

# Jews, Mobility, and Sex: Popular Entertainment between Budapest, Vienna, and New York around 1900

SUSANNE KORBEL

CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ; GRAZ, AUSTRIA

**Abstract:** This article investigates the coinciding of the mass migration from Europe to the Americas and the emergence of mass culture, two developments that shaped everyday life, popular entertainment, and Jewish and non-Jewish relations at the turn of the twentieth century. Jewish actors and actresses were among the most prominent performers who staged in *Orpheums*, *Varietés*, and vaudevilles on both sides of the Atlantic. In their performances they drew on the notion of a new quality of mobility that society was experiencing, utilizing it to negotiate issues such as of the cultural construction of identities and Jewishness, or to critically reexamine antisemitic and nationalistic attitudes. On the one hand, mobility enabled negotiations of controversial issues. On the other hand, mobility led to accusations against popular entertainment, both legitimate and erroneous—for example, that vaudevilles functioned as covers for clandestine prostitution. Therefore, the article examines the question of how mobility influenced popular culture. What were the controversial issues that mobility raised, and what accusations did these evoke? In what ways did actors and actresses in popular culture address gender and Jewishness? To answer these questions, the article analyzes the spaces of popular entertainment in Budapest, Vienna, and New York through close examinations of newspapers, manuscripts, playbills, and records of censorship.

**Keywords:** Mass migration, Performers, Jewish relations, Habsburg Empire, Vienna, Budapest, New York, Prostitution, Mobility, Popular entertainment

ON 8 JANUARY 1894, the newspaper for traveling artists *Internationale Artisten Revue* opened a discussion about the mobility of musicians, artists, and singers with the following anecdote:<sup>1</sup> “There is not enough space for all artists in the capital and, therefore, it is time to go on tour!”<sup>2</sup> Having introduced this general observation about the development of urban popular entertainment, the article told the story of a vaudeville ensemble that had to go on tour to look for other performance venues because, so the argument went, there was an overabundance of performers in Vienna and Budapest and not enough space for all of them. According to the article, after a great deal of trouble the tickets

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<sup>2</sup>“Auf d.e. Tour,” *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 8 Jan. 1894, 1–2.

had been bought and the whole vaudeville ensemble was at the train station, ready to depart, when “Miss X,” the company’s star, was nowhere to be found. Finally, only when the second bell has rung does “Miss X” breathlessly rush in. “‘Thank God,’ the director thinks with relief; but he’s given an even greater fright when “Miss X” explains to the director that she still needs 25 fl. [guilders] in addition to the 40 guilders she’s already received, or she will not be able to join the trip. The director is broke, he has barely 2 fl. to his own name, but a clever director knows how to steal a little from Peter to pay Paul.”<sup>3</sup> After the ensemble director expended much effort and promised additional money, “Miss X” said that she was willing to join the group. Finally, the director sat down, took a deep breath, and expressed the hope that he would not lose “Miss X,” his *Soubrette* (the female singer of a vaudeville ensemble), along the way, because the success of the tour depended on her.<sup>4</sup>

With this story, the newspaper not only presented a picture of the mobility of actors and actresses in popular entertainment but also mirrored the emergence of mass entertainment in the context of the migration movement at the turn of the twentieth century. With the inclusion of this anecdote, the *Internationale Artisten Revue* focused attention on two characteristics of the merging of mobility and popular entertainment. First, the article’s author stressed that, since the 1880s, so many performers had appeared in the metropolises it had become incredibly difficult to secure an engagement. The increasing competition, however, was not the only reason for artists, vaudeville ensembles, and musicians working in the popular entertainment business to go on tour: many vaudeville ensembles, cabaret artists, and variety stars made use of easier modes of travel by train and by steamer. Second, the article provided an apt picture of the important role that female musicians and actresses played in the vaudeville ensembles, even depicting their role as the most notable and relating the success in popular entertainment to the *Soubrettes* and actresses.

In this article, I investigate the coinciding of the mass migration from Europe to the Americas and the emergence of mass culture, two developments that shaped everyday life and popular entertainment at the turn of the twentieth century. Jews participated in the mass migration in disproportionately large numbers, and Jews also interacted with their non-Jewish peers in entertainment. Jewish actors and actresses were among the most prominent performers who staged their songs and plays in *Orpheums*, *Varietés*, and vaudevilles on both sides of the Atlantic. In their performances, they drew on the notion of a new quality of mobility that society was experiencing and utilized it to negotiate different identifications, such as issues of the cultural construction of identities and Jewishness, or to critically reexamine antisemitic and nationalistic attitudes. Owing to the impact of mobility, spaces of and practices in popular entertainment changed, which in turn led to both discrimination and opportunity. On the one hand, in plays staged at popular venues, mobility enabled negotiations of controversial issues. On the other hand, mobility also led to accusations being levelled against popular entertainment, both legitimately and erroneously. For example, it was asserted that *Varietés* (variety shows) sometimes functioned as covers for clandestine prostitution. Such accusations were a consequence of the fact that the performers’ methods of critically dealing with discourses were not appreciated by everyone, in particular by the political elites and administrations. Hence, I pose the question of how mobility influenced popular culture. What were the controversial issues that mobility raised, and what accusations did these evoke? In what ways did

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>The weekly newspaper *Internationale Artisten Revue* was published from 1891 until the eve of World War I in Budapest by Ferdinand Steiner. It was comparable to the German newspaper *Der Artist* with regard to readers, contributions, and international correspondences. See note 33.

actors and actresses in popular culture address gender and Jewishness?<sup>5</sup> To answer these questions, I analyze the spaces of popular entertainment in Budapest, Vienna, and New York that flourished in the period from the 1880s until World War I.

### The Yearning for the “Old” Metropolises and the Appearance of Mobile Popular Entertainment

The article in the *Internationale Artisten Revue* was published at a time when residents of the Hungarian royal capital were lusting after the good old *Színház* (theater), residents of the Austrian imperial capital, Vienna, were yearning for the golden days of the *Volkssängertum*; and the *Great Yiddish Theater* in New York was said to be on the verge of disappearing. The act of mourning for the “good old times”—the urban life of the metropolises in previous decades—had become a transnational phenomenon seen all around the world: Vienna mourned for Old Vienna, Budapest for Old Budapest, and New York for Old New York.<sup>6</sup> The yearning was an internationally shared reaction to the growing urbanization in which city landscapes were rebuilt: streets were enlarged, avenues constructed, and parts of suburbs incorporated.<sup>7</sup> Was that lamenting for the allegedly better, “good old times,” the nostalgic “back-then”?<sup>8</sup> Can any connection be drawn between this phenomenon and the heightened mobility of vaudeville groups? Or, seen from another perspective, did the audience and society even become afraid of the mobility of popular entertainment?

When the urban population yearned for better days, mobility in society in general was about to change. The cultural historian Moritz Csáky argued that mobility gained a new quality: migration for social, economic, political, and professional reasons began to determine the patterns of everyday life and everyday entertainment.<sup>9</sup> Between 1890 and 1914, approximately fifteen million people from Europe, including 3.8 million residents of the Habsburg monarchy, left for the United States.<sup>10</sup> The number of Jews in this movement was

<sup>5</sup>Stephanie J. Nawyn, Anna Reosti, and Linda Gjakaj, “Gender in Motion: How Gender Precipitates International Migration,” *Advances in Gender Research* 13 (2009): 141–73.

<sup>6</sup>These are only three of many cities in which a myth and a sense of mourning for former times arose. For example, the journal *Old New York: A Journal Relating to the History and Antiquities of New York* was first published in 1890. See W. W. Pasko, ed., *Old New York: A Journal Relating to the History and Antiquities of New York* (New York, 1890). Numerous literary journals that appeared at the turn of the twentieth century discussed the “old,” supposedly better, version of cities. See also *A Hét: Társadalmi, Irodalmi és Művészeti Közlöny* [The week: Social, literary, and art bulletin] 4, no. 25 (18 June 1893). Wolfgang Kos and Christian Rapp, eds., *Alt-Wien, Die Stadt, die niemals war* (Vienna, 2004).

<sup>7</sup>Renata Kassal-Mikula, “Alt-Wien unter dem Demolierungskrampen: Wiens Innenstadt nach 1858,” in *Alt-Wien: Die Stadt, die niemals war*, eds. Wolfgang Kos and Christian Rapp (Vienna, 2004), 46–61; Katalin F. Dózsa, *Egy nagyváros születése: Pest, Buda, Óbuda az egyesítés idején* [The birth of the metropolis: or Pest, Buda, and Óbuda at the time of their union] (Budapest, 1998).

<sup>8</sup>Stuart Hall, “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,” in *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (Minneapolis, 1997), 41–68.

<sup>9</sup>Moritz Csáky, “Hybride Kommunikationsräume und Mehrfachidentitäten: Zentraleuropa um 1900,” in *Migration und Innovation um 1900: Perspektiven auf das Wien der Jahrhundertwende*, ed. Elisabeth Röhrlich (Vienna, 2016), 65–97.

