

Introduction

It makes sense to study the reception of operetta in both London and New York because, as Walter James MacQueen-Pope recognized in his retrospective study of Edwardian theatre, ‘the closest theatrical interchange’ existed between the stages of the UK and USA.¹ The same English version of Franz Lehár’s *Die lustige Witwe* was produced in the West End and on Broadway in the same year, 1907, and stimulated the same hearty appetite for operetta from the German stage. The world-wide success of *The Merry Widow* launched what became known as the ‘Silver Age’ of operetta. Rutland Barrington, a singer renowned for his roles in the Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas, was performing in an operetta by Leo Fall in 1910, and remarked, ‘the long-threatened German invasion’ of the West End was ‘an accomplished fact’.² Although the First World War brought a temporary diminution of opportunities for new productions, the 1920s witnessed an enthusiastic renewal of interest. During that decade, operettas from the stages of Berlin theatres (such as the Metropol, the Thalia, and the Theater am Nollendorfplatz) were regularly produced in London’s West End and on Broadway. In addition to Lehár, among the various much-admired imports to both cities were operettas by Oscar Straus, Leo Fall, Jean Gilbert (real name, Max Winterfeld), Emmerich Kálmán, Eduard Künneke, and Ralph Benatzky. The enormous demand for silver-age operetta in London and New York is forgotten, and yet, between 1907 and 1938, over sixty operettas from the German stage were produced in the West End, and more than seventy on Broadway. There are also surprises if we look at the top twenty successful operettas in each city by initial numbers of performances (Appendix 2). In London, Gilbert has four operettas in the top twenty, one more than Lehár, and in New York, Kálmán has four compared to Lehár’s two. It may also raise eyebrows to learn that before the First World War, not all operettas came from Vienna:

¹ W. J. MacQueen-Pope, *Carriages at Eleven: The Story of the Edwardian Theatre* (London: Hutchinson, 1947), 132.

² Rutland Barrington, *More Rutland Barrington* (London: Grant Richards, 1911), 219. The operetta was *Die geschiedene Frau*, produced in London and New York in 1910 as *The Girl in the Train*.

in the three years before Britain's declaration of war (4 August 1914), six operettas from Berlin were produced in London.

This book investigates operetta productions in the context of audience expectations, aspirations, and anxieties. It explores the social, cultural, and moral values of the period, and asks how operettas engaged with modernity, innovative technology, social change, and cultural difference. Seeking to enhance knowledge of international cultural exchange, I study the business world that surrounded them, and consider the changes made for London and New York productions. Beyond a desire to know what it was in German operetta that appealed to British and American audiences, I look for activities that can advance understanding of cosmopolitanism in music, because operetta, along with ragtime and early jazz, was able to cross national borders with remarkable ease.

Operettas of the silver age have features that set them apart from the golden age of Jacques Offenbach, Arthur Sullivan, and Johann Strauss, Jr. They differ in the way they were disseminated, because of the stronger links between those involved in their creation and the agents and business entrepreneurs who were keen to target metropolitan markets. The means of doing so had been facilitated by improved transport networks, technological developments, such as telephones, and protective legislation in the form of copyright law. International distribution occurred quickly because it was already built into the planning of new theatre productions and was aided by a growing number of international stars. Kurt Gänzl observes that 'silver age' suggests a less important and successful period than its 'golden' predecessor but notes that silver-age operetta proved more successful internationally.³ The operettas themselves often differed in content from those of the previous century. Undoubtedly, the satirical character diminished, but they often engaged with modernity. There were changes in the music, too: a more extreme mixture of musical styles became the norm. *Die lustige Witwe* includes the csárdás, fast and slow waltzes, march, polka, gallop, polonaise, mazurka, cake-walk, and Serbian kolo, and later operettas extended the variety of styles to include the latest fashionable dances (for example, the fox trot and tango).

This book is divided into two parts, the first relating to issues of operetta production and the second to its reception. Inevitably, it is not a distinction that can be tightly contained, and there are inevitable overlaps – especially

³ Kurt Gänzl, 'Exportartikel Operette: Die Wiener und Berliner Operette auf englischsprachigen Bühnen', in Marie-Theres Arnbom, and Kevin Clarke, eds., *Die Welt der Operette. Glamour, Stars & Showbusiness* (Vienna: Brandstätter Verlag, 2011), 65–73, at 72.

in Chapter 6 on intermediality. The book begins with an examination of the music of silver-age operetta, and it is followed by a study of the changes that occurred as these operettas were re-worked for audiences in other countries. These revisions enhance our knowledge of the workings of cultural transfer. Chapter 3 investigates how the production of operetta operated as a transcultural entertainment industry. Its business practices illustrate the beginnings of the kind of distribution and consumption of culture that would, in the second half of the twentieth century, begin to be of major economic significance to a country's gross domestic product. Part 1 ends with a survey of those involved in the staging of operetta: its producers, directors, designers, and performers.

