

4 Hungarians and Hungarianisms in Operetta and Folk Plays in the Late-Habsburg and Post-Habsburg Era

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Central European operetta has always been viewed, rightly, as a primarily German-language product launched from German-speaking cities, mainly Vienna, its place of origin, and Berlin, the hub of the early twentieth-century transcultural theatre industry.¹ Within that repertoire Hungarians have usually appeared as exotic Others, often alongside Gipsies, allowing entertaining contrast between Viennese elegance and ‘Hungarian fire’.² Yet so-called Viennese operetta was in many ways defined by composers, performers and impresarios with Hungarian connections – and musicians from Hungary, including Jews and Roma, made ample use of other stereotypical ethnic representations from the region, such as Gipsies, Jews and peasants of various ethnicities.³ This chapter briefly explores the history of operetta in Hungary and how Hungarian contributions complicated representations of ethnicity on the stage.

From the West, Hungary may seem to be ‘an underdeveloped country whose capital, compared to the cultural centers of Western Europe, is at best second-rate’.⁴ But from 1869 to 1910, that capital, Budapest, was growing faster than any city in Europe; as World War I approached, it was Europe’s sixth largest city, nearing one million in population. The region manufactured weaponry for the Dual Monarchy, internal combustion engines and the world’s first electric-powered locomotive.⁵ As it expanded, the city added numerous performing arts institutions, including the Academy of Music and the Folk Theatre, both opened in 1875; the Royal Opera House, opened in 1884, and several commercial theatres – the *Víg* [Comic] (opened in 1896), the *Magyar* [Hungarian] (1897) and the *Király* [Royal] (1903), plus many less prestigious entertainments, from cabarets to cafés to brothels.⁶ *Fin-de-siècle* Budapest ‘presented a frenetic scene of urban revelry and subversive entertainment that continued unabated from midnight until dawn’; as one Budapest magazine put it, ‘we go to Vienna to sleep, and the Viennese come to Budapest to have fun’.⁷

A Brief History of Musical Theatre in Budapest: From Népszínmű to Operetta

It was not always thus. Public culture in Hungary, including theatre, was limited first by the Ottoman occupation (ended in 1699) and then by Austrian suppression following a rebellion against Habsburg rule (ended in 1711). Only at the end of the eighteenth century, with the relaxation of censorship under Joseph II, did public theatre begin to blossom.

It began in German, like much of urban culture in Hungary, including in the largest population centre, Buda-Pest. The Pest German Theatre opened in 1812, twenty-five years before the opening of the Pest Hungarian Theatre. That theatre's opening, at a time when promotion of the Hungarian language was a key rallying point of the national 'Reform Movement', was a centrepiece of patriotic sentiment. In 1840 it became the Hungarian National Theatre, with the support of the National Diet.⁸

Central to the repertoire of the Hungarian National Theatre was the *népszínmű*, or folk play. This genre drew on a variety of influences, particularly Viennese farce and *Volksstücke*; its defining playwright, Ede Szigligeti (1814–78), expanded on this framework and made it 'completely Hungarian, and truly popular'.⁹ Folk plays emphasized a Hungary defined by rural stock character types – 'hussar, magistrate, and peasant, heyduck [irregular peasant soldier], Gipsy musician and landowner', among others – crystallizing 'everything that is considered a symbol of Hungary beyond [the] borders'.¹⁰ Crucial to the appeal was the inclusion of dances and *magyar nóta*, or folk-style artsongs, understood as folksongs since they were sung by peasant figures on stage.¹¹

Operetta Comes to Buda-Pest

Folk plays shared the Hungarian stage with popular works from abroad, which increasingly meant operetta. As had been the case in Vienna and London, Offenbach was key to the introduction of operetta to Hungary: *Le mariage aux lanternes* was performed in German in Buda and in Hungarian in Brassó and Kolózsvár in 1859, two years after it debuted in Paris.¹² Offenbach's own company gave performances in French at the Hungarian National Theatre in 1861, the same year that works of Suppé and Zajc first appeared in Hungary. The National Theatre featured other operettas in Hungarian translation, particularly Offenbach's works, alongside folk play, spoken theatre and opera. The popularity of both folk plays and operetta drove the development of the Folk Theatre in Budapest, opened in 1875, while opera moved to the new Hungarian Royal Opera

House in 1884. Pest's German Theatre was in decline in this period, in part because of pressure from 'protectors of Hungarian culture', and it was not rebuilt after it burned down in 1889; in its efforts to survive, however, it mounted several successful operetta performances, some including guest appearances by Viennese stars like Alexander Girardi and Marie Geistinger.¹³ While the Opera House was conceived as a 'high art' institution, it also presented operettas, 'diversifying' its repertoire 'in order to attract the attention of the public'.¹⁴

The challenge for Hungarian music theatre, as with Hungarian music at large, was finding the balance between the local and the cosmopolitan. In the 1860s and 1870s, advocates for the development of a (government-subsidized) Folk Theatre insisted on the linkage between the local and the folk play as a specifically national genre and the superiority of this genre over operetta on nationalist grounds.¹⁵ In its first four seasons, the Folk Theatre presented 519 folk play evenings and 484 operetta evenings; in 1898–1901, it presented 562 operetta performances compared to 302 folk play performances.¹⁶ Despite the folk play's appeal to ideas of national character, these statistics suggest that audiences quickly came to prefer operettas.