<sup>10</sup>Annemarie Steidl, Engelbert Stockhammer, and Hermann Zeitlhofer, “Relations among Internal, Continental, and Transatlantic Migration from Late Imperial Austria,” *Social Sciences History* 31, no. 1 (2007): 61–92, 76; Annemarie Steidl, Wladimir Fischer-Nebmaier, and James W. Oberly, *From a Multiethnic Empire to a Nation of Nations: Austro-Hungarian Migrants in the US, 1870–1940* (Innsbruck, 2017), 133.

disproportionally high, which is why scholarship calls it the “Jewish mass migration.”<sup>11</sup> Roughly 280,000 Jews made their way toward the United States, most of them, 240,000, from the eastern parts of the Habsburg monarchy, especially Galicia and Bukovina, the monarchy’s most populous but least advanced regions in economic terms.<sup>12</sup> The Jewish population in these regions had relied more strongly than non-Jews on trading and agriculture, sectors that late industrialization had most affected. An economic depression, severe poverty, and demographic growth in the preceding decades had turned Galicia and Bukovina into the launching points for transatlantic migrants from Habsburg territories.<sup>13</sup> The Jewish migrants from there were part of a total number of around two million Jews who emigrated westward from Eastern Europe.<sup>14</sup> They relocated either to the larger cities of Austria-Hungary or attempted to reach the *goldene medine*—the golden land, the United States—and travel to New York,<sup>15</sup> nourishing the pluricultural<sup>16</sup> urban environment.<sup>17</sup> Budapest, Vienna, and New York—the cities I focus on in this article—were among the most prominent sites of immigration from the eastern provinces of the Habsburg monarchy. Migration, however, did not solely go westward; indeed, about one-third of the migrants returned to their homelands.<sup>18</sup> New findings provide evidence that the rate of Jews among returnees was lower, although 20 percent of Jewish migrants returned to the Habsburg monarchy or made the journey between the continents more than once.<sup>19</sup>

Not only migrants were on the move: the *Volkssänger* (folksingers) and participants of the vaudeville scene were part of this broader societal movement too. They formed a kind of

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<sup>11</sup>On the term “Jewish mass migration” and a critical reexamination thereof, see Tobias Brinkmann, “Points of Passage: Reexamining Jewish Migration from Eastern Europe after 1880,” in *Points of Passage, Jewish Transmigrants from Eastern Europe in Scandinavia, Germany, and Britain 1880–1914*, ed. Tobias Brinkmann (New York, 2013), 1–26, 1–3. Jewish protagonists made up a disproportionately high percentage of the migrants from late imperial Austria too: measured against the percentage of Jews among the residents of the Monarchy (4.5 percent) disproportionately more Jews were among migrants than non-Jews (7.5 percent). Annemarie Steidl, “‘There Are No Cats in America ...’ Zur Teilnahme von Juden und Jüdinnen an transatlantischen Wanderungen aus den österreichischen Ländern der Habsburgermonarchie,” *Aschkenas* 17, no. 1 (2007): 13–33, 26.

<sup>12</sup>Steidl, “‘There Are No Cats in America ...,’” 20. Hödl highlights that there exists a blurring gap between numbers of migrants from Habsburg monarchy to the United States as cited by different researchers. See Klaus Hödl, “*Vom Shtetl an die Lower East Side*: Galizische Juden in New York (Vienna, 1991), 34–39.

<sup>13</sup>Hödl, “*Vom Shtetl an die Lower East Side*,” 21–34; Steidl, Stockhammer, and Zeitlhofer, “Relations among Internal, Continental, and Transatlantic Migration,” 68–69.

<sup>14</sup>Klaus Hödl, *Als Bettler in die Leopoldstadt: Galizische Juden auf dem Weg nach Wien* (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar, 1994), 12. Jews constituted approximately 9 percent of all migrants from Europe to arrive in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. Steidl, Fischer-Nebmaier, and Oberly, *From a Multiethnic Empire to a Nation of Nations*, 139.

<sup>15</sup>Between 1890 and 1930, the population of all three cities at least doubled, and in New York it quintupled. Vienna’s population in 1890 was around 1.1 million, and in 1930 around two million, including eighty thousand and two hundred thousand Jews, respectively. Budapest’s population rose from around five hundred thousand to one million and New York’s from 1.5 to five million, including eighty thousand and 1.8 million Jews, respectively.

<sup>16</sup>The concept of pluriculturalism builds on the assumptions of multiculturalism, though, in an attempt to overcome the problematic singularity of the concept of multiculturalism, scholars began to focus on how cultures resonate, interact, and merge through mutual mediation rather than merely tolerating or coexisting. Anil Bhatti, “Plurikulturalität,” in *Habsburg neu denken: Vielfalt und Ambivalenz in Zentraleuropa – 30 kulturwissenschaftliche Stichworte*, eds. Johannes Feichtinger and Heidemarie Uhl (Vienna, 2016), 171–80.

<sup>17</sup>In fin-de-siècle Vienna, every other person living there had not been born in the capital. Michael John and Albert Lichtblau, *Schmelztiegel Wien einst und jetzt: Zur Geschichte und Gegenwart von Zuwanderung und Minderheiten* (Vienna, 1993), 12–13.

<sup>18</sup>Steidl, Fischer-Nebmaier, and Oberly, *From a Multiethnic Empire to a Nation of Nations*, 50–75.

<sup>19</sup>Steidl, “‘There are no Cats in America ...,’” 31–34.

seasonal migration pattern. Popular entertainment artists frequently traveled around the monarchy as well as between Europe and the United States. Temporary seasonal migrations like those of performing musicians had a significant impact on the number of people on the move,<sup>20</sup> though they did not leave much of a paper trail in official records and thus remain difficult to trace.<sup>21</sup> We can gain knowledge about the temporary mobility in popular entertainment mainly from its internal organization. From sources such as newspapers for traveling performers we learn that performers were hired to work abroad and (trans) migrated from one city to another. Usually, travel agents arranged and organized the performers' mobility and provided them with contracts from establishments in the countries to which they went. As the opening anecdote aptly puts it, artists usually traveled in mixed groups of men and women—a travel habit that unsettled observers.<sup>22</sup>

At first glance, the performers' habit of coed travel displayed similarities to another growing field of migration: sex migration and the increasingly organized trafficking in women. Mobility in popular entertainment was therefore often (mistakenly) associated with white slavery and the mobility of sex workers who were brought to overseas regions by human traffickers.<sup>23</sup> Labor migration and sex migration synchronized in many terms: according to the historian, both “occurred at roughly the same moment, both engendered risks and abuses, and both were subject to nationalist pressures and imperial restrictions.”<sup>24</sup> Narratives of intrigue, seduction, and conspiracy formed around these migration patterns, such as that women traveling alone relied on selling sex and ended up in groups of young female and male companions who were sold into slavery to brothels abroad.<sup>25</sup>

Simultaneously with the mass migration and the increasing mobility of performers, popular entertainment developed into what research has depicted as “mass culture”—various types of entertainment that answered the quest for amusement of a huge number of people and, likewise, was available to and part of the everyday life of the vast majority of the people.<sup>26</sup> They enjoyed the infinite pleasure of reading the so-called *Groschenromane* (penny novels), attending music halls and vaudeville shows, or strolling through amusement parks such as the Prater in Vienna, the *Stadtwaldchen* in Budapest, or the Vaudeville Park near Washington Square Park in New York.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Bloomington, 2003), 128.

<sup>21</sup>Concerning the difficulties in tracing seasonal migrations see Steidl, Stockhammer, and Zeitlhofer, “Relations among Internal, Continental, and Transatlantic Migration,” 68.

<sup>22</sup>Susanne Korbel, “Zwischen Budapest, Wien und New York: Jüd innen und (populär-) kulturelle Transformationen um 1900” (Ph.D. diss., University of Graz, 2017), 156–57.

<sup>23</sup>Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil's Chain: Prostitution and Social Control in Partitioned Poland* (Ithaca, 2015). Nancy M. Wingfield, *The World of Prostitution in Late Imperial Austria* (Oxford, 2017).

<sup>24</sup>Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil's Chain*, 138.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 140–68.

<sup>26</sup>The term *mass culture* has been broadly discussed and criticized in research. In this article, I do not wish to intervene in this discussion. I here simply refer to mass culture as the phenomenon that leisure time and time for amusement had become available to the majority of people—both in terms of the availability of leisure time as well as the accessibility of various forms of popular entertainment. Kaspar Maase, *Grenzenloses Vergnügen: Der Aufstieg der Massenkultur 1850–1970* (Frankfurt, 2007), 19–25. For a critical examination of the term, see the Frankfurt School. Theodore W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt, 2016), 128–76.

<sup>27</sup>Several of these spaces were accused of being places for clandestine prostitution, for example the Prater public gardens and the two main streets connecting this entertainment ground with the inner city, the “two streets which directly led into entertainment,” as Joseph Roth wrote: the Praterstraße and the Taborstraße. See Wingfield, *The World of Prostitution*, 137–70.

An analysis of precisely how these two simultaneous developments—the (Jewish) mass migration that led to a new quality of mobility and the emergence of mass culture in entertainment—intertwined has been lacking until now.<sup>28</sup> Relatively little research has been done to date to explain the fact that many of the most popular actors and actresses, directors, and managers in the vaudeville scene were Jewish.<sup>29</sup> Historians Mary Gluck and Klaus Hödl state that this was because much of the historiography has tended to associate Jews in Budapest and Vienna mainly with so-called high culture.<sup>30</sup> Investigating examples of interactions between Jews and non-Jews in mobile popular entertainment promises innovative insights into everyday lives and experiences during the new transatlantic migration movement at the turn of the twentieth century.

### The Making of Mobile Popular Entertainment

At the onset of the twentieth century many newspapers for the entertainment sector, such as *Der Artist* or the *Internationale Artisten Revue*, published articles discussing the “gradual expansion” in the *Artistenwesen* (a general expression for the field of vaudevilles and music halls) and reported on the spread of popular entertainment.<sup>31</sup> Increasing numbers of artists traveled between cities to stage their repertoires. In addition, the vaudeville scene was closely associated with migration because becoming an artist or working in a *Variété* offered migrants their first opportunity to earn money. It emerged as a field that was limited neither to location nor to a small group of people and was open and approachable for creative minds who dared to have the courage to try making a living in this new economic sector. It thus provided conditions in which Jews could become many of the most popular performers and directors.

The new opportunities for mobility led to a general change in popular entertainment. Whereas in previous years the *Volkssänger* had mostly performed individual acts in taverns for which they had been hired by their own arrangement,<sup>32</sup> by the turn of the century

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<sup>28</sup>Nahma Sandrow depicted the history of the Yiddish Theater as one of “vagabond stars.” Sandrow Nahma, *Vagabond Stars: A World History of Yiddish Theater* (Syracuse, 1996).

