

**Franz Lehár: Aspects of his life
with a critical survey of his operettas
and the work of his Jewish librettists.**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements
of the University of Liverpool
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Abbreviations

ed ... editor / edited by / edition

eds ... editors

et al ... and other collaborators

Jg. ... Jahrgang (year of series publication)

n.d. ... undated publication

rev. ... revision / revised

RKK ... Reichskulturkammer (Reich Chamber of Culture)

RMK ... Reichsmusikkammer (Reich Music Chamber)

SA ... Sturmabteilung (Nazi storm troopers)

SS ... Schutzstaffel (Nazi elite protection squad)

tr ... translated by

Note on translations

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Introduction

During the latter decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth operetta was one of the most popular forms of music theatre entertainment in Europe and America. In the later twentieth century the genre continued to enjoy a degree of popularity through revivals of its best known examples, although it became increasingly evident that operetta was being ill served by some of its practitioners. It was also ignored by academics and tutors in conservatoires, while being supported in the main by amateur societies and enthusiasts. Admittedly, some writings on the subject by these enthusiasts were excellent, but many were so eccentric that more harm than good was achieved by their efforts.

This has certainly been true of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, probably the most widely known operettas in the English-speaking world. Yet these works are unusual in the history of operetta. Not only are they the only lasting examples of an English operetta, they are also a rare - perhaps unique - instance of an enduring partnership formed by one librettist and one composer writing for one company. For the French and Viennese examples of the genre it was more usual to have a partnership of two librettists engaged to work with one composer for more than one theatre company.

There are many excellent French and Viennese operettas which are unknown to opera-lovers and theatre-goers in Britain and America. Many

have never been performed in Britain or America, while some that have been performed have not lasted. The dominance of the Gilbert and Sullivan works may be responsible in part for this situation, but there are other factors. Poor-quality translation of lyrics and libretto is one; the alleged need to adapt a foreign work for an English or American audience, thereby failing to be true to the style and form of the original, is another; simplified or reduced orchestration is yet another.

Attitudes towards operetta among some music-lovers have been somewhat ambivalent, for while the music of an operetta may be enjoyed there is a tendency to imagine that a professed admiration for an operetta is almost an admission of a lack of musical taste. The word 'operetta' in itself creates a problem of definition, for it simply means a 'little opera' which by implication suggests an inferior work. [1] Yet many operettas could not be regarded as 'little' or 'inferior'. It would be a pointless exercise to try to define 'operetta' simply in terms of structure, for there are operas structurally similar to operettas. Operettas may be vehicles for social and political satire, as indeed are some operas.

[1] For further discussion of this cf. Gervase Hughes, *Composers of operetta* (London, 1962), pp. 1-3; Richard Traubner, *Operetta, a theatrical history* (London, 1984), pp. 1-2; Heinrich Zelton and Eduard Wolff, *Operette und Musical; der neue Führer* (Weyarn and Wilhelmshaven, 1995), pp. 10-11.

Operetta has a certain advantage over opera in that, at least in its finest examples, it may work on several levels at once. While there may be a fundamentally intellectual purpose in the writing, the work in its totality is less intellectually challenging than opera, thereby appealing to a broader audience. Compared with opera there is greater variety in what is presented on stage - with movement, dance, and acting as well as singing.

The early history and development of operetta has been thoroughly described in the standard histories. [2] The original French model, which itself had assimilated characteristics from traditions elsewhere (such as the Italian 'commedia dell'arte'), was adapted to form a Viennese operetta style in the middle of the nineteenth century. The first example of a Viennese operetta was Suppé's *Das Pensionat* in 1860.

The designation 'Viennese' should be more properly understood to mean 'Austro-Hungarian' when applied to the operettas of Austrian composers, for just as the Austrian Empire embraced a broad range of cultures and languages, so likewise did the operetta style that evolved there. The Viennese operetta also had some traditionally Austrian models from which to borrow, such as the 'Volksstück' (literally 'people's play') with its use

[2] For example, Traubner, *Operetta, a theatrical history*, pp. 1-16.

of dialect, transformations, and stock characters (such as the comedy peasant, Hanswurst). [3]

Both French and Viennese operetta thrived in a hostile environment of state censorship, using comedy to touch upon social satire, political issues and aspects of morality. Parody and pastiche, both in music and drama, were among the optional ingredients. An often necessary adjunct to the Viennese operetta style was the use of dance, which very often meant the waltz. [4]

The later nineteenth century came to be regarded as a golden age for Viennese operetta, with Strauss, Zeller and Millöcker following in the wake of Suppé. So highly regarded were they that after the first decade of the twentieth century there was a serious debate in the German and Austrian press about the future of operetta. A wide range of opinion was sought. Negative opinions were expressed by Charles Lecocq (“Operetta is dead!”) and Princess Marie Adam Lubomirska (“Operetta is the most effective enemy of true opera and every form of serious music”). A more positive outlook was expressed by Ruggiero Leoncavallo (“As long as there are Viennese there will be Viennese operetta”).

[3] Cf. Hartwin Gromes, ‘Vom alt-Wiener Volksstück zur Wiener Operette’ (Doctoral thesis, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, 1967).

[4] Gromes, ‘Vom alt-Wiener Volksstück zur Wiener Operette’, p. 59.

When asked his opinion, Franz Lehár staunchly defended operetta. Any operetta should be regarded on its own merits, as a good or a bad work, not simply condemned because it was an operetta. Operetta was capable of achieving heights of its own, he maintained, and providing its audience with a “spiritual and artistic experience.” [5] This was the artistic credo which governed his thinking throughout his career as a composer. A part of the present study will assess the extent to which Lehár developed and transformed Viennese operetta with a critical evaluation of his achievements.

The very limited experience of Viennese operetta for audiences in Britain and America was commented upon earlier. This was clearly evidenced in a 1979 Light Opera Enquiry which was undertaken for the Arts Council of Great Britain. As the one operetta company, D'Oyly Carte, was limited to the staging of Gilbert and Sullivan it was left to the large national opera companies to mount productions of European operetta. The repertoire in the main was Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers*, Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*, and Lehár's *Die lustige Witwe*. The years that followed witnessed the demise of D'Oyly Carte, the rise and fall of the New Sadler's Wells Opera (which staged Lehár's *Der Graf von Luxemburg*), the emergence of a new

[5] This and the earlier comments taken from 'Für und gegen die Wiener Operette; Äusserungen auf eine Rundfrage', *Die Zeit* (Vienna), 25 December 1910, p. 3.

D'Oyly Carte (which drifted into oblivion in 2003) and a new Carl Rosa (which favoured Gilbert and Sullivan repertoire above its European counterparts).

If there is a substantial audience for operetta in Britain (and if operettas are staged in a manner that remains faithful to the composer and librettist, there may be such an audience) operetta will continue to be enjoyed. Yet it is a genre that places great demands upon the versatility of its artists whose classically trained voices have to be complemented by agility and acting skills. Too often the national companies destroy the quintessential spirit of operetta by ridiculous production devices. Too often the title role of *Die lustige Witwe* has been bestowed upon a long-favoured diva ere she retired.

The sad state of European operetta in Britain is reflected in the paucity of academic study. For every ten books on Gilbert and Sullivan there may be only one on a European operetta composer. Only two books in English have been devoted to Franz Lehár, both out-of-print and both using material derived from not entirely reliable sources. [6] Elements of bias and misrepresentation will be discussed in a survey of biographies of Lehár as part of the present study.

[6] William Macqueen-Pope and D. L. Murray, *Fortune's favourite: the life and times of Franz Lehár* (London, 1953); Bernard Grun, *Gold and Silver: the life and times of Franz Lehár* (London, 1970).

Errors and confusion abound in Lehár biographies. The dates of first performances of his operettas are incorrectly given; these are corrected in the present thesis where appropriate within a chronological survey of the operettas and listed in an appendix. Details of the last decade of the composer's life were overlooked in Lehár biographies published before 1995. Although it had been known in 1946 that Lehár had enjoyed the friendship and support of a senior Nazi official the facts of the matter did not appear in any biography until 1998; the circumstances are discussed and assessed in this thesis. This thesis aims to go further, however, by suggesting how the facts came to be overlooked by exploring Lehár's relationship with his biographer, Maria von Peteani .

Those major contributors to the Lehár operetta, his librettists, were given only passing mention, if mentioned at all, in the composer's biographies. Almost all of these librettists were Jewish, and it may be that a latent anti-semitism may account for their place in the background. A form of anti-semitism, labelled 'Selbsthass' ('self-hatred'), existed within the middle-class assimilated Jewish population, and this might account for Madame Peteani's attitude, she herself being part-Jewish. It is hoped that Jewish perspectives, and the significant contributions by Jewish librettists, are brought more into the picture by the present study.

Lehár's *Die lustige Witwe*, known within the English-speaking world as *The merry widow*, is accorded a special place within this study. It is the

one work by Lehár which has deservedly endured and it is arguably a masterpiece of its kind. Its inherent musical and dramatic qualities will be analysed and its place within a social historical context will be assessed. Some of Lehár's later works are only partially known through the popularity of the tenor solos which became associated with Richard Tauber. The qualities of these, and Lehár's lesser known works, will be considered.

Since its birth in 1860 Viennese operetta has produced a number of works of lasting quality. Works such as *Die Fledermaus* and *Die lustige Witwe* have become classics of the genre. As other forms of entertainment were in the ascendant during the 1930s new operettas became fewer and fewer. Viennese operetta finally died out when its writers (including some of Lehár's librettists) and performers (including Louis Treumann, the first Danilo in *Die lustige Witwe*) perished in the Nazi concentration camps. Its future in performance will depend upon a sympathetic understanding of the genre. As one of Lehár's librettists remarked

What we must recognize is that operetta is a distinct art form, and a very important one, in view of its unquestioned universal popularity. It was born, it grew up, developed, reached heights now already regarded as classical, passed through an occasional period of decline, was reborn again: that is, it has a history [7]

[7] Alfred Grünwald, from *A history of operetta*, quoted in Traubner, *Operetta, a theatrical history*, p. xii.

Biographical literature on Lehár

Andrew Lamb's article on Franz Lehár in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* lists only seven bibliographical references. [1]

These are

E. Decsey, *Franz Lehár* (Munich, 1924, 2/1930);

S. Czech, *Franz Lehár: sein Weg und sein Werk* (Lindau, 1948);

M. von Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben* (Vienna, 1950);

W. Macqueen-Pope and D. L. Murray, *Fortune's favourite* (London, 1953);

S. Czech, *Schön ist die Welt: Franz Lehars Leben und Werk* (Berlin, 1957);

B. Grun, *Gold and Silver: the life and times of Franz Lehár* (London, 1970); and

M. Schönherr, *Franz Lehár: Bibliographie zu Leben und Werk* (Vienna, 1970).

The same author's later article for the *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*

lists some additional titles. [2] These are

G. Knosp, *Franz Lehár: une vie d'artiste* (Brussels, 1936);

I. Kwasnik-Teuber (sic), *Franz Lehár: sein Leben und Werk* (Kevelaer, 1953);

[1] Stanley Sadie (ed), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 10 (London, 1980), pp. 619-622.

[2] Stanley Sadie (ed), *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol. 2 (London, 1992), pp. 1129-1131.

M. Schönherr, 'Die Instrumentation bei Lehár', *Franz Lehár Congress, Bad Ischl 1978*;

G. V. R. van Ham, *Franz Lehár* (Madrid, 1984);

O. Schneidereit, *Franz Lehár: eine Biographie in Zitaten* (Berlin and Innsbruck, 1984);

L'Avant-Scène Opera, no. 45 (1982); and

Franz Lehár: Thematic Index (London, 1985),

as well as articles by Andrew Lamb on specific Lehár operettas. From the purely biographical titles listed in the bibliography under Lehár for *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition (London, 2001), there is nothing further to add.

When compared with bibliographies for other operetta composers in either edition of *The New Grove Dictionary* - Sullivan, Offenbach, the Strauss family, for example - the Lehár list is sparse indeed. A Lehár researcher is not helped by the fact that too many of these biographies are uncritically derived from their forebears.

This is certainly true of the earlier of the two English texts listed above.

Fortune's favourite: the life and times of Franz Lehár lists Peteani, Czech, Decsey and Knosp among its bibliographical sources but it is evident from the text that Peteani's polite hagiography was its principal inspiration.

Even though doubts had already been raised elsewhere about Lehár's role in the Nazi era it appears that these authors thought it unwise to stir up

uncomfortably recent memories.

One of the authors, Macqueen-Pope, had already written about a dozen theatre history books, mainly about London theatres at the turn of the century. His knowledge of London theatre life is perhaps the book's strength, for it is less concerned with Lehár the Austrian composer, more concerned with the popularity of his works in London theatres. This focus on London allows the text to be sidetracked towards peripheral areas; there is, for example, an entire chapter devoted to George Edwardes, the London impresario.

The other author, Murray, an ex-Harrobian and Oxford graduate, editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* during the Second World War, was also a onetime drama critic for *The Times* and an "author of many famous novels" according to book-cover publicity. The promotional statement goes on to admit that the book "is not a biography in the accepted sense of the word" but a "chronicle of a period ... woven around a man who by his melodies brought so much sunshine, happiness and romance into the lives of so many ..." - which no doubt says it all.

The other title in English, Bernard Grun's *Gold and Silver*, was translated from the author's German text, *Gold und Silber: Franz Lehár und seine Welt*, which was also published in 1970 in recognition of the composer's centenary. Grun (1901 – 1972) was an Austrian by birth, his name originally being Bernhard Grün, a composer of operettas and film music

who in 1935 had emigrated to England where he wrote anecdotal books on light music and operetta, as well as a couple of operetta composer biographies.

Except for some slight excisions the English text of his Lehár biography is a faithful rendering of the German. The German edition may be preferred as it includes a Lehár family tree and a bibliography. In the German version Grun expresses his indebtedness to the biographies by Decsey, Knosp, and Peteani, mentioning in particular the “splendid” biographies by Czech.

Grun’s strength lies in his personal knowledge of Lehár and contemporary composers such as Oscar Straus, the subject of his second biography.

Grun shows remarkable honesty when dealing with the more controversial aspects of Lehár’s life. It is Grun who first mentions Lehár’s gift to Hitler of a souvenir programme for *Die lustige Witwe*. It is Grun who delicately refers to Lehár’s weakness for women.

Grun expresses unbounded, almost uncritical, admiration of Lehár the composer, while there are clear indications of Lehár’s personal shortcomings, his flirtations and infidelities. In a postscript (in the form of an open letter to Otto Blau, executor and administrator of the Lehár estate) the author claims to have created a “warts and all” biography. Yet blemishes in the Lehár persona are too often treated with a discretion bordering on cosmetic gloss. Sources of anecdotes, and the circumstances

relating to them, are regarded as unimportant and are generally ignored, thereby raising doubts as to their total veracity.

The main weakness in Grun's account is perhaps an impression that this is a book written by an elderly Austrian musician for others of his age and experience of life. This is more evident in the English version, where passing references to people and events in Austrian history would have more significance for the non-Austrian reader if more explanation in the form of footnotes were provided. Furthermore, the German text is more precise with, for example, the dating of events.

