

## 6 | Operetta and Intermediality

Operetta not only transferred across borders but also from one media platform to another, a characteristic of industrialized production termed ‘intermediality’. A stage show was a multilayered communication medium that connected to other media, such as sheet music, records, film, and radio, linking ‘a variety of media in a symbolic mesh’, as Carolin Stahrenberg and Nils Grosch explain succinctly.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1912, a Broadway theatre reviewer remarked: ‘Nowadays when one goes to hear a Viennese operetta one is certain to recognize the tunes.’ The next year, another American reporter observed: ‘Viennese operetta waltzes are produced in New York restaurants long before they reach the New York theatres.’<sup>2</sup> Operetta also transferred from the theatre to the *palais de danse* after the First World War. Composers knew that if they included waltzes, tangos, and fox trots, these could be marketed in an alternative way via dance bands. An operetta song demonstrated its autonomy ‘by its ability to walk out of the theatre on its own’, as David Baker neatly puts it, ‘becoming a hit in cafés, band concerts, dance halls or variety shows’, and, of course, on records.<sup>3</sup> There was nothing so new about this, Johann Strauss’s operettas were intermedial in a similar sense, since he served up ballroom versions of many of their numbers. Intermediality can create new styles of entertainment, as demonstrated by *Zirkus aimé* (1932), a mixture of revue operetta and circus, with music by Ralph Benatzky and book and lyrics by Curt Goetz. When it was given in the West End as *The Flying Trapeze* (1935), its novel combination of theatre and circus was commented on in *The Play Pictorial*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Carolin Stahrenberg and Nils Grosch, ‘The Transculturality of Stage, Song and Other Media: Intermediality in Popular Musical Theatre’, in Len Platt, Tobias Becker, and David Linton, eds., *Popular Musical Theatre in Germany and Britain, 1890–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 187–200, at 187.

<sup>2</sup> ‘“Eva” Has One Charm’, *New York Times*, 31 Dec. 1912, 7, and ‘Copy London Halls at Palace Theatre’, *New York Times*, 25 Mar. 1913, 8.

<sup>3</sup> David J. Baker, ‘The Merry Mogul: Franz Lehár Modernized Operetta with *The Merry Widow*’, *Opera News*, 65:6 (Dec. 2000), 48–51, at 50.

<sup>4</sup> Anon., *The Play Pictorial*, 66:398 (Oct. 1935), 24.

## Arrangements of Operetta Music

The term ‘remediation’ refers to a change from one medium to another, and there were various ways in which the music of operetta might be remediated. For example, it could be turned into sheet music for private pleasure playing the home piano, or, re-emerge as a military band medley for the enjoyment of the public spending a leisurely afternoon in the park. The market for sheet music was enormous. Bernard Grun recollects that, in the first half of the twentieth century, people bought ‘thousands of piano scores, songs, and “selections,” which were then played at home on the piano’.<sup>5</sup> Diverse arrangements were published: for voice and piano, piano solo or duet, solo instrument with or without piano accompaniment, large or small orchestra, and military or brass bands. The Royal Artillery band recorded a selection from *The Merry Widow*, as did the Grenadier Guards band.<sup>6</sup> Military bands also spread this music in other countries. King Edward’s Horse, a British Dominions cavalry regiment, recorded a selection from *The Chocolate Soldier* in 1913 for Edison Bell.<sup>7</sup> Many arrangements were for dancing. MacQueen-Pope comments on the ubiquity of the ‘Merry Widow Waltz’, which in the days before the *palais de danse* was ‘ground out on piano organs . . . , played in restaurants by orchestras, at the seaside, in parks, at exhibitions, on parade by brass and military bands, tinkled on pianos in innumerable homes, churned on records on the new popular gramophones, [and] danced by couples . . . at parties everywhere’.<sup>8</sup>

A publisher might employ more than one arranger, even for piano selections. In 1909, Ascherberg, Hopwood & Crew published Carl Kiefert’s waltz based on melodies from *The Dollar Princess*, as well as Charles Godfrey’s piano selection from that operetta. The piano part of a vocal score needed an arranger, and Chappell often employed H. M. [Henry Marcellus] Higgs. There were many other arrangers, such as Henri Saxon, Guy Jones, and Gustav Blasser, working for various publishers. A musical director might also arrange selections, as Arthur Wood did for Gilbert’s *Yvonne*. In the early century, a vocal score would have cost around 6s in the UK and \$2 in the USA (slightly more expensive).

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Grun, *Prince of Vienna: The Life, the Times and the Melodies of Oscar Straus* (London: W. H. Allen, 1955), 72.

<sup>6</sup> Respectively, Gramophone Co., 0122, and the Odeon Company, 0706.

<sup>7</sup> Available on disc, 228, or cylinder, 20299; recorded in Oct. 1913.

<sup>8</sup> W. MacQueen-Pope and D. L. Murray, *Fortune’s Favourite: The Life and Times of Franz Lehár* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), 116.

A single song was around 2s in the UK and 60¢ in the USA. At this time a dollar was worth just under five shillings (and there were 20 shillings to the pound). The typical price of individual songs remained the same after the war, although the cost of a vocal score increased a little. As a consequence of the sharply rising prices in 1922, however, sheet music was becoming cheaper in real terms.

Before the war, figure dances were still in vogue, so Chappell published a set of 'Merry Widow Lancers'. Iff's Orchestra recorded the *Merry Widow Lancers* on three discs (containing the five figures of the dance).<sup>9</sup> Some of the music, notably that of the 'Merry Widow Waltz' and 'Vilja', is uncomfortably forced into the required tempo for the figures in a way that was rarely necessary in quadrilles based on music from the Johann Strauss operettas. After the war, dance bands grew in number and were of the newer variety dominated by wind instruments rather than strings. The repertoire of these bands included waltzes, fox trots, and tangos from operetta. The link between theatre and dance was evident when Irene and Vernon Castle took roles in Irving Berlin's *Watch Your Step* at Broadway's New Amsterdam Theatre in 1914, the year they started their dance school and published *Modern Dancing*.

The remediation of an operetta number as a dance piece involved related material but offered a different experience. A few examples from both sides of the Atlantic suffice to illustrate how the dance bands of the 1920s included operetta in their repertoire. The duet 'Josef, ach Josef' from Leo Fall's *Madame Pompadour* was a hit record for two stars of the Berlin stage, Fritzi Massary and Max Pallenberg, in 1928.<sup>10</sup> Yet the Savoy Orpheans at the Savoy Hotel, London, had already recorded it as a fox trot, 'Joseph', several years earlier.<sup>11</sup> In New York, George Olsen and His Music recorded the fox trot 'Leander' from Jean Gilbert's operetta *Katja, die Tänzerin* in 1926.<sup>12</sup> Needless to say it was a similar story with dance bands in Berlin, of which there were a plethora by 1927.<sup>13</sup> Operetta continued to relate to dance band music in the 1930s: Chappell published dance-band arrangements of the waltzes 'Pardon, Madame!' and 'Good Night!' from

<sup>9</sup> Iff's Orchestra, conducted by Herr [Wilhelm] Iff, London: Gramophone Co., 0563–5. Available on Palaeophonics 92 (2015).

<sup>10</sup> *Die grossen Premieren*, Membran Music, 2CDs, 233003 (2010), CD 1, track 13.

<sup>11</sup> Columbia 3373, A560-1, rec. London, c. 16 Jan. 1924. *Madame Pompadour*, Palaeophonics 109 (2013), tracks 11 and 12.

<sup>12</sup> Victor, 10-inch, black label, 20289-B, rec. New York, 29 Oct. 1926.

<sup>13</sup> Anton Gill, *A Dance Between the Flames: Berlin Between the Wars* (London: John Murray, 1993), 104.

Abraham's *Viktoria and her Hussar* in 1931.<sup>14</sup> Henry Hall, who had recently become conductor of the BBC Dance Orchestra, was asked by Chappell to select and arrange a piano selection from the same composer's *Ball at the Savoy* in 1933.

### Player Pianos and Records

There had been various early models of player piano, but it was the pianola developed by the Aeolian Company in 1897 that really took off.<sup>15</sup> In 1908, an industry conference in Buffalo agreed to a common format for piano rolls, which would be capable of playing all 88 notes of the standard piano keyboard. Before this, in 1904, Edwin Welte had invented a device that would play back a performance exactly as the original pianist had played it. People were desirous of hearing a celebrated pianist's performance in their own homes, and player-piano rolls now hold value as a source of historic performing practice – at least in terms of tempo, phrasing, and rhythm. It was still necessary to rely on mechanical devices to give prominence to a melodic line. The player piano was at the height of its popularity in the 1920s. Player pianos and piano rolls, which had been produced all around the globe, faced a period of decline in the 1930s, as attention turned to radio and records. Figure 6.1 shows one of two rolls of selections from *Lilac Time*, arranged by G. H. Clutsam, issued by the Aristyle Music Roll Company.<sup>16</sup>

Before the British Government passed its new Copyright Act in 1911, a Royal Commission had to grapple with the vexed question of a composer's rights with regard to mechanical music. The gramophone



Figure 6.1 *Lilac Time* piano roll.