I should alert the reader to the importance of the list of operetta productions given in Appendix 1. It is sometimes impossible to guess the former German title from that used in an English version: to give two examples, Franz Lehár's *Das Fürstenkind* and Eduard Künneke's *Der Vetter aus Dingsda* became *Maids of Athens* and *Caroline* respectively when produced on Broadway. Since my focus is on operettas from the German stage, Appendix 1 does not include operettas composed to English librettos, even if the composer continued to be actively involved with the stages of Vienna and Berlin. These can, however, be found in Appendix 3.

Some readers may be disappointed that there is not more consideration given to the Broadway musicals of Kurt Weill, which so often overlap with features of operetta. Weill is often seen as standing apart from the musical theatrical practice of his time, especially in the German context, but this impression is dispelled once a familiarity with operetta of the 1920s has been acquired.⁴ *Die Dreigroschenoper* was first performed at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm (1928), as was *Happy End* (1929) and, after its Leipzig try-out, so was *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (1931). In the first two decades of the twentieth century, that theatre, known then as the Neues Theater, had staged many operettas, including worldwide successes such as Franz Lehár's *Der Graf von Luxemburg* in 1909 and Leo Fall's *Der liebe Augustin* in 1912. Weill actually labelled *Der Kuhhandel* an operetta.⁵ It was produced as *A Kingdom for a Cow* at the Savoy Theatre, during his temporary exile in England in 1935. It enjoyed little success, but

⁴ While acknowledging that the success of *Die Dreigroschenoper* cannot be adequately measured using an operetta yardstick, Bernard Grun insists that its stimulating effect should not be denied. *Kulturgeschichte der Operette* (München: Langen Müller Verlag, 1961), 442.

⁵ At this time, argues Stephen Hinton, Weill had 'increasingly embraced operetta as a positive model'. *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 224.

Weill reused the melody of one of its numbers, 'Seit ich in diese Stadt gekommen bin', for 'September Song', the international hit from his Broadway musical *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938).⁶

Part 2 of the book links the reception of operetta to wider social and technological changes, beginning with a general survey of reception. Next, operetta is considered as a form of entertainment created in the knowledge that it would circulate via differing media platforms and channels (such as records, radio, films, and dance-band arrangements). Film adaptations are important, because not only did cinema become a rival of theatre on Broadway and in the West End, but also many actors and singers moved between stage and film. Next, I discuss how operetta resonated with modernity, the glamorous, the sophisticated, the new, and the experiences of city life. Those experiences lead to an examination of the metropolis as a site of cosmopolitanism and trans-cultural exchange. Operetta may be called a cosmopolitan genre in that it was an artistic form appealing to people of differing cultural backgrounds, and involving a transnational mix of performers, composers, lyricists, directors, designers, and entrepreneurs. Nothing illustrates arguments about cosmopolitanism better than the international transfer of musical goods. The nineteenth century witnessed the beginnings of a transcultural entertainment industry that eventually became the globalized entertainment industry of today.⁷

Although operetta's role in offering insight into social history may be accepted, some readers may wonder if anything as positive can be said about its value as an artistic genre. It is easy to jump to the conclusion that it merely offers comforting emotions and sentimental escapism. Yet, because it is often lacking in theatrical illusionistic realism, it is often able to stimulate critical thought. Consider the comments made by Viennese satirist Karl Kraus:

It is plausible when you hear operetta conspirators sing, but in opera conspirators are serious and their unmotivated singing undermines the seriousness of their project. Operetta nonsense is romantic. The function of music, to relax the constrictions of life and revitalize mental activity, is coupled with an irresponsible

⁶ Weill was not alone in feeling the influence of operetta: contemporary topics and modern dance styles are found in operetta before they appear in *Zeitopern* such as Ernst Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf* of 1926.