Lehár's first biographer was Ernst Heinrich Franz Decsey (1870 – 1941). A journalist by profession, Decsey had read law for a doctorate while at the same time studying music at the Vienna Conservatoire with Bruckner and Fuchs. He moved to Graz to work for the *Grazer Tagespost* - first as music critic, later as editor - before returning to Vienna in 1921 to join the staff of the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* as music critic, a post he held until 1938 when the post-Anschluss political climate necessitated his removal from office.

The Lehár book, which was published in 1924, was one of several musical biographies by Decsey. [3] Two other works of his are also of interest: a

[3] Decsey's other biographies are *Hugo Wolf: das Leben und das Lied* (Stuttgart, 1919), *Bruckner: Versuch eines Lebens* (Stuttgart, 1922), *Johann Strauss: ein Wiener Buch* (Stuttgart, 1922 / Vienna, 1948), *Claude Debussy: Biographie* (Graz, 1936), *Debussys Werke* (Graz and Vienna, n.d.)

collection of musical anecdotes with the title *Die Spieldose* (Leipzig, Vienna and Zurich, 1922) and the posthumous autobiography *Musik war sein Leben* (Vienna, 1962) which was edited by his son-in-law, Harald Hampel.

Decsey's Lehár biography spans the composer's life from the family origins to the composition of *Paganini*. It is a compact volume of 140 pages of text followed by a list of compositions. The first 70 pages describe Lehár's life and career before his first operetta production, *Wiener Frauen*. As the second half of the book ends with *Paganini* this Lehár biography is unique in not mentioning Richard Tauber.

Decsey the biographer writes a straightforward factual account in the readable style of short sentences favoured by newspaper columnists.

Reportage on some stage works (for example, *Wiener Frauen*, *Der Rastelbinder*, *Die lustige Witwe*, *Cloclo*, *Eva*, *Frasquita*, and *Paganini*) as well as on some other compositions (such as *Fieber*), is more extensive than on others which arguably deserved more than passing reference.

Some works (such as *Der Mann mit den drei Frauen*) are mentioned only in the listed stage works.

Yet Decsey the musician and critic is never far away. He shrewdly observes how in *Die lustige Witwe* "stepping onto the stage for the first time there were modern people", believable characters, not stereotypes. [4]

[4] Ernst Decsey, *Franz Lehár* (Vienna, 1924), p. 90.

He also recognizes how Lehár uses dance music to go beyond the meaning of the sung words, expressing the inexpressible. “This was new, dance as the language of ultimate ecstasy.” [5]

Decsey notes Lehár’s adroitness in developing motifs from songs - his ‘reminiscence technique’ - by colouring them with instrumental or harmonic transformations to suggest changes of mood; he cites several examples from *Frasquita*. [6] Lehár’s characteristic use of triplet figuration is also commented on. [7]

Although Decsey was familiar with, and appreciative of, contemporary music-making he allows himself some wry comments about those “whose experiments are of greater value than their music.” [8] And perhaps there is a personal jibe at a fellow critic when, in reference to the revision of *Kukuška* as *Tatjana*, he writes that “Max Kalbeck later reworked Falzari, but did not improve him.” [9]

“A good operetta,” Decsey maintains, “is preferable to a weak opera.” [10] Of all the Lehár operettas produced by 1924 the absolute masterpiece for

[5] Decsey, *Franz Lehár*, p. 95.

[6] Decsey, *Franz Lehár*, p. 107.

[7] Decsey, *Franz Lehár*, p. 108.

[8] Decsey, *Franz Lehár*, p. 16.

[9] Decsey, *Franz Lehár*, p. 53.

[10] Decsey, *Franz Lehár*, p. 17.

Decsey is *Endlich allein* by virtue of its second act dominated by two principal singers. This is Lehár's "*Tristan* among operettas." [11] Lehár's early training and career as a bandmaster are thoroughly described. The programme for his first military concert - an eclectic mixture including selections from *Lohengrin*, Schubert's *Erlkönig*, a pot-pourri from *The Mikado*, and Lehár's own *Persischer Marsch* - is reproduced.

Of Lehár's personal life, and of his relationships with women, Decsey offers but fleeting glimpses. The reader is informed that Lehár's music is an expression of love for some unknown beloved, and that women always fancied him ("Lehár war immer Frauenliebling"). [12] Yet the only affair mentioned in any detail is one with an older woman at Barmen-Elberfeld who performed "a very respectable erotic service" and later "mothered her darling boy and saved him from a life of dissipation." [13] As for Lehár's wife Sophie, she is accorded a photograph but mentioned only briefly in the text.

A disappointing feature is the lack of sources for the biographical details. How much came from personal interviews with the composer or with Lehár's friends and family, or how much from published articles, is a

[11] Decsey, *Franz Lehár*, p. 12.

[12] Decsey, *Franz Lehár*, p. 43.

[13] Decsey, *Franz Lehár*, p. 36.

matter for speculation. There can be no doubt that Decsey at some time was well acquainted with Lehár, for in his autobiography Decsey describes a late-night visit by the composer to his apartments where he played through *Friederike* into the early hours of the morning. [14] This event would have taken place in 1929, five years after publication of the biography. To judge from references in the Decsey autobiography to the Léons, suggesting a close bond between the journalist and this family, it may have been through the librettist Victor Léon that Decsey got to know Lehár.

A Lehár anecdote appeared in Decsey's *Die Spieldose*:

The court tailor of the Queen of Rumania commissioned from Lehár senior a composition to celebrate the royal birthday. Being a very busy bandmaster Lehár had no time, and so he entrusted the task to his 16 year old son, Franz. "If you do a fine job the tailor will reward you with a new suit!"

Franz Lehár junior delivers a serenade on the very next day, and after a few days the tailor sent the promised suit. The young composer tries it on, it is a splendid fit - but Lehár senior is unpleasantly struck by the realisation that the suit is made up of two kinds of material - a lighter one and a darker one.

"That's all right," replied young Lehár, "my serenade is also made up of two materials - an old march and a turned over polka!" [15]

This is one of several anecdotes which, transformed through various retellings, are found in books about Lehár.

Decsey concludes his biography of Lehár with a pen portrait of a

[14] Ernst Decsey, *Musik war sein Leben* (Vienna, 1962), p. 166.

[15] Ernst Decsey, *Die Spieldose* (Leipzig, Vienna and Zurich, 1922), pp. 181-182.

composer who has a childlike love of applause. Such is his need for appreciation that it is said in another anecdote that someone wanting to interview the composer had only to stand outside Lehár's door and give a couple of rounds of applause for the composer to make an immediate appearance. Yet the final image of Lehár is that of a man satisfied with the material gains of success but disappointed in not enjoying the recognition of the musical establishment, always looked upon as the bandmaster made good. [16]

A reader might have expected this level of insight from Gaston Knosp's *Franz Lehár, une vie d'artiste* (Brussels and Paris, 1935). A former student of Massenet and Lavignac, Knosp (1874 – 1942) was a composer of vocal music and salon pieces. He was particularly drawn towards the exotic and the oriental. He dedicated to Debussy a sequence of piano pieces, programmatic in content and supposedly Egyptian in style, with the title *El Kahirah – Impressions du Caire*, published in 1912. In the same year he also published his final report on ethnomusicological research which he had undertaken in Vietnam. [17]

Lehár was not Knosp's only subject for biography, for he also wrote a

[16] Decsey, *Franz Lehár*, pp. 139-140.

[17] Gaston Knosp, 'Rapport sur une mission officielle d'étude musicale en Indochine', *Int. Arch. für Ethn.*, (Band XX, 1911), (Band XXI, 1912). This is listed in the bibliography to Hong Thao, 'Hmong music in Vietnam', *Nhac Viet, the journal of Vietnamese music* (Special issue, vol. 4, no.2, fall 1995); see also www.hmongnet.org/publications.

memoir of Massenet as well as monographs on Puccini and Strauss. [18]

Yet it is surprising that someone with such an academic track record could have produced in this first Lehár biography in French a literary style which one might tend to associate more with the fashionable society magazines of the time than with seriously informed reporting. The opening chapter presents Lehár at home in the Schikaneder-Schlössl, with descriptions of the rooms and (granted, quite interesting) photographs. On first impressions this “vie d’artiste” is more lifestyle description than biography.

In his biographical survey of Lehár’s early career Knosp occasionally lapses into fanciful journalism, as for example when he describes Lehár junior playing through the score of *Kukuška* to his dying father who afterwards “leaves this life calmer as if he foresaw a better future for his son.” [19] Loaded statements are presented with neither explanation nor illustration, as when Knosp declares that “one feature that Lehár has in common with Puccini is the art of writing things which often appear difficult ... and which in reality are not so.” [20] A reference to

[18] The Massenet memoir was published as ‘Erinnerungen an Massenet’ in *Neue Musik-Zeitung* 23 (Stuttgart, 1912). The Strauss biography appeared as *Johann Strauss: la vie, une valse* (Brussels, 1941).

[19] Gaston Knosp, *Franz Lehár, une vie d’artiste* (Brussels and Paris, 1935), p. 17.

[20] Knosp, *Franz Lehár, une vie d’artiste*, p. 32.

instances in support of this argument would amplify the author's critical appreciation.

Knosp is on safer ground when discussing Lehár's work in the context of the history of operetta and judging his operettas from the perspective of the French forebears in the genre. Lehár had achieved universal appeal with his style of operetta, most notably in *Die lustige Witwe*, dispensing with those predictable characteristics - what Knosp refers to as the "trop nombreuses viennoiseries" - which appealed only to audiences in Vienna. [21] In the face of critics who despised his symphonic style of writing Lehár had breathed new life into a form of entertainment which some had regarded as defunct.

The most useful section of the book is a chapter on 'Lehár et Giuditta'. Here Knosp describes an interview with the composer on the eve of the Belgian premiere of *Giuditta*. Of the new operetta Lehár says, "It is my best work" ("C'est ma meilleure oeuvre") - a predictable opening statement, as interviews about his other operettas would seem to indicate - but then he comments about the changes that had taken place in musical theatre:

The old operetta, dear friend, is exhausted. It came in its time, there were some excellent ones, but it has had its day. We are moving by way of light-hearted musical comedy towards the true light opera. Grandiloquent finales are finished. No life is completely an operetta or completely a drama, is it? The poor man sees hours of operetta,

[21] Knosp, *Franz Lehár, une vie d'artiste*, p. 29.

and drama also touches the rich. Quite right it is. It is all to do with an amalgam of comedy. And that is what attracts me - comedy, real characters on stage, and bringing life to episodes in their lives, where there is no place for anything beyond what is natural. [22]

Lehár's clear intent had been to bring 'verismo' to operetta. He recalls how he had been condemned in Vienna for his innovations, such as finales without ensembles, and then continues:

Believe me, composing an operetta is a difficult thing, more difficult than is generally believed. You have to write something that falls easily against the ear, that the crowd can sing and dance easily, and above all avoid the commonplace and never sacrifice the music. It takes a good musician to succeed with an operetta, and not every good musician will succeed. [23]

Giuditta, so Knosp explains, is an ambitious work through which the composer will attempt to throw off the shackles of *Die lustige Witwe* and reinvent himself ("se renouveler") as Verdi did with *Falstaff* or Puccini with *Turandot*. [24]

Knosp concludes his book with a survey of different styles of Lehár operetta, focusing his attention on *Frasquita*, *Das Land des Lächelns*, and *Wo die Lerche singt*. There are brief descriptions of Lehár's friendships with Puccini and Tauber, yet another collection of characteristic anecdotes followed by some comments on the influence of Lehár's mother, and a glance towards the future with preparations for *Le chant du bonheur*, the

[22] Knosp, *Franz Lehár, une vie d'artiste*, p. 36.

[23] Knosp, *Franz Lehár, une vie d'artiste*, pp. 36-37.

[24] Knosp, *Franz Lehár, une vie d'artiste*, pp. 38-39.

French version of *Schön ist die Welt*. There is no bibliography, thereby forcing the reader to make educated guesses about Knosp's sources, with the exception of the obvious one (Lehár himself).

In contrast with Knosp's slim volume the first of the Stan Czech titles is truly worthy of its classification as biography. Published in 1948 in Lindau am Bodensee and Vienna *Franz Lehár: sein Weg und sein Werk* provides 232 pages of text followed by the most comprehensive list of Lehár's works to date and a valuable bibliography.

Stan (or Stany) Czech, pseudonym of Stanislaw Szczech, was an acknowledged expert on operetta, having produced one of the most enduring handbooks on the subject. [25] He had an additional interest in Chopin. [26] Yet it was his detailed knowledge of operetta that gave this first of two biographies of Lehár its value, with some excellent synopses of the operettas.

This Lehár biography is a sober and straightforward account, focusing on Lehár's musical career and providing some information on librettists.

Details of family life are there, but intimate details of Lehár's personal life

[25] Czech's *Das Operettenbuch: ein Wegweiser durch die Operetten und Singspiele des Bühnenspielplans der Gegenwart und Vergangenheit* first appeared in 1936. For a second edition (Dresden, 1939) the title was trimmed a little; subsequent title modifications (Stuttgart, 1950 and 1960) replaced *Wegweiser* with *Führer*. See <http://catalog.loc.gov/>, the online catalogue of the Library of Congress.

[26] Czech's *Chopin: Erdenweg eines Genius* appeared in 1950.

(such as his adventures with women) are studiously avoided. It is carefully researched, with an impressive bibliography that includes not only Decsey and Knosp but also articles from newspapers and journals (some by Lehár). Unfortunately there is no clear indication or attribution for sources used.

The latter years of Lehár's life and career - in effect the whole post-*Giuditta* period and the Nazi annexation of Austria - are glossed over. There is a simple explanation. The 1948 publication of Czech's Lehár biography was not a first but a third edition, having first appeared in Berlin in 1940 and subsequently been reprinted in 1942. It was planned not only as a biography of a living composer but as a politically correct factual history from the Nazi standpoint. Instead of a final chapter on Lehár's final years, even in the 1948 edition, Czech resorts to another assemblage of anecdotes. Nevertheless, the book is not without value, though perhaps more as popular biography than academic.

Maria von Peteani's *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben* may be regarded as the 'official' biography of the composer, the only approved work on display at the Lehár Villa, and the only biography in the catalogue of Josef Weinberger, for it was first published by Lehár's own Glocken-Verlag. Maria von Peteani was an artist by profession, especially gifted as a book illustrator and bookplate designer. Born on 2 February 1888 in Prague, she was the daughter of one Edmund Sauer. While she

was still in her infancy the family moved to Linz. At school in Linz her artistic talents were nurtured by Professor Eduard Lorenz. She was also a proficient linguist (in French, English and Italian) and she received tuition in music and piano from her father. [27]

When she was twenty she married an opera singer, Eugen von Peteani, Reichsritter von Steinberg (1873 – 1913), a rich landowner who lost much of his wealth in 1909 when his bank collapsed. There was worse to come. After appearing in Vienna and Budapest and taking tenor leads as a guest artist in Stockholm and Milan her husband developed vocal problems. With Eugen forced to give up his singing career in 1912 Maria was reduced to offering tourist accommodation at her husband's family villa. In 1913 Eugen suffered an apoplectic fit and died, and Maria returned to her parental home in Linz.