<sup>14</sup> Pl. nos. 34041 and 31042.

<sup>15</sup> For more detailed information on player pianos, see Roehl, Harvey Roehl, *Player Piano Treasury* (New York: Vestal Press, 1973), and Arthur A. Reblitz, *The Golden Age of Automatic Musical Instruments* (Woodsville, New Hampshire: Mechanical Music Press, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Aristyle Music Roll 93213C and 93214C. Aristyle was located at 18 Orchard Street, London, W1.

companies claimed that copyright fees would cost many jobs among the manufacturing workforce. According to William Boosey, Winston Churchill decided that pianola rolls infringed copyright because it was possible for a human being to read and reconstruct the music being played, but that was not the case with gramophone records. The Act resulted in many composers having to part with their work to record companies for a compulsory fixed percentage. Section 19 of the Act put it at 5 per cent of the price of the record, or 2.5 per cent if the composer's music did not feature on the second side of the record. It meant that composers were earning less than 2d from each record sold (records at this time cost between 1s and 3s). Moreover, this 2d had to be shared with any lyricist or agent they used. Once the copyright percentage was agreed with one record company, another company had the right to insist upon the same terms. The performers of music, on the other hand, were able to negotiate any terms they pleased, and consequently made far more money out of records than did composers and lyricists.

The changing music market in the early twentieth century prompted a shift from concentrating on sales of sheet music to the exploitation of rights.<sup>17</sup> The UK's Copyright Act of 1911 responded to the 1908 revision of the Berne Convention by asserting that copyright in music applied to its mechanical reproduction. The Mechanical Copyright Licences Company, established in 1910, collected and distributed royalties, and became the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society in 1924. Publishers realized that performing rights, about which they had been so neglectful previously, were now a major source of income, especially with the advent of recording, player pianos, films, and radio broadcasts.

The phonographic cylinder could no longer compete with competition from discs as the first decade of the twentieth century drew to a close. Columbia Records dropped the format in 1912, though Edison kept going with dwindling numbers. The industry was always keen, for competitive reasons, to stress its technological progress. An advertisement in 1912 for the Orpheus gramophone claimed that it had an 'everlasting sapphire point' making replacement needles unnecessary.<sup>18</sup> Another advertisement, for the new Columbia Grafonola of 1924, boasts of technological progress in Columbia's gramophones and records.<sup>19</sup> Yet the German record label Electrola, part of the same business as Britain's Gramophone Company,

<sup>17</sup> See Ruth Towse, 'Economics of Music Publishing: Copyright and the Market', *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 41:4 (2016), 403–20.

<sup>18</sup> *The Play Pictorial*, 21:124 (Dec. 1912), vii.   <sup>19</sup> *The Play Pictorial*, 44:264 (Aug. 1924), 51.

had already claimed perfection for its records of *The Merry Widow* in 1907, citing an endorsement from the composer: 'The new Gramophone Records reproduce the fine musical points of my own music in the most perfect manner.'<sup>20</sup> In 1910, the Gramophone Company gave Robert Falcon Scott two HMV 'Monarch' gramophones and a box of several hundred records to take with him on his ill-fated Terra Nova Expedition to the Antarctic. Among the discs were the 'Dollar Princess Two-Step' and 'Dollar Princess Operatic Party', issued while the operetta was still running at Daly's.<sup>21</sup>

Records were of performers who had achieved stardom on stage, and the same was true of films and photographs. Even published song-sheets commonly named the singer who had made the song popular. Thus, to pick up on Mary Simonson's useful phrase, performers created 'intermedial reference points'.<sup>22</sup> In 1911, for example, soloists from the London production of *The Count of Luxembourg* could be heard on discs released by HMV, and soloists from the New York production of *Gypsy Love* could be heard on Edison cylinders. Recordings were of single items or selections rather than of whole productions. Original cast members were preferred, but engaging every single one was not always possible. Records of some members of the Daly's *Merry Widow* cast (sadly, not Lily Elsie<sup>23</sup>) were released by Odeon, a company founded in Berlin in 1903, for which Eduard Künneke worked as musical director during 1908–10. Harry Welchman played Colonel Belovar in the Daly's production of *The Lady of the Rose*, but it is Thorpe Bates who sings the role on the Columbia recordings with Daly's Theatre Orchestra. Yet Phyllis Dare, Ivy Tremand, and Huntley Wright all sing their own numbers on these records (see Appendix 4). Singers engaged for recordings discovered that gramophone royalties could supplement their salaries substantially, especially if they were star performers. José Collins's earnings at the Gaiety in 1923, including her gramophone royalties, sometimes amounted to £800 in a single week.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *The Play Pictorial*, 10:61 (Sep. 1907), viii.

<sup>21</sup> 'Dollar Princess Two-Step' (Fall, arr. Kaps), The Black Diamond Band, Mar. 1910, GC 2–462; 'The Dollar Princess Operatic Party' (Fall), opening chorus, sung by Eleanor Jones-Hudson, Peter Dawson, Stanley Kirkby, Ernest Pike, Carrie Tubb, and Harold Wilde, Oct. 1909, GC 4621. The recordings can be found on *Scott's Music Box*, 2 CDs, EMI 5099964494920, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Mary Simonson, *Body Knowledge: Performance, Intermediality, and American Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 20.

<sup>23</sup> Recordings were made by Columbia, however, of her singing in the leading role of Stolz's *The Blue Train* (1927). Transfers are available on Palaeophonics 101, PEO197 (2012).

<sup>24</sup> José Collins, *The Maid of the Mountains: Her Story* (London: Hutchinson, 1932), 205.

There were three record manufacturers in Britain in 1912, but by 1916 the number had risen to 60.<sup>25</sup> Recording companies marketed operetta not only as dance music but also as hit songs. The 1920s were a boom time for record sales, and songs from successful operettas were recorded regularly because, at this time, the industry was reluctant to promote anything new and untried.<sup>26</sup> In Austria and Germany, Odeon and Parlophone advertised records of *Schlager* (hit songs).<sup>27</sup> HMV Records of 'Sämtliche Schlager' ('All the Hits') from *Der Graf von Luxemburg* were advertised as on sale at Weiss's shop at 189 Friedrichstrasse, Berlin, almost immediately after its premiere in 1909.<sup>28</sup> When Paul Abraham appeared on the scene, he was well aware of the market for *Schlager*. Many songs from *Viktoria und ihr Husar* became hit records ('Meine Mama', 'Mausi', and 'Goodnight' were special favourites). In *Die Blume von Hawaii* (1931), there were again hit songs to be marketed: one of them, half written in English, was 'My Golden Baby'.<sup>29</sup>

The separate existence of *Schlager* encouraged intermediality. People who had never been to a theatre were whistling Lehár's 'Nechledl-Marsch' (from *Wiener Frauen*) on the streets, claims Anton Mayer.<sup>30</sup> Out of the context of operetta performance, it hardly mattered what key a song was sung in, or whether the singer was male or female. Chappell marketed the sheet music for 'You Are My Heart's Delight' in four different keys to cater for male or female soloists of various voice ranges, and also published a vocal duet version for soprano and tenor (Figure 6.2).

Tauber's voice ensured wide dissemination of Lehár's music on radio and records.<sup>31</sup> Certain songs became particularly identified with him, examples being 'Hab ein blaues Himmelbett' (*Frasquita*), 'Gern hab'ich

<sup>25</sup> David Linton and Len Platt, 'Dover Street to Dixie and the Politics of Cultural Transfer and Exchange', in Platt, Becker, and Linton, *Popular Musical Theatre in London and Berlin*, 170–86, at 185.

<sup>26</sup> See Simon Frith, 'The Industrialization of Music', in *Music for Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 11–23, at 15.

<sup>27</sup> See advertisement for records of *Im weißen Rössl* reproduced in Kevin Clarke and Helmut Peter, *The White Horse Inn: On the Trail of a World Success*, trans. Interlingua, Austria (St Wolfgang: Rössl Hotel Verlag, 2009), 121.

<sup>28</sup> See advertisement reproduced in Stefan Frey, 'Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg? Franz Lehár und die Unterhaltungsmusik des 20. Jahrhunderts' (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1999), 148.

<sup>29</sup> Welsh singer Donald Peers made a hit recording of this as late as 1949. HMV B.9808, OEA-14068.

<sup>30</sup> Anton Mayer, *Franz Lehár – Die lustiger Witwe: Der Ernst der leichten Muse* (Vienna: Edition Steinbauer, 2003), 40. Unfortunately, Mayer rarely provides sources of information, and his book contains no footnotes. It is often difficult, therefore, to verify the information given.

<sup>31</sup> Stefan Frey, *Franz Lehár oder das schlechte Gewissen der leichten Musik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995), 176.