In addition to presenting foreign works in translation, including Offenbach, Strauss and Sullivan, Hungarian authors worked to create works that could match the wit and musical sophistication of those works. This effort drew heavily on international models, as *Az eleven ördög* (The vivacious devil) illustrates. This work, based on a French comedy, was composed by a Warsaw-born Jewish composer, József Konti (1852–1905). Trained in Vienna, Konti worked for several years as Suppé's assistant before moving to Hungary at age 26 to work as a theatre conductor, Hungarianizing his name (originally Josua Kohn) and becoming the orchestra director of Budapest's Folk Theatre in 1885. *Az eleven ördög* was performed throughout Hungary hundreds of times from its 1883 premiere until 1913 – and notes in the scores, parts and reviews indicate that many of the initial performances were in German. Still the show came to be remembered as 'the first Hungarian operetta', in part because Lujza Blaha (1850–1926), the Folk Theatre's leading prima donna during this period, had a great success in the lead role.¹⁷

Folk vs Urban Cosmopolitan Ideal: Two Prima Donnas

The fact that operetta took hold as a 'native' Hungarian genre in a comedy about French aristocrats highlights Hungary's continuing struggle over whether to define its cultural establishment as 'traditional', as in folk plays,

or ‘fashionable, bourgeois’, as in operetta.¹⁸ It also underlines the importance of performers such as Blaha, remembered as ‘the nation’s nightingale’. Like other successful performers, she was versatile, appearing in works by Offenbach, Strauss and Suppé, as well as Verdi and Meyerbeer. Yet Blaha was identified – and identified herself – as a Hungarian actress specializing in Hungarian works.¹⁹ As one critic wrote in 1919, ‘Blaha was not a real peasant girl . . . in the folk plays, but rather [she was] all the charm, beauty, kindness, sensuality and candor that the whole Hungarian public had tied to the ideal of folk-like Hungarianness . . . She herself was the genre.’²⁰

By contrast, Blaha’s slightly younger contemporary, Ilka Pálmay (1859–1945), had a thoroughly international career. By the age of twenty, Pálmay rose from the theatres of the Hungarian provinces to Budapest’s Folk Theatre, where she performed for most of the 1880s. In the 1890s she performed in Vienna, Prague, Berlin and London; she created the roles of Christel, opposite Alexander Girardi, in Zeller’s *Der Vögelhändler* (Theater an der Wien, 1891) and Julia Jellicoe in Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Grand Duke* (London Savoy Theatre, 1896), and in 1905–6 she appeared onstage in New York. She continued to perform irregularly until 1928, when she celebrated her retirement with a performance at Hungary’s National Theatre.²¹ Though Pálmay, like Blaha, performed both folk plays and operettas, she was more cosmopolitan. Her case shows how Hungarian talent was integrated into a ‘complex [system] of cultural transfers amidst the Pest–New York–Berlin–Paris theatre and [later] film industries’.²²

Hungarian-Gipsy Style from Vienna: Johann Strauss Jr

The role of Hungarian actors, authors and others in the theatre world, however, was distinct from the way Hungarians were depicted on stage. That was defined, at least in operetta, by Johann Strauss’s *Der Zigeunerbaron* (1885). This work apparently came about in part because of the recognition of the potential appeal of Hungarianness on the Viennese stage. In June 1883, Hungary’s Folk Theatre played for three weeks in Vienna, featuring three prima donnas – Blaha, Pálmay and the ‘Gipsy prima donna’ Aranka Hegyi (1855–1906) – in operettas and folk plays; the popularity of these performances demonstrated the draw of Hungarian topics in Vienna.²³ In November of that year, Strauss met Mór Jókai, the most popular Hungarian writer of the age, in Vienna, and Jókai worked with Strauss’s librettist, Ignaz Schnitzer, to create a new operetta on a Hungarian subject.²⁴

The title character of *Der Zigeunerbaron*, Sándor Barinkay, is the son of an exiled Hungarian nobleman. As the operetta opens, Barinkay is returning to his ancestral lands, and an Austrian official, Carnero, informs those living there – Zsupán, a Hungarian pig farmer who has taken over the property, as well as a band of Gypsies who are camped there, led by Saffi, a mysterious Gypsy girl, and Czipra, her mother – that Barinkay's land and title have been reinstated. In an effort to forestall the land transfer, Zsupán offers his daughter, Arsena, as Barinkay's potential bride, but she objects that he is not a true member of the nobility (covering for the fact that she is in love with someone else). Barinkay declares he prefers Saffi after all, and they spend the night together, 'married' by forest birds, to the shock of the Austrians. After a rousing recruiting scene to end Act 2, most of the male characters join the Hungarian hussars – Barinkay to prove himself worthy of Saffi (suddenly revealed to be a Turkish princess), Zsupán by mistake; they return victorious from their military adventures in Act 3 to seal the happy ending. The presentation of Arsena as bride in Act 1, the recruiting scene in the finale to Act 2, and the entrance march in Act 3 provide opportunities for production numbers with attractive national costumes, dancing, and scenery. Strauss described his vision of the Act 3 introduction thus: 'Around 80 to 100 soldiers . . . Market women in Spanish, Hungarian, and Viennese costume [. . .] it must be an impressive scene, since this time we want to imagine an *Austrian* military and *Volk* in a *joyful* mood about a victorious conquest!'²⁵

