produced in colour. Dennis Price played Rudi, Gisele Preville was Maria, and Patricia Dainton was Grete. The success of the film rivalled that of the acclaimed theatre production.

In the USA, German director Ernst Lubitsch, whose family was Ashkenazi Jewish, was making his mark in musical films, the first being *The Love Parade* (Paramount, 1929), with Jeanette MacDonald and Maurice Chevalier. They also starred in his film *One Hour with You* (1932, music by Oscar Straus). In *The Merry Widow* (MGM, 1934), Chevalier played Danilo, and MacDonald was Sonia (Hanna). The screen play was by Ernest Vajda and Samson Raphaelson. The name of the Ruritanian country was changed to Marshovia, and fresh lyrics were provided by Lorenz Hart (uncredited), with some additional lyrics by Gus Kahn. The musical adaptation was by Herbert Stothart, aided by orchestrators Paul Marquardt, Charles Maxwell and Leonid Raab. Herbert Stothart was a composer, arranger and musical director for MGM in the 1930s. He had plenty of Broadway experience and had worked with Vincent Youmans and Rudolf Friml before his involvement in an early sound film adaptation, released in June 1930, of *Golden Dawn*, a Broadway operetta composed by Kálmán to an English text. A month earlier that year, another early MGM sound film had been released, based on a loose adaptation of a Lehár operetta (*Zigeunerliebe*); it was *The Rogue Song*, directed by Lionel Barrymore and Hal Roach (uncredited). It starred Catherine Dale Owen, Lawrence Tibbett and, perhaps unexpectedly, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy.

As the Depression began to lift in the USA in 1934, Hollywood producers took renewed interest in Broadway and sponsored many plays there. At the end of the 1935–6 season, however, Hollywood producers (such as MGM, who had backed productions by Max Gordon and Sam H. Harris) took umbrage at the provisions in a new contract made between play producers and the new Dramatists' Guild-League of New York Theatre. It divided the money paid for rights to a play into 60 per cent

for the author and 40 per cent for the producer, and even if a film producer had financed the play, the film rights were still to be offered in the open market.²⁰ There was an inevitable reduction in interest from Hollywood. Perhaps, at this point, it would be helpful to draw upon Vivian Ellis's neat distinction between a film producer (such as Samuel Goldwyn in Hollywood or Erich Pommer in Berlin) and a film director: the producer assembles the picture, and the director shoots the picture.²¹

Lubitsch's *Merry Widow* had won many admirers but was not a huge box-office success, and that prompted MGM to seek a change of partner for MacDonald. Nelson Eddy was soon found.²² MacDonald and Eddy were first brought together in *Naughty Marietta* (1935; based on Victor Herbert's operetta), which was followed by *Rose-Marie* (Friml, 1936). Their third film together, and their biggest success, was *Maytime* (Romberg, 1937), directed by Robert Z. Leonard. Their film partnership continued until 1942.

The Austrian film director Arthur Maria Rabenalt commented on the various advantages possessed by screen adaptations over the stage originals: complicated intrigues could be edited in a way that made them more credible, awkward scene changes could become lithier, and characters could be made more convincing by making certain dramatic situations more visible.²³ Another way of removing stage rigidity in screen adaptations was to reduce the quantity of music and be flexible about the sequence of an operetta's musical numbers. In films, means were usually found to moderate the affront to realism when characters suddenly feel a compulsion to sing.

Three short examples can be given to illustrate some of the variety in the practice of adapting from stage to screen. In the film *The Smiling Lieutenant* (1931), based on Oscar Straus's *Ein Walzertraum* (1907) and directed by Lubitsch, the adaptation is designed to help the American audience recognize itself in the imported operetta, which had placed much emphasis on the charms of Vienna. In the Viennese stage version, in order to help a foreign princess to win the affections of the Austrian lieutenant, Franzl (the vivacious leader of a women's orchestra) has to teach her about what makes Viennese women so attractive: it is their lively temperament. She also encourages the princess to cater for the lieutenant's delight in other Viennese pleasures, such as food. In the film, Franzl proffers advice of a rather different character: she plays the piano and sings a ragtime song: 'Jazz up your lingerie'. The next time we see the princess on screen, she is playing syncopated music at the piano with a cigarette dangling from her lips. It is clear that her behaviour now resonates with the bold, emancipated American city woman of the 1920s (the original operetta belongs to 1907).