⁷ The development of a nineteenth-century music industry features in my books *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2nd edn 2001) and *Sounds of the Metropolis: The 19th-Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris, and Vienna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

exhilaration, and we gain a sense of our own real follies in the confusion created. The operetta is an intoxication that gives rise to thought.⁸

Kraus's words bring to mind Walter Benjamin's thoughts on humour and critical awareness: "There is no better start for thinking than laughter."⁹

Without deeper knowledge of these stage entertainments and their reception, we lack adequate understanding of the musical-theatrical mainstream in the early twentieth century. Operetta is part of a cultural middle ground that is often neglected in academic work, the focus of which so often falls on the predilections of a cultural elite, or on working-class leisure pursuits. Much of the work undertaken on twentieth-century operetta until recent times has been of a cataloguing and plot-descriptive nature, rather than interpretative or critical.¹⁰ That is now changing, as scholars investigate operetta productions in the context of cultural history and the social issues with which they engage.¹¹ In saying this, I do not mean

⁸ Karl Kraus, *Sprüche und Widersprüche* [1909, rev. 1923], in Karl Kraus, *Aphorismen*, ed. Christian Wagenknecht (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1986, 4th edn 1994), 7–177, at 97. Translations are mine, unless otherwise stated.

⁹ Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer' ('Der Autor als Produzent', 1934), in Peter Demetz ed., *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Schocken Books 1978), 235.

¹⁰ Four of the most important of such works for the English reader are Kurt Gänzl and Andrew Lamb, *Gänzl's Book of the Musical Theatre* (London: The Bodley Head, 1988); Mark Lubbock (with an American section by David Ewen), *The Complete Book of Light Opera* (London: Putnam, 1962); Gerald Bordman and Richard Norton, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 4th edn 2011), and Richard C. Norton, *A Chronology of American Musical Theater*, 3 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). A wide-ranging survey of operetta sources can be found in Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Operetta: A Sourcebook*, 2 vols. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015). Two useful shorter books are David Ewen, *The Book of European Light Opera* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962) and John Drinkrow, *The Vintage Operetta Book* (Reading: Osprey, 1972). Four German publications (offering synopses of various operettas omitted in English texts) are Stan Czech, *Das Operettenbuch: Ein Führer durch die Operetten und Singspiele der deutschen Bühnen* (Stuttgart: Muth'sche Verlag, 1950); Anton Würz, ed., *Reclams Operettenführer* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1951); Otto Schneiderei, *Operette A-Z: Ein Streifzug durch die Welt der Operette und des Musicals* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1975); and Heinz Wagner, *Das große Operettenbuch: 120 Komponisten und 430 Werke* (Berlin: Parthas-Verl., 1997).

¹¹ For necessarily selective examples, see Micaela Baranello, 'Die lustige Witwe and the Creation of the Silver Age of Viennese Operetta', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 26/3 (2014), 175–202; Tobias Becker, David Linton, and Len Platt, eds., *Popular Musical Theatre in Germany and Britain, 1890–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Bettina Brandl-Risi, Clemens Risi, and Rainer Simon, *Kunst der Oberfläche: Operette zwischen Bravour und Banalität* (Leipzig: Henschel Verlag, 2015); Kevin Clarke, ed., *Glitter and be Gay: Die authentische Operette und ihre schwulen Verehrer* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2007); Stefan Frey, *Laughter under Tears: Emmerich Kálmán – An Operetta Biography*, trans. Alexander Butziger. Los Angeles: Operetta Foundation, 2014 (originally published as 'Unter Tränen lachen': *Emmerich Kálmán: Eine Operettenbibliographie*. Berlin: Henschel, 2003), and

to denigrate Richard Traubner's excellent general survey, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (revised 2003), or Andrew Lamb's *150 Years of Popular Musical Theatre* (2000). I am thinking strictly in terms of the academic limitations of research that works outside the apparatus of footnotes, and often fails to offer adequate detail regarding sources of information. I might add at this point that I have, throughout the book, employed what some may consider an excessive number of footnotes. My concern is to present, whenever possible, information that may be validated and verified. In my own research, I have discovered the necessity of confirming that a source is reliable, or, checking to see if it has been accurately cited and not misinterpreted. I therefore feel obliged to offer readers the opportunity to scrutinize my own interpretation of sources. Yet, while I hope this book will contribute to the scholarly study of operetta, I am also keen to appeal to general readers who enjoy operetta and wish to enhance their enjoyment by delving into the history of the genre. I want to assure such readers that all essential content is located in the main body of the text.