The Hungarian elements in *Zigeunerbaron* were thus part of an exotic pageant, serving to 'rouse enthusiasm . . . for the existing empire and its elegant capital'.²⁶ Strauss uses music to contrast East and West, as András Batta wrote: 'The csárdás represents the village . . . dominated by the long-established nobility and peasantry. The waltz is a district of the city, the cosmopolitan and industrial center.'²⁷ But the exotics in *Der Zigeunerbaron* consist of more than just the csárdás, and Strauss blurs the line between its various Others, be they Hungarian, Gypsy or Turkish – beginning with the title character. Barinkay's costume is described in the original libretto as 'half oriental, half Hungarian'; as he relates in his entrance aria, he has been working as a travelling acrobat, sword-swallower, animal-tamer, magician and fortune teller – professions that 'contemporary urban audiences would readily have ascribed . . . to Gypsies'.²⁸ On the other hand, the refrain of this aria is a waltz in major mode, the 'neutral' sound in Strauss's music. The chorus of Gypsy smiths forging weapons for the Austrian military features triangles and cymbals, conventionally heard as 'Turkish percussion'; these instruments also appear in the fast section of the 'Gypsy song' with which the heroine, Saffi, introduces herself, possibly hinting at her true Turkish identity.²⁹

The slower sections, meanwhile, include many elements more usually associated with Hungarian-Gipsy style.³⁰

Recalibrating Ethnic Representation in the Silver Age

Strauss's Hungarians, Turks and Gipsies blend together, all serving as a 'stimulus of fantasy' for the West.³¹ Meanwhile, ethnic representations in works from composers from the eastern half of empire are often more complex. Perhaps no one at the turn of the century was better positioned to depict characters of all kinds of backgrounds than the quintessential Austro-Hungarian Franz/Ferencz Lehár. Lehár's father was a military bandmaster and dance music composer who was posted all over the empire, moving to Budapest with his family in 1880. Young Lehár grew up speaking Hungarian, so at the age of twelve, he was sent to relatives in his father's hometown to improve his German enough to study at the Prague Conservatory, chosen over the conservatories in Vienna and Budapest because it welcomed younger students.³² After completing his studies, he became a military musician himself, posted successively in Losoncz, Trieste, Pola and Budapest.

After Lehár left the military for a post at Theater an der Wien – under the management of another migrant from Hungary, Vilmos/Wilhelm Karczag (1857–1923) – he soon produced his first two operettas, *Wiener Frauen* (Vienna Women) and *Der Rastelbinder* (The Pot-Mender), both premiered in 1902. *Der Rastelbinder* premiered in Hungarian at the Opera House in Budapest less than a year later as *A drotostót* with Lehár himself conducting.³³ (This Hungarian title is almost identical to *A két drotostót* (The Two Pot-Menders), a folk play by Győző Kempelen (1829–65) with music by Béni Egressy (1814–51), which was performed in Budapest at least into the 1890s.³⁴) In the prologue, a young tinker says farewell to the girl to whom he is engaged as he leaves his Slovak (in Hungarian, *tót*) village to seek his fortune in the big city; in *Der Rastelbinder* that city is Vienna, while in *A drotostót* it is Budapest. Years later they meet in the city, where there are romantic complications as well as commentary and comic relief from a 'stereotypical yet not purely unsympathetic and demeaning' Jewish character, the onion seller Pfefferkorn.³⁵

Whereas a cast of exclusively peasant characters was unusual in operetta, it was common in folk plays. Folk plays also had a long history of stereotypical ethnic characters, including (mostly) sympathetic Jewish characters, going back at least to Szigligeti's *A zsidó* (The Jew) of 1844. Moreover, Hungary was not the only place in eastern Europe where Jews were featured on the stage: by the 1870s, Polish theatre productions such as

Jew in the Barrel delighted working-class audiences, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Stereotypes of Jewish identity were used not just by anti-Semites but also by Jewish actors and theatre musicians satirizing anti-Semitism.³⁶

Given the large multi-ethnic in-migration to Vienna and Budapest, Lehár could expect that audiences in both cities would respond to tropes of 'Jewishness' and to musical markers of 'Slovakness' or 'Slavonicness' – the latter attached both to folk practices and to Dvořák, his former teacher. More than signifying deeply felt Slovak identity, these were part of a palette of national topics Lehár could use to add colour to his score. His mixture of waltzes, folksong (or pseudo-folksong) and buffo writing became 'the most popular model for [operetta] composition'.³⁷

Lehár turned his attention to the Hungarian-Gipsy topic in *Zigeunerliebe* (Gipsy Love), premiered in January 1910 in Vienna and November 1910 in Budapest. As he had for *A drotostót*, Lehár himself conducted these premieres, withdrawing from a previous commitment to conduct Hamburg's two-hundredth performance of *Der Graf von Luxemburg* to be in Budapest.³⁸ The Budapest magazine *Színházi hét* (Theatre Week) published Lehár's telegrams about this last-moment decision, underlining to its readers that no matter how successful the composer had become in Vienna and beyond, Lehár was still one of their own.