Already developing her professional competence as an illustrator, Maria worked on title pages for books, fashion drawings for journals, and bookplates for the personal libraries of distinguished clients (among whom was Frau Johann Strauss). In the 1920s she embarked upon a career as a writer, and by 1926 she was a columnist for the 'feuilleton' section of the *Wiener Tagblatt*. Because there was Jewish ancestry on her mother's side she lost her job at the *Wiener Tagblatt* in 1938, and in 1940 she was

[27] Biographical details from Peter Rath, 'Maria von Peteani: Spuren-suche im Walzertakt', *Biblos* 47, 1 (1998), pp. 71-82; available from website <http://www.onb.ac.at/biblos/rath001.jpg>.

prohibited by the Nazis from any professional activity, freelance or otherwise, as a writer. She survived the war and returned to Linz, where she died on 28 July 1960.

Although she had known Lehár casually as a young woman it was 1947 when the composer telephoned her from Zurich and invited her to write his biography. They entered into a correspondence. [28] Throughout this period Lehár remained concerned about the level of trust he was placing in her with regard to the faithful recording of selected details.

Lehár distrusted biographers, yet he felt a need to leave for posterity an account of his life from his personal viewpoint. It was his wife, Sophie, shortly before her death, who had recommended Madame Peteani. [29] The resultant text is a blend of third-person autobiography by Lehár ghost-written by Peteani interspersed with personal memoirs by Peteani herself and unacknowledged gleanings from other biographies.

Despite its tone of uncritical admiration her Lehár biography remains a work of some merit and value, especially in its personal details. Her retelling of the friction he endured from the snobbery within the military establishment has a distinct ring of truth about it. [30]

[28] The correspondence is kept in the Stadtarchiv, Linz. See later in this thesis the chapter on the Lehár / Peteani correspondence, also Appendix 4.

[29] Maria von Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben* (Vienna and London, 1950), p. 212.

[30] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, p. 35.

When Peteani reveals that “young Lehár became familiar with all the nervous conditions of music directors and divas, the jealousy and joy of success, dark cabals and light amours heard in giggles from every corner offstage” this is as much as she is prepared to say about Lehár’s personal life at Barmen-Elberfeld. [31] In the light of Decsey’s account of this episode (and indeed the later account by Grun) Peteani’s further statement that “without Barmen-Elberfeld Franz would not have experienced a host of things necessary for his life’s work” becomes something of an understatement. [32]

There is, however, one account of a flirtation in her book. This was an encounter with a lady claiming to be a fashion model of German birth whom he met in 1912 during a Channel crossing while en route for London. They met for dinner one evening and, over champagne, arranged to meet again. Shortly after that first rendezvous Lehár was guest of honour at a social evening held in the home of a certain titled gentleman. On being introduced to the lady of the house he had to pretend not to know her - for she was his recent dinner companion. She naturally kept up the pretence, but she did not keep the second rendezvous. [33] Lehár considered the episode worthy of adaptation as an operetta libretto and

[31] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, p. 26.

[32] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, p. 27.

[33] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, pp. 119-120.

even suggested it to Dr Willner who wisely steered him away from the idea.

The book is full of musical quotations, but these are really used as illustrations within the text, serving in the main as reference points highlighting an operetta under discussion, not so much for critical evaluation. Her attempts at musical insight occasionally misfire, as for example when discussing *Der Rastelbinder* she remarks that

The entrance song of Pfefferkorn introduces for the first time a Lehár speciality, more than that, a Lehár discovery - rhetorical or narrative music ("die redende oder erzählende Musik") which thereafter found an abundance of applications in the operettas of other composers. [34]

Here she has not only overlooked the application of narrative music within earlier operettas of Austrian and other traditions (Sullivan and Offenbach, for example) but also within some well known works representative of German and Austrian opera. [35]

In a discussion of *Wo die Lerche singt* Peteani describes how "Lehár's Lark spread her wings and flew", a statement that could so easily have led to a comparison with Puccini's *La rondine* which after all was written by the same librettists, Willner and Reichert, but instead she drifts into cloying banality, rhetorically addressing the composer with

[34] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, p. 62.

[35] Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung voices: opera and musical narrative in the nineteenth century* (Princeton, NJ, 1991) especially Chapter 3, pp. 61-87, where musical narrative in Mozart and Wagner is considered.

How many languages do you speak, Franz Lehár? How is it that you are understood in every land? ... Your music needs no interpreter, it is the Esperanto of the hearts. [36]

This recurrent idolizing of her subject is the most awful aspect of an otherwise useful book. Elsewhere, for example, she describes Lehár as “the Toscanini of Losoncz”. [37] Peteani writes more like a novelist than a serious biographer. Her descriptions of the operettas are little more than programme notes in content. On the other hand there are interesting quotes from reviews and correspondence with Puccini. [38]

There are fleeting appearances of Peteani herself in the text when one reads that

At that time I had married young, lived with my husband in Vienna, and attended the premiere of *Der Graf von Luxemburg*. Adele Strauss, widow of Johann Strauss, had invited us to her box. That was on the 12th November 1909. [39]

Later, in reference to *Eva*, she mentions how “I once heard this operetta in an Italian *stagione* in Goerz” and how the tenor playing Flaubert had adopted the make-up and appearance of Caruso. [40] (The Peteani family seat was at Goerz).

[36] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, pp. 132-133.

[37] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, p.31.

[38] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, p. 153.

[39] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, p. 104.

[40] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, p. 117.

The personal memoir achieves greater value when Peteani records the day-by-day life of Lehár at the end of his life with the seemingly endless fan mail and business correspondence, and the constant stream of medics visiting to care for the dying man. There are moments in the book when details are revealed that could only have come from personal knowledge of Lehár and his household - the composer's fondness for pets [41], the behaviour changes (agitation, rushed speech with open vowels and weak consonants) at moments of musical inspiration [42], the library with its large collection of illustrations and literature on Paganini [43], and Lehár's recollection of the first night of *Turandot*. [44] The book is illustrated with over a hundred photographs.

Lehár's next biographer was another woman, author of a proto-feminist tract with the title *Esoterik Lebensphilosophie* which was published in 1950. This was Dr Ilse Teuber-Kwasnik, and her *Franz Lehár: sein Leben und Werk* appeared in 1953. [45] Her book on Lehár is a slim volume from a series of budget-priced publications. It is an uncritical and sketchy

[41] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, p. 187.

[42] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, p. 138.

[43] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, p. 158.

[44] Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben*, p. 154.

[45] The name is listed wrongly as Kwasnik-Teuber in Stanley Sadie (ed), *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, pp. 1129-1131.

book of only twenty-four pages divided into two roughly equal sections - the first devoted to Lehár's life, the second to his work.

The first part is simply a condensed survey of the main aspects of the composer's life and career. Personal details are minimal, librettists are not mentioned at all, and there are no source references. In discussing the operettas the author observes that the form of the early works is dominated by dance. [46] With *Paganini* she detects "a broadening of the musical form" [47] and suggests that this change of direction is attributable to the influence of Puccini. [48] Later she comments on Lehár's "excellent sense of empathy with the music of foreign nations." [49]

Teuber-Kwasnik's sparse and derivative essay is dwarfed by Stan Czech's second foray into Lehár biography which appeared in 1957. Borrowing the title from Lehár's *Schön ist die Welt*, Czech produced a text of almost three hundred pages, presenting the composer on a broader canvas than in the earlier book.

It begins promisingly with a suggestion of approval by Lehár in the form of a quotation selected from a letter, dated December 1941, in which the

[46] Ilse Teuber-Kwasnik, *Franz Lehár: sein Leben und Werk* (Kevelaer, 1953), p. 15.

[47] Teuber-Kwasnik, *Franz Lehár: sein Leben und Werk*, p. 19.

[48] Teuber-Kwasnik, *Franz Lehár: sein Leben und Werk*, p. 9.

[49] Teuber-Kwasnik, *Franz Lehár: sein Leben und Werk*, p. 24.

composer referred to Czech as “my successful biographer” (“mein erfolgreicher Biograph”). The value of such a quote, taken out of context, is naturally doubtful.

Czech’s opening chapter is a colourful account of the production and worldwide success of *Die lustige Witwe*. The storybook nature of this chapter, with direct speech not attributed to any source, is suggestive of historical unreliability. The author is far more convincing when sources (such as Franz Lehár’s reminiscences or Anton Lehár’s memoirs of his mother) are clearly indicated. [50]

In this book the author reveals more of Lehár’s personal life. A section (headed ‘Lehár und die Frauen’) is devoted to anecdotes about women he encountered. [51] The Channel crossing romance is retold. [52] The author even dares to suggest that for Lehár to be satisfied by a purely platonic desire is “hardly imaginable” (“kaum denkbar”). [53]

Balancing to some extent this image of Lehár the ladies’ man is Lehár the clubbable man’s man, and the author provides some details about the composer’s interest in the Schlaraffia. [54] It is revealed that one of his

[50] Stan Czech, *Schön ist die Welt: Franz Lehárs Leben und Werk* (Berlin, 1957), p. 32.

[51] Czech, *Schön ist die Welt*, p. 144.

[52] Czech, *Schön ist die Welt*, p. 155.

[53] Czech, *Schön ist die Welt*, p. 60.

[54] Czech, *Schön ist die Welt*, p. 96.

contributions as a ‘Schlaraffianer’ had been the composition of a “witty and charming parody” of the Venusberg music from *Tannhäuser* for a spring festival in which lady members, dressed as elves, performed a round dance. [55] On a more serious note Czech records how the Nazis banned this eccentric organization. [56]

Moments of first person narrative attest to a personal knowledge of the composer. The author mentions a visit to Lehár at Vienna, noting how the house in the Theobaldgasse was bedecked with Nazi flags. [57] On a visit to Ischl he describes how he sat on a terrace with Lehár as the composer’s female admirers went by, gazing towards them. [58]

This is a book not just about Lehár but about his world - the society he knew, his musical contemporaries, rivals and associates - and the author is occasionally diverted towards Kálmán or Girardi. More relevant to a life of Lehár are the several references to Puccini. [59] There are references also to Tauber, the Marischkas, and the grim fate of Löhner-Beda and others in the concentration camps.

[55] Czech, *Schön ist die Welt*, p. 263.

[56] Czech, *Schön ist die Welt*, p. 282.

[57] Czech, *Schön ist die Welt*, p. 282.

[58] Czech, *Schön ist die Welt*, p. 259.

[59] Czech, *Schön ist die Welt*, pp. 174, 195 and 215.

Czech's expert knowledge of operetta and light music theatre takes him on to other diversions about performance styles in cabaret and variety where the 'Pablatschendiven' - the divas of the 'pawlac' (Slavonic for 'wooden stage') - held sway. The 'Heurigensänger' or tavern singers were another topic. [60] While such singers, with their sentimental ballads and dialect songs, were an important part of Viennese musical life, their brand of popular culture had only a tenuous link with Lehár through his very brief association with Eduard Merkt (1852 – 1908), lyricist and composer of numerous 'Wienerlieder', songs in Viennese dialect. Merkt wrote the text for Lehár's march *Rex Gambrinus-Ex!*.

For more than a decade after the publication of Czech's second book there was no further study of Lehár until the two language versions of Grun's account in 1970. Serious study of Lehár still lacked method and there was a dearth of bibliographic referencing in Lehár literature. In recognition of this fault Max Schönherr broke new ground with a useful reference work, *Franz Lehár: Bibliographie zu Leben und Werk*, which was published in typescript in 1970.

Max Schönherr (1903 – 1984) was a composer and musical director who had known Lehár and conducted much of the operetta repertoire, having worked at the Opera House at Graz and the Vienna Volksoper. Since 1931 he had been musical director of the Vienna Radio Symphony

[60] Czech, *Schön ist die Welt*, pp. 52-60.

Orchestra. [61]

Schönherr's 161 pages of typescript, modestly described by the author as a "skeleton of incompleteness", are a remarkable achievement. [62]

Excluding the introduction and afterword there are eight sections to his

Bibliographie, the references in each arranged chronologically:

- A) Newspaper references to articles by Lehár, interviews with Lehár, and compositions published in newspapers
- B) Published biographies of Lehár
- C) Articles about Lehár
- D) Literature on music, music theatre, and history with significant references to Lehár
- E) Reviews of Lehár first night performances
- F) Reference works (dictionaries, operetta guides, etc.) with details on Lehár and his operettas
- G) Index of people, places and subjects mentioned in sections A to F
- H) Chronologies (family history, contemporary operetta productions), lists of theatres where the operettas were first staged, details of film versions of the operettas, publication and location details of works listed in B, D and F.

The work is unfortunately not without fault. Personal evidence of several fruitless searches would appear to indicate the presence of misleading entries. The absence of page references for articles from newspapers and

[61] Biographical details on Schönherr from the website of the Österreich Lexikon at www.aeiou.at/aeiou.encyclop.s/s342726.htm .

[62] Max Schönherr, *Franz Lehar: Bibliographie zu Leben und Werk* (Vienna, 1970), p. ii.

journals is also unhelpful. That apart, it remains an inspiring research tool in its complete version. The more readily available four-page extract from the *Bibliographie* which was published in the same year is an inadequate substitute. [63]

Two further writings by Schönherr attest to his understanding of Lehár. The first is a paper he presented on Sunday 16 July 1978 at the Kongress ‘Franz Lehár’, a weekend conference held at the Kurhotel in Bad Ischl. Schönherr’s contribution was an 18-page typescript on Lehár’s orchestration, ‘Die Instrumentation bei Lehár’. [64] The second is the brief forward to the *Franz Lehár: Thematischer Index / Thematic Index* completed by Schönherr just days before his death in December 1984. As the “last surviving musical director from the ‘Marischka’ theatres in Vienna” he declares that “there is pure gold hidden in the pages of these scores, all orchestrated by the composer himself” (“wahres Gold ist versteckt in den Partiturseiten, vom Komponisten selbst instrumentiert”) wherein lay the secret of Lehár’s success. [65]

[63] Max Schönherr, ‘Beiträge zu einer Franz-Lehár-Bibliographie’, *Österreichische Musik Zeitschrift* (1970), vol. 25, pp. 330-333. While in the complete *Bibliographie* the name of Ilse Teuber-Kwasnik is correctly presented the *ÖMZ* extract has the erroneous ‘Kwasnik-Teuber’.

[64] Among other contributors was Carl Dahlhaus whose essay ‘Zur musikalischen Dramaturgie der *Lustigen Witwe*’ was published by *ÖMZ* in 1985.

[65] *Franz Lehár: Thematischer Index / Thematic Index* (London, 1985), p. iii, published by Glocken-Verlag.

The next title from Andrew Lamb's listing for *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* has not been consulted for the present survey. Gerald R. van Ham's *Franz Lehár un musico del siglo XX* (Madrid, 1984) is a translation into Spanish by Juan J. Victorio. According to the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid it is a volume of just 121 pages, part of a collection of 'Clasicos de la musica'. [66] The text in its original language has at present evaded detection.