In his music criticism of the early 1930s, Theodor Adorno, explained that operetta appealed to people who wanted the relaxation and physical pleasure that 'real art' had forbidden in the early twentieth century.¹² Such desires used to be satisfied in community art, but capitalism, he argued, had worked to eliminate a living folk culture and turn music into a market article. He believed that nineteenth-century composers such as Johann Strauss Jr still had room for manoeuvre, but that vanished with the industrialized production of the next century.¹³ There was no longer a 'vulgar music' that a composer could draw on in order to regenerate musical material.¹⁴ Adorno identifies 'historical dregs' of a disheartening

Michela Niccolai and Clair Rowden, eds., *Musical Theatre in Europe 1830–1945* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017). In German universities, operetta has been accepted as a research subject, and Albrecht Dümmling pinpoints the moment of change to the appearance of the article 'Operette' by Harald Haslmayr and Jörg Jewanski, in Ludwig Finscher, ed., *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2, rev. edn, Sachteil 7 (Kassel/Stuttgart, 1997), 706–39. At the same time, however, Dümmling remarks on the lack of analytical work on operetta. See 'Wiederentdeckung NS-verfolgter Operettenkomponisten: Erfahrungen eines Musikwissenschaftlers', in Wolfgang Schaller, ed., *Operette unterm Hakenkreuz: Zwischen hoffähiger Kunst und 'Entartung'* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2007), 198–208, at 199.

¹² 'Arabesken zur Operette' [1932], *Gesammelte Schriften*, 19, *Musikalische Schriften VI* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984), 516–19, at 516.

¹³ 'Zur gesellschaftlichen Lage der Musik' [1932], *Gesammelte Schriften*, 18, *Musikalische Schriften V* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984), 729–77, at 771. An excerpt of this essay, 'On the Social Situation of Music', is in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 391–436.

¹⁴ 'Zur gesellschaftlichen Lage der Musik', 771.

kind in operetta, made up of that which can no longer be transformed into individual human expression in 'objective types of music'.¹⁵ He regards human expression in operetta as a self-confident but empty spirit that yields nothing of substance, and ignores the arguments Erich Urban made back in 1903 that operetta has its own 'justification, meaning and history' as a genre.¹⁶ Adorno is unable to comprehend popular music as anything other than 'outdated or depraved art music'.¹⁷ There is no recognition of popular musical genres developing their own individual musical styles, techniques, and devices.¹⁸ In fact 'light music' becomes ever worse, and Adorno links its erosion and trivialization specifically to the industrialization of its production.¹⁹

Unlike 'serious' opera, which preferred historical and mythological subject matter, operetta frequently engaged with social modernity, if not with artistic modernism. It was common for operettas to relate to features of the modern city, such as trains, cars, department stores, cinemas, and to social changes associated with the development of a capitalist economy. A perceived lack of moral tone in operetta was of special concern in cities that were part of a nineteenth-century 'national awakening', such as Athens or Helsinki: indecency and lack of high-mindedness could seem inappropriate to national ambition. In spite of that, however, people in all social strata shared an appetite for operetta, although this genre addressed most consistently the worldview, desires, and aspirations of the urban middle classes.

Defining what an operetta is is problematic because its classification is fluid. For the purposes of this book, I include a broad range of stage works that relate to the European heritage of operetta, but which may sometimes be classified as musical plays, operetta-revue, vaudeville operetta, and

¹⁵ 'Arabesken zur Operette', 516.

¹⁶ Erich Urban, 'Die Wiedergeburt der Operette', *Die Musik*, 3:3 (1903), 176–86, and 3:4 (1903): 269–81; quoted from 3:3, at 180.

¹⁷ 'Zur gesellschaftlichen Lage der Musik', at 771.

¹⁸ I put the case for these developments in *Sounds of the Metropolis*. Adorno's inability to see any distinct developments in popular music leads him to make sweeping and patently inaccurate statements, such as 'die Jazz-Fertigindustrie lebt von der Verarbeitung "klassische" Musik, die Bildung als Rohstoff ihr liefert' (the jazz industry thrives by processing 'classical' music as a heritage of raw material). 'Zur gesellschaftlichen Lage der Musik', at 773.