<sup>29</sup>Popular culture is currently in great demand in Jewish studies. There is a discernible shift away from historiographic studies that are mainly interested in the “Jewish bourgeoisie” and that consequently made the “contribution” of Jews to “high culture” a subject of discussion. Hence, traditional narratives of the history of the Jews in Germany and Austria have been critically reexamined. Mary Gluck, *The Invisible Jewish Budapest: Metropolitan Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Wisconsin, 2016). Klaus Hödl, *Zwischen Wienerlied und Der kleine Kohn: Juden in der Wiener populären Kultur um 1900* (Göttingen, 2017). Edna Nahson, ed., *New York's Yiddish Theater: From Bowery to Broadway* (New York, 2016).

<sup>30</sup>Gluck, *The Invisible Jewish Budapest*, 10–16; Hödl, *Zwischen Wienerlied und Der kleine Kohn*, 22 and 28–38. I am not arguing that there exists a dichotomous or static separation of “highbrow” and “lowbrow” culture. Lawrence Levine already emphasized in 1988 that no such dichotomy exists; instead, the terms are signifiers for the perception and criticism of culture in a given society. Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, 1988). For a cultural studies approach, see John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Athens, 2006). On the association of Jews with “highbrow” culture, see Steven Beller, *Wien und die Juden 1867–1938* (Vienna, 1993), 13–16. Klaus Hödl, *Zwischen Wienerlied und Der kleine Kohn*, 17.

<sup>31</sup>Ferdinand Steiner, “An unsere geehrten Leser,” *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 8 Nov. 1891, 1.

<sup>32</sup>Josef Koller, *Das Wiener Volkssängertum in alter und neuer Zeit: Nacherzähltes und Selbsterlebtes, mit Biographien, Episoden, Liedern, zahlreichen Abbildungen und Porträts nach zeitgenössischen Bildern aus dem Volkssängerleben* (Vienna, 1931).

popular entertainment had become better organized. Up until the 1880s it was common for taverns to employ singers as entertainment for their guests, or at least as an accompaniment for dining or drinking. In those days, only a few people—the so-called old folksingers or “*alte Volkssänger*”—plied this trade; there were far fewer of these individuals than inns and it was thus easier for the singers to find employment. Serving beverages and food to the guests was the main purpose of these inns. Enjoying entertainment with their food and drinks, however, gained popularity among the guests. From the 1880s onward, directors, who were predominantly former *Volkssänger*, founded venues and ran fixed stages where they offered entertainment on a permanent basis. Artists no longer performed alone in taverns and inns but staged their repertoire with a group of artists and musicians in programs consisting of several different acts in the new music halls and vaudeville. The programs there lasted about one to two hours and were repeated several times a day during afternoons and evenings. By performing as part of a program, the artists from abroad could use the same facilities as the ensemble they joined, including the “name of the stage” and its concession. Thus, the traveling performers gained the administrative benefit of avoiding the effort involved in acquiring permits of their own to stage plays in each new city they visited.<sup>33</sup>

The administrative advantages that an increasing number of artists were able to make use of led to an increase in entertainment spaces. From 1890 to 1900 the number of registered *Varietés* and *Etablissements* in Budapest and Vienna doubled, while the number of venues in New York even quadrupled (in the case of music halls, but not the big Yiddish theaters, which suffered from the competition music halls represented). In addition to fixed stages, open-air venues were established. Over the summer, when the local ensembles were on tour, the cities offered several stages, mostly in (entertainment) parks, to ensure that their inhabitants would not face a lack of amusement. The *Sommeretablissement* at the Kaisergarten in the Prater welcomed traveling entertainment groups and offered them not only the stage but also costumes, instruments, and even engaged musicians whom they could use for staging their repertoires.<sup>34</sup> The venue in Budapest’s *Városliget* (also called *Stadtwaldchen*, central park), surrounded by the amusement park’s carousels, and the small entertainment park at Washington Square Park or Fort George, known as “Harlem’s Coney Island,” in New York did likewise.<sup>35</sup>

Managers, agents, and other associates of the popular scene created more organizational infrastructure for the music business; newspapers operating on an international basis and agencies supporting the traveling stars emerged.<sup>36</sup> Artists and vaudeville managers built

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<sup>33</sup>The domain of *Volkssänger* became ever more institutionalized during this period. Several associations for traveling artists and performers were founded across Europe and the United States. Newspapers tried to provide transatlantic information for a lively exchange in the business. In addition, several managers tried to help the artists and performers on both sides of the Atlantic to create transnational (and transatlantic) careers. Susanne Korbel, “Zwischen Budapest, Wien und New York,” 72–86.

<sup>34</sup>Concerning Jews and popular entertainment in Vienna, see Brigitte Dallinger, *Verloshene Sterne: Geschichte des jüdischen Theaters in Wien* (Vienna, 1998), as well as the works of Klaus Hödl cited in this article.

<sup>35</sup>For example, “New York City Jottings,” *The New York Clipper*, 15 July 1905, 13; “Fort George Fire Swept,” *The New York Clipper*, 16 Dec. 1911, 14.

<sup>36</sup>The *Internationale Artisten Revue* was most widely read in Austria-Hungary; in the German Empire it was the newspaper *Der Artist*. *The New York Clipper* was the English-language equivalent in the United States. *The New York Clipper* had been published since 1853, the *Internationale Artisten Revue* was first published in November 1891, and *Der Artist* in 1892. On *Der Artist*, see Margaret Myers, “Searching for Data about Ladies’ Orchestras, 1870–1950,” in *Music and Gender*, eds. Pirkko Moisala and Beverly Diamond (Urbana, 2000), 189–213, 208.

international relationships and exchanged and evaluated information about forms of social insurance, simplifications of transatlantic travel routes, and the foundation of associations.<sup>37</sup>

The *Internationale Artisten Revue* was one of these newly evolved newspapers. Founded in Budapest in 1891 by Ferdinand Steiner, a member of the famous Viennese Jewish entertainment family Steiner, the weekly newspaper corresponded with cities all over Europe and made frequent exchanges with its North American counterpart, the *New York Clipper*.<sup>38</sup> As early as 1900, only nine years after its foundation, the *Internationale Artisten Revue* was corresponding with more than two hundred establishments and eighty agencies in more than sixty cities around the world.<sup>39</sup>

### Strolling through the Fin de Siècle in Budapest, Vienna, and New York

Changes in urban landscapes reflected the mobile trend in the popular entertainment sector. Budapest's Kérepesi út (Kérepesi Street), which leads from the Erzsébet bridge over the Danube to the Keleti pályaudvar (east train station) and the Fuimei cemetery, was a characteristic boulevard of the fin-de-siècle metropolis. This modern boulevard was peppered with theaters, *Künstlerheime* (hotels for performers) and—by and by—*Varietés*, *Etablissements*, and music halls. Situated in Erzsébetváros, the seventh district of Budapest, the boulevard was bounded at its far end by the Andrassy út, directly in one of the most popular areas of Jewish life. Strolling down the Kérepesi boulevard also meant passing through a vibrant center of Jewish life. Here, the most famous vaudeville, Folies Caprice, served as a model for the *Varietés* (*Mustervarieté*) that were then springing up in Budapest, Vienna, and New York—all of which were undergoing similar developments in their urban entertainment scenes.<sup>40</sup>

Inspired by the Chat Noir de Paris, the Folies Caprice, founded by Antal Oroszi, was one of the very first venues of this kind. Oroszi was not only the director of a *Variété* but also a famous playwright. Using the pseudonym Caprice, the Jewish playwright wrote some of the most popular pieces of the time, including *Klabriaspártie* and *Romeo Kohn und Julie Lewi*.<sup>41</sup> The *Wiener Extrapost*, a Viennese weekly newspaper, compared the Folies Caprice with one of Vienna's most famous *Volkssänger* taverns of decades past, saying that it was as famous "[a]s the Sperl had once been in Vienna."<sup>42</sup> Visitors from abroad flooded the Folies Caprice, and international actors and actresses were continually part of the programs staged there. In

<sup>37</sup>In Vienna, the association Der Lustige Ritter was founded. Popular actors and artists in Budapest first joined the Viennese association but later founded their own, the Budapester Artisten Club. In America, circuits fulfilled the function of these associations. Korbel, "Zwischen Budapest, Wien und New York," 156–58. On entrepreneurs and their associations in popular entertainment, see also Antje Dietze, "Americanization of Show Business? Shifting Territories of Theatrical Entertainment in North America at the Turn of the 20th Century," in *Processes of Spatialization in the Americas: Configurations and Narratives*, eds. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramirez and Hannes Warnecke-Berger (Bern, 2018).

<sup>38</sup>The weekly *New York Clipper* was published from 1853 to 1923.

<sup>39</sup>Korbel, "Zwischen Budapest, Wien und New York," 72–76.

<sup>40</sup>On the vaudeville scene in Budapest, see Konrad Miklós, "Music Halls and Jewish Identities in Budapest at the Turn of the Century," in *Jewish Space in Central and Eastern Europe: Day-to-Day History*, eds. Jurgita Šiaučiūnaitė-Verbickienė and Larisa Lempertienė (Cambridge, 2009), 143–55.

<sup>41</sup>Hödl, *Zwischen Wienerlied und Der kleine Kohn*, 62. Gluck, *The Invisible Jewish Budapest*, 168–70. Nikola Roßbach, ed., *Wien parodiert: Theatertexte um 1900* (Vienna, 2007), 99–134.

<sup>42</sup>"Budapester Brief," *Wiener Montags-Journal (Extrapost)*, 15 Aug. 1892, 1.