According to Jonathan Bellman, the first to analyse the Hungarian-Gipsy topic in detail in English, *Zigeunerliebe* is diminished by Lehár's incorrect use of Hungarian-Gipsy musical conventions – particularly his 'uncharacteristic' four-bar phrases – as well as the way that 'the plot reduces the complexities of the Gipsy stereotype to pap'.³⁹ The second act of *Zigeunerliebe* does rely heavily on stereotype: it is an elaborate dream sequence in which Zorika, a young Transylvanian Hungarian gentlewoman, impulsively runs away with Gipsy musician Józsi, 'living in a caravan telling fortunes and stealing watches' before returning to her boring Hungarian fiancé.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Zorika and Józsi's relationship could have been considered more realistic than Barinkay and Saffi's relationship in *Zigeunerbaron*. In *Zigeunerbaron*, Hungarian Barinkay's decision to be with (fellow exotic) Gipsy/Turkish princess Saffi can lead to a happy ending. Lehár's Zorika is clearly a respectable European who happens to live in Hungary, contrasted with the passionate, fickle, nomadic Gipsy Józsi, at a time when many Hungarians considered Gipsies 'primitive' or even animalistic.⁴¹ A true match between the two was unfathomable.

The next major operetta composer to come out of Hungary was Imre/Emmerich Kálmán (1882–1953), born in Siófok, a growing resort town on the southern shore of Lake Balaton. He studied piano and frequented the theatre there, then moved to Budapest to attend secondary school and the Academy of Music, where he shared a composition teacher with Béla

Bartók (1881–1945), Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967) and fellow operetta composers Viktor Jakobi (1883–1921) and Albert Szirmai (1880–1967). Kálmán initially concentrated on serious works and newspaper criticism but turned to light genres around 1907; his first operetta, *Tatárjárás*, a tale of romance among Hungarian military officers at a country estate, was premiered in Budapest in 1908.⁴² At the first performance, his wife recalled, the directors of the Theater an der Wien, Karczag and Karl Wallner, along with composer Leo Fall, fresh from the success of his *Dollarprinzessin* (1907), approached him in his box. After a night on the town with Kálmán, Szirmai and Jakobi,⁴³ Fall encouraged Karczag and Wallner to bring *Tatárjárás* to Vienna, where it opened in 1909 as *Ein Herbstmanöver*. This show was successful enough, and Kálmán relocated to Vienna.

The way *Tatárjárás* was received, however, indicated that what worked in Budapest would not always suit Vienna. Critics there considered *Ein Herbstmanöver* ‘insufficiently dramatic’ and too ‘rustic’, perhaps because of the density of Hungarian-Gipsy tropes, perhaps because of the countryside setting; so Kálmán found a way to give Viennese audiences ‘the “Gipsy fire” they expected of him’.⁴⁴ But he still emphasized the point of view of Hungarians, especially urban Hungarians.

A decidedly Hungarian urbanity is at the centre of Kálmán’s biggest hit, *Die Csárdásfürstin* (The Csárdás Princess), premiered in Vienna in 1915 and in Budapest in 1916. In the show’s first big vocal number, ‘Heia, in den Bergen ist mein Heimatland’ (Heia, in the mountains is my homeland), ‘csárdás princess’ Sylva – Szilvia in the Hungarian version – sings about her rural Transylvanian origins accompanied by a Gipsy band, foregrounding the exotic Hungarian element, but as part of her Budapest nightclub act, complete with applause from the onstage audience. After this number, Kálmán’s score relies more on cosmopolitan popular styles of the time, in keeping with its urban setting. Where *Zigeunerbaron* contrasts the supercilious Viennese with rustic and lightly differentiated exotics (Hungarians, Gipsies and Turks), the Hungarians and Gipsies of Sylva’s cabaret in *Csárdásfürstin* are part of a sophisticated community of Budapest entertainers and hangers-on that contrasts with the hypocrisy of the aristocratic life of Vienna (where Acts 2 and 3 take place). The plot is driven less by national difference than by sexual mores and class. Sylva and Prince Edwin are in love, but Sylva works in a not-very-respectable Budapest cabaret, and, as Count Boni Káncsianu, a regular patron of the cabaret, tells Feri von Kerekes, another habitué, ‘princes marry variety girls only in operettas’.⁴⁵ The reason variety girls were not considered marriage material, of course, was an attraction for patrons flocking to Budapest nightspots from all over Europe – their ‘sweet sins’ and the ‘love school’ in which they teach, attractions Feri and Boni celebrate in a peppy

march titled 'Die Mädis vom Chantant' (The girls of the cabaret) even as police doctors in real-life Budapest worked to regulate them.⁴⁶ This number and Boni's subsequent solo, 'Ganz ohne Weiber geht die Chose nicht', resemble (both musically and in subject) the praise of women in *Die lustige Witwe's* 'Maxim's' and 'Ja, das Studium der Weiber', but now the women are Hungarian showgirls instead of Parisian ones.

Kálmán's next most successful show, *Gräfin Mariza* (Countess Mariza, 1924), is set in the countryside rather than the city, on the estate of the title character; her love interest is her estate manager, Count Tassilo Endrödy-Wittenburg, working under an assumed name to pay off his late father's exorbitant debts and earn a dowry for his younger sister. *Zigeunerbaron* uses its potpourri of characters to glorify the past of the empire and its capital, as well as the old-style Hungarian aristocracy whose 'values, habits and lifestyle . . . the Budapest press abhorred and the Viennese appreciated and found amusing'.⁴⁷ *Mariza* satirizes the contemporary challenges those aristocrats faced when called to pay for their lifestyle.