1984 also marked the publication of a book which Lehár researchers could not wisely ignore. When Leipzig scholar Otto Schneidereit (1915 – 1978) died an unfinished manuscript biography of Lehár was found among his papers. His publisher, VEB Lied der Zeit Musikverlag, commissioned two editors to complete and prepare the work for publication. The result was *Franz Lehár: eine Biographie in Zitaten*.

Schneidereit had been a prolific author of operetta guides, music theatre histories and biographies. [67] His 'biography in quotations' is a

[66] See website www.bne.es/cgi-bin/wsirtex .

[67] His writings include *Operettenbuch: Die Welt der Operette – Die Operetten der Welt* (Berlin, 1955), *Operetten von Abraham bis Ziehrer* (Berlin, 1965) rev. as *Operette A – Z: Ein Streifzug durch die Welt der Operette und des Musicals*, and *Berlin, wie es weint und lacht: Spaziergänge durch Berlins Operettengeschichte*. Among his biographies are *Jacques Offenbach* (Leipzig, 1966), *Fritzi Massary: Versuch eines Porträts* (Berlin, 1970), *Johann Strauss und die Stadt an der schönen blauen Donau* (Berlin, 1972), *Paul Lincke und die Entstehung der Berliner Operette* (Berlin, 1974), *Eduard Künneke, der Komponist aus Dingsda* (Berlin, 1978) and *Richard Tauber: ein Leben - eine Stimme* (Berlin, ?1981; new ed. Berlin, 2000).

compilation of extracts from source readings which include interviews with or articles by Lehár, personal published memoirs by Anton von Lehár, first night reviews and critical comments, and details quoted from the biographies by Grun, Peteani and Czech. It is as authoritative as the sources quoted. There is a linking narrative which unfortunately is not without errors of fact or erroneous conclusions. Scrupulous revision - which Schneidereit did not live to undertake and which the appointed editors were perhaps unqualified to carry out - would have avoided these errors.

Having exhausted the biographical references listed in editions of the *New Grove* dictionaries it is appropriate to consider some other works which may contribute to a fuller understanding of Lehár.

There are autobiographical writings by Lehár himself (consulted by Schneidereit and listed in the Schönherr *Bibliographie*) which have appeared in newspapers and journals. These are occasionally repetitive, sometimes anecdotal, and may be judged as factual as fallible memory may allow, but they at least have the virtue of corroborating evidence from other sources. Among the most important of his writings is his privately printed *Bekenntnis* (Zurich, 1946) which is primarily a statement of his artistic credo.

His brother, Anton Freiherr von Lehár, wrote a little gem in *Unsere Mutter* (Berlin and Vienna, 1930), a slim volume published in honour of the

composer's sixtieth birthday. Interesting for its family photographs and details of family history, it is also the source of fascinating letters from mother to son about problems with Franz, who as a young man is revealed as a cock-a-hoop individual.

The rewards of Lehár's later successes may be deduced from the personal possessions displayed at the Lehár Villa. These are described in an early catalogue. [68] The currently available catalogue has less to say about the contents but it does include a brief biographical essay by Peter Herz, one of Lehár's lyricists. [69] An official publication such as this is perforce uncontroversial. This is certainly the case with a tribute publication from Glocken-Verlag on the tenth anniversary of Lehár's death. [70]

In the years following the centenary of Lehár's birth, as if to demonstrate the breadth of interest throughout Europe, several biographies of Lehár appeared in various languages. There was one in Rumanian, comprising 160 pages of text (derived mainly from Czech and Peteani) with a list of compositions. [71] After that came a 36-page biography published in

[68] Karl Eidlinger and Franz Lipp, *Lehár Museum: Katalog und Erläuterungen zu den Sammlungen in Bad Ischl* (Bad Ischl, 1951).

[69] Peter Herz, 'Impressionen beim Besuch des Lehár-Museums', in *Lehár-Museum Bad Ischl* (Vienna and Bad Ischl, n.d.).

[70] *Franz Lehár zum Gedenken* (Vienna, 1958). No author is named on the title page but an introduction attributes the authorship to Maria von Peteani.

[71] Ladislau Fűredi, *Lehár* (Bucharest, 1972).

Flemish with a curiously selective discography but no bibliography. [72]

There was a biography in Russian, Alla Vladimirskaia's *Frants Legar* (Leningrad, 1981), and another in Hungarian, Zoltan Szenassy's *Lehár* (Bratislava, c.1995). [73]

Although academic research has resulted in studies and theses on operetta, products in the main of German and Austrian universities, the only doctorate thesis to date on *Lehár per se* is the work of an American scholar, Edward Michael Gold. [74] While there is a biographical element to his dissertation (derived almost exclusively from the standard sources of Decsey, Czech, Grun and Peteani) the focus of his investigations has been the style of the operettas analysed according to principles established by Jan La Rue. [75]

In a spin-off publication, released by Glocken-Verlag to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Lehár's birth, Gold asks "To what extent is it possible to homogenize the elements of opera and operetta?" [76] The question

[72] Paul De Raedt, *Het leven en werk van F. Lehár* (Brussels, 1973).

[73] Details of these last two titles from the Library of Congress website at <http://catalog.loc.gov/>.

[74] Edward Michael Gold, 'On the significance of Franz Lehár's operettas: a musical-analytical study' (Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 1993).

[75] Jan La Rue, *Guidelines for style analysis* (New York, 1970).

[76] Edward Michael Gold, *By Franz Lehár – the complete cosmopolitan* (London, 1995), p. 14.

seems to cast doubt on the validity and purpose of his analytical study. While Gold convincingly demonstrates the maturing of Lehar's style through a gradual enrichment of orchestration and by motivic and thematic development he fails to take account of the various extra-musical forces which impose themselves upon a composer, thereby affecting his style, and which are more evident in light music theatre than in opera: the particular demands or limitations of principal artists, especially in a genre which employed 'stars' such as Girardi; the shape and structure of lyrics and libretto; the constraints, usually commercial, presented by theatre company managers.

In the biographical part of Gold's thesis a curious claim is made with regard to one of Lehar's works. Lehar's nephew, Dr Francis Lehar, had suggested that there was "no practical evidence" that *Die Spieluhr* - despite its listing in *Grove* and the standard Lehar biographies - ever existed. [77] Gold accepts this unquestioningly and consequently omits *Die Spieluhr* from his own list of Lehar stage works. [78] The present thesis will show in the chronological survey of operettas that the work was not a figment of Lehar's imagination. [79]

Authors of the most significant Lehar biographies published in or before

[77] Gold, 'On the significance of Franz Lehar's operettas', p. 101.

[78] Gold, *By Franz Lehar – the complete cosmopolitan*, p. 15.

[79] A piano score was published by Karczag and Wallner.

the centenary year of 1970 had the advantage of knowing Franz Lehár personally. It would be impossible to imagine how much access some of these biographers may have had to personal papers; Peteani may have been best favoured in this respect although (as will be discussed later) she suppressed many details. It is likewise impossible to imagine how much prime source material may have been lost when the Schikaneder-Schlössl was ransacked during the later months of the Second World War. There certainly is prime source material on Lehár still available, albeit scattered in various locations around the world, and the present study will provide further details about known sources.

There is little purpose to be served by a biography of Lehár prepared by gleaning data from every biographer from Decsey to Schneidereit. While it is understandable that each of these authors has brought his or her own perspectives and prejudices into the writing, a more serious matter is the repetition of erroneous facts (most evident when comparing dates of first performances) which, through unchecked repetition in derivative works, can too often acquire undeserved credibility.

Recent years have witnessed a revival of interest in Lehár with recordings of songs, piano sonatas, instrumental music, orchestral works and lesser known operas and operettas, and no fewer than four biographies by Stefan Frey, Herbert and Ingrid Haffner, Franz Endler and Norbert Linke. To judge from his scholarship and assimilation of published data, the most important of these is Stefan Frey.

Frey has written two books on Lehár. His initial inspiration was a maxim proposed by Adorno that “light art is the socially bad conscience of the serious.” [80] This leads Frey to the suggestion that Lehár may equally be regarded as “the aesthetically bad conscience of light music.” [81] In the first of his books, published in 1995, Frey departs from the judgement that Lehár is considered “an annoyance to the intellectual, the essence of sweet kitsch, plainly a synonym for trash.” [82] His conclusion (if one understands the argument correctly) is that through the modern quality of his work Lehár defies categorisation and remains a cultural phenomenon, an icon, of his age. [83]

Frey alternates biography (derived largely from Czech, Decsey, Grun and Peteani) with critical assessment and dramatic analysis of the operettas.

Forty pages alone are devoted to the musical and dramatic content of *Der Graf von Luxemburg*. [84] The author also provides a useful study of the

[80] Stefan Frey, *Franz Lehár oder das schlechte Gewissen der leichten Musik* (Tubingen, 1995), p. 4, quoting Adorno in Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt a.M., 1987), vol. 5, p. 160.

[81] Frey, *Franz Lehár oder das schlechte Gewissen der leichten Musik*, p. 4.

[82] Frey, *Franz Lehár oder das schlechte Gewissen der leichten Musik*, p. 1.

[83] Frey, *Franz Lehár oder das schlechte Gewissen der leichten Musik*, p. 215.

[84] Frey, *Franz Lehár oder das schlechte Gewissen der leichten Musik*, pp. 83-123.

characteristics of the 'Tauber-Lieder', the tenor arias of Lehár's later works associated with Richard Tauber. [85]

The second of Frey's books is perhaps the most important contribution to Lehár scholarship since Max Schönherr's *Bibliographie*. The title is taken from the rhetorical bravado attributed to Lehár himself as reported by his mother in a letter to Anton. [86] *'Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.'* *Franz Lehár und die Unterhaltungsmusik im 20. Jahrhundert* provides a thorough biography, the result of literature research and investigation of prime source documents.

The eighteen chapters of this book are subdivided into short essays, each devoted to a topic related to the main subject or argument. The shadow of Adorno seems never far away: once again "the bad conscience of light music" is cited. [87] Frey also quotes Adorno's judgement that *Die lustige Witwe* stands "on the borderline", being "one of the last operettas that still has something to do with art and one of the first to unhesitatingly

[85] Frey, *Franz Lehár oder das schlechte Gewissen der leichten Musik*, pp. 155-161.

[86] Letter dated 10 December 1896, quoted in Anton Freiherr von Lehár, *Unsere Mutter* (Berlin and Vienna, 1930), p. 30.

[87] Stefan Frey, *'Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.'* *Franz Lehár und die Unterhaltungsmusik im 20. Jahrhundert*, (Frankfurt a.M. and Leipzig, 1999), p. 19.

disown art.” [88] The writings of Adorno are used to explain the intrinsically sexual content of *Zigeunerliebe*. [89]

Frey displays a jaundiced opinion of previous biographers, accusing Decsey of contributing to a Lehár legend and declaring that Schönherr is guilty of compiling a bibliography of approved reviews “which Lehár himself had meticulously collected.” [90] A degree of caution is of course desirable, and with some Lehár biographies justifiable, but that same caution surely applies to that most virulent of critics, Karl Kraus, who, as Frey asserts, tracked Lehár’s career with more accuracy than those contemporaries who had succumbed to a condition diagnosed by the author as ‘Lehár-gie’. [91]

Frey’s original thoughts deserve to be challenged at times. He almost echoes Kraus when he suggests that

Operetta at the beginning of the 20th century had become a modern mass medium, and had long lost the innocence of its 19th century forebears. And Lehár’s *Lustige Witwe* was its fall from grace. [92]

[88] Frey, ‘*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*’, p. 107, quoting from Theodor Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften 19* (Frankfurt a.M., 1984), p. 249.

[89] Frey, ‘*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*’, p. 169, quoting from Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt a.M., 1987), vol. 5.

[90] Frey, ‘*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*’, p. 15.

[91] Frey, ‘*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*’, p. 14.

[92] Frey, ‘*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*’, p. 14.

Such a statement serves to demonstrate that the author has not only overlooked the nineteenth-century roots of the libretto of *Die lustige Witwe* but has also failed to consider the contemporaneously relevant barbs of satirical comment on politics, state institutions and sexual morality that lay within the seemingly innocent writings of Meilhac and Halévy, Zell and Genée, or W. S. Gilbert. Such a judgement requires further elucidation, as does Frey's conclusion that Lehár "was without doubt the Andrew Lloyd Webber of his time." [93]

However much Frey may scorn the 'legend' of Lehár perpetrated by some biographers he remains dependent upon the composer's published writings for much of his source material. The range of sources broadens with more general discussion of, for example, the significance and history of *Die lustige Witwe* to which over forty pages are allocated. Minor works and their librettists receive little attention.

There are separate chapters devoted to contemporary composers - the friendly (Puccini), the respectful (Schoenberg), the hostile (Richard Strauss) - as well as to key figures in Lehár's career (Karczag, Marischka, Treumann and Tauber). There are numerous echoes of, and even direct quotes from, Frey's earlier book on Lehár. This is particularly apparent in his discussion of the 'Tauber-Lied' in *Friederike*, 'O Mädchen, mein Mädchen', when he states that "the head motif becomes

[93] Frey, '*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*', p. 18.

the core motif of the work” (“das Kopfmotif ... wird zum Grundmotif des Werkes”). [94] This diversion into analytical commentary seems oddly out of place in a book of historical appraisal.

As both a biography and a critical survey of Lehár's life and career this is certainly a groundbreaking book. Previously neglected or undiscovered remarks about Lehár and his operettas have been unearthed. There is good coverage of Lehár's life in the Nazi period. The composer's letters to the Nazi official, Hans Hinkel, which were cited in press reports in 1946 and at that time thought to be of doubtful authenticity, are now shown to be accurate by reference to the archives in the former Berlin Document Center. Yet the circumstances of the various episodes for which Lehár sought assistance from Hinkel are not described as fully as one might wish, largely because editorial excisions from quoted documents leave much unsaid.

Even so, taking the work as a whole this is a most comprehensive account. The author's opinions may be open to question, but his assemblage of facts is commendable. He provides a much more accurate listing of dates of first night performances than any previous biographer (although some of his dates - for *La danza delle libellule* and *Tatjana*, for example - are disputed in the present thesis), together with publication details of scores

[94] Frey, *Franz Lehár oder das schlechte Gewissen der leichten Musik*, p. 165; Frey, 'Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.', p. 275.

and known locations of manuscripts. The selective discography includes the recordings of less well known Lehár works issued on the 'cpo' label by Classic Produktion Osnabrück for which Frey wrote accompanying booklet notes.

Published just one year before Frey's second Lehár book were two other biographies with unfortunately similar titles, both suggesting consideration of the inner private world of Lehár by reference to the inscrutable Chinese smile which is the subject of Sou-Chong's 'Immer nur lächeln' in *Das Land des Lächelns*.

Franz Endler (born 1937), newspaper and television journalist, is the author of over a dozen popular books, from opera companions and biographies of conductors (such as Karl Böhm and Herbert von Karajan) to histories of Vienna. By using only literature sources, and with no evidence of archive research, Endler produced in his *Immer nur lächeln...: Franz Lehár, sein Leben - sein Werk* a disappointing book in which errors from previous biographies are repeated.