¹⁹ 'Zur gesellschaftlichen Lage der Musik', 771. For a survey of critics of operetta who preceded Adorno, see Marion Linhardt, *Warum es der Operette so schlecht geht: Ideologische Debatten um das musikalische Unterhaltungstheater (1880–1916)* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2001). For later debate, until it became infected by Nazi ideology, see Marion Linhardt, ed., *Stimmen zur Unterhaltung: Operette und Revue in der publizistischen Debatte (1906–1933)* (Vienna: Lehner, 2009).

musical farce. The term ‘musical comedy’ tended to be associated with a type of British and American stage entertainment that arose in the 1890s. It was often contrasted with operetta in the minds of critics, especially during the years between the success of *The Merry Widow* in 1907 and the appearance in the mid-1920s of the new-style Broadway musicals of George Gershwin and others. Volker Klotz has attempted to distinguish operetta from the stage musical by insisting that, in the former, the spoken dialogue is part of a stage world shaped by music, and that the dramatic highlights are the ensembles in which individual tensions are revealed.²⁰ That is often true, but, as the Broadway musical developed, a much more obvious distinction became the styles of singing associated with each. While operetta singing remained rooted in operatic technique, the musical began to demand a range of different styles, among which the ‘operatic’ vocal sound was but one option.²¹

Another difficulty lies in distinguishing an operetta from an opera. It is my contention that searching for defining structural features is a pointless exercise. What makes an opera an opera is more a question of musical style and, in particular, the presence or absence of musical styles associated with commerce or entertainment.²² In the eighteenth century, popular styles could be incorporated into opera, as in *Die Zauberflöte*, without creating the same definitional problems that occur following the growth of a music industry. The use or adaptation of later popular styles, as happens in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, became aesthetically problematic. Significantly, this stage work ran very successfully on Broadway as *The Threepenny Opera*, but is not in the regular repertory of any major opera company. The definition of operetta given in Lehár’s *Der Göttergatte*, however, ignores musical style altogether, and describes it simply as ‘an entertainment in which women flash their legs to musical accompaniment’. A late 1920s development, particularly hated by Adorno, was revue operetta, which he accused of playing irresponsibly with people’s aspirations and desires.²³ It

²⁰ Volker Klotz, *Operette: Porträt und Handbuch einer unerhörten Kunst* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, rev. edn 2004), 19.

²¹ Jo Estill classified these styles (‘belt’, ‘opera’, ‘twang’, etc.) and their associated techniques, and they form the basis of the vocal coaching method she developed in the 1980s: *Compulsory Figures of Voice: A User’s Guide to Voice Quality* (Santa Rosa, CA: Estill Voice Training Systems, 1997).

²² I have elsewhere categorized such music as the ‘Third Type’ in order to distinguish it from classical or folk music. In European countries it is known by such labels as *Unterhaltungsmusik*, *variétés*, *musica leggera*, and λαϊκή μουσική. See ‘Musical Theatres’, in Helen Greenwald, ed., *The Oxford Handbook to Opera* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 53–72.

²³ ‘Zur gesellschaftlichen Lage der Musik’, 772.

was a loose structure in which dialogue increased, and songs were scattered here and there with little that made them essential to the action. To the question, 'where are we after this song?' the answer was likely to be, 'exactly where we were before the song began'. Producer-director Erik Charell was associated with the rise of revue operetta in Berlin, an example being his hugely successful *Im weißen Rößl* (*White Horse Inn*).

Some words are necessary concerning the problem of categorizing the stage works that are the focus of this book. 'Operettas from the twentieth-century German stage' is a useful phrase for outlining its general remit, even if a small number of operettas that reached Broadway and the West End were heard first on the Hungarian stage, and secondly on the German stage. Another common description refers to this period of operetta production as the *silberne Ära* or *silberne Zeitalter* (silver age). This designation may seem to be the simplest and most appropriate, because it appears to avoid the national identification problems of this cosmopolitan genre. However, for some, the silver age is associated with Vienna, and not Berlin.²⁴ I am examining the work of composers born in Germany (Lincke, Gilbert), as well as Bohemian and Moravian composers (Nedbal, Benatzky, Korngold) and composers whose country of birth has changed: for example, Paul Abraham [Pál Ábrahám], born in Apatin, once in Hungary (and before that under Habsburg control) but now in Serbia, and Walter Kollo, born in Neidenburg, once East Prussia but now Nidzica in Poland. Franz Lehár, whose birthplace now lies in Slovakia (in Komárno), illustrates the difficulties for those keen on establishing ethnic identity. Kálmán sometimes referred to Lehár as 'the Slovak', yet his father was Austrian (there was originally no accent on the 'a' of the family name²⁵), and his mother was Hungarian (albeit of German descent). Lehár grew up speaking Hungarian and German, studied in Prague, and obtained his first job with his father's band in Vienna.