1901, numerous audience requests for guest performances by the actors from the Folies Caprice in Budapest led to an ongoing discussion as to whether to establish another venue in Vienna. This caused what would later be called the *Volkssängerkrieg* (folksinger war), a phenomenon that revolved around fears of competition on the part of the directors of the *Varietés* and members of the Viennese popular scene.<sup>43</sup>

That they served as role models for the steadily growing urban entertainment scene was not the only connection between the two metropolises of the monarchy. The interaction between the Viennese and Budapest performers was especially close regarding the exchange of artists: Mendel Rottmann regularly performed as Max Rott at the *Mustervarieté* Folies Caprice. The Viennese *Volkssänger* and playwright Heinrich Eisenbach also performed at Somossy's Orpheum, the "first Vaudeville of the capital," as well as at Herzmann's Orpheum in Budapest. The performers from Vienna were so close to the Budapest scene that Eisenbach even married his long-term partner, Anna Ferry, in Somossy's Orpheum between their guest performances in November 1893.<sup>44</sup>

Apart from the large number of Jews operating as actors, *Soubrettes*, or directors, the vaudeville scenes were closely, but not exclusively,<sup>45</sup> connected with districts that had relatively high Jewish populations and were associated with Jewish cultures: Budapest's *Erszébetváros*, New York's Lower East Side, and Vienna's Leopoldstadt.<sup>46</sup> In addition, the Viennese vaudeville scene flourished in the sixth and ninth districts as well as in the very city center, where Max Rott opened his *Variété Max und Moritz* in the direct vicinity of St. Stephan's cathedral.<sup>47</sup> Unlike Budapest, the Viennese scene was made up of ensembles that staged productions in more or less fixed arrangements, but which worked to attain better conditions in the different possible venues over the years. For this reason it was customary for an audience to see one group at Taborstraße 12 one year and find another there the following year.<sup>48</sup> In New York, the part of the Lower East Side bisected by Broadway—the Bowery—was in especially high demand when it came to the quest for amusement. A huge number of theaters and, later, music halls were to be found in the middle of the neighborhood, which was home to three-quarters of New York's Jewish population between 1890 and 1900.<sup>49</sup> The *Journal of Old New York* wrote as early as 1890 that "the Englishman, the Frenchman, the Russian, who has not visited New York, still

<sup>43</sup>Hödl, *Zwischen Wienerlied und Der kleine Kohn*, 98–100.

<sup>44</sup>"Im Somossy Orpheum," *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 1 Nov. 1893, 9.

<sup>45</sup>On the concept of Jewish urban spaces not as enclosed areas but rather as spaces of contacts and interactions see Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke, "Exploring Jewish Spaces: An Approach," in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*, eds. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke (Burlington, 2008), 1–26, 3–11.

<sup>46</sup>Leopoldstadt's main streets, Taborstraße and Praterstraße, led directly into the entertainment area, as Joseph Roth mentioned in his novel *Juden auf Wanderschaft*. On Jewish sites in Leopoldstadt see Lisa Silverman, "Jewish Memory, Jewish Geography: Vienna before 1938," in *Making Place: Space and Embodiment in the City*, eds. Arijit Sen and Lisa Silverman (Bloomington, 2014), 173–97.

<sup>47</sup>Situated at Annagasse 3 in Vienna's First District, the *Variété Max und Moritz* was opened by Max Rott and Adolf Glinger in September 1910. Adolf Glinger and Max Rott were both the *nom de plume* of the two former *Volkssänger* who also lived under their stage names. In 1914 the *Volkssänger* Heinrich Eisenbach joined his colleagues from the Budapest Orpheumgesellschaft at the Max und Moritz. On Glinger and Rott see Korbel, "Zwischen Budapest, Wien und New York," 64–66. "Ein Zwischenfall bei Max und Moritz," *Neues Wiener Journal*, 19 Sept. 1910, 4.

<sup>48</sup>In Vienna these areas overlapped with those where there was clandestine prostitution. On sites of clandestine prostitution in Vienna see Wingfield, *The World of Prostitution*, 145–55.

<sup>49</sup>Hasia Diner, "Yiddish New York," in *New York's Yiddish Theater: From Bowery to Broadway*, ed. Edna Nahshon (New York, 2016), 50–63, 52.

knows that its glory is Broadway.”<sup>50</sup> Broadway was not only beloved by its audience but also by the artists, who tried to become part of it themselves so they could perform in one of the small cafés or the recently emerging music halls in Lower Manhattan.<sup>51</sup>

The flourishing entertainment scenes in these neighborhoods welcomed a highly diverse, pluricultural audience. The sites of popular entertainment played an important role in the everyday life of the bulk of the population. They provided a space where people from different social, political, and ethnic backgrounds could gather, meet, and interact. The sites of popular entertainment functioned as spaces of Jewish and non-Jewish relations and provided the space to address and discuss issues such as antisemitism or gender norms. The unique composition of the spaces of popular entertainment as places to which people ran in search of amusement enabled these discussions. In pursuit of their goal, they were largely indifferent to controversial political, cultural, and social issues. Thus, issues that were not negotiable in other contexts could be discussed—a topic to which I will return shortly.<sup>52</sup>

### Risks for Mobile Performers in Popular Entertainment

Despite the new opportunities for mobility, it was still not easy to cross the Atlantic. Vaudeville managers provided good traveling and working conditions as well as contracts for actors from the Habsburg monarchy and Europe so that they could work for months at a stretch on stages in the United States. Artists and vaudeville managers built international relationships, exchanged views, and evaluated themes, including social insurance, ways to simplify transatlantic travel, and settings for the foundation of associations.<sup>53</sup> The members of Vienna’s popular scene were among the first to establish such an association for artists and actors in 1893. They called their association *Der lustige Ritter* and advertised it with the slogan “Dem Humor eine Gasse, das Wohlthun als Ziel!”<sup>54</sup> Members of the Budapest scene initially joined this association before establishing their own, the *Budapester Artisten-Verein*, in 1900.<sup>55</sup> Both

<sup>50</sup>W. W. Pasko, “Old New York, February 1890,” *Old New York: A Journal Relating to the History and Antiquities of New York* 1, no. 2 (1890), 1–23.

<sup>51</sup>Music halls evolved in New York around the turn of the century. They replaced the very large theaters, and especially members of the Yiddish theater scene complained about this newly emerging type of popular entertainment. Edna Nahshon, “Overture: From the Bowery to Broadway,” in *New York’s Yiddish Theater*, ed. Edna Nahshon (New York, 2016), 8–49, 37. Edmund James, ed., *The Immigrant Jew in America* (New York, 1907), 222–27. Nina Warneke, “Immigrant Popular Culture as Contested Sphere: Yiddish Music Halls, the Yiddish Press, and the Processes of Americanization, 1900–1910,” in *Theatre Journal* 48, no. 3 (1996): 321–35. Early motion pictures provided an especially vivid picture of the music bar scene in New York in the early 1900s.

<sup>52</sup>In this sense, the sites of popular entertainment functioned as spaces with a quality of in-betweenness, as described in postcolonial studies. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 2004), 6–7. Mayhill C. Fowler stated that the same concept applied to Yiddish theaters in Soviet Ukraine and described the paradox of “ethnic” theaters and spaces for the Soviet Ukrainian Yiddish theaters as a specific new avant-garde theater that aimed at deprovincializing the stages and in which the allegedly divided ethnic theaters interacted and intermingled. Mayhill C. Fowler, “Jews, Ukrainians, Soviets? Backstage in the Yiddish theatres of Soviet Ukraine,” *Jewish Culture and History* 18, no. 2 (2017): 152–69, 153–56.

<sup>53</sup>See note 24.

<sup>54</sup>Matthias Bernhard Lautzky, “Der lustige Ritter in Wien,” *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 10 Dec. 1893, 5.

<sup>55</sup>“Budapester Artisten Verein,” *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 20 May 1900, 1. Later on, in both Vienna and Budapest members of the associations discussed separating and founding new associations. However, *Der lustige Ritter* and *Der Budapester Artisten Verein* continued to exist until the end of World War I. The *Internationale Artisten Organisation* was founded thereafter. Koller, *Das Wiener Volkssängertum in alter und neuer Zeit*, 160.

associations actively intervened for social security and old-age provision for artists and actors and tried to provide for their poorer colleagues whose success in the profession had declined or who were unable to pursue their profession due to an occupational injury.<sup>56</sup> Although these associations also supported the traveling activities of their members, further associations catering specifically to traveling vaudeville managers were subsequently founded in the years preceding World War I. These aimed to provide help and information for ensembles and directors who wanted to arrange and optimize their transatlantic tours independently. As part of the Association of Vaudeville Managers of the United States, the Association of Traveling Variety Managers organized regular meetings and formed a committee that provided information for managers on request.<sup>57</sup> In Europe, after the end of World War I the *Internationale Artisten Organisation* was founded to work cooperatively beyond the structure of the new propagandized nation-states.<sup>58</sup>

Crossing the Atlantic, however, naturally still entailed several risks, and this was one reason for the establishment of an international artists' organization and network. In January 1894, an artist who had just arrived back in Europe after having traveled through North America wrote a letter to the editor of the *Internationale Artisten Revue*, seeking to have it published and read by other traveling artists:

I was engaged for a thirty-week tour in America and Canada by Imre Fox in Vienna in May 1893. From 2 November 1893 to 1 May 1894, I was engaged at Koster & Biale in New York [one of the great music halls, SK]. On the morning of 2 November, we drove to a small venue where the first performance took place; from then on, we traveled nearly every day. On the evening of Sunday, 7 November, we performed in Wilmington. After this performance, Imre Fox told us he would travel to New York on business and he would return to the association in Bethlehem by Monday. On 9 November, we traveled with his brother-in-law, Mr. Clark, to Bethlehem. We prepared everything for the evening show, and the audience was just arriving at the theater, but Imre Fox had not yet arrived. We waited for all trains arriving from New York, but none of them brought Imre. Finally, we had to cancel the performance and return the money to the audience. . . . Since we had no director, we drove back to New York that same evening; I went to Mrs. Fox, who told me in tears that her husband had disappeared; she had searched for him in all the hospitals and even called the police but had not found any trace of him so far. She firmly believed that her husband had been murdered. Only by 10 November did she know for sure that her husband had run away to Europe and left her without any funds.<sup>59</sup>

With this letter, the author wanted to warn his colleagues about the agent who had betrayed him and the ensembles he worked with and thereby protect other artists from a similar fate. The artist, however, also requested help and tried to find support among the readers of the newspapers in the hope that the fraudulent agent could be arrested and he would finally receive payment for his work. The newspaper *Internationale Artisten Revue* provided help during the search for Imre Fox—as it did frequently in other, similar cases—and in the next issue it reported that he had been caught in

<sup>56</sup>“Treffen des Wiener Artistenverbandes,” *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 1 Nov. 1893, 8. See also Matthias Bernhard Lautzky, “Artisten,” *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 20 Jan. 1894, 2–3. And *Mehrere lustige Ritter* [signature of the authors, SK], “Der Club der lustigen Ritter in Wien,” in *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 10 May 1895, 2–3.