In contrast is *Immer nur lächeln...: Das Franz Lehár Buch* by Ingrid and Herbert Haffner, a product of location fieldwork, interviews, and radio archive research as well as literature. Herbert Haffner had written a guide to orchestras, *Sinfonieorchester der Welt* (Wilhelmshaven, 1988) and as a husband and wife team they had worked as arts correspondents and collaborated on *Zwischentöne: Fragen an Musiker zum Musikgeschehen*

der Gegenwart (Hofheim, 1995), a collection of interviews with musicians on contemporary music-making.

Although the Haffners visited some of the same archives used by Frey their book is more illuminating on the Hinkel correspondence and on Lehár's relationships with women. Only the Haffners identify Edith Windbichler as the mysterious Frau W., the subject of Lehár's blackmail scandal. [95] There are chapters considering Lehár the property owner, Lehár the publisher. There is a clear account of the composer's career during the First World War and of his earlier work as bandmaster with the infantry.

The book justifies the underlying thought behind the title by concentrating more on the personality of Lehár, less on the musician, for the authors have nothing of importance to say about the music or about Lehár's status as a composer. Their agenda is straightforward documentary reportage in a clipped journalistic style, in present tense throughout.

There are shortcomings. Several first night dates are wrong, some quotes (such as Hofmannsthal's "God, how lovely it would have been if Lehár had done the music for *Rosenkavalier* instead of Richard Strauss") are given without source references, only the old versions of place names appear in the text, and there is certainly one wrong picture caption (where

[95] Ingrid and Herbert Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln... : Das Franz Lehár Buch* (Berlin, 1998), p. 107.

Fritz Löhner-Beda should have been identified as a person standing on the right, not the left). [96]

The final work to be considered in this survey is by Norbert Linke (born 1933), graduate and postgraduate of the University of Hamburg, who in 1976 became Professor of Music at the Gerhard Mercator University in Duisburg. His *Franz Lehár* is a slim volume of just more than 120 pages concisely written.

Linke's earlier writings had been concerned with music education and music therapy. [97] Research grants allowed him to study light music, the results being a collaboration with Nikolaus Harnoncourt to recreate the original version of *Der Zigeunerbaron* and his monographs for Rowohlt on Strauss and Lehár. [98]

While there is much to commend this book there are some glaring errors. The Hinkel affair is not mentioned, and Schneidereit's erroneous account of the blackmail scandal is repeated (even though Frey and the Haffners,

[96] Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ...*, p. 133.

[97] Consider, for example, his *Heilung durch Musik? Didaktische Handreichungen zur Musiktherapie* (Wilhelmshaven, 1977), and *Musik in der sozialen Schule: Beiträge zu einer individual-psychologisch begründeten Musikdidaktik* (Wilhelmshaven, 1981) among others.

[98] Norbert Linke, *Johann Strauss (Sohn) in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1982), and Norbert Linke, *Franz Lehár* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 2001).

whose works are in Linke's bibliography, have the correct facts). On the other hand this is the first account to give proper recognition to Lehár's final stage work, *Garabonciás*. [99]

Linke's sources (which include articles overlooked by previous authors), together with his individual research, have provided a slightly different perspective from the observations of other biographers. A visit to Lehár's Schikaneder-Schlössl in Nussdorf allowed Linke to study the composer's military pass of 1889 bearing a description of a young man "1.65 metres tall" with "blue eyes, blonde hair" who "speaks and writes German, Hungarian and Czech." [100]

Linke shows that there is still much to glean from both literature and archive sources. An archive unseen by previous biographers (the Tauber-Griessler-Linke Archive in Duisburg) provides documentary evidence about the completion of sketches for *Frasquita*. [101] There is evidence too that if *Friederike* had failed Lehár would have decided to abandon operetta composition. [102]

All the biographers in this survey have contemplated in their individual ways the personality and musical career of Lehár. Their subject was

[99] Linke, *Franz Lehár*, p. 123.

[100] Linke, *Franz Lehár*, p. 20.

[101] Linke, *Franz Lehár*, p. 75.

[102] Linke, *Franz Lehár*, p. 92.

multi-faceted as a person and as a composer, the “complete cosmopolitan” of Edward Gold’s description, which is reflected in all these differing accounts: in his professional zeal he was a role model for the pan-German political climate of the 1930s (Czech); he was a man’s man, fascinated by women (Decsey) and fascinating to them (Peteani). He was also a man of human failings, sitting upon whatever moral or political fence suited his purpose, a husband devoted to his wife yet unfaithful to her, either coolly disloyal or genuinely helpless when his Jewish collaborators and friends needed him most.

Lehár’s place as a man of the theatre is not consistently or clearly defined in the biographies. It is theatre that shaped and inspired much of his music. It is theatrical colleagues - singers and librettists - who influenced his thoughts.

Certain aspects of the biographical data will be assessed in the present study, and where there are conflicting details or there is disagreement about the interpretation of the available facts an attempt will be made to find a resolution. Wherever possible, additional data from field research or from other literature sources will be presented in corroboration. It is of course inevitable that, whatever new answers are found, there will be new questions raised as well.

Franz Lehár - public persona, private person

In addition to the Lehár literature described in the previous chapter there is, as Max Schönherr has revealed in his *Bibliographie*, a fairly substantial corpus of reports and accounts about the composer. Lehár was an avid self-publicist, and there are contemporary articles by him, as well as interviews with him, in Viennese newspapers and journals. As some of these tend to dwell upon similar details their usefulness for a biographer is limited, even assuming their acceptability at face value.

Often more illuminating and of greater interest are the articles written about Lehár by his contemporaries - close friends and acquaintances, as well as colleagues and rivals. When specific events are mentioned in such memoirs it is sometimes possible to corroborate essential details of dates and places from other sources.

The paucity of desirable primary source material (letters, diaries, notebooks, etc.) with regard to Lehár makes it impossible for a biographer to assess why certain things happened as they did, be they choices involving the staging of operettas or the motivation for more personal matters. The archive at Bad Ischl has some documents of interest (Lehár's contract from an infantry regiment, letters with publishers, etc.), but the Lehár Archive in Vienna is only partially catalogued.

It is more than likely that many potentially useful items will be in the

hands of private collectors. Serious academic interest in operetta, a rarity in the early and middle decades of the twentieth century, has developed significantly only within the latter decades. As interest has increased so has the market value in operetta memorabilia. The comparative status of operetta thirty years ago may be suggested by the results of a Sotheby's auction in 1975 when a thousand pounds was paid for an autograph letter by Chopin, and over two hundred for a Wagner letter, while some items from Richard Tauber's collection (which included autograph letters from Lehár) went for "no more than a song". [1]

The biography of Franz Christian Lehár begins with his birth on 30 April 1870 in Komárom, situated some sixty kilometres to the north-west of Budapest. A thriving port at the confluence of the Váh and the Danube the city was also known as Komorn in German; since 1919, with the creation of a border between Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the city has been split into two parts, the southern Hungarian section and a northern section with the Slovak name of Komárno, a situation unaffected by the further division into the Czech and Slovak Republics.

The Lehár family had its roots in Moravia. Lehár's great grandfather, Johannes (1782 – 1849), was born in Brunnles (Brnicko); Johannes' son, Josef (1810 – 1881), settled in Schönwald (Šumvald) where he married farmer's daughter Anna Polach (1804 – 1876). Josef had three sons, one

[1] Andrew Lamb, 'In the saleroom', *Musical Times*, no. 1589, vol.116, July 1975, p. 635.

of whom, Franz, the father of the operetta composer, was born on 31 January 1838. [2]

Franz Lehár senior (1838 – 1898) was an army bandmaster and composer. He had studied music with a local windband player in his native Moravia before moving to Vienna in 1855, continuing his studies there at the Konservatorium and working as a horn player at the Theater an der Wien under the baton of Franz von Suppé. In the autumn of 1857 he was conscripted into the army and joined the band of the 50th Infantry Regiment based in Vienna. In 1863 he became bandmaster of the 50th Regiment, being at 25 the youngest to achieve this status within the Austrian Empire.

The dual role of music director and composer was by no means unusual. On the contrary it was a very desirable combination of talents. Each regiment of the Imperial and Royal Austrian Army had not only its own colours and its own standard but also its own signature tune, a march specially composed to honour a person or an event. For the 1st Regiment of Uhlan Lancers, for example, bandmaster A. Leonardt composed the *Kronprinz Rudolf-Marsch* in 1858 to celebrate the birth of the Emperor's son. Some marches were specially commissioned, the most famous being one for the 5th Regiment of Hussars in honour of Field Marshal Joseph,

[2] Wolfgang Huschke, 'Zur Herkunft Franz Lehárs' (Musikgeschichte und Genealogie XXII), *Genealogie: Deutsche Zeitschrift für Ahnenkunde*, Heft 4, 19.Jg., April 1970, pp. 99-108.

Count Radetzky de Radetz, which was composed by Johan Strauss I.

Franz Lehár senior, who had seen action at Solferino, Custoza and Sadowa, wrote a march in memory of the battle of Custoza in 1866.

This, the *Oliosi Sturm-Marsch*, became the regimental march of the 50th Infantry. [3]

In 1868 Lehár senior was stationed in Komárom where he met and, in the following year, married Christina (or Christine) Neubrandt (1849 – 1906). As one of their children recalls, theirs was a pure love match - “eine reine Liebesheirat”. [4] They had five children: Franz Christian (1870 – 1948); Eduard (1872 – 1873); Maria Anna, ‘Mariska’ (1875 – c.1894); Anton (1876 – 1962) whose military service earned him a baronetcy in 1918; and Emilie, ‘Emmy’ (1890 – 1976).

Franz Christian’s early years were spent as a ‘Tornisterkind’ (‘kitbag child’), as they called children of army personnel moving from billet to billet. [5] As the Austrian Empire embraced a variety of peoples and cultures this was a lifestyle that presented linguistic opportunities and

[3] For a list of marches associated with regiments of the Austrian army see Josef Damanski (ed), *Die Militär-Kapellmeister Österreich-Ungarns* (Vienna, Prague and Budapest, 1904), pp. 12-15.

[4] Anton Freiherr von Lehár, *Unsere Mutter* (Berlin and Vienna, 1930), p. 12.

[5] Lehár applied the description ‘Tornisterkind’ to himself in his autobiographical memoir ‘Franz Lehárs Werdegang’, *Deutsche Militär-Musiker-Zeitung* (Berlin), 30.Jg., no.12, 20 March 1908.

familiarisation with various folk music styles.

His first teacher, from whom he learned violin and piano, was his father.

Yet it was an event at Cluj (then known as Klausenburg) that transformed

the boy's perception of music. This was a cathedral concert in which

Liszt's oratorio *Christus* was conducted by the composer. Lehár senior

was among the violinists in the orchestra. After the performance young

Lehár was shocked to see his father bow and kiss the maestro's hand. The

memory of this incident lived with Lehár throughout his life, for in 1944

he described how he had been affected by it:

At that moment there was awakened for the first time within my childlike soul the realisation that music, the archetype ('Urform') of all the arts, is more than a means of entertainment or livelihood, but a gift from God to uplift, cheer and comfort the heart, and that the vocation of musician means ministering to man's affirmation of life and his zest for life. [6]

The kind of homage paid to Liszt as described in Lehár's memoir is

certainly no exaggeration. It is known that Liszt was in Cluj in March

1879 where he arranged at short notice a charity concert in aid of the

victims of a flood that had swept through Szeged on 11 March. At the end

of this concert Liszt was given a rapturous reception by students who

lifted him onto their shoulders. [7]

[6] Franz Lehár, 'Musik - mein Leben', *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 23 September 1944, p. 2.

[7] Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: Vol. 3, The final years 1861 – 1886* (London and Boston, 1997), p.387.

Music heard within a military environment would have embraced an eclectic range of styles, from strictly disciplined parade marches through socially functional light entertainment potpourris to more formal classical concerts. It is therefore not surprising to read a report of a performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony conducted by Lehár senior, a task which he "discharged ... in a most meritorious manner." [8]

It was decided that young Lehár would benefit in the long term from a more formal musical and general education than was available in the military setting. For a while the boy attended a Catholic grammar school in Budapest which was run by Piarist monks. There he accompanied the singing classes on the harmonium and familiarised himself with operatic vocal scores given to him by his father - *Lohengrin*, *Carmen* and *Faust* (the Gounod opera which he knew as *Margarete*). These scores inspired his first compositions; his Opus 1 was a song dedicated to a childhood sweetheart.

Fluency in German was a priority for anyone wishing to make a mark in the Austrian establishment. The Neubrandt side of the family had been very much pro-Magyar and anti-German. Consequently Hungarian language and culture formed a prominent part of young Lehár's life. To

[8] This was in Sarajevo. The report from the *Bosnische Post*, 16 December 1891, is cited in T. Polomik, 'Quellen zur Erforschung der Tätigkeiten und Rollen von Militärorchestern in Bosnien und Herzegowina zur Zeit der österreichisch-ungarischen Verwaltung (1878-1918)', *Studia musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 32, April 1990, p. 387.

counterbalance this by developing his knowledge of German without affecting his musical progress he was sent to Sternberk (Sternberg) in Moravia to live with his uncle Anton, the local director of music. There the boy attended a 'Volksschule' (an elementary school for early and middle years) and continued his studies in piano, violin and harmony. He also played violin with his uncle's spa orchestra.

In 1882, at the age of twelve, he won a scholarship to the Conservatoire at Prague which entitled him at no cost to six years of tuition of the violin, his first study, with Antonin Bennewitz; piano and composition were his second studies. Excellent though the conservatoire was, these were not happy times for

there I was expected to be trained as a violin virtuoso according to the unbending will of my father. Secretly I took lessons with Fibich in the theory of composition. Dvořák, whose chamber works I had got to know in manuscript, looked through my first compositions - a sonata in D minor and a sonatina in G major. Thereupon he advised me, "Give up the fiddle and become a composer!" [9]

The total veracity of such anecdotal tales told so long after the event, even though recounted in all major works of Lehár biography, may be open to doubt. In this instance the story seems convincing. Prague Conservatoire was primarily concerned with grooming performers. The teaching of composition was a new development inspired by Smetana and taken up

[9] Franz Lehár, 'Musik – mein Leben', *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 23 September 1944, p. 2.

by Josef Foerster.

What cannot be doubted is the programme of performances undertaken by Lehár and his fellow students. During every month of his final year there was an evening concert by the students. Conservatoire records show that Lehár played second violin in Smetana's E minor Quartet on 25 January 1888; on 10 March 1888 a fellow student, A. Pick, performed Lehár's *Romance* for violin solo; on 26 May 1888 Lehar led a string quartet in the 'Haydn' *Serenade* (now attributed to Hofstetter).