Sometimes adaptations could entail complete reworking. In the film of *The Chocolate Soldier* (1941), the adapter faced a difficult challenge. Bernard Shaw had given permission (with a high degree of scorn) for the original German libretto to be based on his play *Arms and the Man*. However, he now refused to allow his work to be used in a film unless he was paid a substantial sum. MGM refused and, instead, went ahead, retaining Straus's music but commissioning a new screenplay from Leonard Lee and Keith Winter based on Ferenc Molnár's *The Guardsman*.

In *Maytime*, there was an opposite state of affairs. The Broadway stage version of *Wie einst im Mai* in 1917 had jettisoned Walter Kollo's music, and Rida Johnson Young had adapted the libretto by Rudolf Bernauer, Rudolf Schanzer and Willy Bredschneider for a fresh score by Sigmund Romberg. In the film version, much of Romberg's score was itself discarded, and replaced by interpolated numbers. *Maytime* was a film triumph, however, and revealed that audiences enjoyed a tear-jerker as much as a song and dance show. Unfortunately, it appeared in 1937, the year in which Hollywood lost its interest in adapting stage entertainments because of the new contractual conditions. Perhaps that was why so little use was made of the Romberg score and why the musical director, Herbert Stothart, chose to include public-domain music that did not require payment of copyright fees.

In Germany and Austria, the 1950s and early 1960s witnessed the halcyon days of *Heimat* films (homeland films). These films became a celebration of forests, mountains and dirndls. They had a nostalgic appeal in their emphasis on wholesome and supposedly traditional values lived by honest folk overcoming adversity in idyllic rural locations. The *Heimat* film is often confused with the *Bergfilm* (mountain film), but the latter had a simpler plot, usually involving an accident and rescue. Remakes in colour of old films were popular in the 1950s. The taste for the *Heimat* film was initiated by *Schwarzwaldmädel* (The Black Forest Girl) of 1950, directed by Hans Deppe, which was the first German colour film to be released after World War II. Remarkably, it was the fourth time a film had been made of this operetta. The script was by Bobby Lüthge, who kept the same characters and plot but moved the period of action to the present – although that did not preclude the wearing of traditional Black Forest costumes. The scenery is of serene landscapes unspoiled by war. The conciliatory mood of the film made it enormously appealing, and it engendered a succession of *Heimat* films.

The influence of the 1950 *Schwarzwaldmädel* is felt in the 1952 film of *Im weißen Rössl*, despite Charell's contribution to the screenplay. Jazzy songs are gone. The intervention of the Emperor Franz Josef is no longer

an ironic twist on the crisis-resolving power of the *deus ex machina* but is, instead, presented seriously. It was a marker of what was to come: in the 1960 film directed by Werner Jacobs, all traces of the frivolity, mischief, camp and caricature of Charell's original revue operetta – the features that lent it a tone of social critique – had vanished. Although its re-orchestrated score now reveals its age, it remains the most popular version of *Im weißen Rössl*, largely because of the presence of Peter Alexander, who sang in popular films, then operetta adaptations and, later, became a TV presenter.