<sup>57</sup>The Association of Traveling Variety Managers frequently reported on its activities and advertised invitations to meetings in the *New York Clipper*. Harry Jacobs, “Call: The Regular Meeting of Association of Traveling Variety Managers of America,” *New York Clipper*, 9 June 1900, 348.

<sup>58</sup>Koller, *Das Wiener Volkssängertum in alter und neuer Zeit*, 160.

<sup>59</sup>Charles Haydn, “Leserbrief,” *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 10 Jan. 1894, 9. It should be noted that Bethlehem and Wilmington were both cities with a high German-speaking population.

Vienna due to the assistance of the readers.<sup>60</sup> Support within the international artists' scene was strong not only in preventing financial but also sexual abuse.<sup>61</sup>

### Mobility and the Allegation of Selling Sex

While the creation of organizational features such as the *Internationale Artisten Revue* provided artists with help, their mobility and the newly developed infrastructure related to it (such as housing) led to allegations being raised against the popular entertainment scene. The places where the traveling artists slept, the *Artistenheime* or theatrical lodgings, made the scene appear quite similar to that of prostitution. *Artistenheime* were located either next to or directly above the performance venues and provided rooms where artists from abroad could spend the night. Because these rooms were private and could thus not be easily monitored, some members of the public assumed that they served as locations for "silent prostitution." This allegation led to what would soon be called "adverse circumstances."<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the alleged "ungrounded attitude" of the traveling performers raised concerns among members of the public. These allegations were directly connected, on the one hand, to an argument about the use of space and, on the other hand, to an argument about movement and traveling that was strongly interrelated with gender attributes, both female and male.

The mobility of the popular entertainment scene included many traveling female performers. They traveled together with either their ensembles or their—mostly male—agents. The image evoked by these (mostly young) women en route with male agents and companions was similar to that of women who were victims of human traffickers. Especially in Galicia and Bukovina as well as along the routes between the Habsburg capitals and Eastern European provinces, the threat of trafficking women increased enormously in the last decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>63</sup> Human traffickers contacted women either in their hometowns or while they traveled alone. Keely Stauter-Halsted illustrates that traffickers convinced women to follow them by claiming that they would hire them in honest positions or by proposing to them.<sup>64</sup> Instead, these women found themselves in brothels. Although Nancy Wingfield argues that "these girls and young women were not simply victims, but sometimes willing participants, or something in between,"<sup>65</sup> the discourse of the last decades of the nineteenth century focused solely on the subject of seduced female victims. Thus, women traveling alone led to a "panic" concerning seduction by human traffickers. Parents were warned to take care of their daughters so as to prevent them from becoming victims of traders in white slavery and being kidnapped to Southeastern Europe, the Russian Empire, or South America.<sup>66</sup>

Female voyagers in popular entertainment coincided with the stereotype of trafficking in women. *Damenkapellen* (ladies' orchestras)<sup>67</sup> were among the first performers to make their

<sup>60</sup>"Miscellaneous," *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 24 Jan. 1894, 10.

<sup>61</sup>"Warnung," *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 8 Dec. 1891, 32.

<sup>62</sup>"Folies Caprice," *Budapesti Hírlap*, 7 Oct. 1893, 5.

<sup>63</sup>Petra de Vries, "'White Slaves' in a Colonial Nation: The Dutch Campaign against the Traffic in Women in the Early Twentieth Century," *Social and Legal Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 39–60.

<sup>64</sup>Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil's Chain*, 125.

<sup>65</sup>Wingfield, *The World of Prostitution*, 172. On migration and trafficking in women, see *ibid.*, 204–7.

<sup>66</sup>Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil's Chain*, 121–2; Wingfield, *The World of Prostitution*, 10–12, 138–39.

<sup>67</sup>On *Damenkapellen* see Myers, "Searching for Data about Ladies' Orchestras, 1870–1950," 189–213; Derek B. Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis: The 19th-Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris and Vienna* (Oxford, 2008), 21–24.

living by traveling around, performing all over Europe. As such, they were the first to stand in the spotlight of what would become frequent public allegations. There is evidence that in some cases the *Damenkapellen* led women into prostitution, albeit randomly.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, the perceived link between traveling performers and clandestine prostitution spread immensely and confronted female performers in vaudeville in the following decades. The international artistic business boom and the appearance of a new infrastructure for traveling stars in the fin de siècle caused this perception to grow, and the *Soubrettes* who performed in the *Varietés* on both sides of the Atlantic only nourished it further.<sup>69</sup>

*Soubrettes* were tough actresses who wrote and staged their own songs as part of the various programs of *Varietés*. These confident female singers won the hearts of their audience by charming them during performances—a way of interacting with their audience that was considered by some to be obscene. Moreover, the female *Variété* stars operated in the public sphere. Because this conflicted greatly with the view of women at the time—namely that they, like all things feminine, should be confined to the private sphere—these female performers were accused of violating several stereotypes of femininity. Two arguments were put forward stating why the female singers could not be professionals but were instead only interested in earning easy money as prostitutes: first, the fact that the music performances took place outside the home and second, that these performers were travelers and the audience therefore had no idea where their home (or what they considered home) might be.<sup>70</sup>

One of the allegations was that, due to the “obscene” acts of the *Soubrettes* and the directors who exploited them, the whole vaudeville scene would become a hotspot for “rough obscenities” (*rohe Obszönitäten*) and, accordingly, for clandestine prostitution. Regarding the Folies Caprice, the *Budapesti Hírlap* reported that “two or three secret rooms existed, which the police were not aware of.”<sup>71</sup> These private rooms could provide spaces for silent prostitution, and critics propounded that infringements against morality would occur more frequently due to the growing number of vaudeville halls and *Artistenheimen*: “In the vaudeville halls, infringements occur regularly despite police controls.” The *Soubrettes* were allegedly engaged in duplicity, and the director compelled them “to stay together in separate coffee shop-like establishments and tempt men whom they addressed during the performance to consume drinks” in the restaurants owned by the vaudeville directors.<sup>72</sup>

Additionally, the agencies that tried to connect international artists and musicians with directors and managers were accused of exploiting young and impressionable girls. The male agents and managers would betray their female clients and lure them to establishments and ensembles under false pretenses. In October 1912, the Ministry of the Interior became aware of grievances lodged against a hotel and *Variété*. Jacques Weiser, who, according to the police record was a Jewish artists’ manager from Budapest named Jakob Weiss,<sup>73</sup> was accused of seducing young girls in a *Hôtel-Variété*. Of Weiser’s activities, the *Zentralstelle zur Überwachung des Mädchenhandels* (Central Office for Monitoring the Trafficking in

<sup>68</sup>Myers, “Searching for Data about Ladies’ Orchestras, 1870–1950,” 194.

<sup>69</sup>Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil’s Chain*, 117–34.

<sup>70</sup>On accusations raised against women traveling alone, see Wingfield, *Prostitution*, 193–202.

<sup>71</sup>“Folies Caprice,” *Budapesti Hírlap*, 7 Oct. 1893, 5.

<sup>72</sup>“Chantant und Polizei,” *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 8 Mar. 1892, 1.

<sup>73</sup>On Jewish travel agents and the ideas and antisemitic polemics, see Tara Zahra, “Travel Agents on Trial: Policing Mobility in East Central Europe, 1889–1989,” *Past & Present*, no. 223 (2014): 161–93, 177–80.

Women) informed the Ministry of the Interior that “for the Hotel-Variété Opera—a low-class location—underage girls are engaged by Viennese performing artist agencies under the guise of artistic productions; but they are aware that the women will be exploited by the so-called directors and members of the artistic management and forced into prostitution as well.”<sup>74</sup> The accusation brought against Weiser illustrates both the close interrelatedness of the discourses on traveling vaudeville performers and on traffickers of women, and the increasing antisemitism in the panic of trafficking.<sup>75</sup> Nancy Wingfield argues that, since the Lemberg trial in which twenty-seven Galician Jews were charged with hijacking women in brothels against their wills, both Jewish organizations and antisemites in Austria focused on the preponderance of Eastern European Jews in trafficking in women.<sup>76</sup>

Such accusations devalued the whole scene of *établissements*, traveling *Volkssänger* ensembles, and variety shows and were thus welcomed by critics of the popular scene. They held up these allegations as proof that confirmed their reservations, assuming that the standards held by all members of the scene were low and vulgar. Both men and women were suspected not to be working as professional artists or serving their art, but to be either perpetrators or victims of exploitation instead. However, whereas men were depicted as the acting subjects—agents who could influence and exploit the women—the women’s voices were silenced and their words were not entered into the police reports.<sup>77</sup>

The passivity assigned to female actors seems particularly striking since the anecdote in the *Internationale Artisten Revue* cited in the preceding text depicted the *Soubrette* “Miss X” as the most important member of the ensemble. But what kind of picture did the anecdote of the traveling *Soubrette* present? The anecdote portrayed the actress as traveling with a group and thus specifically did not allow the abduction fear for women traveling alone to arise.<sup>78</sup> Another method of prevention from becoming seduced into prostitution was financial security, a point the article confirmed in assuring that the *Soubrette* traveled with sufficient money. What might be perceived as enterprising was also a reference to financial security, which women needed to have while traveling. The anecdote thus rejected any necessity on behalf of traveling actresses to earn money by any means other than through performances and suggested that female members of the popular scene did not need to earn money as prostitutes.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Schreiben der Zentralstelle zur Überwachung des Mädchenhandels an das Ministeriums des Inneren betreffend das Engagement von Artistinnen in Belgrad, 5 Oct. 1912, Zahl 2758, 37587/1912, box 2122, Mädchenhandel und Prostitution, Ministerium des Inneren [hereafter: MdI], Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv [hereafter: AVA], Österreichisches Staatsarchiv [hereafter: OeStA], Vienna, Austria.