Figure 6.2 'You Are My Heart's Delight', the hit song of *The Land of Smiles*.

den Frau'n geküßt' (*Paganini*), and 'O Mädchen, mein Mädchen' (*Friederike*).<sup>32</sup> With 'Dein ist mein ganzes Herz' (*Das Land des Lächelns*),

<sup>32</sup> For an analysis of the 'Tauber-Lied', see Paul D. Seeley, 'Franz Lehár: Aspects of His Life with a Critical Survey of His Operettas and the Work of His Jewish Librettists', PhD diss. University of Liverpool, 2004, 358–64.

the Tauber-Lied became a ‘declaration of love’ song and lost the narrative quality it had in *Frasquita* and *Paganini*. Frey comments that this type of song was even more effective on radio or gramophone than the stage, and records of ‘Dein ist mein ganzes Herz’ sold over a million copies in German, English, French, and Italian versions.<sup>33</sup> The song was as popular on radio as it was in sheet music and on disc. In 1944, Forbes-Winslow remarked that ‘You Are My Heart’s Delight’ had been ‘broadcast repeatedly from more than fifty stations in parts of the world’.<sup>34</sup>

Some singers now made their reputations singing vocal refrains on dance-band records, one such being Pat O’Malley, who sang songs from *White Horse Inn* on recordings made by Jack Hylton and His Orchestra in Berlin and Milan,<sup>35</sup> before becoming a film and TV actor in the USA. Others who released songs from this operetta were Sam Browne and Cavan O’Connor.

## Radio

When dance bands and singers performed on radio, it always created a thorny problem for the BBC. The corporation was anxious to avoid accusations that it was acting like an advertiser in a theatre programme. When Eric Maschwitz, head of the BBC’s variety department, first invited Cavan O’Connor to appear on radio in 1935, he was asked to sing anonymously as ‘The Vagabond Lover’. His signature song, ‘I’m only a Strolling Vagabond’, was that of the unknown stranger in Künneke’s *The Cousin from Nowhere*.

In New York, RCA Radio had no hesitation in promoting the Broadway production of *White Horse Inn*, and broadcast excerpts in the same month as the premiere, excitedly announcing the presence of leading cast members, such as Kitty Carlisle and William Gaxton.<sup>36</sup> An unnamed chorus member was Alfred Drake, the understudy for Gaxton (as Leopold), who later achieved fame as Curly in *Oklahoma!* at St James’s Theatre in 1943.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Frey, ‘Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg’, 241–42.

<sup>34</sup> D. Forbes-Winslow, *Daly’s: The Biography of a Theatre* (London: W. H. Allen, 1944), 162.

<sup>35</sup> ‘It Would Be Wonderful’ in Berlin, and ‘Your Eyes’ in Milan, both March 1931. Tracks 10 and 11 of *Selections from White Horse Inn*, Sepia 1141 (2009).

<sup>36</sup> RCA Radio *Magic Key* broadcast, 25 Oct. 1936, *Selections from White Horse Inn*, Sepia 1141 (2009), CD recording, tracks 3–8.

<sup>37</sup> Amy Henderson and Dwight Blocker Bowers, *Red, Hot & Blue: A Smithsonian Salute to the American Musical* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 145.

In the next decade, Drake enjoyed star billing in a BBC broadcast of excerpts from *White Horse Inn* (15 November 1959).

The precursor of radio was the electrophone. The use of telephone technology to relay music from the Paris Opéra had been demonstrated at the Exposition Internationale d'Électricité in 1881, and companies offering similar services soon sprang up elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> In 1890, Lillian Russell sang 'Voici le sabre' from Offenbach's *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein* into a funnel on the New York stage, while President Grover Cleveland listened to her performance in Washington.<sup>39</sup> In London, an audio system developed by the Electrophone Company in 1895 used telephone lines to relay musical shows and opera. On 1 February 1896, the cover of the weekly review *Invention* depicted a man relaxing in an armchair, smoking a pipe, and listening to an electrophone transmission over headphones.

Singer Ellaline Terriss mentions the electrophone in her autobiography, describing how, by means of microphones, a show was relayed over the telephone. It enabled her to hear *The Shop Girl* (1895) when she was temporarily absent from the show through illness. She explains:

you listened by holding earphones to your ears on a kind of two-pronged metal rod – or you could just hold them in your hands. There was also an attachment like a stethoscope with little tubes which fitted into your ears. Over it you heard the show, and although it was by no means as clear and good as modern radio, still it served its purpose and we thought it was wonderful.<sup>40</sup>

The Electrophone Company had a salon at its headquarters in Pelican House, Gerrard Street, where listeners sat, often wearing evening dress in the early days, and listened over headphones. The system was also available in some hospitals, but the usual practice was to subscribe to the service and ask an operator to connect your telephone to the site of your choice. In 1906, all the main London operetta theatres were available. Terriss considered it a forerunner of radio, and, indeed, it was radio that drove the electrophone into oblivion in the summer of 1925. Just one year before, the Electrophone Company was offering subscribers the chance to listen to Fall's *Madame Pompadour* at Daly's and Lehár's *The Three Graces* at the

<sup>38</sup> Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 209–11.

<sup>39</sup> Henderson and Bowers, *Red, Hot & Blue*, 33.

<sup>40</sup> Ellaline Terriss, *Just a Little Bit of String* (London: Hutchinson, 1955), 118.

Empire.<sup>41</sup> A subscription of £5 a year allowed two listeners access to any of the shows broadcast, and there was no extra charge for the telephone call.

The arrival of radio effected a change in music dissemination. William Boosey declared that the radio broadcasting of music was what decided Chappell to abandon concert giving.<sup>42</sup> It was also radio that made the collection of performing rights imperative. The first show to be broadcast from a theatre in the UK was Straus's operetta *The Last Waltz*, which opened at the Gaiety in December 1922. BBC radio services had begun that year, and the former Gaiety Restaurant, next door to the theatre, was now Marconi House, headquarters of BBC broadcasting.<sup>43</sup> It had a studio on the top floor, and leading stars such as José Collins and W. H. Berry were soon engaged.<sup>44</sup> Austria's first radio station Radio Verkehrs AG was established in 1924, and, two years later, *Frasquita* was the first operetta to be broadcast in its entirety (live from the Thalia-Theater). At this time, the station was attracting an audience of over 100,000, and issuing a weekly magazine, *Radio Wien*.<sup>45</sup>

Radio had, at first, transmitted live from theatres, but the BBC was soon using alternative premises, such as St George's Hall. Studio broadcasting then became the norm, and with this development came the recognition that the broadcasts needed to 'develop a technique of acting and production peculiar to themselves'.<sup>46</sup> An obvious difference was the interaction of actors with microphones, which necessitated decisions about where the latter were to be placed. If radio productions are ignored in studies of operetta reception, a sense of the public's familiarity with some stage works is undermined. The BBC, for example, broadcast over half-a-dozen studio performances of Künneke's *The Cousin from Nowhere* between 1927 and 1938. The neglect of radio broadcasts has given the impression that Weill's *Die Dreigroschenoper* was ignored in the UK until Marc Blitzstein's Broadway version was given at the Royal Court Theatre in 1956. In fact, its first performance took the form of a live BBC studio broadcast on 8 February 1935 (as *The Tuppenny-ha'penny Opera*, adapted by C. Denis

<sup>41</sup> For further information, see Denys Parsons, 'Cable Radio – Victorian Style', *New Scientist*, 23 (30 Dec. 1982), 794–96.

<sup>42</sup> William Boosey, *Fifty Years of Music* (London: Ernest Benn, 1931), 179.

<sup>43</sup> W. J. MacQueen-Pope, *Gaiety: Theatre of Enchantment* (London: W. H. Allen, 1949), 455.

<sup>44</sup> Collins, *The Maid of the Mountains*, 213; and W. H. Berry, *Forty Years in the Limelight* (London: Hutchinson, 1939), 244.

<sup>45</sup> <http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=raw>

<sup>46</sup> Val Gielgud, *British Radio Drama 1922–1956* (London, 1957), 33, quoted in Michael Sanderson, *From Irving to Olivier: A Social History of the Acting Profession in England, 1880–1983* (London: Athlone, 1984), 221.

Freeman), and the musical suite that Weill made of this work had already been transmitted on 10 March 1933.

Radio offered opportunities for new compositions. Franz Marszalek, the musical director of the Schauspielhaus in Breslau (Wrocław), where Künneke's *Lady Hamilton* had its premiere in 1926, later took up work at that city's radio station. Künneke already had a connection with Breslau, because his wife, the singer Katarina Garden, had been born there. Marzalek commissioned him to compose a Dance Suite for radio, and it was broadcast on 8 September 1929. Künneke also composed his 'Opta-Walzer' for choir and orchestra (including a theremin) as an advertisement for Opta Radio. On 1 January 1932, the BBC broadcast the first radio operetta, *Good Night, Vienna!* (music by George Posford, libretto by Eric Maschwitz, using the pseudonym Holt Marvell).<sup>47</sup> It became a screen operetta later that year. A stage version did not appear until 1936. A later operetta heard first on radio was Kálmán's posthumous *Arizona Lady*, broadcast by Bayerische Rundfunk, 1 January 1954.