When many of the composers named above were born it was into territory controlled by the Dual Monarchy, but that territory shrank considerably after the First World War. Following the Treaty of Saint Germain, 1919, the Austro-Hungarian Empire lost Bohemia, Moravia, the Trentino, South Tyrol, Galicia, Bukovina, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dalmatia, and Slovenia. Some operettas were composed to Hungarian

²⁴ Some critics apply the label to Vienna only, and sometimes it refers to the first two decades of the twentieth century only, as in Franz Hadamowsky and Heinz Otte. *Die Wiener Operette: Ihre Theater- und Wirkungsgeschichte* (Vienna: Bellaria, 1947), 297–346.

²⁵ It was added to match the German pronunciation of 'a'; without an accent, an 'a' in Hungarian is more like 'o' in the word 'hot'.

libretti and later translated into German, although it was often the German version that was the basis of an English-language adaptation. After extensive deliberation, I have chosen the simple but not unproblematic term ‘German operetta’ to describe the research object of this book. The main thing for the reader to understand is that I am using this term to refer to stage works performed in the German language before they were given in English versions on Broadway and in the West End. In other words, I am using ‘German’ in the sense that people speak of Mozart’s German operas, rather than his Austrian operas.

I have decided to spell names in the form in which the person became widely known, thus, the reader will find mention of the Shubert brothers (not Shubart), and Paul Abraham (not Pál Ábrahám). Nevertheless, I find it difficult to be fully consistent. For example, I use Emmerich (not Imre) as Kálmán’s given name, but I leave the diacritical markings on Kálmán, although his gravestone in Vienna’s Zentralfriedhof does not. My excuse is that there was an inconsistency in presenting his name, and a choice had to be made (and Kálmán was not a name he was born with, but one he chose himself). When I name an operetta, if the title appears in German, then I am referring to the German language version. An English title refers to the English version, and, if there are differing American and British versions, then I specify Broadway or the West End. This book concentrates on English language performances in those cities, but there were occasional performances in German. Operettas could transfer easily from the German stage to the Irving Place Theatre, New York’s most significant German-language theatre (built in 1888, with a seating capacity of over 1500), the Yorkville Theatre (Upper East Side), or the Wintergarden zum schwarzen Alder. The musical director of the Yorkville Theatre, Rudolf Bach, gave operetta performances in German in the mid-1920s, including Stolz’s *Mädi*, Jarno’s *Die Försterchristl*, Fall’s *Madame Pompadour*, and Kálmán’s *Die Bajadere*.²⁶ German productions also took place in London, for example, at the Coliseum in 1912 and the Aldwych in 1933. There were also a few performances of operetta in other languages. Edmund Eysler’s *Pufferl* was given in Italian translation, at the Majestic, New York, in 1911, and Oscar Straus’s *Mariette* in its original French version at His Majesty’s, London, in 1929.²⁷ Performances were also given in Yiddish in New York (Irving Place became a Yiddish theatre in the later 1920s) and in London

²⁶ John Koegel, *Music in German Immigrant Theater: New York City, 1840–1940* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 369.

²⁷ There is some limited reference to performances in languages other than English provided in Appendix 1.

(Pavilion Theatre).²⁸ The Schulman-Goldberg Public Theatre, located at 4th Street and 2nd Avenue, had a seating capacity of 1743, and opened on 27 January 1927 with *Parisian Love*, a Yiddish version of Kálmán's *Bajadere*.²⁹

In ascertaining numbers of performances, I have drawn on a variety of sources, from websites to books and newspapers. The annual volumes of Burns Mantle's *Best Plays* are a valuable source of information for New York, but they began to appear only in 1920, and a single summary volume, added in 1933, suffices for 1909–19. J. P. Wearing's *London Stage* volumes are rich in data, but, valuable as they are, they do not include variety theatres; therefore, for example, the one-act operettas produced at the London Hippodrome are not included. Several cautions need to be given regarding the reliability of interpreting long runs as an indication of an operetta's popularity. For a start, they ignore tours, which might lead to a different perception about an operetta's reception. Lehár's *Frasquita* may have flopped in London, but it arrived there after a successful four-month tour of other UK cities. José Collins, the singer playing the title role, described its failure as the most bitter disappointment of her life, and blamed it on the location of the Prince's Theatre, which she complained was at the 'wrong end of Shaftesbury Avenue' and in 'a dim, uninviting neighbourhood'.³⁰ Another matter to bear in mind, when construing the length of a run as an indication of popularity, is that some theatres had two performances a day, and others had matinee performances on certain days. The size of the auditorium needs to be considered, too: Drury Lane, for instance, could accommodate an audience twice the size as was possible in most West End theatres. Finally, performance statistics do not indicate whether or not there was a capacity audience for most of the run, nor do they tell us whether a production needed to close because audiences were dwindling, or because another production was waiting to be staged. When Straus's *The Last Waltz* closed at the Gaiety Theatre, it was still playing to a full house, but the next production had been prepared.³¹

²⁸ In 1906, the Pavilion Theatre in London's East End was the home of Fenman's Jewish Operatic and Dramatic Company. Jim Davis, 'The East End', in Michael R. Booth and Joel H. Kaplan, eds., *The Edwardian Theatre: Essays on Performance and the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 201–19, at 208.