Kálmán and his librettists highlight this shift in viewpoint through ironic reference to *Zigeunerbaron*: Mariza announces her engagement to an imaginary fiancé (the better to avoid the mob of gold-digging suitors) whom she names, after the pig farmer in *Zigeunerbaron*, Baron Kálmán Zsupán. This fictitious engagement is complicated when a 'real-life' Baron Zsupán, a patriotic Hungarian who also owns many pigs, turns up at Mariza's estate for their engagement party. Also, like *Zigeunerbaron*, *Mariza* draws a range of exotic colours from its setting: it includes multiple scenes with dancing peasants, uses a Gipsy band on stage and opens with a Gipsy girl, Manja, singing about the vagaries of fate ('Glück ist ein schöner Traum'). The opposition between csárdás, the music of Hungarian peasants and Gipsies, and waltz, the music of the city, is in full force, but Mariza and Tassilo confirm their position by their mastery of both. Each has a csárdás song – Mariza's grand entrance aria and Tassilo's lament for his past – but both songs emphasize their roles as aristocratic patrons, singing 'Play, Gipsy!' They also waltz, signifying both their romance and Tassilo's nostalgia for his old life of leisure, and dance the Charleston and foxtrot.⁴⁸ Their musical catholicity stresses that these are cosmopolitan European characters with roots in a colourful place.

Which Audience?

As the Hungarian audience for operetta grew, composers and librettists could either target their works specifically for Hungary or aim for the broadest

possible international audience, perhaps adding certain elements for Hungarian versions. In a popular theatre context, tailoring works to particular audiences was expected and could happen in a variety of ways. For example, at the 1882 Budapest premiere of Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, a brief dialogue was added after Rosalinde's csárdás commenting humorously on the number's possible problems for a Hungarian public, with one character protesting that it was 'certainly no Hungarian song'.⁴⁹ What has come to be the best-known song from *A csárdáskirálynő*, 'Hajmási Péter, Hajmási Pál', did not appear in *Die Csárdásfürstin*; Kálmán added it to replace a csárdás song that had already appeared in Budapest in his *A kis király* (1912).⁵⁰ Some text changes had significance beyond just creating a singing translation in a different language. In *Mariza*, Zsupán's 'Komm mit nach Varaždin' (Come with me to Varaždin) became 'Szép város Kolózsvár' (Kolózsvár is a beautiful city), celebrating with syncopated rhythms a major Transylvanian city Hungary had lost to Romania at the end of World War I. (Croatian Varaždin was also lost, but Transylvania was invested with more national sentiment.) Still, however much Kálmán – and Lehár – might have desired a continued connection with the land of their birth, they sought a broader public than was available there. Using the formula established by Lehár, composers and librettists contrasted exotic settings and their associated styles (Hungarian or not) with contemporary styles. Three farther-flung examples by Hungarian-born Jewish composers from the interwar period are Kálmán's *Golden Dawn* (1928), set in the jungles of Africa; Sigmund Romberg's *The Desert Song* (1925), set in French colonial Morocco and Pál Ábrahám's *Die Blume von Hawaii* (1931).

This approach contrasted with that of two non-Jewish Hungarian composers, Jenő Huszka (1875–1960) and Pongrácz Kacsóh (1873–1923), who each wrote several shows that were popular only in Hungary. Huszka's second operetta, *Bob herceg* (Prince Bob, 1902), about an English prince's romantic adventures in London, had considerable international success, but Huszka chose to continue his career in the Hungarian government rather than pursuing international productions. He did not even attend the German-language premiere of *Bob* in nearby Vienna, despite the fact that Karczag, the producer and a fellow Hungarian, sent him a train ticket and reserved him a first-class hotel room.⁵¹ His later works do not appear to have been performed in translation. Beyond snubbing his producer, Huszka flouted the rules of the 'exotic' niche that Viennese operetta allotted to Hungarians, as *Gül baba* (1905), a historical romance set at the time of the Ottomans' capture of Buda in 1541, illustrates. The plot of *Gül baba* includes the same three 'exotic' character types found in *Zigeunerbaron* – Hungarian, Turkish and Gypsy – but they are provided with distinct music in ways that might not be understood by much of the

non-Hungarian operetta audience.⁵² The show also depends on at least a cursory knowledge of sixteenth-century Hungarian history to be fully appreciated. Huszka's *Mária főhadnagy* (Lieutenant Mária, 1942), a tale of Hungary's 1848 revolution, similarly relies at least in part on a Hungarian audience's historical knowledge, patriotic sentiment and appreciation of the musical variations of status among Huszka's Hungarian characters.

Kacsóh's best-known show, *János vitéz* (John the Hero, 1904), is another that was clearly created with the Hungarian, not international, audience in mind, as both its music and its mostly peasant characters suggest the continuation of the folk-play tradition. In it, young shepherd János is forced to leave his village and his beloved, the orphan girl Iluska. After joining the hussars, rescuing a French princess, and defeating Turks and witches, he is reunited with Iluska by magic in the land of the fairies. Ensembles are relatively simple compared to contemporary operettas, and most characters' solos consist of *magyar nóta* (folk-style artsongs conventionally accompanied by Gipsy bands), except for the foursquare song of the French king and the waltz songs of his daughter the princess. Though its music is charming, much of the appeal of *János vitéz* comes from its source material, the 1845 epic poem of the same name by national poet Sándor Petőfi (1823–49). It was not meant to travel.