## Film

In the early days of film, stage actors had generally been scornful about the new medium, but with the advent of sound film it became common for actors to combine a cinema and theatre career, especially since earnings tended to be higher in film.<sup>48</sup> Some acclaimed operetta singers, such as Carl Brisson and Evelyn Laye, became film stars. The singing of Gitta Alpár, a coloratura soprano first with Budapest State Opera, and later with Berlin State Opera, can be heard in the film *I Give My Heart* (Wardour Films, 1935), based on *The Dubarry*. Because of her Jewish heritage, Alpár had fled from the Nazis in 1933, first to Austria, then to the UK (later, to the USA). Stars crossing from film to stage could prove less trustworthy, especially in the days of silent film. When Charles Dillingham acquired the American rights of *Madame Pompadour*, there were rumours that Metropolitan Opera diva Geraldine Farrar, or even Fritzi Massary, might take the title role, but the part was, at length, given to silent screen star Hope Hampton.<sup>49</sup> Sadly, at the Philadelphia try-out she showed a lack of singing and stage acting experience, and so, for the Broadway premiere (the opening production at the new Martin Beck Theatre), she was replaced

<sup>47</sup> *Radio Times*, issue 431, 1 Jan. 1932, 48. <sup>48</sup> Sanderson, *From Irving to Olivier*, 206.

<sup>49</sup> See Stefan Frey, *Leo Fall: Spötischer Rebell der Operette* (Vienna: Steinbauer, 2010), 196.

by the reliable Wilda Bennett. However, in contrast, Max Hansen, who played Leopold in Richard Oswald's 1926 silent film of the comic play *Im weißen Rössl* (written by Oscar Blumenthal and Gustav Kadelburg in 1897), succeeded in playing the same role on stage in the later operetta.

There were links between film and stage from the beginning. The performance of Paul Lincke's *Castles in the Air* at the Scala Theatre, London, in April 1911, was preceded by 'Charles Urban's Kinemacolor'.<sup>50</sup> Sirmay and Kollo's *The Girl on the Film* (1913) was the first operetta to include a scene of film projection (in Act 3). A year later, in the New York production of *The Lilac Domino* in 1914, a film was shown of the carnival in Nice. A number entitled 'Film Music' forms part of the musical score, but it is composed with a broad brush – a march and trio – rather than incidental music to be synchronized with screen images. That same year, the 'Song of the Picture-Palace Queen' in Act 1 of Gilbert's *The Cinema Star* illustrated how music was used more typically to represent action and mood in motion pictures.

Klaw and Erlanger formed a film company in 1913 and were soon joined by a major studio, the Biograph Company. They must have believed profits were assured because of the number of theatres they had at their disposal, but the prices they charged were too high and it folded in three years.<sup>51</sup> When the Shuberts took over the Longacre Theatre in 1918, it was in partnership with others, including L. Lawrence Weber who, as secretary of the Producer Managers Association was associated with several motion picture companies. Several of these companies listed their address as the Longacre Theatre, revealing how film and theatre businesses were working in cooperation.<sup>52</sup> In the mid-1920s, *The Play Pictorial* recognized such connections by including brief coverage of new films. The film rights to *Der letzte Walzer*, which Blumenthal and Rachman had sold to United Plays, Broadway, were purchased by the Shuberts in October 1920, but they failed to make the film within three years, as stipulated in the contract. As a consequence, in 1927, Grünwald, Brammer, and Straus resold the motion picture rights to the Davidson Film Aktiengesellschaft, Berlin, for 20,000 marks in lieu of royalties.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *The Times*, 1 May 1911, 8.

<sup>51</sup> 'Klaw & Erlanger Films', *New York Times*, 24 May 1913, 11; John C. Tibbetts, *The American Theatrical Film: Stages in Development* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985), 72–75.

<sup>52</sup> See Maryann Chach et al. *The Shuberts Present: 100 Years of American Theatre History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 251–53.

<sup>53</sup> Information given in a letter from United Plays, 15 Aug. 1927, in 'Show Series – Box 42', Shubert Archive, Lyceum Theatre, W45th Street, New York.

Operettas provided the subject matter of a number of classic films of the silent era. A much-admired director, Ludwig Berger, was responsible for *Ein Walzertraum* (1925), starring Willy Fritsch and Mady Christians. Unfortunately, a large number of silent films have either been lost or no longer exist. Early silent films were on a single reel, and thus short in duration; multi-reel films were a feature of the second decade of the twentieth century. In the 1920s, there were critics ready to argue for the artistic status of film. Cultural historian Egon Friedell maintained that, like other art forms, film had areas of activity and effects that were subject to its own generic laws; moreover, he believed it was the art that represented contemporary times most clearly and completely.<sup>54</sup>

Erich von Stroheim's *The Merry Widow* (MGM, 1925), starring John Gilbert as Danilo and Mae Murray as the widow, departs considerably from the operetta. It includes what would now be called a 'backstory' of the widow's early life as an American ex-vaudeville performer in the small kingdom of Monteblanco. The Parisian scenes come later. Lehár's music was rearranged by William Axt and David Mendoza. The film has erotic content featuring scantily clothed dancers at Maxim's restaurant and a love scene on a bed in a *chambre séparée*, with half-naked blindfolded musicians playing in an alcove.

After seeing *Die Zirkusprinzessin* in Berlin in 1926, Arthur Hammerstein contracted Kálmán for the opening show at the theatre he had built in honour of his father Oscar in New York.<sup>55</sup> It was to be *Golden Dawn*, in which Archie Leach took the minor role of Anzac. Leach had not yet become the film star known as Cary Grant, and did not appear in the Warner Brothers and Vitaphone film version directed by Ray Enright in 1930. The music was credited to both Emmerich Kálmán and Hubert Stothart, and the Vitaphone Orchestra was conducted by Louis Silvers. The fox trot song 'Though I'm Interested' and the sado-masochistic song in which a woman declares she wants a man like a tiger (a typical 'I want' burlesque number) must surely be Stothart, because Kálmán's grasp on syncopation was slight at this time. The screenplay and dialogue was by Walter Anthony, and the location and time was East Africa during the First World War, when it was under German rule. The cast was a mixture of

<sup>54</sup> Egon Friedell, 'Kunst und Kino' [c. 1912] in *Wozu das Theater? Essays, Satiren Humoresken* (München: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1969), 87–95, at 91 & 95.

<sup>55</sup> Stefan Frey, *Laughter under Tears: Emmerich Kálmán – An Operetta Biography*, trans. Alexander Butziger (Culver City, CA: Operetta Foundation, 2014), 172. Originally published as '*Unter Tränen lachen*: Emmerich Kálmán – Eine Operettenbiographie' (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 2003), 184.

British and American. Dawn (played by Vivienne Segal) is white but has been assured that once in many years African girls are born white and beloved of the god Mulungu. The ‘wild African dances’ at Dawn’s purification ceremony in advance of her being sacrificed are not characterized by African signifiers – it is all very European. The bloodthirsty Shep Keyes, played by Noah Beery in blackface make-up, is undaunted by the dire warning, ‘the British government will not tolerate the sacrifice of a white woman’. She is, of course, rescued.

A year later, contrasting with the overheated acting of *Golden Dawn*, G. W. [Georg Wilhelm] Pabst’s film *Die 3-Groschen Oper* (1931) featured non-mimetic delivery of songs, most strikingly so in Lottie Lenja’s singing of ‘Seeräuber Jenny’. Her blank expression operates as a mask, but the effect is to force a critical position onto the viewer, something for which Brecht constantly strove in his epic theatre. Elsewhere, the film exhibited intertextuality in casting Fritz Rasp, who was celebrated for playing cold villains, as Peachum, and having Reinhold Schünzel play his usual shiftless character-type as Tiger Brown. The film credits make clear that the screenplay is *frei nach Brecht* (freely after Brecht) and not his stage play. In the film, for instance, there is a burglary at the London department store Selfridges. The musical director was the competent Theo Mackeben, but neither Kurt Weill nor Brecht were pleased with this version of *Die Dreigroschenoper* and took Pabst to court.<sup>56</sup>

*Tonfilmoperette* was a major part of the entertainment culture of the Weimar Republic.<sup>57</sup> Cinema numbers grew in this period from 2000 to 5000.<sup>58</sup> Films were able, via the simple expedient of locating a scene in a dance hall or bar, to feature cameo appearances by well-known dance bands.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, films had an influence the stage. In 1919, Ernst Lubitsch directed the film *Madame Dubarry*, starring Pola Negri as Jeanne and Emil Jannings as Louis XV; thus, the Mackeben-Millöcker *Dubarry* did not appear from out of the blue.

<sup>56</sup> John Willett, *Brecht in Context: Comparative Approaches* (London: Methuen, rev. edn 1998; 1st pub. 1984), 128–29.

<sup>57</sup> Rainer Rother, ‘Genreblüte ohnegleichen: Die deutsche Tonfilmoperette’, in Bettina Brandl-Risi, Clemens Risi, and Rainer Simon, *Kunst der Oberfläche: Operette zwischen Bravour und Banalität* (Leipzig: Henschel Verlag, 2015), 177–83, at 179. At the time of writing, the only full-length study in English of these films is Richard Traubner, ‘Operette: The German and Austrian Musical Film’, PhD diss. New York University, 1996 (Ann Arbor: UMI Microform 9706293, 1996).

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Garncarz and Thomas Elsaesser, ‘Weimar Cinema’, in Thomas Elsaesser with Michael Wedel, eds., *The BFI Companion to German Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999), 247–48, at 247.