<sup>75</sup>On the antisemitic background of these assertions, see John W. Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848–1897* (Chicago, 1981), 225–27. See also Keely Stauter-Halsted, “A Generation of Monsters: Jews, Prostitution, and Racial Purity in the 1892 L’viv White Slavery Trail,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 38 (2007): 25–35. This discourse also interfered with the discussion of “white slavery,” bringing together “whiteness” and “Jewishness” under the guise of a colonial angle and separating “white slaves” from victims of trafficking from Southeastern Europe. De Vries, “‘White Slaves’ in a Colonial Nation,” 45–48.

<sup>76</sup>Wingfield, *The World of Prostitution*, 172–78.

<sup>77</sup>For example, Übermittlung eines Verzeichnisses der Prostitutionslokale, Varietés, Winkelhotels, Cafés und Gasthöfe der Stadt Astrackan, 20 Mar. 1914, Mädchenhandel und Prostitution, Zahl 58, 24444/1914, F52, box 45, Ministerium des Äußeren [hereafter: MdAe], Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv [hereafter: HHStA], OeStA, Vienna, Austria.

<sup>78</sup>Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil’s Chain*, 132.

<sup>79</sup>“Auf d.e. Tour,” *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 8 Jan. 1894, 1–2.

## Gender and Jewishness in the Urban Experiences of Popular Entertainment

The spread of the vaudeville and entertainment scene into the urban and private spaces that the *Variétés* and their accompanying accommodations provided for the mobile performers led to the creation of harsh gender-based clichés and allegations of clandestine prostitution. In the context of the panic concerning trafficking at that time, the topics of masculinity and femininity had become subjects of in-depth discussions as a result of the expansion and mobility of the scene. The male agent who hired *Soubrettes* under the guise of working in popular entertainment was depicted by the police as Jewish and the active part of an entrapment scheme, whereas neither any signifiers of Jewishness nor further personal affiliations on the part of his victims were addressed.<sup>80</sup> However, unlike in the discourses on trafficking and clandestine prostitution as they appeared, for example, in the previously quoted police report, signifiers of “Jewish” affiliation of protagonists were not mentioned at all for performers in popular entertainment. Although antisemitism was observed in most contexts at the time, newspaper critics, reports on *Variétés*, and other such publications made few statements about Jews, either as actors and *Soubrettes* or as directors of establishments. This leads me to the question of how Jewish and gendered identifications intersected in the vaudeville experience.

The plot and the composition of spaces of popular entertainment diverged concerning affiliations of Jewishness. Firstly, delving into the interrelatedness of Budapest, Vienna, and New York, I highlighted that Jews took part in the popular entertainment scene in all three cities and that this scene in each of them was located in areas with a large Jewish population. Secondly, a substantial number of actors and *Soubrettes* in popular entertainment were Jews. Many of them performed under stage names, which has often been interpreted in research hitherto as a particularly “Jewish” practice.<sup>81</sup> However, in popular entertainment non-Jews also tended to invent an international-sounding *nom de plume* to garner more interest. Considering the paradox of these three observations, the international sphere of popular entertainment created by the new mobility seems to have enabled a kind of Jewish “passing.”<sup>82</sup> Although the society made few references to a “Jewish” affiliation of performers, artists strongly addressed Jewishness in their songs and plays, a phenomenon that led historian Mary Gluck to describe the vaudeville scene in fin-de-siècle Budapest as a space in which the otherwise “invisible Jewish Budapest” became visible.<sup>83</sup>

In the last part of this article, I will therefore focus on the experiences in the vaudevilles, specifically questioning the part of the urban experience therein; this will lead me to investigate the notion of Jewish passing in the international sphere of popular entertainment and compare it to the notion regarding gender assertions made due to mobility. In both contexts there seems to be a gap between the gendered/Jewish allegations and the way gender and Jewishness were staged in performances. Were *Variétés* only discussed as covers for clandestine prostitution? Or did the *Variété* also provide a space to negotiate Jewishness and gender norms? And what impact did mobility have on the plot of popular entertainment

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<sup>80</sup>On the image of the “bad male Jew,” see Sander L. Gilman, “Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the ‘Modern Jewess,’” *The German Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (1993): 195–211, 196.

<sup>81</sup>On the problematic assertions that Jews would exclusively use stage names see Hödl, *Zwischen Wienerlied und Der kleine Kohn*, 29–32.

<sup>82</sup>On Jewish passing, see Kerry Wallach, *Passing Illusions: Jewish Visibility in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor, 2017), 3–6.

<sup>83</sup>Mary Gluck, “Jewish Humor and Popular Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Budapest,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 34 (2008): 1–21.

at the time? Did it result only in allegations—or might it even have enabled negotiation of such stereotypes?<sup>84</sup> A glance into the contents discussed in popular entertainment might not only answer these questions but also give an idea why society became afraid (of the possibilities) of mobility in popular entertainment.

A few examples can serve to make these points more concrete. I will introduce an actor and an actress, both of whom came face to face with mobility and its practical effects and also with (negotiating) Jewish passing and visibility. Risa Basté was one of the most famous Viennese *Volkssängerinnen* (female folksingers) and *Soubrettes* in the fin-de-siècle Habsburg monarchy. She staged songs and couplets in the most popular *Etablissements* and the newspapers widely reported this *Soubrette's* activities. She was married to another well-known performer in popular entertainment, Adolf Glinger. Glinger was born Adolf Hargesheimer in the Hungarian capital of Budapest and migrated to Vienna to work as a *Volkssänger* and playwright, during which time he assumed his *nom de plume*. The young couple traveled continually between the cities of the Habsburg monarchy. The newspapers of Budapest, Prague, Linz, and many other towns and cities were filled with stories featuring their names. Over the years, they became acquainted and worked together with both notable Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger* of the time: Heinrich Eisenbach,<sup>85</sup> the couple Paula Walden and Otto Taussig, and Max Rott—all of whom performed and lived under pseudonyms.<sup>86</sup> Their meeting points were the Budapest Orpheumgesellschaft, the group Max and Moritz, and other ensembles, in all of which Jews and non-Jews performed together.<sup>87</sup> It was here that Risa Basté and Adolf Glinger met and fell in love. They married in March 1904, and henceforth their traveling activity in the variety scene was a prime occupation of their lives.<sup>88</sup> The work and lives of the two were closely interrelated.

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<sup>84</sup>On the analytical framework of “Jewishness,” see Lisa Silverman, “Reconsidering the Margins: Jewishness as an Analytical Framework,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 8, no. 1 (2009): 103–20. On similarities and differences between antisemitic and misogynistic stereotypes, see Christina von Braun, “Antisemitismus und Misogynie: Vom Zusammenhang zweier Erscheinungen,” in *Von einer Welt in die andere: Jüdinnen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Jutta Dick and Barbara Hahn (Vienna, 1993), 179–96; Shulamit Volkov, *Das jüdische Projekt der Moderne* (München, 2001), 62–81.

<sup>85</sup>Heinrich Eisenbach was born on 10 Aug. 1870 in Cracow and died at the age of 52 on 14 Apr. 1923 in Vienna. The “popular comedian” recognized his wife Mizzi Eisenbach (née Pflieger) as his sole heiress in his last will and testament, signed on 23 Mar. 1923. Todfallsaufnahme Heinrich Eisenbach, Verlassenschaftsabhandlung 658/23, Bezirksgericht Hietzing A4/2, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Austria.

<sup>86</sup>Risa Basté was born Sali Sarah Friedmann on 5 Apr. 1879. Meldezettel Sali Sarah Friedmann, K2 – C-Antiquariat, Historische Meldeunterlagen, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Austria. Meldezettel Sali Sara Glinger Hargesheimer, geb. Friedmann, K4 – Meldekartei, Historische Meldeunterlagen, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Austria. Meldezettel Sali Risa Glinger, geb. Friedmann, K5 – E-Antiquariat, Historische Meldeunterlagen, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Austria. Todfallsaufnahme Sali Glinger, Verlassenschaftsabhandlungen: 46/68, Bezirksgericht Innere Stadt A4/3, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Austria. Meldezettel Adolf Glinger, K2 – C-Antiquariat Historische Meldeunterlagen, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Austria. Meldezettel Adolf Glinger Hargesheimer, K4 – Meldekartei, Historische Meldeunterlagen, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Austria. Meldezettel Adolf Glinger, K5 – E-Antiquariat, Historische Meldeunterlagen, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Austria. Todfallsaufnahme Adolf Glinger, Verlassenschaftsabhandlungen: 360/47, Bezirksgericht Innere Stadt A4/15, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Austria.

<sup>87</sup>Using the previous examples, Klaus Hödl highlighted that popular culture was constituted and consumed jointly by Jews and non-Jews. Klaus Hödl, “The Quest for Amusement: Jewish Leisure Activities in Vienna circa 1900,” *Jewish History and Culture* 14, no.1 (2014): 1–17, 1–4. Regarding Jews and the Viennese Operetta, see Steven Beller, *Wien und die Juden 1867–1938* (Vienna, 1993), 31–32.

<sup>88</sup>At that time, it was a common practice among Jews to change their names. Dietz Bering, “Der jüdische Name,” in *Antisemitismus: Mythen und Vorurteile*, eds. Julius Schoeps and Joachim Schlör (Munich, 1996), 153–66. Hödl, *Zwischen Wiener Lied und Der kleine Kohn*, 6.



Performers in general associated themselves with their profession so strongly that they even settled matters of their private lives in the *Varietés*; that the marriage of the Viennese performers Heinrich Eisenbach and Anna Ferry took place in Somossy's Orpheum in Budapest during a tour is a case in point.

Because mobility had a fundamental impact on popular entertainment, it comes as no surprise that mobility and migration also influenced the performances of the vaudeville groups. The *Volkssänger* and *Variété* stars continually addressed mobility and traveling during their performances, and in doing so picked up different stereotypes along the way, formed troupes, or played on subjects to reinterpret them—all under the angle of mobility. The popular plays positioned themselves in the context of utopian texts that emerged in unison and sought to offer alternative perspectives on class, ethnic, or gender barriers and conflicts. Literature also used the metaphor of traveling to locate contested gender relations or antisemitism in remote or (alleged) imaginary spaces.<sup>89</sup> Likewise, traveling was interpreted from manifold perspectives, and just as trips could have many different reasons, the images of travelers in the performances were multilayered and not exclusively positive. The artists often juxtaposed those images in the broader context of (antisemitic, anti-Bohemian, etc.) stereotypes in their pieces.