Die Försterchristl (*Christel the Forest Ranger*) first filmed in 1926, had been remade in 1931, and was remade in black and white in 1952 and in colour in 1962. The 1952 *Die Försterchristl*, which starred Hannerl Matz and was directed by Arthur Rabenalt, was admired for having the romantic comedy touch associated with Lubitsch. The operetta, with music by Georg Jarno, was set just after the 1848 revolution in Austria and Hungary. Eighteen minutes into the 1962 version of *Die Försterchristel* [*sic*], there is a surprising interpolated number. It is British composer Ronald Binge's *Elizabethan Serenade*, arranged for a chorus, who greet the arrival of the Kaiser and Countess Elisabeth. It had been a hit tune in Germany in the early 1950s. Oskar Sima plays Leisinger in both *Försterchristl* (1952) and *Försterchristel* (1962). These two films have many scenes in common; it is almost as if the film company Carlton simply wished to remake it in colour so as to do justice to the Austrian landscapes.

There were, all the same, non-homeland films made during this period, one of which was of Oscar Straus's operetta *Der letzte Walzer* (1953), directed by Rabenalt. The screen adaptation is by Curt J. Braun, but Julius Brammer and Alfred Grünwald remain credited for the libretto. There is also interpolated music, and Robert Gilbert and Fritz Rotter are credited for the lyrics to the songs of the interludes, the music of which one assumes is by Straus. The composer is shown conducting the Bavarian Symphony Orchestra at the beginning of the film, while the credits roll, although the musical director for the film was Bruno Uher.

Operetta had a final flowering on television, and one of the pioneers of TV operetta was Kurt Wilhelm, who was fond of big production numbers. Television production was often a hybrid of stage and screen practice. Studio sets resembled stage sets, but the changing camera angles are indebted to film.²⁴ The German television company Beta, founded in 1959, became interested in operettas in the 1960s and was able to produce them with a budget beyond the affordability of Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) and Österreichischer Rundfunk (ORF; Austria).

Notes

1. Egon Friedell, 'Kunst und Kino' [c.1912] in *Wozu das Theater? Essays, Satiren Humoresken* (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1969), 87–95, at 91 and 95.
2. Jolson's co-star was Mary McAvoy, and the director was Alan Crosland. It was a Warner Brothers production.
3. It starred Willy Fritsch and Lilian Harvey and was directed by Wilhelm Thiele. The writers were Franz Schulz and Paul Frank, and the music was composed by Werner R. Heymann; the Comedian Harmonists were among the performers.
4. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), v.
5. *Ibid.*, 141.
6. *Ibid.*, 207.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, 208.
9. Joseph Garncarz and Thomas Elsaesser, 'Weimar Cinema' in Thomas Elsaesser with Michael Wedel (eds.), *The BFI Companion to German Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999), 247–8, at 247.
10. Linda Wood, *British Films 1927–1939* (London: British Film Institute, 1986), 19, 119–20.
11. Richard Traubner, 'Der deutsche Operettenfilm vor und nach 1933' in Wolfgang Schaller (ed.), *Operette unterm Hakenkreuz: Zwischen hoffähiger Kunst und 'Entartung'* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2007), 147–69, at 163. Regrettably, no source is given.
12. Bruno Granichstaedten's music to the song 'Zuschau'n kann i net' was omitted, and Robert Gilbert's lyrics altered, but Ralph Benatzky's music remained intact, although his music was later banned because he was (wrongly) assumed to be a Jewish composer.
13. Kate Connolly, 'Hitler's favourite actor was Soviet spy', *The Guardian*, 21 Feb. 2017, 14.
14. Béla Balázs, *Theory of Film*, trans. Edith Bone (London: Dobson, 1952; originally published as *Filmkultúra*, Budapest: Szikra kiadás, 1948).
15. Rachel Low, *The History of the British Film 1929–1939: Film Making in 1930s Britain* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985), 123.
16. Roy Ames, *A Critical History of the British Cinema* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978), 85.
17. 'Blossom Time', *Variety*, 24 July 1934, 4.
18. Charles Castle, *Noël* (London: W.H. Allen, 1972), 106.
19. Peter Noble, *Ivor Novello* (London: Falcon Press, 1951), 191.
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