<sup>59</sup> Rother, ‘Genreblüte ohnegleichen’, 181.

During the 1930s, some theatres in Vienna were closing or screening films (see Chapter 3). Even the Theater an der Wien was operating mainly as a cinema in 1936. In Germany, Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft, better known as Ufa, which had been founded in 1917, was absorbing other companies, but did not enjoy any kind of monopoly. Ufa presented the only serious European challenge to Hollywood, and its international success lay in operettas and comedies. Versions of these were often shot in three languages: German, English, and French. For example, one of the best-known films of the Weimar period, Ufa's *Der Kongreß tanzt* (1932), directed by Erik Charell, was produced simultaneously as *Congress Dances* and *Le Congrès s'amuse*.

Ufa released a screen operetta *Die Drei von der Tankstelle*, directed by Wilhelm Thiele, in 1930. Although the title, 'The Three from the Filling Station' might seem unexciting (a French version was retitled *Le Chemin du paradis*, but no English version was made), it proved to be Ufa's most commercial successful film of the 1930s. Rainer Rother has explained that musical films of this period derived their popular appeal by creating laughter in the face of economic depression, and this they achieved through irony.<sup>60</sup> There are common preconceptions of the days of the Weimar Republic as an outpouring of hedonism before the Nazi horrors to come,<sup>61</sup> but this film offers much more than dance, song, and frivolity. Its humour is infectious and the three best friends who are rivals for the hand of a wilful young woman resolve their differences amicably in the end. And it is the end of the film that is most surprising, because it shows that Brecht was not isolated in his ideas about breaking frame in dramatic representation and reminding audiences of the mechanics of the construction of representational forms. The stars of the film, Lilian Harvey and Willy Fritsch, are shown stepping through theatre curtains and suddenly noticing that the cinema audience is staring at them. They wonder why nobody has left; the show is over. They rapidly realize that the audience wants a proper operetta finale, and only then will be satisfied that it is the end. An ironic 'proper' finale follows, complete with full cast, a line of high-kicking dancers (revealing the influence of the Tiller Girls in Berlin) and assorted extras. In the later century, this kind of self-referentiality, and exposure of the means by which a narrative code, dramatic meaning, and illusion are

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>61</sup> 'The higher the prices rose the greater the abandon, the madder the night clubs, the faster the dance steps', Alexandra Richie, *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), 323.

constructed, would be termed ‘postmodernism’. But here it is, before the post has arrived.

The spectacular scenery that could be shown on film enthralled those who were stuck in the city in the depression years and yearned to travel (see Chapter 7). A film like *Die Blume von Hawaii* of 1933, directed by Richard Oswald, appealed to the tourist impulse. For most people Hawaii was an unattainable destination, and yet here it could be seen on screen: the palm trees, the sea hitting the rocks, and so forth. However, out-door production offered more than travel brochure information or beauty of landscape, it added to the apparent naturalism of film compared to the pseudorealistic decorative effect of stage scenery.<sup>62</sup> People expected a broader view of location, although this did not prevent a film from constructing an imaginary location, so that the inside and outside of a house might in reality be two different houses presented as one. German silent films were often outdoor films, but studio filming increased from the mid-1920s.

Robert Stolz's *Zwei Herzen in Dreivierteltakt* was the first German screen operetta, and was premiered at the large Ufa-Palast cinema in Berlin on 13 March 1930.<sup>63</sup> Based on it, was the British film *Two Hearts in Waltztime* (1934), directed by Carmine Gallone and Joe May, starring Carl Brisson, Frances Day, Valerie Hobson, and Oscar Asche. Stolz's screen operetta had been a great success in the USA, where it had been advertised as the ‘First German Screen Operetta: All-Talking, Singing, Dancing’!<sup>64</sup> His score to another screen operetta, *Das Lied ist aus*, which appeared later that same year, contained the song ‘Adieu, mein kleiner Gardeoffizier’ (lyrics by Walter Reich), which was interpolated into the West End production of *White Horse Inn* as ‘Good-Bye’.

Three original screen operettas were released in 1931: *Die Privatsekretärin*, with music by Paul Abraham, *Ronny*, music by Emmerich Kálmán, and *Die große Attraktion*, music by Franz Lehár. Composing for film could prove profitable. Kálmán was paid 30,000 marks for the seven numbers he composed for *Ronny*.<sup>65</sup> Lehár composed another two screen operettas during the Weimar years and had film

<sup>62</sup> Arthur Maria Rabenalt emphasizes this in *Der Operetten-Bildband: Bühne, Film, Fernsehen* (Hildesheim: Olms Presse, 1980), 39.

<sup>63</sup> Gustav Holm, *Im ¾ Takt durch die Welt: Ein Lenensbild des Komponisten Robert Stolz* (Vienna: Ibis-Verlag, 1948), 283.

<sup>64</sup> Programme from Orpheum Theatre, Quincy, Illinois, quoted in John Koegel, *Music in German Immigrant Theater: New York City, 1840–1940* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 371.

<sup>65</sup> Ludwig Hirschfeld, ‘Kálmán-Tonfilm’, *Neue Freie Presse*, 25 Dec. 1931, cited in Stefan Frey, *Laughter under Tears*, 203; ‘Unter Tränen lachen’, 217.

adaptations made of three of his stage operettas: *Das Land des Lächelns*, *Friederike*, and *Der Zarewitsch*. A loose adaptation of Lehár's *Zigeunerliebe* was released by MGM in May 1930 as *The Rogue Song*, directed by Lionel Barrymore and Hal Roach (uncredited). It starred Catherine Dale Owen, Lawrence Tibbett, and, perhaps unexpectedly, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. An example of a continental European operetta that made it to Hollywood, but not to the Broadway stage, is *The King Steps Out* (1936), directed by Josef von Sternberg, and starring Grace Moore and Franchot Tone. It was based on Fritz Kreisler's *Sissy* (libretto by Ernst and Hubert Marischka), first performed at the Theater an der Wien in 1932.

Erik Charell was director of the Großes Schauspielhaus in Berlin when Erich Pommer of Ufa asked him to direct *Der Kongreß tanzt* (1931). Michael Wedel has suggested that Charell's experience of the medium of film inspired an innovative creation of 'a virtuoso synthesis of choreography, musical montage and a smooth narrative flow, which enchanted audiences in Germany and abroad'.<sup>66</sup> Pommer founded the film company Decla and, after it became part of Ufa in 1923, he joined Ufa's directorial board. When Ufa reorganized under a new general manager, Ludwig Klitzsch, in 1927, financing and production became separate units. The production-unit system was also being established at a similar time in Hollywood. The separation of production and finance gave Pommer more freedom to accept Charell's expensive demands for *Der Kongreß tanzt*. Carl Hoffman, a renowned cameraman, and also a director, set an example of how camera mobility and sound could work together in this film.<sup>67</sup> It also had the services of the influential designer Walter Röhrig, who had created the expressionist sets for Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (1919).

Siegfried Kraucauer argues that German films of 1918–33 reveal 'deep psychological dispositions' that 'influenced the course of events during that time'.<sup>68</sup> In particular, he criticizes the 'patronizing benevolence' of their depiction of a retrospective and Utopian Vienna with 'gentle archdukes, tender flirtations, baroque decors, Biedermeier rooms, [and] people singing and drinking in a suburban garden restaurant', all of which 'implied that such effeminate enemies would be a pushover'.<sup>69</sup> He holds that, with the coming of sound, 'operetta profited more than any other escapist

<sup>66</sup> Michael Wedel, 'Charell, Erik', in Elsaesser, *The BFI Companion to German Cinema*, 50.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Wedel, 'Hoffman, Carl', in Elsaesser, *The BFI Companion to German Cinema*, 137.

<sup>68</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), v.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 141.

genre'.<sup>70</sup> He recognized that *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* did not romanticize the past, but he still mistrusted its escapism:

this film was a playful daydream woven of the materials of everyday life. Three careless young friends suddenly gone bankrupt buy a filling station with the proceeds of their car; there they devote themselves to flirting with a pretty girl who time and again turns up in her roadster – a dalliance which after some emotional confusion logically ends with one of the three rivals winning out. The refreshing idea of shifting the operetta paradise from its traditional locales to the open road was supported by the eccentric use made of music. Full of whims, the score constantly interfered with the half-rational plot, stirring characters and even objects to behave in a frolicsome manner. An unmotivated waltz invited workers clearing out the friends' unpaid-for furniture to transform themselves into dancers, and whenever the amorous roadster approached, its horn would emit a few bars which threaded the film with the stubbornness of a genuine leitmotiv.<sup>71</sup>

Instead of perceiving innovative ways in which music and sound are used, he finds the score eccentric and full of whims. The imaginative treatment of the heroine's car horn – turning noise into a leitmotiv – attracts no more than a scornful comment.