²⁹ 'East Side Opens a New Play House', *New York Times*, 28 Jan. 1927, 15.

³⁰ José Collins, *The Maid of the Mountains: Her Story* (London: Hutchinson, 1932), 246, 248.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 209. The next production was *Catherine*, which used the music of Tchaikovsky.

I should alert the reader to what is missing in a reception history like this. First, by concentrating on two cities, wider reception in the UK and USA is neglected. Second, by focusing on Broadway and the West End, the wealth of amateur performance is ignored.³² Third, it means some operettas of the period, now regarded as important, are marginalized, because they were not produced in London or New York. Two Lehár examples are *Der Zarewitsch* and *Giuditta*. At this point, I must confess that my determination to research silver-age operetta was fired not by *Die lustige Witwe* (although I like it immensely) but by Kálmán's *Die Herzogin von Chicago*, a work not given a Broadway or West End production. Some operettas missed out on a London production because of the First World War. The Broadway audience saw Lehár's *Alone at Last (Endlich Allein)* in 1915, but the West End audience did not. The London audience was deprived, later, of the opportunity of seeing continental European operettas of the war years because the attention of entrepreneurs tended to focus on the current operettas being applauded in Berlin. Kálmán's *Die Csárdásfürstin* (1915), along with *Das Dreimäderlhaus* (1916), Heinrich Berté's operetta using arrangements of Schubert's music, are rare examples of wartime operettas from the German stage that were given productions in the 1920s in the West End, as *The Gipsy Princess* (1921) and *Lilac Time* (1922), respectively.

Some may argue that it is more important to study originals rather than devote time to adaptations. An original is often prized as the authentic version, and, because of that, considered the best. Leaving aside how original the original is – it is often a version of something else – it must be recognized that an adaptation can differ in ways that make comparison inappropriate or awkward. Consider the New York version of *The Dollar Princess*: more than half of the final act contains new music, including a choral number by the production's musical director W. T. Francis, a new song by Leo Fall, another by his brother Richard, and three songs by a composer of great importance to the later American musical stage, Jerome Kern. Arguments for authentic versions of operettas prove even more vexed than those for high-status operas (such as Verdi's *Don Carlos/Don Carlo*). I do recommend performing the English versions, and not just as historical curiosities. They offer accessibility to Anglophone audiences, as well as a new perspective for those familiar with the German stage versions. It needs to be borne in mind that some operettas were adapted

³² In the UK, the National Operatic and Dramatic Association, founded in 1899, played an important role in facilitating the performance of operetta in the period studied. See John Lowerson, *Amateur Operatics: A Social and Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 143–71.

from Hungarian originals, and that different versions exist for revivals of operettas on the German stage: the Berlin *lustige Witwe* of 1928, for instance, differs from the Vienna version of 1905. Composers were often actively involved in creating additional music: Lehár composed two extra numbers for the London *Merry Widow*, and a new hit song, 'Ich hol' dir vom Himmel das Blau', for the later Berlin version.

The twentieth century's renewed enthusiasm for operetta began with *The Merry Widow* but had run its course by the end of the 1930s. The last new import on Broadway was Straus's *Three Waltzes* (1937), and, in the West End, Kálmán's *Maritza* (1938). The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 made importing stage works next to impossible, but a once-thriving operetta culture was disintegrating in Germany from 1934 on, even if it still managed to continue in the absence of many of its leading figures and under watchful Nazi eyes.³³ In London, even revivals of once-loved works were proving difficult. *Lilac Time* opened at the old Shaftesbury Theatre on 20 August 1940 but was withdrawn after 23 performances because of bombing. This theatre was destroyed by bombs on 17 April 1941 (the present Shaftesbury is the renamed Prince's Theatre).³⁴ Remarkably, *The Merry Widow* was revived for a successful run of over three hundred performances at His Majesty's Theatre in 1943, and an ENSA production returned to London from overseas to open at the Coliseum in September 1944. Unfortunately, that month witnessed the beginning of V-2 rocket attacks (ending in March 1945). Less powerful V-1 rockets had been fired at London in the three previous months.