In her song *Der Reisekoffer*, Risa Basté told the audience about a journey she took to see her aunt. She assumed the role of a woman who traveled alone. Embodying the panic of human trafficking, the *Soubrette* herself and the setting of the scene created a scenario that was hard to imagine in fin-de-siècle society: “I am coming from a journey, as you can tell from looking at me / and a terrible mishap occurred on the train / a man sat in a corner, at night we tittle-tattle a bit / And we swapped our luggage in the heat of the moment.”<sup>90</sup> The *Soubrette* informed the audience that she had to promise that she would travel in the *Damencoupé*—a train compartment for women only. She also promised not to make contact with any men. However, she broke both promises. As it turned out in this 1902 song, the woman swapped her luggage with another person; after a stimulating encounter with a travel companion, she now had a man's suitcase instead of her own luggage. She was therefore afraid of what her aunt would think. Portraying the image of the supposedly innocent bourgeois daughter she asked the audience for advice:

The aunt is very mean, oh no, and gave strict orders  
 To only use the women's compartment to come here.  
 I say: Aunty, eh, of course, your wish is my command,  
 But if one disobeys, punishment follows immediately.  
 Who can help me with an idea? How does such a thing get into the women's  
 compartment (showing a pair of braces and other pieces of male clothing).<sup>91</sup>

At this point the song turned out to be more subversive than one might expect: at the turn of the century, it was not appropriate for women to talk about men's clothing. In *Die Welt von Gestern* (The World of Yesterday), Stefan Zweig wrote that new words had to be invented so that women would not need to use intolerable words such as “trousers”; women had to refer to trousers as

<sup>89</sup>On imaginary spaces of Vienna in fin-de-siècle literature, see Ulrich E. Bach, *Tropics of Vienna: Colonial Utopias of the Habsburg Empire* (New York, 2016), 2, 31.

<sup>90</sup>Risa Basté, Liedertexte, Theater TB – Textbücher der Theaterzensur 117/24, NÖ Reg. Präs., Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, St. Pölten, Austria.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

the “unspeakable” (*die Unaussprechlichen*).<sup>92</sup> Instead of singing about the *Unaussprechlichen*, the Jewish *Soubrette* sang about the “missing” content of the suitcase. She did not use the words for what she found in her suitcase—namely the men’s clothing that she, as a woman, was not allowed to talk about. Instead she showed the audience what she found. Considering that women were not allowed to use most of the words for male garments, Risa Basté acted confidently. She held a mirror up to the audience expressing what her aunt—who represented the rest of society—expected from a young woman, but also expressed that she wanted neither her aunt nor these members of society to tell her what to do.

The silencing of women’s voices in the official discourse of the previously quoted police records obscured the role the actresses played within the ensembles and the confidence expressed by the female musicians and *Volkssängerinnen* (*Soubrettes*) in their performances. Risa Basté exposed and challenged the gap between supposedly forbidden behavior and the sexual pursuits of women and confronted her audience with the fact that she preferred traveling in a shared train compartment with men. As the *Soubrette* continued her performance of *Der Reisekoffer*, the stage became covered with pieces of men’s clothing. Referring to this situation, the newspapers emphasized that the *Soubrette* knew how to turn the atmosphere of the *Variété* into a private bedroom. Nonetheless, the censorship (which was restrictive concerning sexuality at the turn of the century) did not prohibit her from staging the song.<sup>93</sup>

Notwithstanding society’s restrictive attitude, in the unique atmosphere of popular culture the actors and actresses even managed to spark a vivid and in-depth discussion about gender boundaries by utilizing the metaphor of mobility. Transferring the scenario to a neutral enclosed space of a train allowed the performers to act out what was not possible in reality. At the *Variétés* around 1900 the actors and actresses established the practice of gender bending. Risa Basté perfected this kind of gender bending together with one of her partners, Mr. Man de Wirth. Unlike in earlier performances of *Hosenrollen*, not only one actor made up the scene, but two—a man and a woman—each performing the other sex: “Mr. Man de Wirth and Ms. Risa Basté still exert the most powerful force to draw attention. They both contrast with each other in an interesting way—Mr. Man de Wirth as a lady and Ms. Basté as a gentleman. Both successfully studied the strengths and weaknesses of the ‘other’ gender and provide imitations which cannot be distinguished from the originals.”<sup>94</sup> By having a female and a male performer each staging the opposite sex it became possible under the guise of mobility and internationality in the urban sphere of popular entertainment to both mention in public and discuss gender and sex from the perspectives of both men and women.

A different piece, *Der Afrikareisende*, utilized the key of suggesting mobility together with the international sphere of popular entertainment to negotiate Jewishness, juxtaposing it with colonial stereotypes. *Der Afrikareisende* was written by the Jewish *Volkssänger* Heinrich Eisenbach, who was popular for deploying and making fun of “jargon”—an often antisemitic depiction of a mixed language of Viennese dialect, Yiddish fragments, and German.<sup>95</sup> The

<sup>92</sup>Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern*, 41st ed. (Frankfurt, 2014), 94.

<sup>93</sup>“Theater und Vergnügungen in Wien,” *Neue Freie Presse*, 18 July 1894, 12. “Advertisements,” *New York Clipper*, 26 Sept. 1903, 735. Such references to the famous *Soubrette* can be found in nearly all newspapers. On the sensibility of censorship concerning sexual references, see Norbert Bachleitner and Paul Ferstl, “Österreichische Theaterzensur im 20. Jahrhundert: Ein Abriss ihrer Entwicklung und eine Fallstudie zur Zensur englischer Stücke während des Ersten Weltkriegs,” in *Weltbühne Wien: Rezeption anglophoner Dramen auf Wiener Bühnen des 20. Jahrhunderts* vol. 2, eds. Ewald Mengel, Ludwig Schnauder, and Rudolf Weis (Trier, 2010), 27–50, 27–31.

<sup>94</sup>“Roithners Theater Variété,” *Neue Linzer Tagespost*, 29 Apr. 1899, 4.

<sup>95</sup>“Im Somossy Orpheum,” *Internationale Artisten Revue*, 1 Nov. 1893, 9.

*Afrikareisende*, Wenzel Jerabek, is depicted as a Bohemian citizen and quite an unsavory character<sup>96</sup> who is a famous man after having traveled through Africa and who wants to convey his global knowledge to the audience. He unfolds his observations while sharing his life story. In doing so, the Jewish *Volkssänger* performing as a traveler to Africa compares the experiences he has made on the journey with (his) socialization in the Habsburg monarchy, all performed in a mixture of Yiddish, Czech, and Viennese dialect.

You do not need to be afraid of me,  
 Even though I appear a bit wild,  
 I will do you no harm,  
 Because I am a Bohemian guy! Wenzel Jerabek  
 is my name and I deal with Africanists!<sup>97</sup>

The play *Der Afrikareisende* applies the metaphor of traveling to replace stereotypes, transferring them from the Habsburg monarchy to a new and faraway surrounding—in this case to Africa. The setting functioned as a dummy for the censorship and audience to respectively relocate and distance political problems of the time. This was an expanding approach also known in literature, opera, and operetta. For example, the forgotten 1885 operetta of the same name (*Der Afrikareisende*) by Franz von Suppé, and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's 1901 novel *Afrika's Semiramis* apply the same strategy to discuss problems of the Habsburg monarchy by proxy outside its territory. By relocating the setting, Eisenbach's play pokes fun at and exaggerates the stereotypes with which most members of the audience were familiar.<sup>98</sup> Every second person living in fin-de-siècle Vienna had not been born in the city. Czech speakers constituted the largest group of immigrants in Vienna, followed by the Jewish migrants from the monarchy's eastern provinces. The stereotypes of these two groups were the most common in the daily urban experience, as reflected by Eisenbach in this text:

In Africa there is a big,  
 big meadow. There, you see neither a tree,  
 nor a bush nor a tavern,  
 nor do they have a gas light.  
 There's the Jewish desert  
 Sahrah [*sic*]. Once, I was walking around in the Sahrah [*sic*]  
 and heard  
 a terrible roar and,  
 suddenly from the distance a powerful  
 lion jumped onto me.  
 Oh, I thought, this is dobre  
 Noz! [Czech for "goodnight"] As you know, Bohemians are

<sup>96</sup>On Czechs in Vienna 1900, see Brigitte Hamann, *Hitlers Wien: Lehrjahre eines Diktators* (Munich, Zurich, 1996), 435–55. Michael and Lichtblau, *Schmelztiegel*, 143–45.

<sup>97</sup>Heinrich Eisenbach, *Der Afrikareisende*, Theaterzensur Textbücher 1899–1901, Kt. 116/3, NÖ Reg. Präs, Lower Austrian National Archives, St. Pölten, Austria.

<sup>98</sup>András Vari has concluded that the functions of ethnic stereotypes at the turn of the nineteenth century fluctuated regularly, including both positive and negative components. András Vari, "The Functions of Ethnic Stereotypes in Austria and Hungary in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Creating the Other: Ethnic Conflict and Nationalism in Habsburg Central Europe*, ed. Nancy M. Wingfield (New York, 2004), 39–55, 48–54.

not timid. But either way  
 It's not easy to fight a lion by  
 Yourself. The lion  
 Bounded in my direction opening its jaw,  
 As big as the outer  
 Palace gate [in Vienna], with the intention of eating me.  
 Out of fear I started  
 To shout in Czech: Strč  
 Prst, skrsk, krk! [Shove your finger down your throat] As the lion  
 Heard that, he opened his mouth,  
 Started to laugh, and looked  
 At me in a friendly manner, then he turned around  
 And walked slowly away. And  
 As I look closer at him  
 I saw he had two tails. He was a Bohemian  
 Lion, my fellow countryman.<sup>99</sup>

The play thus adopts signifiers of Jewish, Czech, and colonial ascriptions. While Africa is totally unfamiliar, the *Afrikareisende* is able to communicate in Yiddish and Czech and assigns a Jewish connotation to the place when he mistakes it for the Jewish desert “Sahrah.” The play employs the phonetic proximity of the German pronunciation of the African desert “Sahara” and the (allegedly Jewish) female name “Sarah” to superimpose the Zionist discourse of the time, when Palestine was commonly spoken of as the “Jewish desert.”<sup>100</sup> Strolling through the faraway “Jewish desert Sahrah,” he meets a lion. What is more, although the protagonist is not familiar with the animal in its “new” appearance, he identifies it as Czech by associating it with the Czech language and heraldic symbol. He survives this dangerous encounter because he is able to communicate with the allegedly dangerous lion. Moreover, the *Afrikareisende* expects the audience to understand this reference to something that was usually denounced as *Böhmakeln*—speaking in Bohemian idiom—in the Habsburg monarchy.