The screen operetta he chooses as the pinnacle of 'lucrative speculation in romantic nostalgia' is *Der Kongreß tanzt*:

[It] set the flirtations of a sweet Viennese girl against the stately background of the Viennese Congress of 1814. Spectacular mass displays alternated with intimate tête-à-têtes involving the Tsar in person, and Metternich's diplomatic intrigues added a pleasing touch of high politics. Elaborate rather than light-winged, this superoperetta with its agreeable melodies and intelligent structural twists amounted to a compendium of all imaginable operetta motifs. Some of them set a fashion. Particularly frequent were imitations of that sequence of *Congress Dances* in which Lilian Harvey on her drive through the countryside passes various kinds of people who all take up the song she sings from her carriage.<sup>72</sup>

Once again, he is unimpressed by cinematic innovation: he has no words of admiration for the long tracking shot of Harvey's carriage journey, an astounding feat of camera work at this time. He sees it merely as a fashionable gimmick to be imitated. Nothing in Kracauer's commentary suggests that he would have had any sympathy with Richard Dyer's argument that social tensions in the depression years generated social needs to which film musicals responded, albeit by offering no more than the

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 207.    <sup>71</sup> Ibid., 207.    <sup>72</sup> Ibid., 208.

pleasure of an escapist Utopian vision.<sup>73</sup> People did not necessarily mistake a vision of a Utopian Vienna for social reality. Zoë Lang has also pointed out that, alongside an idealization of Austria's imperial past, a typical feature of such films – *Der Kongreß tanzt* among them – is the woman who gives up her dreams for more realistic options.<sup>74</sup>

German operetta films begin to suffer from Nazi interference after 1933, which, at first, meant eliminating credits naming Jewish artists, as happened with *Die Csárdásfürstin* of 1934, directed by Georg Jacoby, and *Im weißen Rössl* of 1935, directed by Carl Lamac.<sup>75</sup> It was not long before Harvey and Fritsch were eclipsed by Marika Rökk and Johannes Heesters as the Nazi 'dream couple' (beginning with *Der Bettelstudent* of 1936, directed by Jacoby). Rökk, who married Jacoby, was banned for performing for a few years after the Second World War because of suspected Nazi collusion.<sup>76</sup> Ironically, it was revealed in 2017 that she had actually been a Soviet agent.<sup>77</sup>

When a stage operetta became a film, the tendency was to reduce musical content and increase dialogue, perhaps because musical numbers often seem static and undramatic on film. A lukewarm reviewer of Ufa's *Der Vetter aus Dingsda* (directed by George Zoch), screened at the 79th Street Theatre in Yorkville, commented on the 'occasional bit of singing to remind one of the film's origin'.<sup>78</sup> In many cases, screen adaptations of operetta were far from being filmed versions of the stage production: the music of more than one operetta might be included, and dialogue and narrative might change. In addition, the music was mediated differently. As Mary Simonson remarks: 'The emergent cinema did not simply remediate the materials, performance strategies, and aesthetics of the stage.'<sup>79</sup> According to Linda Hutcheon, when 'a manifestly artificial form like an opera or a musical' is adapted to the screen, there are two possible ways to proceed, either the artifice can be acknowledged or it can be 'naturalized'.<sup>80</sup> She notes that a particularly awkward problem is the convention that

<sup>73</sup> Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', in *Only Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 2nd edn 2002), 19–35; orig. pub. in *Movie*, 24 (Spring 1977), 2–13.

<sup>74</sup> Zoë Alexis Lang, *The Legacy of Johann Strauss: Political Influence and Twentieth-Century Identity* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2014), 149–50.

<sup>75</sup> See Derek B. Scott, 'Operetta Films', in Anastasia Belina and Derek B. Scott, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Operetta* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

<sup>76</sup> Hans-Michael Bock and Tim Bergfelder, eds., *The Concise Cinegraph: Encyclopedia of German Cinema* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 401.

<sup>77</sup> Kate Connolly, 'Hitler's favourite actor was Soviet spy', *The Guardian*, 21 Feb. 2017, 14.

<sup>78</sup> 'At the 79th Street', *New York Times*, 1 Feb. 1936, 9. <sup>79</sup> Simonson, *Body Knowledge*, 198.

<sup>80</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2nd edn 2013; first pub. 2006), 46.

a character's interiority is conveyed through music, which sits uneasily with the conventions of realist drama.<sup>81</sup>

Guido Heldt observes that, in film musicals, rather than music serving the plot by adding emotional intensity to a particular scene, the plot more often serves the music by providing 'the scaffolding for the numbers it has to frame and motivate'.<sup>82</sup> Interpreting songs as internal thoughts may be possible, but this becomes progressively more difficult in the case of duets, trios and larger ensembles. The ability of a group of people to articulate their thoughts simultaneously in musical harmony is never going to be convincingly realistic – as Mad Margaret says of her fellow villagers in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Ruddigore*: 'They sing choruses in public. That's mad enough, I think!' In film musicals, numbers are often introduced by an 'audio dissolve' from normal conversation to instrumental accompaniment to singing, whereas on stage they are usually distinct structural entities.<sup>83</sup> The change from stage play to screenplay is affected by the scenario, shooting script, and use of montage, and that leads to blurred distinctions about authorship between the screen writer and the film director from the 1920s on.

During the early 1930s, it is instructive to see the impact on performers when they move from a theatre stage to a film studio and are faced with a camera instead of a live audience. Film may seem to be an all-embracing medium, but it has its own conventions, even if they are subject to change with the passing of time. There are significant differences between theatre and film: in the theatre, the whole space of the action is seen but the spectator's position and angle of vision is fixed. In film, Béla Balázs observes that four new devices take over: a scene can be broken into several shots; the spectator can be given a close-up; the angle of vision can be changed; and montage can be used.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, there is a need to consider the editing of shots, for example, the speed of change from one to another. There were a range of conventional shot positions in the 1930s, the most common being the long shot, the mid-shot (often used for two actors in the same scene), and the close-up (head and shoulders). The relationship of the performer to the camera is important. If the performer sings to camera, it

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 60–61.

<sup>82</sup> Guido Heldt, *Music and Levels of Narration in Film: Steps Across the Border* (Bristol: Intellect, 2013), 138.

<sup>83</sup> See Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 66.

<sup>84</sup> Béla Balázs, *Theory of Film*, trans. Edith Bone (London: Dobson, 1952; originally published as *Filmkultúra*, Budapest: Szikra kiadás, 1948).

emphasizes the performance act, breaking with naturalistic illusion. There are many differences between working to camera and working with a live audience. In a theatre, a performer can turn unexpectedly to a section of the audience in any part of the auditorium. Filmmakers like to edit shots; they do not want performers choosing which camera to turn to.

The British film *Blossom Time* of 1934 was a new adaptation of Schubert melodies by G. H. Clutsam and differed from his earlier West End success *Lilac Time*, based on Berté's *Das Dreimäderlhaus*. To add to the confusion, it also differed from Romberg's Broadway version of the latter as *Blossom Time*, which is why the film's American title became *April Blossoms*. The credits state that the screenplay, dialogue, and lyrics are by Franz Schulz, John Drinkwater, Roger Burford, and G. H. Clutsam, and the music is 'specially adapted and composed' by the latter. This screen operetta was later turned into a stage operetta, *Blossom Time* (book by Rodney Ackland), produced at the Lyric Theatre in 1941. *Blossom Time* cost British International Pictures (BIP) much more than its other films, owing to the expensive sets and crowd scenes.<sup>85</sup> The director Paul Stein was Viennese but had worked for five years in Hollywood.<sup>86</sup> The cast included Richard Tauber, the most famous star to work for BIP at that time. Tauber was one of first operetta singers to become a sound film star; indeed, he performed in over a dozen films (six of them British) and founded his own film production company in 1930, releasing *Das Land des Lächelns* in November of that year. Being of Jewish ancestry, he found it necessary to move to London permanently in 1938.

An examination of the scene in the film in which Tauber accompanies himself on piano singing 'Once There Lived a Lady Fair' (the music of which is by Clutsam rather than Schubert), reveals that his mimetic and gestural signs are in accord with operatic performance practice – as is his wide dynamic range – and contrast with the naturalistic code adopted by the members of the drawing-room audience in the film: his gestures are theatrical, whereas theirs are restrained. *Variety* remarked backhandedly of his acting in this film that it was 'surprisingly good – for a world-famous tenor'.<sup>87</sup> Jane Baxter, cast in the role of Vicki Wimpassinger, the object of Schubert's affection, was a glamorous film star of the 1930s and adopts the restrained kinesic code of cinema. Tauber is first and foremost a celebrated singer. Film is a medium in which sound tends to be balanced

<sup>85</sup> Rachel Low, *The History of the British Film 1929–1939: Film Making in 1930s Britain* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985), 123.

<sup>86</sup> Roy Ames, *A Critical History of the British Cinema* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978), 85.

<sup>87</sup> 'Blossom Time', *Variety*, 24 Jul. 1934, 14.

technologically, but this suits his gentle *falsetto* conclusion to the song. Shots are intercut showing details of the emotional impact his performance is having on the audience. The device of montage presents a sequence of different shots from which we interpret what is going on and build a picture of the whole (an idea of the space of the room, for instance). In one sense Tauber's audience 'stands in' for the viewers of the film, since they have no presence in a film equivalent to that which they enjoy in a theatre. Naturally, records were produced of film hits, and Tauber's recording of 'Once There Lived a Lady Fair' (CE 6480-2) was released in July 1934, the same month as the film's release.