An interest in operetta continued on the European continent after the Second World War but was diminished in extent. The large Viennese publishing house Weinberger was in difficulties through loss of royalty income and operetta's decline in popularity, but publisher Otto Blau, who had fled to London in September 1938, helped the firm to make a new start there. Weinberger soon took over the administration of Viktor Alberti's Octava Music (originally a Berlin publishing house, which had relocated to Australia) and Lehár's Glocken Verlag.³⁵

³³ For an account of the Metropol-Theater's productions during this period, see Matthias Kauffmann, 'Operetta and Propaganda in the Third Reich: Cultural Politics and the Metropol-Theater', in Len Platt, Tobias Becker, and David Linton, *Popular Musical Theatre in London and Berlin*, 258–73.

³⁴ Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *Lost Theatres of London* (London: New English Library, rev. edn 1976; orig. pub. Hart-Davis, 1961), 213.

³⁵ Sophie Fetthauer, 'Musikverlage im Dritten Reich und im Exil: Der Wiener Bühnen- und Musikalienverlag Josef Weinberger', in Wolfgang Schaller, ed., *Operette unterm Hakenkreuz: Zwischen hoffähiger Kunst und 'Entartung'* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2007), 104–14, at 113.

The production of new German operettas did not cease, although interest from Broadway and the West End had evaporated. Oscar Straus's *Die Musik kommt* was produced in Zürich in 1948, and his final operetta, *Božena*, with book and lyrics by renowned librettists Julius Brammer and Alfred Grünwald, was seen in Munich in 1952. Hans Carste composed his *Lump mit Herz* in 1945–48, while in Soviet captivity. *Die stumme Serenade*, begun at a similar period by Erich Korngold, saw the light of day in 1951. Gerhard Winkler wrote four post-war operettas, including *Die ideale Geliebte* (1957). Swiss composer Paul Burkhardt composed ten post-war operettas, including *Das Feuerwerk* (1950), with which Erik Charell and Robert Gilbert were involved and which included the worldwide hit 'O mein Papa'. There was even a late 'Lehár' operetta: his music was drawn on by Miklos Rakaï and Paul Bonneau for *Rose de Noël* (performed at the Châtelet, Paris, in 1958, with French book and lyrics by Raymond Vincy). The re-use of Lehár's music was part and parcel of a time in which revivals were much more common than new work, a state of affairs confirmed by the radio recordings released on the Cantus Classics label, as well as the Hamburger Archiv für Gesangskunst, which contains a hundred or more complete recordings of operettas broadcast on German and Austrian radio in the 1950s and 1960s.³⁶

In the UK, Richard Tauber enjoyed a run of 86 performances of his operetta *Old Chelsea* at the Prince's Theatre in 1943. He took the leading role and sang the hit song 'My Heart and I'. Ivor Novello sang in his own operettas, too, his last being *King's Rhapsody* in 1949. Chappell continued advertising *Lilac Time*, *A Little Dutch Girl*, *Waltzes from Vienna*, and *Wild Violets* as 'available to operatic societies' in the early 1950s.³⁷ New English adaptations of continental European operettas would also be published in the second half of the twentieth century (the work, for example, of Ronald Hanmer and Phil Park, or Douglas, Maschwitz, and Grun). J. J. Shubert revived *The Merry Widow* at the Majestic in 1943, with Marta Eggerth and Jan Kiepura, and hoped to tempt Lehár to travel to the USA. Lehár did not go, but it was still one of the most successful revivals in Broadway history.³⁸ Leonard Bernstein composed his operetta *Candide* in 1956 (final version 1989). Nevertheless, when I produced my own operetta

³⁶ <http://linemusic.de/cantus.html> and www.vocal-classics.com/.

³⁷ See advert on the back of Chappell's republication in 1952 of *The Dubarry*.

³⁸ Stefan Frey, "dann kann ich leicht vergessen, das teure Vaterland . . ." Lehár unterm Hakenkreuz', in Schaller, *Operette unterm Hakenkreuz*, 91–103, at 103.

Wilberforce in 1983 (book and lyrics by Steve Davis), the genre label was regarded as an eccentric choice. Operetta seemed a historical form of no contemporary relevance. Yet, if one considers how easily *Phantom of the Opera* or *Les Misérables* might have slotted into the category of operetta as it was understood in the first half of the twentieth century, it might be argued that it is the term that has become old fashioned, rather than the form.