At 9.00 a.m. on Thursday 12 July 1888 the Conservatoire presented a public concert in the Grand Hall of the Rudolfinum. This was the final performance examination for sixteen graduating students. Among them was Lehár who performed a Bruch violin concerto, not (as claimed by some biographers) the first in G minor but the less well known second in D minor. On Sunday 15 July 1888, after a church service, the graduates received their certificates and diplomas. [10]

An image of the Lehár family in the 1880s was presented by Ludwig Karpath (1866 – 1936) who encountered them on a Danube steamer in 1884:

At the luncheon table I was flanked to my right and left by two stalwart lads, one in the uniform of a cadet, the other wearing

[10] Details from annual reports and concert programmes kept in the archive of Prague Conservatoire, kindly supplied by PhDr Jitřenka Pešková.

some fancy uniform ('Phantasieuniform'). Opposite me were seated an oldish gentleman in the uniform of an Austrian military bandmaster, and his wife. The four heads formed the Lehár family We had not even got to the dessert when I knew everything about them. Father Lehár had been promoted to a regiment stationed in Budapest and was about to take up his new position. ... Mother Lehár, a very lively and intelligent woman, spoke with an unmistakable Hungarian accent, but no less fluently in German than her husband, just that she threw Magyar words into the conversation from time to time... . She introduced me to the two boys, the older one called Franz, the younger called Anton. Franz was destined to be a musician as he was visiting the Prague Conservatoire, Anton was going to be an officer. [11]

These were clearly ambitious parents who had thoroughly mapped out their children's futures. Lehár evidently resented parental interference in his training as a musician but he was certainly glad of their help after his first forays in the music profession. On leaving Prague he had taken a not very well paid position as leader of the orchestra of the municipal theatres, the Vereinigte Stadttheater, at Barmen-Elberfeld in Germany. It was useful experience, but he quit the post hastily, allegedly to escape the cloying attentions of a singer in her thirties with whom he may have had a sexual relationship. [12]

Lehár senior's military career had taken him to Prague and Bratislava while serving with the 19th, the 102nd and the 89th Regiments, but now he

[11] Ludwig Karpath, *Begegnung mit dem Genius* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1934), p. 350.

[12] See, for example, the account in Bernard Grun, *Gold and Silver, the life and times of Franz Lehár* (London, 1970), pp. 36-38.

was back in Vienna with the 50th and able to offer his son a job as first violin in his orchestra. The rank of corporal was on offer. Young Lehár duly enrolled with the military in November 1889. It was a perfect arrangement, allowing him to continue violin studies at the Vienna Konservatorium. At this time he first met two other musicians, likewise future operetta composers, Leo Fall (1873 – 1925) and Edmund Eysler (1874 – 1949).

He did not stay long with his father's regiment. In 1890 he secured a position as bandmaster with the 25th Infantry Regiment in Losoncz, a town in the hill country of what was then northern Hungary (but which is now southern Slovakia, where the town's present name is Lučenec). This remote area became a land of opportunity for a young man who had now beaten his father's record as the youngest bandmaster in the Empire. If he was to succeed as a bandmaster he had to demonstrate not only musical talent but also an attractive personality. Karpath has described how the Austrian military orchestras, fronted by a personable music director, were the pride of a glorious Empire:

You are aware of what the Austrian military bands stood for. If there's any institution of the old Monarchy I'm sorry to have lost it is the military orchestras, for they were among the best that the collapsed Austro-Hungarian Empire had to offer. So it was no wonder that they were in demand all over, and always performed in the most fashionable establishments. The extent of their popularity depended upon the personal qualities of the conductors, many of whom performed outstandingly. It was still general practice at that time for publicity notices to carry not only the name of the

regiment but also that of the conductor. There was a standard formula - 'Under the personal direction of Herr Kapellmeister So-and-so.' The name of the conductor was in fact the deciding factor. Military concerts directed by a popular conductor naturally were the favoured ones. It is for that very reason that the War Ministry decreed some years later that posters could no longer advertise the name of the conductor, only the name of the regiment. At the time when I became acquainted with the Lehár family this ban was not yet in existence [13]

In his four years at Losoncz Lehár exploited his musical talents and personality to the full. Colonel-in-chief of the regiment was Baron Fries whose 17-year old daughter, Baroness Vilma Fries, required singing lessons. The new musical director was expected to teach her, with the result (if one may believe Lehár's favourite biographer) that "she lost her voice, he his heart." [14]

Less well documented is his involvement with Countess Rosa Cebrian, one of the beauties of Losoncz. For both these women Lehár composed songs: for Baroness Vilma he wrote 'Vorüber!', 'Aus längst vergang'ner Zeit' and 'O schwöre nicht!' (the last two with texts by the Baroness); there were three also for Countess Rosa, 'Die du mein alles bist' and (with texts by the Countess) 'Ruhe' and Lehár's first waltz song 'Möcht's jubelnd in die Welt verkünden'.

[13] Karpath, *Begegnung mit dem Genius*, p. 351.

[14] Maria von Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben* (Vienna and London, 1950), p. 30.

Another twenty-six compositions may be dated from the Losoncz years, including the marches *Kaiserhusaren-Marsch* Op. 5, *Oberst-Baron-Fries-Marsch* (later renamed *Auf hoher See*), and *Grüsse an Losoncz* (known in Hungarian as *Losonczy induló*). For social occasions he composed dances with titles such as *Wiener Lebenslust* Op. 11 (a waltz), and *Korallenlippen* Op. 7 (a polka-mazurka).

For concert performances Lehár composed a handful of virtuosic pieces for solo violin and orchestra. These were inspired by Hungarian folk music, as is indicated by their titles - *Magyar dalok* Op. 8 ('Hungarian songs'), *Magyar noták* ('Hungarian sounds') and *Magyar egyveleg* ('Hungarian medley'). Very much in the character of these is a later work, *Magyar ábránd* Op. 45 ('Hungarian fantasy'), a rhapsodic showpiece for violin arguably equal to anything by other masters of the genre such as Hubay, Ysaye or Enescu; this fantasy borrows a theme from Lehár's oddly named *Lyuk, lyuk, lyuk* Op. 13 ('Hole, hole, hole'), another of his Losoncz marches.

Lehár's appointment at Losoncz ended ignominiously with an act of insubordination towards a senior staff officer. Forced to resign, he gave a farewell concert on 27 February 1894. On the next day he took a train to Sarajevo where his parents were now based. The period of unemployment was short-lived, for his father soon had news of a vacancy at Pola (now Pula) in Croatia, near the southern tip of the Istrian Peninsula.

The Imperial Naval Base at Pola was a shipyard of extreme importance to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, being used for the construction of warships. Over thirty thousand personnel were accommodated in the garrison. With its Roman remains and historical churches this was an area of greater interest than Losoncz. [15] More importantly, it offered better musical opportunities, for here was the Imperial Navy's only orchestra, with one hundred and ten players.

Lehár's two years at Pola were dominated by his attempts at serious composition, most notably with his opera *Kukuška*. His over-confidence (leading to his resignation in 1896) and his unworldliness could so easily have ruined any hope of a future career if his parents had not rescued him again. The exasperation felt by his mother in particular was revealed in Anton Lehár's little book of memoirs. A letter dated 10 December 1896 from Frau Lehár to Anton began:

Dear Toni!
Mainly about Franz.
When we were most worried about him he just showed up.
Looking like one of those arty types. Cravat skewwhiff. In his Fledermaus cloak. No rings, no watch-chain, no cravat-pin.
Just as I said, like one of those arty types.
"What do you say to this success?" were his first words.
Luckily I found the right thing to say at the right time -
"Congratulations!" - for I just couldn't take my eyes off those crumpled clothes.

[15] On Pola and its history see T. G. Jackson, *Dalmatia, the Quarnero and Istria* (Oxford, 1887), vol. 3, pp. 280-304. On naval activities prior to the First World War see Milan N. Vego, *Austro-Hungarian naval policy 1904-14* (London and Portland, 1996).

And then we were off. “Oh, someday you’ll see”, “You never did want to believe in me”, just going on and on like that.
Since then everything has been carrying on just as before. Franz is getting a ballet interlude ready, hoping and dreaming ... [16]

Frustrated by his lack of immediate success, but at least in the interim supported financially by his parents, the young composer had no choice but to take up another post as bandmaster, this time with the 87th Infantry based at Trieste and Pola. While acknowledging the young man’s talent he doubted whether Franz had “the stuffing in him to exploit his success” (“Ob der Franzl das Zeug hat, seinen Erfolg auszunutzen, ist eine andere Frage”). [17]

Frau Lehár made extraordinary sacrifices, and brother Anton even approached Ludwig Karpath, music critic of the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, to try to effect an introduction to the music director of the Vienna Hofoper, Gustav Mahler. Yet when Lehár realised that his fellow passenger on a train bound for Baden was none other than the great Mahler, he was so confused that he did not dare to introduce himself. [18]

[16] Anton Freiherr von Lehár, *Unsere Mutter*, p. 30.

[17] Otto Schneidereit, *Franz Lehár: eine Biographie in Zitaten* (Berlin, 1984), p. 46.

[18] Franz Lehár, ‘Mein interessantestes Reiseabenteuer’, in Schneidereit, *Franz Lehár*, pp. 52-53. For an English translation see Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 3, *Vienna: triumph and disillusion (1904-1907)* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 474-475.

On 1 January 1898 Lehár senior applied for retirement with effect from 31 March, but on 7 February he died of pneumonia. He had nominated his son to succeed him as regimental music director, so on 1 April 1898 Franz Lehár junior became bandmaster with the 3rd Infantry Regiment of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Budapest. It would appear, however, that his mind was not always fully on the job. So preoccupied was he with the premiere of *Kukuška* that he missed a parade. A letter dated 4 May 1898 from his mother to Anton explains why:

Dear Toni!

Do forgive Franz if he doesn't write to you, but he's never before been plagued so much. Everyone's congratulating him, everywhere he's being sent for.

But the most important news I have for you is that Director Mahler of the Vienna Hofoper wants to speak with him.

There's even been an enquiry come from Berlin.

It's high time, because Franz cannot understand that a piece of thread can be stretched just the once. I am struggling. Doing the impossible. But that's my business. God willing, better times will come.

On the day of the premiere a great disaster befell Franz. How am I to tell you, an officer, about it without blushing? To cut a long story short, it happened that on the day before the premiere there was a royal court dinner. The corps commandant Prince Lobkovitz mentioned to the Emperor that an opera by a Budapest military bandmaster was to be performed. The Emperor asks of which regiment. On the next day there was the Imperial Parade. Franz did not come home until 2 o'clock in the morning and just said to me, I don't know, shall I turn out for parade or not. Then we slept in. Franz did not turn out. At the Parade the Emperor asks after the bandmaster who wrote the opera. - Franz was quite unconcerned about it all!

[19]

[19] Anton Freiherr von Lehár, *Unsere Mutter*, p. 34.

Two postscripts have to be added to this. Although Mahler and his wife, Alma, were to become secret admirers of Lehár's greatest success, *Die lustige Witwe*, the music director of the Hofoper had absolutely no plans for *Kukuška*, the prime reason being that the music lacked the promise of the libretto. [20] When some years later *Die lustige Witwe* was being performed in Ischl the Emperor, in conversation about the composer, recalled the incident of the bandmaster missing a parade. [21]

Lehár's years in Pola, Trieste and Budapest produced ambitious works in addition to his operatic endeavours. There were no songs of the Fries or Cebrian variety but more serious song cycles, the *Karst-Lieder* and *Miramare* to texts by his *Kukuška* librettist, Falzari. An anthem, *Der Liebe Allmacht*, was written in 1895. There were the inevitable marches, six in all, three waltzes (including the *Klänge aus Pola*, also known as the *Adria-Walzer*), and some polkas.

Three programmatic works deserve mention: firstly a 'scène fantastique' for orchestra, *Ein Märchen aus Tausend und einer Nacht* Op. 3 which is curiously lacking in oriental character; secondly the unpublished *Le réveil du soldat*, described as a tin soldiers' game ('Zinnsoldatenspiel'); and thirdly *Il Guado* Op. 29, a concert piece for piano and orchestra.

[20] Karpath, *Begegnung mit dem Genius*, p. 353. On the Mahlers' admiration for *Die lustige Witwe* see La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 3, p. 473; also Alma Mahler, *Gustav Mahler: memories and letters* (London, 1990), p. 120.

[21] Peteani, *Franz Lehár*, p. 50.

Much of Lehar's output for piano is of little consequence for most were youthful pieces dating from his Prague years, ambitious in his attempts (which were not entirely successful) to master sonata form, the results showing melodic skill in a patchwork structure. In *Il Guado* there is none of the titanic vigour of a Brahms or Tchaikovsky concerto but instead a piece of lightweight charm. It was inspired by a poem of the same name by Lorenzo Stecchetti (1845 – 1876). The poem describes an idyllic moment in the life of a young man who has carried his beloved through the murmuring waters of a river in Bologna and then, as they lie together on the riverbank, he experiences love for the first time. In a review of a recent recording it was suggested that *Il Guado* had "the fervour of the Warsaw Concerto without such a memorable tune." [22]

Being temperamentally unsuited to the rigorous discipline of military life Lehar was constantly seeking opportunities elsewhere. Yet when the directorship of the newly formed Vienna Konzertverein fell vacant in December 1901 it seemed that his reputation as a budding serious composer had a downside. The interview panel (which included the composer of *Der Opernball*, Richard Heuberger) rejected his application because they decided he was unsuited to light music. Yet this was the year when his directing of light music performances in city parks had already come to the notice of the popular press and (more significantly)

[22] Christopher Lambton in *BBC Music magazine*, March 1998, p. 76, reviewing cpo 999 423-2.

been enthusiastically admired by Lizzy Léon, daughter of librettist Victor Léon.

The event which first brought Lehár worldwide fame received scant notice when first reported in 1902. One of the grand old ladies of Viennese society was the Princess Pauline Metternich-Sandor (1836 – 1921). Nicknamed the ‘ugly beauty’ (‘la belle laide’) or, on account of her connections with the wealthiest Jews, ‘Our Lady of Zion’ (‘Notre Dame de Zion’), she was a society hostess and influential patron of the arts responsible, among other things, for planning the annual Carnival Balls. Johann Strauss had dedicated to her his *Wiener Bonbons*, and in 1901 Lehár wrote his *Paulinen-Walzer* for that year’s ball.

The Princess was very keen on masked balls with a theme. The theme was intended to stimulate ideas for the commissioned music and for the décor of the Sophiensaal. Past ideas had included the exotic (a Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival) and the preposterous (a Secessionist Village Gala) but of late she had opted for colour themes. In 1901 the décor was red and white; for 1902 she chose gold and silver.

This was a partial return to the Secessionist theme as gold and silver were highly favoured by Klimt and his fellow artists. When Lehár’s new waltz, *Gold und Silber-Walzer*, was first performed at the Sophiensaal on Thursday 27 January 1902 it aroused little interest. Lehár sold the piece for 50 gulden to a small publisher, Chmel, who struck a deal with

Bosworth in London. Within months the waltz was being played across Europe and America.

In February 1902 Lehár directed the band of the 26th Infantry in a sequence of marches following a *matinée* entertainment at the Theater an der Wien in honour of the golden wedding of Prince Rainer, Archduke of Austria. This brought Lehár to the attention of the theatre's new lessee and manager, Wilhelm Karczag (1859 – 1923), and his actress wife Julie (or Juliska) Kopacsy-Karczag (1871 – 1957), who recognized the conductor's charismatic talents. When offered the post of music director at the theatre Lehár did not hesitate, and in March 1902 he took off his military uniform for the last time.

Much of Lehár's biography for the next twenty years is occupied by his successes and failures as a composer of operetta. While biographers may differ with regard to certain details about some of these operettas (as will be discussed elsewhere in the present research study), there are many details which are considered indisputable, as they are firmly corroborated by documentary evidence.