The film was a triumph commercially, as well as being well received by critics, and that encouraged Stein to follow it up with *My Song Goes Round the World*, a film starring another famous tenor, Josef Schmidt. British and American companies became keen to make film versions of German operetta. The success of *Blossom Time* persuaded Alfred Hitchcock to try his hand later in 1934 with *Waltzes from Vienna*, which Oswald Stoll had presented at his Alhambra Theatre in 1931-32. MGM in the USA fought back in November 1934 with Ernst Lubitsch's film version of *The Merry Widow* starring Jeanette MacDonald and Maurice Chevalier.

The Hollywood version of *Waltzes from Vienna* had to wait until 1938 and was retitled *The Great Waltz*. It was directed by Julien Duvivier, Victor Fleming, and Josef von Sternberg, and starred Luise Rainer (as Poldi Vogelhuber), Fernand Gravey (as Johann Strauss), and Miliza Korjus (as Carla Donner). The screenplay was by Samuel Hoffenstein and Walter Reisch from an original story by Gottfried Reinhardt, rather than the book that Moss Hart had written for the Broadway production of 1934. The music was adapted and arranged by Dimitri Tiomkin, and Oscar Hammerstein II's lyrics replaced those of Desmond Carter, which had been used in the West End and Broadway productions. Broadway choreographer Albertina Rasch was, however, re-engaged to supervise dances and ensembles. The film begins with an on-screen announcement:

In Vienna in 1844 'nice people' neither danced the waltz ... nor kissed their wives in public ... nor listened to new ideas ... In 1845 came Johann Strauss II and his immortal melodies ...

It is unhistorical nonsense, of course, but an excuse follows: 'We have dramatized the spirit rather than the facts of his life, because it is his spirit that has lived – in his music.' There follows a scene of Strauss's first performance with his orchestra at Dommayer's Casino. It is poorly attended and going badly. An aristocrat enters with 'famous opera singer'

Carla Donner in his party, and she is immediately attracted to young Strauss. They have to leave, but by now a large crowd has gathered outside. A tenor sings 'Every Tree in the Park', the tune of its verse based on 'Ja, das alles auf Ehr' from *Der Zigeunerbaron* (actually composed over forty years later). Around twenty minutes into the film, there is a dramatic cut from the sensual abandon of a waltz to a decorous minuet in an aristocratic hall. Carla has invited Strauss, who has brought a song, 'Looking at You'. Carla sings it, tactfully avoiding announcing that it is a waltz. The polite audience looks shocked as the waltz rhythm kicks in, but – astonishingly – they are won over. Carla is an irrepressible vamp, although her voice is what one might imagine if Ethel Merman had been a coloratura soprano.

The film plot shares some resemblance to *Waltzes from Vienna* in being a love triangle between Strauss, his down-to-earth sweetheart, Poldi, and the sophisticated, high-society woman, but it also includes scenes of Strauss marching with the revolutionaries of 1848 (to his own march). Later, facing a blockage of barricades, he ends up in a carriage with Carla in the Vienna Woods and, naturally, it provides inspiration for his *Tales from the Vienna Woods* waltz (in reality composed twenty years later). In no time at all he is shown conducting its performance by a women's orchestra in a garden restaurant. Carla offers the public another opportunity to hear her glass-shattering top notes, and, suddenly, the revolution is over.

There is now a domestic scene with Strauss playing the tune of the bullfinch duet from *Der Zigeunerbaron* on the piano and becoming irritated with Poldi for disrupting his work. They decide to leave Vienna (they are now man and wife) and inform a gathering of their friends. Strauss then sings 'One Day When We Were Young' to the bullfinch tune, but Carla happens to pop in, and her look indicates that she knows she is the inspiration for his song. Carla has brought an operatic commission. Poldi persuades him he must stay in order to compose for the Imperial Theatre. The piece he writes is *Die Fledermaus* (actually composed for the Theater an der Wien not the Burgtheater). Poldi goes to the performance and tells Carla she is not standing in her way, because she loves Strauss and recognizes his manly needs as an artistic genius. It is easy, perhaps, to feel a little nauseated, but the scene is affecting because of Louise Rainer's acting. Strauss leaves in a carriage with Carla but she is suddenly struck with the realization that Poldi will always be between them. She tells him so and catches the Danube boat to Budapest alone (to strains of 'One Day'). The film's closing scene takes place forty-three years later; Strauss and Poldi have an audience with the Emperor, who takes Strauss to his balcony to show him a cheering crowd of Viennese citizens who love his music.

Oscar Straus had composed an operetta called *Hochzeit in Hollywood* in 1928, and the word 'Hollywood' in the title may have prompted the invitation he received from Warner Brothers. He arrived in Hollywood in January 1930 for a three-month engagement, but there was no project for him to work on. Straus re-established contact with Ernst Lubitsch whom he had met when the latter was an actor in Max Reinhardt's company. Lubitsch had left Germany for Hollywood in 1926 and had just begun to make his mark in musical films, the first being *The Love Parade* (Paramount, 1929), with Jeanette MacDonald and Maurice Chevalier. On the expiry of Straus's Warner contract, he received a telegram from Lubitsch informing him that a film was going to be made of *A Waltz Dream*. Straus became involved with the adaptation, working with Lubitsch and composing some fresh music.<sup>88</sup> Its title was *The Smiling Lieutenant* and, following its release in 1931, it became the first sound-film adaptation of a stage operetta to enjoy international success. It starred Claudette Colbert as Franzi, Maurice Chevalier as Lieutenant Niki, and Miriam Hopkins as Princess Anna. The musical director was Adolph Deutsch, and Johnny Green and Conrad Salinger were involved in arranging Straus's music. The screenplay was by Ernest Vajda and Samson Raphaelson, and the song lyrics by Clifford Grey.

Tom Gunning coined the term 'cinema of attractions' to describe the emphasis that early silent film placed on showing and exhibiting. Chevalier has not moved far from an 'exhibiting' technique in *The Smiling Lieutenant*. He sometimes directs his gaze towards the camera as a means of establishing contact with the spectator. Revealing an awareness of spectatorship by looking directly at the camera is a feature of early European film rejected in classical Hollywood practice because it ran counter to the creation of realistic illusion.<sup>89</sup> The plot of this film revolves around an incident in which Lieutenant Niki, on street duty during the arrival procession of the visiting King Adolf XV of Flausenthurm and his daughter, Princess Anna, smiles and winks at his sweetheart Franzi. Unfortunately, the princess thinks it was meant for her. In consequence, he finds himself having to marry her and move to Flausenthurm. He remains fond of Franzi, but, in the end, Franzi teaches Anna how to win him over to herself.

<sup>88</sup> Grun, *Prince of Vienna*, 149–50.

<sup>89</sup> Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde', *Wide Angle*, 8:3–4 (1986), 63–70, at 64; see also Jonathan De Souza, 'Film Musicals as Cinema of Attractions', in Massimiliano Sala, ed., *From Stage to Screen: Musical Films in Europe and United States (1927–1961)*. Speculum musicae 19 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2012), 71–91.

The scenes of Niki's initial courting of Franzi, and of the eventual winning over of Niki by Anna, reveal how continental European operetta was transcreated for the American market. In *The Smiling Lieutenant*, Niki courts Franzi with a song in fox-trot rhythm ('A dinner or supper for two') rather than the waltz song 'O du Lieber' – even if the latter remains part of the underscore at times. In the stage operetta, Franzi had to teach the princess about the lively temperament that makes Viennese women so attractive, and encouraged her, also, to cater for his love of Viennese food. In Berger's 1925 film of the operetta, Franzi goes further, and teaches the princess to play a Viennese waltz on the piano. In Lubitsch's film, Franzi has rather different advice: she plays ragtime and sings 'Jazz up your lingerie'. The next time we see the princess she is playing syncopated music at the piano with a cigarette dangling from her lips. Clearly, the vivacious, emancipated American woman is an equivalent of the Viennese woman and her fiery temperament. Indeed, while Niki is discovering his wife's change of behaviour, the film's underscore is of the trio 'Temp'rament' from Act 2 of the Viennese version. Two differing cultural traits are conflated here, and yet there is a similarity to be recognized in how they are used to achieve the same end, that of domesticizing Niki. The film concludes with Niki singing to camera, 'I've found at home my rata-tatata-tata'. That is how operetta cosmopolitanism works: an audience recognizes itself in the imported operetta, aided by appropriate cultural parallels.