The influence of *János vitéz* and the folk play does appear, however, in a work that has travelled, Kodály's *Háry János* (1926). *Háry* is labelled a *Singspiel*, but the peasant characters – including a title character named János – tell a different tale. There is even a supporting princess character whom János must resist in favour of his peasant sweetheart. Like the princess in *János vitéz*, *Háry's* princess sings a sort of waltz song, 'Ku-ku-kuskám', though like most of *Háry's* other tunes, it is based on musical material collected by Kodály in the countryside, identified as an 'artsong of foreign origin' and filed in Kodály's archive with 'Artsongs among the folk'.⁵³ Most of the attention paid to this work focuses on how Kodály harnessed 'the poetic power of folklore' by putting 'genuine folksong on to operatic stage'.⁵⁴ To international audiences, *Háry János* has become a colourful and 'authentic' representation of that power, chiefly as an orchestral suite. To a domestic audience of the time, there would also have been a clear connection to folk plays and *magyar nóta*, a song type that Kodály called inauthentic.

Hungarian Operetta since World War II

Operetta did not fit easily into the ideological framework of state socialism in post-World War II Hungary, filled as it is with frivolous aristocrats,

sexually suggestive humour and musical styles from the imperialist West (especially jazz). But its popularity meant that it was the starting point for popular theatre in the new era, so theatres and critics puzzled over how to transform it from 'capitalist kitsch' into 'progressive model plays'.⁵⁵ Ottó Vincze's *Boci-boci tarka* (Spotted-spotted cow, 1953) shows several methods for doing so: it introduced an ideologically appropriate setting, the collective farm, and included 'authentic' folksongs (following Kodály's example), including the title children's song, as well as mass songs in its score.⁵⁶ But the most popular operettas in post-war Hungary included older works that had been made more ideologically appropriate. Budapest's Operetta Theatre took both *Boci-boci tarka* and a revised *A csárdáskirálynő* on tour to the Soviet Union in 1955–6, and Kálmán's work appears to have won the day.⁵⁷

Though operetta was superseded by newer popular genres by the 1960s, it maintains a place in Hungary's cultural landscape to this day. In 2013, Hungarian operetta was added to the 'Collection of Hungaricums', a heritage list 'for the identification, collection and documentation of national values important for the Hungarian people'.⁵⁸ Its application for inclusion in the Collection emphasized operetta's attraction not just for Hungarian audiences but for international ones, whether they be tourists in Budapest or audiences for Hungarian operetta performances abroad. Since 1989, this repertoire appeals to local audiences' nostalgia for the pre-war past, while impresarios, musicians and connoisseurs in Europe and North America promote Hungarian operetta as the core of this light classical repertoire.

Notes

1. Derek B. Scott, 'Silver-Age Operetta: The Power of an Early 20th-Century Transcultural Entertainment Industry', presented at the symposium Popular Music and Power, held at Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, 23–5 June 2016, www.academia.edu/27081736/Silver-Age_Operetta_The_Power_of_an_Early_20th-Century_Transcultural_Entertainment_Industry (accessed 1 Mar. 2018).
2. Micaela Baranello, 'The Operetta Empire: Popular Viennese Music Theater and Austrian Identity, 1900–1930', unpublished PhD dissertation, Princeton University (2014), 358.
3. The word Roma – adjectival form 'Romani' – means 'man' in the Indic language spoken by many Roma across Europe; the word 'Gipsy' (or 'Gypsy') is based historically on the mistaken notion that these people are from Egypt and is often used stereotypically or pejoratively. However, many Roma call themselves 'Gipsy' or its local equivalent, including in Hungary. The term 'Gipsy music' is commonly used in Hungary, to refer to the genre of entertainment music performed by urban Romani musicians, mainly at restaurants and cafés. Here, I use the term 'Gipsy' primarily to refer to stereotypical representations of the ethnic group and to the musical occupation; Roma refers to members of the ethnic group more generally.
4. Judit Frigyesi, *Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the-Century Budapest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 1.

5. Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Corvina/Osiris, 1999), 20–7. Budapest was created in 1873 by combining Buda, Pest and Óbuda; discussion of earlier history refers to Buda-Pest or to its constituent parts.
6. Ildikó Nagy, 'Polgárosuló színház a polgári Budapesten' in Miklós Lackó (ed.), *A tudománytól a tömegkultúráig: művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok, 1890–1945* (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 1994), 191–6; Lynn M. Hooker, *Redefining Hungarian Music from Liszt to Bartók* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 26–7.
7. Mary Gluck, *The Invisible Jewish Budapest: Metropolitan Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 141. The director of the Theater an der Wien confirmed this view of Vienna when he remarked that 'every piece that plays past 10 o'clock [at night] is lost'. Quoted by Camille Crittenden, *Johann Strauss and Vienna: Operetta and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 174; emphasis in original.
8. See George Biztray, 'Hungary, 1810–1838' in Laurence Senelick (ed.), *National Theatre in Northern and Eastern Europe, 1746–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 278–80; Peter Nemes, *The Once and Future Budapest* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005), 128; and Alice Freifeld, *Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary, 1848–1914* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000), 33.
9. József Bayer, Introduction, *Szigligeti Ede színművei*, I. (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1902), 18. For more on *Volksstücke*, see Feurzeig, this volume, Chap. 2.
10. András Batta, *Träume sind Schäume . . . : Die Operette in der Donaumonarchie*, trans. Maria Eisenreich (Budapest: Corvina, 1992), 11.
11. Dénes Tóth, *A magyar népszínmű zenei kialakulása* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1953), 48.
12. See Péter Bozó, 'Operetta in Hungary, 1859–1960', *Magyar zene a 20. században*, MTA BTK ZTI, 2014, http://real.mtak.hu/13117/1/bozo_operetta_in_hungary.pdf (accessed 27 Nov. 2017); György Székely, Kerényi Ferenc and Gajdó Tamás (eds.), *Magyar színháztörténet II., 1873–1920* (Budapest: Magyar Könyvklub–Országos Színháztörténeti Múzeum és Intézet, 2001), 125–7, <http://mek.oszk.hu/02000/02065/html/2kotet/20.html> (accessed 27 Nov. 2017).
13. Székely et al., *Magyar színháztörténet II., 1873–1920*, 413–15, 420, <http://mek.oszk.hu/02000/02065/html/2kotet/77.html> (accessed 29 Jan. 2018); Bozó, 'Operetta in Hungary, 1859–1960'.
14. Markian Prokopovych, *In the Public Eye: The Public Opera House, the Audience and the Press, 1884–1919* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2014), 231. Though this passage addresses the staging of Lehár's *Fürstenkind* at the Opera House in 1910, Prokopovych also discusses productions of Offenbach in the 1880s (140–7) and Strauss's *Der Zigeunerbaron* in 1905 (195–220).
15. Gyöngyi Heltai, 'Népszínház a nemzetépítésben. A szakmai diskurzus kialakulása (1861–1881)', *Korall* 37 (Nov. 2009), 60–5.
16. Székely et al., *Magyar színháztörténet II., 1873–1920*, 111, 125, <http://mek.oszk.hu/02000/02065/html/2kotet/20.html#22> (accessed 7 Feb. 2018).
17. Péter Bozó, 'Piszkos partitúrák, szennyes szólások, avagy Az eleven ördög és a magyar operett nem teljesen szeplőtelen fogantatása', *Magyar zene* 52, no. 3 (Aug. 2014), 318, 331.
18. Quoting Sándor Hevesi, 'A régi népszínmű és a magyar nóta' in *Az igazi Shakespeare és egyéb kérdések* (Budapest: Táltos, 1919), 124; and Nagy, 'Polgárosuló színház a polgári Budapesten', 193.
19. Her husband and Suppé attempted to launch her Viennese career at the Carl-Theater, but she wrote in her diary that if they persisted 'I will leave him, because I will never be a German actress, never'. *Blaha Lujza naplója*, ed. Ilona Csillag (Budapest: Gondolat, 1987), 77.
20. In Sándor Hevesi, 'A régi népszínmű és a magyar nóta', *Az igazi Shakespeare és egyéb kérdések* (Budapest: Táltos, 1919), 125.
21. See Székely et al., *Magyar színháztörténet II., 1873–1920*, 136 <http://mek.oszk.hu/02000/02065/html/2kotet/20.html#22> (accessed 13 Feb. 2018) and 'Pálmay Ilka, Életrajz', *Színésztkönyvtár*, 2003, www.szinesztkonyvtar.hu/contents/p-z/palmayelet.htm (accessed 13 Feb. 2018).
22. Gyöngyi Heltai, 'Roboz Imre és a Vígshízház nemzetközi kapcsolatrendszere az 1930-as években: Budapest–New York–Párizs–Berlin', *Multunk* 2018, no. 1, 137.
23. Amadé Németh, *Az Erkelek a magyar zenében* (Békéscsaba: Békés Megyei Tanács VB, 1987), 114; see also *Blaha Lujza naplója*, 199–201. For more on Hegyi, daughter of a Romani musician from Subotica, see Géza Csemer et al., *Hegyi Aranka cigány primadonna (1855–1906) emlékkönyv* (Budapest: Napház–Khamorro, 1996).