Lehár's private life is another matter. In 1903 he was living in Vienna's 3rd district at Marokkanergasse 20. He first visited Ischl in that year, staying in the Wagner-Mühle on Salzburgerstrasse. At the window of a house opposite his lodgings in Ischl he occasionally observed a young woman with a peach complexion and Titian blond hair. This, according to

his favoured biographer, is how Lehár first encountered Sophie Meth, his future wife. [23]

In a quite different account by other biographers there is a story of Lehár's unrequited love for Fernande (or Ferry) Weissenberger. Ferry was the 23-year old daughter of restaurateur, Ferdinand Weissenberger, and a niece of the hotelier Anna Sacher (1859 – 1930). Both father and aunt disapproved of Lehár's attentions, dismissing him as both a starveling and a fortune-hunter. Ferry married another, and her close friend, Sophie Meth, then unhappily married to a carpet dealer, left her husband to begin a relationship with Lehár.

Why twenty years had to elapse before the couple were married is another area for speculation. [24] A curious aspect of their relationship is that both before and for some time after marriage Franz and Sophie lived in separate apartments. It is interesting to note that Lehár in 1948, when a widower, wanted to renew contact with Ferry who was likewise widowed, but nothing came of it. [25]

In 1904 Lehár's Vienna address was Schleifmühlgasse 1, in the 4th

[23] Peteani, *Franz Lehár*, p. 69.

[24] The most reliable sources have 20 February 1924 as the marriage date; see, for example, Huschke, 'Zur Herkunft Franz Lehárs', p. 102. Schönherr and Grun erroneously have 1921, while Peteani mentions no date at all.

[25] Ingrid and Herbert Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ... : Das Franz Léhar Buch* (Berlin, 1998), p. 208.

district. His mother was also in Vienna, keeping a close interest in his projects as she reveals in a letter to Anton:

Vienna, 1905

Dear Toni!

I suppose you'll not be spreading any tales about the plot of Franz's new operetta so I'll briefly give you the gist:

An immensely rich widow from Rumania is leading a merry life in Paris. She is surrounded by suitors. But because her grand fortune is in Rumania a Rumanian is chosen to marry the young widow so that her assets remain in the preserve of the fatherland.

The way Treumann arrives in Paris, that chorus of suitors - many very funny scenes. For all the cast some very worthwhile roles. The libretto is finished already so that Franz can work in peace.

So don't breathe a word. Otherwise the thing will be in the burlesque theatre before Franz is ready. Take care. I'm saying the same to Franz for in this respect he is tremendously gullible. Goodbye. More news later. [26]

The finished product, *Die lustige Witwe*, was of course somewhat different when first staged, but she clearly knew the essential details, such as the casting of Louis Treumann as leading man.

The success that came with *Die lustige Witwe* made huge demands on Lehár's time, with premieres to conduct at major cities of Europe. His compositional output in other respects (such as songs and popular dance music) was considerably diminished. A particular concern throughout this time was the health of his mother.

Frau Lehár was now probably closer to Franz than she had ever been. She was staying with him in Vienna when he was preparing for the premiere of

[26] Anton Freiherr von Lehár, *Unsere Mutter*, p. 49.

Tatjana there in February 1906. She wrote to Anton:

My dear Toni!
We hope that we'll see each other soon at the *Tatjana*
performance in Vienna.
It looks splendid now in Franz's apartment. Wherever you
look you find garlands and flowers with thoughtful
dedications. Whole trees of lilacs and roses. When I went
into the drawing-room the sight overpowered me. The
lighting was as if in fairyland. Everything so comfortably
heated. ... Franz showed me everything. With his
inimitable heart-warming kindness. *Then my child seemed
to me like a king.* ... [27]

In May 1906 Lehár travelled to Ischl to take up residence at his summer
quarters there. His mother came with him, and from there she wrote again
to Anton:

My dear Toni!
I received your note.
Praise God, I'm feeling better. I do have hours without
pain and for that I am contented.
Dear Toni, do consider how lucky you all are when you
get up in the morning without any aches and pains!
Just take everything else in life as it comes. To give you
an example - budget well and live frugally.
But I'll always be thankful to Franz for taking all these
great worries from me. May God reward him!
Farewell. Can't continue. My hand's trembling too much!
Affectionate kiss

From your Mother. [28]

She died on 6 August 1906 when Lehár returned from the Ischler
Hoftheater where he had been conducting a performance of *Die lustige
Witwe* attended by the Emperor.

[27] Anton Freiherr von Lehár, *Unsere Mutter*, pp. 50-51.

[28] Anton Freiherr von Lehár, *Unsere Mutter*, pp. 51-52.

Ischl was officially renamed Bad Ischl on 7 September 1906. [29] A favoured summer resort of the Emperor it was equally popular with financiers, academics, artists and composers who could display a measure of professional success by having second homes there. Lehár's base there was the Rosenvilla, a three-roomed bungalow which he rented at Esplanade no. 6, former occupants of which had included Meyerbeer, Brahms and Leschetizky. [30]

As his wealth increased Lehár changed his Vienna addresses. In 1907 he moved to Mariahilferstrasse 5 before buying the more extensive property at Theobaldgasse 16 which had housed the offices of a union and pension fund organization for actors and musicians, the 'Inkassoverband der Theater- und Orchesterunternehmungen Österreichs'. [31] He now shared the building with the copyright agency, the 'Komponisten- und Autoren-Gesellschaft', occupying the first floor and with his lodger, Dr Alfred Willner, occupying the third. Then in 1910 he purchased outright the former home of Adelheid, Countess Sabran-Ponteves, a villa on the Traunkai in Bad Ischl (now the Lehár Villa). [32]

[29] Heinrich Prochaska, *Ischls Chronik: Geschichte des Badeortes Ischl 1823-1923*, vol. 3 (Bad Ischl, 1923/ rev.ed., n.d.), p. 98.

[30] Grun, *Gold and Silver*, p. 146.

[31] Schneidereit, *Franz Lehár*, p. 120.

[32] Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ...*, p. 78.

Lehár was now at the top of his profession as a music theatre composer. This he had achieved by his musical talents and good fortune and, when needed, parental support, but he was also adept at getting to know the right people in the right places. Among those right places were the gentlemen's clubs of Vienna.

The Schlaraffia was one such club. It was a society which many would no doubt regard as eccentric, for it required its members to dress as mediaeval knights and address each other by their knightly titles. Lehár was known as 'Ritter Tonreich, der Notendrucker', literally 'Sir Rich-in-Sound, the Noteprinter' (suggesting banknotes or musical notes). Others included the Hofoper Ballet's musical director, Josef Bayer (1852 – 1913), known - after his most famous work - as 'Ritter *Puppenfee*' ('Sir Fairy Doll'), and the author of *Schwammerl* - the novel adapted as the musical play known in English as *Lilac Time* - writer Rudolf Hans Bartsch (1873 – 1952) who was known as 'Ritter Sonett'.

Lehár was a member of the Schlaraffia Vindobona, the Viennese branch, which was located at Währingerstrasse 85. The Schlaraffia had been founded in Prague in 1859, its first members being from the theatrical profession. The objects of the society were self-indulgent enjoyment of the arts, friendship and good humour. Politics, religion and business affairs were taboo subjects for conversation. The Schlaraffia was (and in Germany, Austria and America, still is) run as a club for gentlemen, open

to all who can accept its guiding principles and speak the language of the Schlaraffia, which is German. [33]

Lehár described his association with the Schlaraffia in one of his autobiographical writings. [34] Through the society he renewed his acquaintance with Bartsch, whom he had known as an officer in 1892, and was introduced to the librettists of the first Lehár operetta to be staged, the authors of *Wiener Frauen*, Norini and Tann-Bergler. Lehár's article about his Schlaraffia friends was substantially quoted with some relish by Karl Kraus in his publication *Die Fackel*. A caustic critic of Lehár, Kraus had nothing good to say of the Schlaraffia which he regarded as a "link bringing all the banalities of the earth together." [35] This may have been so, but it was a rare instance in Austria of a non-racist environment where, for example, Jews and non-Jews could meet and enjoy camaraderie on equal terms. [36]

Lehár was also a member of the Rotary Club of Vienna, where fellow

[33] A number of websites describe the Schlaraffia. The details above are from www.schlaraffia-bonnense.de/schlaraffia.htm .

[34] Franz Lehár, 'Vom Schreibtisch und aus dem Atelier. Bis zur Lustigen Witwe', *Velhagen und Klasings Monatshefte*, 26.Jg., (Bielefeld and Leipzig, 1912), pp.214-215.

[35] Karl Kraus, 'Ritter Sonett und Ritter Tonreich', *Die Fackel*, no.343, 29 February 1912, pp. 5-8. (Kraus's quoted comment is on p.7).

[36] See Joyce Jones, 'Modern knights meet for culture, fun and ceremony' (article from *New York Times*, 12 February 1995) on website www.kehler.net/bostonia/52.html .

members included representatives of a broader professional spectrum.

Lehár's interpretation of the Rotary philosophy as applied to music was an emphasis on the universality of music:

Music is international and makes the same appeal in the heart in every country of the world. It is the most noble and important aid to the furtherance of the Rotary idea. Music expresses most eloquently the possibility of a harmonious understanding between all cultured nations of the globe.

Especially Viennese music has the reputation of being the pleasant mediator of joy and happiness...

These comments were made in the interests of reconciliation between countries that had suffered a world war. Unfortunately Lehár could not avoid adding a personal slant to this ideal of harmonised cultures:

Before the great war, Viennese music has [*sic*] found a home in all English speaking parts of the world. Works of mine, like *The Merry Widow*, *The Count of Luxembourg*, *Gipsy Love*, etc. were performed in America and England in accordance with the authors' intentions and designs and just as they were produced on the European stage. Sad to say, the war has, also in this respect, proved destructive. [37]

Lehár's involvement with these organizations inspired some curiosities among his vocal output. With a text by an unidentified lyricist writing as 'Pilger Moriz Wien' he composed an anthem, *Schlaraffenlied*, dedicated to the source of Schlaraffia philosophy, 'der Allmutter Praga' ('to Prague, mother of all'). Another Schlaraffia song, with words by 'Ritter Hotsch'

[37] Franz Lehár, 'Rotary and Viennese music', *The Vienna Herald*, 7 June 1930, p. 4. (The article is written in English).

(or Karl Hotschewer), was published in 1928 with the title *Vindobona*. In sharp contrast to the beerhall bonhomie of the Schlaraffia songs was his *Rotary Hymne* ('Rotary Brüder, auf zur Arbeit!') with words by Fritz Löhner-Beda. This was written for both piano and orchestral accompaniment.

The First World War produced one of Lehár's more interesting song cycles, *Aus eiserner Zeit*, which he dedicated to the German Kaiser. The most challenging work in the cycle is the fifth song, *Fieber*, which can stand alone as a symphonic tone poem, having been scored with orchestral accompaniment. The others, written for voice with piano accompaniment, have a direct poignancy and simplicity in their style.

One of these songs, 'Ich hab' ein Hüglein im Polenland', was selected for inclusion in a special *Kriegsalmanach* in 1916, published by the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and sold to support wartime welfare funds. Robert Fuchs and Franz Schreker were among the musical contributors to this "beautiful testimony to the patriotic feelings of our Austrian artists and scholars." [38]

Although he faced much criticism for his being exempt from military service for the duration of the war, Lehár was a very active supporter of the war effort through the many concerts and performances which he directed

[38] *Kriegsalmanach 1914 1916* (Vienna, 1916), p. 5. (Preface by Dr Eduard Prinz von und zu Liechtenstein).

to entertain the troops. In the summer of 1916, for example, he was close to the western front at Lille to conduct *Der Graf von Luxemburg*. [39] In the summer of 1917 he had an audience of hundreds of wounded soldiers at a Swiss hospital. [40]

Lehár firmly hoped and believed that attitudes towards music, theatre and operetta would change after the war:

European art and letters will emerge from the war purified from the feverish taste that characterized production antedating the great conflagration. We are at the threshold of a great renaissance that will grow out of the virility of the race, out of the self-abnegation and devotion displayed by all the peoples of Europe. The aesthetics of literature and the new tendencies of art will be characterized by forcefulness, seriousness and depth. Music will rise to greater heights, leaving behind its former frivolity, and become the interpreter of what is best and purest in human hearts.

These are Lehár's own words from an interview on 19 December 1915 in Vienna which was published in New York in the following month. [41]

This was an ambitious credo, indicative more of directions that Lehár himself would aspire to, for there would still be scope enough for frivolous music and low comedy in the cabarets of post-war Berlin and Vienna.

[39] Karl Kraus, 'Lehár spricht', *Die Fackel*, no. 436, 2 August 1916, p. 92.

[40] Karl Kraus, 'Und der Herrgott lacht!', *Die Fackel*, no. 462, 9 October 1917, p. 100.

[41] Bela Sekely, 'Renaissance in art to follow war, Lehár says', *The Sun* (New York), 9 January 1916.

A renaissance in Lehár's art, evident in some of his wartime compositions, was no doubt inspired by experiences and events during those years. The serious quality of a song such as *Fieber* may have been inspired to some degree by the fact that his brother Anton had been severely wounded in September 1914. [42] Among a handful of marches composed by Lehár during these years was one in honour of his much-decorated brother, the *Piave-Marsch des 106. Regiments, Baron Lehár*, also known as *Lehár fiuk* ('Lehár lads'). This was no time for writing waltzes, and only when the war was over did Lehár compose any further concert waltzes, with *Im Zeichen des Frühlings* in 1920 and in 1921 *Wilde Rosen* and *An der grauen Donau*.

For nearly twenty years Lehár wrote no more concert waltzes or marches. His next, and last, concert waltz, *An Saar und Rhein*, appeared in 1939; his next, also his last, march was the *Marsch der Kanoniere* in 1942. Instead the 1920s and 1930s witnessed a succession of songs, light-hearted fare generally using contemporary dance styles. The great renaissance was to be found elsewhere, in the operettas which gradually turned away from the traditional Viennese to a more cosmopolitan style, with a more serious content, intended for a more universal audience.

[42] After recovering from his injuries Anton was offered administrative posts but he insisted on returning to active service at the Italian and Piave fronts. After 1918 he joined the fight to restore the Hungarian monarchy. On this subject see Anton Lehár, *Erinnerungen: Gegenrevolution und Restaurationsversuche in Ungarn 1918-1921* (Munich, 1973).

Throughout his very public career Lehár was careful to keep the private person hidden from view. In his articles and interviews he talked mainly about his early life, or about his latest operetta, and of his attitudes and ambitions towards operetta, his quest for a new direction. [43] From his colleagues and friends more personal details emerge - his fondness for pets, for example. [44] From a guide at the Lehár Villa the present author learned of Lehár's superstitious nature, for in a cabinet at the villa were some miniature elephants made out of some fabric; Lehár habitually kept one of these in his pocket as a good luck charm when conducting. One of his last librettists has reported that Lehár was a workaholic until the final years of his life. [45]

The following two chapters will look more closely at specific areas of Lehár's life and career in an attempt to reveal more of the private person. His relationship with well-placed Nazi officials has raised feelings of sensitivity or suspicion about an episode ignored by some biographers or used by others as an excuse to condemn him.