Chevalier starred again, this time with Jeanette MacDonald, in the next Lubitsch-Straus collaboration, *One Hour with You* (1932). Lubitsch was proving his skill in comedy, especially of an erotic character, and was admired for his social psychological understanding of character motivation, as well as his talent for innuendo. In April 1934, he turned his attention to *The Merry Widow*, which premiered in October that year. It starred Chevalier as Danilo and MacDonald as Sonia, the screenplay was by Ernest Vajda and Samson Raphaelson, and new lyrics were provided by Lorenz Hart (with some additional lyrics by Gus Kahn). The musical arrangement was by Herbert Stothart, with help from orchestrators Paul Marquardt, Charles Maxwell, and Leonid Raab. Herbert Stothart had become a composer, arranger, and musical director for MGM in the 1930s, and brought with him his Broadway experience. The place name change from Marsovia to Marshovia in the film may be motivated by a desire to offer a more Eastern European pronunciation of Marsovia (as in the Hungarian 's', or the Czech 'š'). When Danilo first sees Sonia in

Marshovia, she wears a widow's veil, and so he does not recognize her later, when she pretends to be a new dancer, Fifi, at Maxim's restaurant in Paris. He has been sent to Paris to marry the widow, but he only realizes that Fifi and the widow are one and the same when he attends the ball at the embassy. There is no backstory of their having been young lovers in the past, but they are strongly attracted to each other and decide to marry. Then, discovering that the marriage has been a plot, Sonia calls it off, and Danilo returns to Marshovia, where he is imprisoned for failing in his task. She goes there, too, to vouch for his innocence, and they are finally reconciled in his prison cell.

There are several differences between the stage operetta and the film version: in the former, it is the 'Dollar Princess' problem (money creates distrust for a couple in love); in the film, seduction scenes are important. Lubitsch demonstrates his characteristic fascination with seduction and power relations, the latter being different during the seduction process when sexual desire is the focus.<sup>90</sup> Maurice Chevalier is the same charming seducer he was in *The Smiling Lieutenant*. MacDonald and Chevalier had already appeared in Lubitsch's *The Love Parade*, *One Hour with You*, and *Love Me Tonight*, but, surprisingly, *The Merry Widow* was not a box office success and that prompted MGM to find a new partner for MacDonald in the shape of Nelson Eddy.<sup>91</sup> MacDonald and Eddy's first film together was *Naughty Marietta* in 1935 (screenplay by Rida Johnson Young, music by Victor Herbert). The couple's biggest film success was *Maytime* (1937).

In *The Chocolate Soldier* (1941), directed by Roy del Ruth, Nelson Eddy's partner was Risë Stevens. Straus's music was adapted by Bronislau Kaper and Herbert Stothart, and additional music and lyrics were by Gus Kahn and Bronislau Kaper. Shaw had originally agreed, via his German agent Siegfried Trebitsch, that the plot of his play *Arms and the Man*, but no dialogue, could be used for *Der tapfere Soldat* and its Broadway version *The Chocolate Soldier* subject to two conditions: it should be advertised as an unauthorized parody and he should receive no royalties. The latter stipulation, which may be taken as typically Shavian derision, had clearly begun to pain him once he saw the enormous profits the operetta was making. When MGM expressed the wish to film it, he had no hesitation in demanding to be paid handsomely. Reversing his original position, which was undoubtedly intended to represent him as an idealistic artist rather than a business man, he now supported

<sup>90</sup> Delphine Vincent, "'Lippen schweigen, 's flüstern Geigen: Hab mich lieb!' Seduction, Power Relations and Lubitsch's Touch in *The Merry Widow*', in Sala, *From Stage to Screen*, 271–87, at 272–74.

<sup>91</sup> Henderson and Bowers, *Red, Hot & Blue*, 124.

his demands by asserting that Louis B. Mayer was the idealist, while he was the businessman.<sup>92</sup> Unfortunately, Shaw's waspish wit failed him a second time, and he received nothing. With some help from Straus, the music was fitted around an adaptation of Ferenc Molnár's play *The Guardsman* by Leonard Lee and Keith Winter Shaw. Some years later, when Pinewood Studios made a film of *Pygmalion* (1938), they took care that no similar problem should arise by having Shaw write the screenplay. To Shaw's intense discomfort, however, his screenplay was awarded an Oscar in Hollywood. When Lerner and Loewe's musical *My Fair Lady* (which is closer to the Pinewood film of *Pygmalion* than to the stage play) was produced on Broadway to enormous acclaim in 1956, Shaw had been dead for over five years and was therefore spared further personal embarrassment.

The 1941 film of *The Chocolate Soldier* opens with Maria (as Nadina) on stage singing 'My Hero'; she is soon joined by her husband Karl (as Bumerli), making it a duet. Maria longs to be an opera singer – she later sings 'Mon Coeur s'ouvre à ta voix' (from *Samson et Dalila* by Saint-Saëns) at a soirée. We learn that one of her favourite operatic arias is 'Star of Eve' from Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. Karl suspects his wife of having an eye for other men. In a restaurant scene, he enters in disguise as Vasily, a 'famous Russian bass', to sing Mussorgsky's 'Song of the Flea' (another interpolated number). He tells Maria he has seen her in *The Soldier of Chocolates* and tries to seduce her. When flowers arrive for Maria the next day, Karl demands to know who sent them. Maria, who is not fooled by what is happening, lies. Vasily visits and calculatingly sings 'Star of Eve'. Later that evening, her husband having had to go to Olmutz, he serenades her with 'The Moon Will Rise in Vain' (another interpolated number). Maria lets him in, sings 'Tiralala' (from the stage operetta), and they go out for the evening. She also reprises 'My Hero' as a song for Vasily, playing him along mercilessly, despite the jealousy he is unable to conceal.

That night Karl returns and asks what she has been doing. She tells him she has been reading. They travel to the theatre to perform in *The Chocolate Soldier*, and the scene is that of the Nadina-Bumerli duet 'Oh you little choc'late soldier man', but Karl changes Bumerli's words to fit his distrustful mood. After an ensemble dance routine, Karl returns to the stage as Vasily. It is a cue for another reprise of 'My Hero', at first with new lyrics, and then, as Nadina/Maria sings, the original lyrics. She informs him she was never fooled and they conclude with the duet 'Forgive, Forgive,

<sup>92</sup> Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 278.

'Forgive'. The number of reprises of 'My Hero' in the film make up for Straus's failure to provide a single one in the stage operetta – he had not expected it to be a hit song.

## Concluding Remarks

Austrian film director Arthur Maria Rabenalt commented on the various advantages screen adaptations possessed over the stage originals: the libretto became the basis of a scenario with montage, complicated intrigues could be edited in a way that made them more credible, awkward scene changes could become lither, and characters could be made more convincing by making certain dramatic situations more visible.<sup>93</sup> Another way of removing stage rigidity in screen adaptations was to reduce the quantity of music and be flexible about the sequence of an operetta's musical numbers. Short instrumental reprises could be used for scene transitions, and new numbers could be specially composed for the film version: for instance, 'Toujours l'amour in the Army' for Chevalier in Lubitsch's *The Merry Widow*.

Whatever its artistic merits, the commercial success of film meant that many in the theatre world viewed it negatively as a rival of their own performance medium. Similar feelings were engendered by radio. Yet others felt differently. George Grossmith, who joined the BBC management in 1926, declared that he had 'always thought that all branches of the entertainment world should work hand in hand'.<sup>94</sup> In the summer of 1929, he was in Hollywood learning about new developments in the motion picture industry at United Artists. He was approached by Ned Marin and Edmund Goulding of Fox Studios, who knew he had been responsible for the book of the Broadway production of *The Dollar Princess*. They asked if he would devise the scenario for a film they intended to make of it, directed by Alexander Korda. Flying films were proving popular at the time, so they wanted it updated to include planes; therefore, Freddy would not be Alice's secretary but, instead, her private pilot. Unfortunately, while still at the planning stage, two of the planes belonging to Fox Studios crashed over Santa Monica Bay. Grossmith was then asked to work on a Foreign Legion scenario instead. The next thing to disappear was the music, and the film became *Women Everywhere*, set in Casablanca, which was replicated in

<sup>93</sup> Rabenalt, *Der Operetten-Bildband*, 33.

<sup>94</sup> George Grossmith, 'G. G.' (London: Hutchinson, 1933), 214.

miniature at Fox Hills.<sup>95</sup> In this instance the term ‘remediation’ is absurd, because the final product lacks any resemblance to the initial product, but there is a traceable intermedial relationship.

In this chapter the term ‘intermediality’ has been employed to indicate a mutually influencing *relationship* between one medium and another. Intermediality implies a conscious thought process about how the art that is created will work for different media. Thus, arranging selections of operetta in the nineteenth century for music boxes and other mechanical media platforms may be best seen as remediation, whereas writing a theatre piece with planned detachable numbers for other use (performance at home, dance bands, or records) is intermedial practice. Klaus Waller remarks that Abraham’s intention, from the outset, was to create catchy melodies for the stage that could also be disseminated via dance halls, coffee houses, and records, radio, and cinema.<sup>96</sup> Intermediality stands in opposition to the *Gesamtkunst* ideal, which is one of centralization rather than dispersion. In the music dramas of Wagner, for example, it was the composer’s wish that the arts should *unite* to serve the stage performance. In contrast, operetta of the early twentieth century is representative of an intermedial art world.

<sup>95</sup> Grossmith, ‘G. G.’, 251–56. The film was released by Fox Film Corporation in June 1930, and starred J. Harold Murray and Fifi D’Orsay.

<sup>96</sup> Klaus Waller, *Paul Abraham: Der tragische König der Operette* (Norderstedt: BoD, 2014), 193–94.