24. D. Péter Forgács, “A cigánybáró” operett igaz története’, *Új forrás* 37, no. 3 (2005), 33–43 <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00016/00103/050313.htm> (accessed 21 Feb. 2018).
25. Quoted by Crittenden, *Johann Strauss and Vienna*, 174; emphasis in original.
26. Crittenden, *Johann Strauss and Vienna*, 175.
27. Batta, *Träume sind Schäume*, 152–3.
28. Crittenden, *Johann Strauss and Vienna*, 181.
29. Lynn M. Hooker, ‘Turks, Hungarians, and Gypsies: Exoticism and Auto-exoticism in Opera and Operetta’, *Hungarian Studies*, 27, no. 2 (2013), 299–302.
30. Jonathan Bellman, *The Style Hongrois in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), Chap. 3.
31. Timothy D. Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 90.
32. Otto Schneiderreit, *Lehár*, trans. V. Ágnes Meller (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1988), 19–21; Péter Hanák, ‘The Cultural Role of Vienna-Budapest Operetta’ in *The Garden and the Workshop: Essays on the Cultural History of Vienna and Budapest* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 141. Lehár’s parents, like many Hungarian citizens, came from families of other ethnicities who embraced Hungarian language and identity in the nineteenth century. Baranello indicates, however, the media (presumably in Vienna) described him as Slavic rather than Magyar (*The Operetta Empire*, 227).
33. See Baranello, *The Operetta Empire*, 103–4, and “A drótostót” az Operaházban’, *Huszadik század* (April 1903) www.huszadikszazad.hu/cikk/a-drotostot-az-operahazban (accessed 21 Feb. 2018).
34. See *A Városligeti Színkör, 1889–1934*, Színháztörténeti Füzetek, no. 79 (Budapest: Országos Színháztörténeti Múzeum és Intézet, 1991), 82, among others. Another set of music to go with Kempelen’s play, by Géza Allaga (1841–1913), is mentioned in Péter Szuhay (ed.), *Megvetés és önbecsülés: Igaz történet üstfoltozóról, drótostótról, teknőscigányról* (Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum, 2014), 50.
35. Baranello, *The Operetta Empire*, 105.
36. Halina Goldberg, ‘The Jewish Self/The Jewish Other: Performing Identity in the “Majufes”’, presented at Jewish Music Forum, University of Chicago, 26 Feb. 2009, 9–10.
37. Baranello, *The Operetta Empire*, 135.
38. ‘A Király-színház nagyhete’, *Színházi hét*, 1, no. 2 (6–13 Nov. 1910), 8 http://epa.oszk.hu/02300/02365/00002/pdf/EPA02365_szinhazi_het_1910_02.pdf (accessed 23 Feb. 2018).
39. Bellman, *The Style Hongrois*, 216–17.
40. Baranello, *The Operetta Empire*, 225.
41. See Hooker, *Redefining Hungarian Music*, 119–21.
42. ‘The Biography of Emmerich Kálmán’, *Emmerich Kalman Memorial Home* <http://emlekhaz.konyvtar-siofok.hu/?p=the-biography-of-emmerich-kalman> (accessed 3 Mar. 2018).
43. Vera Kálmán, *Emlékszel még . . . : Kálmán Imre élete*, trans. V. Ágnes Meller (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1966), 58.
44. Baranello, *The Operetta Empire*, 232, 214.
45. András Gerő, Dorottya Hargitai and Tamás Gajdó, *A csárdáskirálynő: Egy monarchikum története* (Budapest: Pannonica Kiadó, 2006), 77.
46. Quotations from *Die Csárdásfürstin*, text by Leo Stein and Béla Jenbach, music by Emmerich Kálmán (Leipzig: Josef Weinberger, 1916), 17; see also Gluck, *The Invisible Jewish Budapest*, 141, and Judit Forrai, ‘Kávéházak és kejnők’, *Budapesti negyed* 12–13, no. 2–3 (1996), 110–20.
47. Markian Prokopovych, ‘Celebrating Hungary? Johann Strauss’s Der Zigeunerbaron and the Press in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna and Budapest’, *Austrian Studies* 25 (2017), 128, 134.
48. *Gräfin Mariza*, text by Julius Brammer and Alfred Grünwald, music by Emmerich Kálmán (Vienna: Karczag, 1924).
49. Crittenden, *Johann Strauss and Vienna*, 205.
50. Gerő, et al., *A csárdáskirálynő*, 29.
51. Róbert Gál, *Déliháború Hortobágyon: Huszka Jenő élete és művei* (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi, 2010), 74, 92.
52. Hooker, ‘Turks, Hungarians, and Gypsies’, 302–5.
53. János Bereczky, Katalin Paksa, Mária Domokos, Imre Olsvai and Olga Szalay, *Kodály népdalfeldolgozásainak dallam- és szövegforrásai* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1984), 50.

54. Tibor Tallián, 'Háry János', *Oxford Music Online* <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O005826> (accessed 2 Mar. 2018).
55. Gyöngyi Heltai, *Az operetta metamorfózisai, 1945–1956: A 'kapitalista giccs'-től a haladó 'mimusjáték'-ig* (Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó, 2012).
56. Péter Bozó, 'Műfaji hagyomány és politikai kisajátítás Vincze Ottó Boci-boci tarka című operettjében (1953)', presented at the conference in honour of Melinda Berlász's seventieth birthday, Budapest, November 2012. www.zti.hu/mza/docs/Berlasz70/Berlasz70_BozoPeter_Mufaji_hagyomany_es_politikai_kisajatitas.pdf (accessed 3 Mar. 2018).
57. Bozó, 'Operetta in Hungary'.
58. Hungarikum Bizottság, *Hungarikumok Gyűjteménye/Collection of Hungarikums* <http://hungarikum.hu/sites/default/files/hungarikumok-lista.pdf> (accessed 3 Mar. 2018).

Recommended Reading

- Bozó, Péter. 'Operetta in Hungary, 1859–1960', *Magyar zene a 20. században*, MTA BTK ZTI, 2014, http://real.mtak.hu/13117/1/bozo_operetta_in_hungary.pdf (accessed 8 May 2019).
- Gluck, Mary. *The Invisible Jewish Budapest: Metropolitan Culture at the Fin de Siècle*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016.
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- Prokopovych, Markian. 'Celebrating Hungary? Johann Strauss's Der Zigeunerbaron and the Press in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna and Budapest'. *Austrian Studies*, 25 (2017): 118–35.