It may seem as though these performances were mainly highlighting differences, yet whatever these assertions were meant to evoke, the director of the piece never created a total opposition between the self and the other. *Der Afrikareisende* used an irrelevant setting (as far as the censorship was concerned, i.e. Africa) to negotiate not only the problem of pejorative clichés but also colonialism. The *Afrikareisende* depicts the Bohemians as stupid, greedy, uneducated, and unwilling to work. However, the *Afrikareisende* calls himself Wenzel, which is intended to be recognized as a Bohemian name. Even if the character Wenzel Jerzabek, staged by Heinrich Eisenbach, is supposed to recall the stereotype of the uneducated Bohemian, the character is invented and portrayed in such a way that the audience would react with empathy. Moreover, the audience of course experiences the play through this character, who simultaneously functions as a communicator between Yiddish, Czech, and Viennese slang, as well as between familiar and unknown spaces. With the character Wenzel staged by a Jewish *Volkssänger*, the audience experienced a twofold passing, both that of several Jewish spheres—lingual and spatial—and that of the immigrant’s

<sup>99</sup>Heinrich Eisenbach, *Der Afrikareisende*. Theaterzensur Textbücher 1899–1901, Kt. 116/3, NÖ Reg. Präs, Lower Austrian National Archives, St. Pölten, Austria.

<sup>100</sup>I want to thank Frank Stern for bringing this fact to my attention. For further information on Zionist discourse, see Michael Brenner, *Geschichte des Zionismus* (Munich, 2002), particularly 44–55.

experience, represented by the allegedly non-Jewish immigrant per se, the Czech-speaking immigrant. Tough Bohemia in particular was cast in the discourse of the time as a territory with an almost entirely Jewish population. Finally, the play indirectly ascribes thinking in stereotypes to those holding a colonial perspective of the world. It pokes fun at those who attended the new kind of “anthropological” evening lectures in which a supposed scientist-traveler presented a European audience with pictures of the “exotic” indigenous population they encountered on their journeys.<sup>101</sup>

In *Der Reisekoffer*, the initially harmless situation of traveling enabled the mutually intended, sexual contact between two strangers. On the stage, the tête-à-tête could be negotiated by referring to traveling and settling the scenario in a mobile and neutral space. These performances of the *Soubrettes* conveyed vivid images of confident women who cleverly used the metaphor of traveling to transfer content that was considered critical by the censorship of the time to an allegedly harmless and unimportant location. Thus, as a part of their performances, they were even able to convert gender stereotypes. Risa Basté addressed gender differences with regard to masculine characteristics as perceived by her as a woman. However, she not only referred to her handling of the unfortunate situation but also introduced the male position and accordingly included both sides of the stereotype.

The performances played along a distinguishable “scale” between total difference and total similarity, a strategy that was intended to help the audience members become more familiar with the content of the piece.<sup>102</sup> Thus, I argue that by presenting this composition of multilayered differences to the audience, the director stressed the perception of similarities equally. With reference to Sigmund Freud, a joke cannot be appreciated if no one can empathize with the person/character who is telling it. A feeling of empathy is only evoked when an (apparent) opposition arises, which also retrieves similarities in the situation.<sup>103</sup> By enabling perceptions of similarities under the guise of mobility, reversing antisemitic stereotypes, and transferring controversial issues to faraway places, the performers were able to pass various ostensible boundaries, such as gender and Jewish visibility and invisibility. The metaphor of traveling was used as a dummy for censorship while functioning virtually as a figure of vagabondage. In doing so, the plays went beyond mere political and cultural critique and engaged the audience in self-critique.

<sup>101</sup>Such anthropological evening lectures became quite popular among the bourgeoisie around 1900 and could regularly be found in institutions like the Urania. This was also represented in the new emerging panopticons, such as Präuscher’s Panoptikum in the Prater.

<sup>102</sup>Because research has mainly focused on differences, Dorothee Kimmich and Anil Bhatti elaborated on the function of difference within societies. Bhatti and Kimmich argue that thinking about difference is based on a binary construct that solely differentiates between those who are equal and “the other”—without any range in between. However, they state that difference does not matter in the practice of everyday life but instead that the possibility to recognize difference is based on the ability to perceive similarity. Rather than merely perceiving a total difference or similarity, a person perceives a range (of stereotypes, of facets, of identities, and so on) of differences and/or similarities. The paradigm of similarity does not negate difference but elaborates on the range and practice between the dichotomous opposition of similarity and otherness. Anil Bhatti and Dorothee Kimmich, eds., *Ähnlichkeit: Ein kulturtheoretisches Paradigma* (Konstanz, 2015). Johannes Feichtinger and Heidemarie Uhl highlighted that research on the Habsburg Empire has recently begun to reexamine dichotomies based on differences. Johannes Feichtinger and Heidemarie Uhl, “Stichwort Habsburg Zentraleuropa: Ein kulturwissenschaftliches Untersuchungsfeld,” in *Habsburg neu denken: Vielfalt und Ambivalenz in Zentraleuropa, 30 kulturwissenschaftliche Stichworte*, eds. Johannes Feichtinger and Heidemarie Uhl (Vienna, 2016), 9–18, 15.

<sup>103</sup>I am here referring to what Sigmund Freud noted on the function of humor and jokes, and moreover the way popular culture works. Sigmund Freud, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten: Der Humor* (Frankfurt, 2012), 193–200, 209–11, and 253–54.

## Conclusion

One must include the influence of mobility when considering what determined popular entertainment at the turn of the twentieth century to understand its attraction and success. The spread of popular entertainment (“mass culture”) coincided with a change in the degree of mobility in society in general,<sup>104</sup> which subsequently influenced popular culture on various levels. Larger numbers of musicians and artists started to operate outside their local regions, which afforded a specific infrastructure. Vaudeville directors opened *Artistenheime*, hotel-like institutions that offered sleeping places for performers from outside the city. Newspapers provided coverage of the entertainment scene, while agencies supporting the traveling stars and local venues by arranging stationary permits for them to perform swept the cities. This infrastructure made it easier for traveling performers to keep their performances going for an international public. Mobility in popular entertainment, however, also resulted in controversial assertions and allegations, and society at large maintained its reservations against the traveling stars. The image of traveling agents escorting actresses correlated with that of the panic concerning trafficking in women, and because the audience and the locals perceived the performers as “foreigners” they often maligned the characters of traveling performers. A consequence of this distrustful attitude was that people accused those involved in vaudevilles, music halls, and *Varietés* of only being interested in earning easy money, functioning as covers for clandestine prostitution, and producing “lowbrow” cultural materials that were not worth seeing.

The negative effects linked to mobility in popular entertainment, however, juxtapose the feasibilities that mobility and traveling enabled by utilizing them in plays and songs. On the stages of popular entertainment venues, mobility created a space of possibility as a metaphor of replacement. This influenced expressions of Jewishness and gender and enabled the discussion of stereotypes as a performative strategy. Because of this ambivalence between the possibilities and the harsh denunciations linked to the development of mobile popular culture, I have posed the question of whether the audience, the society, and even some of the performers’ peers became afraid of the mobility of popular entertainment.

The performers’ reactions to assertions, devaluations, and criticism, as well as the audience’s commitment to popular entertainment and the strategies used in it provide a potential answer to this question. The actors and actresses rejected such clichés and allegations and invested a great deal of effort in defending themselves and their art. They attempted both to expose and avoid the performing agencies that were involved in exploitation and prostitution, and their comments illustrate their belief that newspapers and agencies should support traveling artists and musicians. In the newspapers for the entertainment business, the performers pilloried directors or managers who attempted to engage women in prostitution. Associations tried to refute the allegations by widely publishing articles and trying to create public awareness not only about grievances in the entertainment business but also about the commitment of serious performers in defending their art against mere assertions. Finally, the support urban audiences gave to the traveling artists and the increasing popularity of their performances indicate that the audience had a committed interest in both the performers and their performances and was indifferent to the allegations brought against them. The audience members were fans of the *Soubrettes*’s subversive staging and became quite used to the performative strategy of transferring stereotypes to faraway locations, such as Africa, or into

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<sup>104</sup>Moritz Csáky coined and defined this notion of a new quality of mobility. See note 6.

an enclosed space, like a train compartment. The numerous spectators seem to have appreciated the critical voices that could be articulated in popular entertainment and to have allowed the metaphor of traveling to enable “mobility in the minds,” thereby making it possible to address stereotypes and to question them. This in turn transformed the sites of popular entertainment into subversive spaces where gender, antisemitism, and other controversial issues could be discussed—and this may well have evoked fear in the persons who carped about the scene.

**SUSANNE KORBEL** is researcher and lecturer at the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Graz specializing in cultural studies, migration studies, and Jewish history. Currently, she is working on a project about new, nonexclusive narratives of the history of Jews in Vienna around 1900 based on everyday life encounters and relations, aiming to overcome narratives of particularity. She is about to publish her first book, *Singspielhalle, Kabarett und Varieté Jüdinnen und Juden von der Habsburgermonarchie bis Amerika* (Böhlau, 2020). She has held fellowships in Jerusalem, New York, Southampton, and Tübingen, and taught as visiting faculty at the Andrassy University Budapest and the University of Haifa.