Granted, there were promises he failed to keep, for which some may have

[43] See, for example, Franz Lehár, 'Der neue Weg der Operette', *Neues Wiener Journal*, 19 October 1929, p. 8.

[44] Victor Léon, 'Menagerie Direktor Franz Lehár', *Neues Wiener Journal*, 25 July 1937, p. 13.

[45] Paul Knepler, *Festrede anlässlich der Denkmals-Enthüllung am 6. Juli 1958* (Vienna, 1958).

bitter memories. There is an instance told by Vera Kálmán of how she and her husband, the composer Emmerich Kálmán, were being harassed by Nazi storm troopers. Lehár had promised to assist, but then failed to appear. [46]

Yet elsewhere in her memoirs this same Vera Kálmán can speak of their “friend Franz Lehár”, for he was also a charming ladies’ man. This aspect of his personality will be explored in these next chapters, as well as his loyalty towards Sophie, the wife who seems to have ignored his indiscretions.

How Lehár cast a veil over his private life, whether political or sexual, will be discussed in the chapter on his relationship with Maria von Peteani. From the trivia of their friendly correspondence emerge details of two remarkable personalities, and of a book that is anything but balanced and objective.

[46] Vera Kálmán, *Die Welt ist mein Zuhause* (Munich, 1980), pp. 113-114.

Lehár and the Third Reich - “a contentious problem”

When Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933 it was only a matter of time before Austria was amalgamated into a pan-German empire. This had been Hitler's dream when he wrote the opening chapter of *Mein Kampf* while in prison following the failed putsch of 1923:

German-Austria must return to the great German mother country, and not because of any economic considerations. No, and again no: even if such a union were unimportant from an economic point of view; yes, even if it were harmful, it must nevertheless take place. One blood demands one Reich. [1]

Purity of the blood was the all-important consideration. Nazi policy had decreed as early as 1920 that only a person of German blood could be a 'Volksgenosse', a 'comrade of the people' entitled to all the rights and privileges of German citizenship.

This policy was legitimised by means of the Nuremberg Laws which were passed at the Party Congress on 15 September 1935. There were two race laws, the Blood Protection Law ('Blutschutzgesetz') and the Reich Citizenship Law ('Reichsbürgergesetz'). According to the Citizenship Law only a true Aryan could be a citizen of the Reich; anyone else was a state citizen.

Those who could not prove true German or Aryan ancestry (effectively

[1] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, tr R. Manheim (London, 1969), p. 3.

those of Jewish, Romany, Asian or African extraction) were relegated to an underclass, denied rights of citizenship, denied positions of influence, denied opportunities to make or maintain any large income. The same denials of rights extended to spouses of any of these people, however truly German their background. To be married to a Jew was considered as bad as being a Jew.

While the Citizenship Law had dire consequences for the political rights of non-Aryans the Blood Protection Law had devastating effects on the personal lives of these people. This law banned marriage and extra-marital sexual relations between Aryan and non-Aryan. Infringements of this law were crimes of racial disgrace ('Rassenschande') punishable by imprisonment or, in some instances, by death. This same law forbade the employment of non-Jews by Jews. [2]

However odd, if not inhumane, the Blood Protection Law may seem to a more liberal-minded person today, it cannot be overlooked that within the orthodox Jewish community there would have been similar feelings about the prospect of intermarriage, except that figuratively speaking it would be Jewish blood - and by extension, the Jewish tribal and religious identity - suffering defilement. Intermarriage is still officially unacceptable within the Jewish tradition. It has even been known for Jewish parents whose son

[2] See subject references relating to these laws in Christian Zentner and Friedemann Bedürftig, *The encyclopedia of the Third Reich*, tr Amy Hackett (New York, 1977).

or daughter has married 'out' to "sit *shiva* (go through the mourning process) as if their son or daughter were dead." [3]

The Nazi definition of 'Jew' reveals much of the biological pedantry in the Nazi creed. It was not enough to know that a person had Jewish blood, they needed to know how much. Jewish musicians, for example, while denied the right to be part of mainstream music-making in Germany, were allowed to be active within their own cultural association ('Kulturbund') but they had to apply for this privilege by completing a questionnaire which asked about their degree of Jewishness. [4]

A Jew would be defined as a complete Jew ('Volljude') if he had four completely Jewish grandparents; with three Jewish grandparents he was a three-quarter Jew ('Dreivierteljude'). Less racially Jewish, but still politically Jewish, was the condition of half Jew ('Halbjude'), also defined as a '1st degree hybrid' ('Mischling 1. Grades'); this was someone with two Jewish grandparents. A person with one completely Jewish grandparent was a quarter Jew ('Vierteljude') or a '2nd degree hybrid' ('Mischling 2. Grades'). In the early years of the Nazi state any non-Aryan, or anyone tainted by association with Jews, could expect marginalization and segregation. Extermination came later.

[3] Julia Neuberger, *On being Jewish* (London, 1996), p. 201.

[4] See Joseph Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich: eine Dokumentation* (Frankfurt and Berlin, 1989), p. 411 for a sample questionnaire designed by Hans Hinkel.

While Austria remained independent there was absolutely nothing the Nazi authorities in Germany could do about the Jews in Austria, or about those who worked with Jews, other than create a climate of antipathy by means of disinformation and rumour. Nazi Germany judged “the Austrian repertoire to be an out-and-out Jewish repertoire.” [5] This provided them with an excuse to discredit Lehár.

It was alleged that Lehár had said that the German invasion of Belgium in 1914 amounted to a breach of a treaty, and this allegation prompted the Nazi membership of the Prussian Parliament to demand an immediate boycott of Lehár’s works. The affair grew out of a misunderstanding involving not Franz but his brother Anton in an unguarded moment at Vienna’s ‘Griechenbeisl’. [6] Lehár went public about his treatment by Nazi Germany with statements to the Viennese press:

I am aware that rumours have been circulated in Germany claiming that I made some remark about the Germans’ invasion of Belgium being a violation of an agreement. Someone is making propaganda out of this remark, the

[5] Franz Lehár, ‘Warum ich in Deutschland boykottiert werden soll’, *Wiener allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 July 1933, p. 3.

[6] According to Dr Otto Back et al., *Österreichisches Wörterbuch* (Vienna, 1995), a ‘Beisl’ is a small restaurant with national characteristics. ‘Griechenbeisl’ (literally ‘Greek taverna’) is the name of the oldest inn in Vienna, situated at Fleischmarkt 11. First recorded in 1477, it has been known by several names, acquiring the name ‘Griechenbeisl’ from its association with Greek traders. The ballad singer Augustin composed his ‘Oh, du lieber Augustin’ there in the 17th century, and the inn has been especially popular with Vienna’s musicians, artists and politicians. See website at <http://www.griechenbeisl.at>.

intention being to have my works boycotted by all German theatres, radio stations, bands, etc.

I categorically declare that this report about a remark of mine is not true. I was not involved in the recently held business meetings of the authors' association in Vienna (where the remark allegedly was made) so on that score alone the assertion that has been made falls flat.

It is more likely to have been a conversation with my brother, Baron Anton von Lehář, one of the directors of the musical copyright society based in Berlin and who, some time at one of those sociable and intimate gatherings at an inn following the Vienna meeting, happened to make a completely harmless remark which supposedly led to his being unjustly suspected of anti-German-Reich sentiments. This whole affair is just further proof to me that all possible means are being used to oust so-called foreign composers and authors who enjoy success in Germany in favour of "colleagues" accepted on account of their party political affiliations. [7]

This was a political battle being waged along personal and professional lines, for the Nazis in Germany wanted to oust Anton Lehář as director of the performing rights society and replace him by some Nazi functionary.

The excuse that Austrian repertoire was Jewish, suggesting by implication that German repertoire was not, was shown by Lehář to be untenable because the military bands of the Sturm Abteilung, the storm troopers, often performed works by Jewish composers.

On 27 November 1934 a report was prepared for one of the Nazi cultural associations at Halle a. d. Saale, evidently in response to questions raised

[7] Franz Lehář, 'Warum ich in Deutschland boykottiert werden soll', *Wiener allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 July 1933, p. 3. Lehář published similar statements in the *Neue freie Presse*, the *Neues Wiener Journal*, and the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*.

about Lehár:

Re: Franz Lehár Investigation.

Franz Lehár is a contentious problem for the cultural policies of the Third Reich. Composers within the German music profession hold him to be an Aryan by descent. According to the biography by Ernst Detsey (sic) published by Drei-Masken-Verlag in 1930 (a work which has a tendency in places for friendly in-house propaganda) the paternal line of the family may be traced back to a Marquis Lehár who arrived at Moravia as a French prisoner-of-war in 1799. He took refuge in the ruined castle of Brünnlitz bei Schönewald and eventually married a countrywoman native to the region there ...

The introductory mythology about the non-existent French marquis was followed by more reliable detailing of Lehár senior's career and Franz Lehár's training and military career. Then came the real focus of the inquiry:

In the year 1901 Lehár resigned from military service and took over the position of musical director at the Theater an der Wien where he now applied himself to composition. His libretti without exception originate from Jews. With his Jewish collaborators and Richard Tauber as well Lehár moves exclusively within Jewish circles in Vienna. The construction of his operettas betrays a template of a certain international kitschy quality. Those texts set to music by Lehár and provided by Jews are devoid of any German feeling. From the cultural political standpoint Lehár's ability is being deplorably squandered on subjects such as these. Concerning the character of Lehár there is intelligence from Vienna dated 22 May 1934: Lehár composed a waltz which he dedicated to France and which was eventually used in the sound film *1934 Wien*. From the German music publishers in Vienna came the announcement of the Reich broadcasting authorities in Berlin on 23 May that Franz Lehár is married to a non-Aryan. The wife he married some years ago after a long-standing relationship is allegedly a Jew. Lehár himself, in

a written communication of 16 August 1933, gave assurances to the Reich leadership of the Reich registered Association of German Theatre regarding his own Aryan lineage. Nevertheless, any excision of Lehár's theatrical works is unacceptable to the Nazi cultural community.

This last sentence betrays the double standards in Nazi political thinking, for while 'excision' ('Abnahme', suggestive of permanent removal) would have been desirable to the Nazi purist, Lehár had too many friends in high places. How to reconcile high-ranking Nazi admiration for Lehár with the composer's politically compromised position because of his links with Jewish singers and librettists, therein lay the problem. The report goes on:

Presupposing that the assertion about the non-Aryan marriage, difficult to check as it is, should after all prove to be without foundation, even so - by his constant association with non-Aryans, his ongoing collaboration for some years now with Jews, his close friendship with Richard Tauber, and not least by some malicious remarks about National Socialism - Lehár has placed himself as far as he possibly can beyond the circle of those colleagues who work in accordance with the cultural policies of the Third Reich, leaving aside any value judgements about his musical accomplishments.

Heil Hitler! [8]

Even if the Nazi authorities were prepared to retract their boycotting policy with regard to Lehár's works they continued to undermine support by their assertion that all his librettists were Jewish. Their claims were repeated time after time. A musicologist writing in 1936 stated:

[8] Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich*, pp. 437-438.

When we return to light music we encounter in the performance schedules of German theatres indeed few non-Aryan musicians yet more and more frequently we come across Jewish writers. The operettas of the Aryan Frans (sic) Lehár without exception have texts by Jewish librettists. With most theatres it has become customary practice to leave out the names of Jewish collaborators from programme notices. Doubtless there are works too which, if only because of the creative interest to us of their composers, have sufficient merit to be kept in the performance rosters. [9]

Nazi ideology was one thing in theory, quite another in practice. [10] The mammoth task of ensuring that the musical, theatrical and other professions were Aryanised fell to the civil servants of the RKK, the Reichskulturkammer.

The RKK was a most important part of the vast array of bureaucratic machinery which governed every aspect of life in Nazi Germany. Its president was Dr Paul Joseph Goebbels (1897 – 1945), Reich Minister for Enlightenment of the People and Propaganda. Vice-president was Secretary of State Walther Funk (1890 – 1960) and the managing director was Dr Schmidt-Leonardt.

[9] Herbert Gerigk, 'Die leichte Musik und der Rassengedanke, *National-sozialistische Monatshefte*, January 1936, no.70, quoted in Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich*, p. 360.

[10] One of the most bizarre instances of the dichotomy between Nazi theory and practice was the discovery of thousands of soldiers of Jewish ancestry who served in the Wehrmacht and the SS. See *Daily Telegraph*, 2 December 1996; also Bryan Mark Rigg, *Hitler's Jewish soldiers: The untold story of Nazi racial laws and men of Jewish descent in the German military* (Lawrence, Kansas, 2002).

The RKK was divided into further Kammer (chambers or departments), each of which could be subdivided into any number of federations or representative professional bodies. The Reichskammer der bildenden Künste was a typical example, having sixteen federations, each with its own committee, and twelve regional assemblies. The other principal areas of responsibility for the RKK were film, theatre, music and the press, represented respectively by the Reichsfilmkammer, Reichstheaterkammer, Reichsmusikkammer, and Reichspressekammer. [11]

Even a colossal organisation such as the RKK could not entirely rid the arts world of Jewish influences. There was hardly an established and respected composer of opera and theatre music who had not at some time collaborated with a Jewish librettist. This was certainly true of Richard Strauss, first president of the RMK, the Reichsmusikkammer, and Eduard Künneke, a committee member of the composers' association. The prime reason for any excision of Lehár's works being "unacceptable to the Nazi cultural community" was that his operettas (along with the music of Beethoven, Brahms, Liszt, Johann Strauss and Wagner) were admired by Adolf Hitler. [12] Although its librettists were Jews, his favourite Lehár

[11] For details of the staffing of government departments in the formative years of Nazi Germany, as well as biographical profiles of leading personalities, see Otto Stollberg, *Das Deutsche Führerlexikon* (Berlin, 1934).

[12] Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (Harmondsworth, 1998), p. 42.

operetta was *Die lustige Witwe*. [13] Hitler's first encounter with *Die lustige Witwe* may have been in October 1906. One story claims that he even auditioned for the chorus and might have been successful if he could have provided his own tailcoat. [14] It was, one may be assured, just a story. [15] On the other hand there is the vivid account of Frau Winter, Hitler's Munich housekeeper, who caught Hitler "der Arme" ("the poor man", as she described him) admiring himself before a mirror, wearing tails and dress scarf while listening to a cylinder recording of *Die lustige Witwe* on his return from a performance of the operetta. "Na, Winterin, was sagen Sie?" ("Well, Winter, what do you say?") Hitler asked. "Bin ich vielleicht kein Danilo?" ("Am I not perhaps a Danilo?"). [16]

Hitler's regard for Lehár's most popular operetta was more than a casual interest, it was the obsessive devotion of a lifelong fan. Writing in May 1948 Hitler's chief architect, Albert Speer recalled:

[13] A fact reported in many studies of Hitler and the Nazi tyranny, for example, Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, vol. 1, *The years of persecution 1933-39* (London, 1998), p. 34.

[14] See William A. Jenks, *Vienna and the young Hitler* (New York, 1960), p. 230, quoting Josef Greiner, *Das Ende des Hitler-Mythos* (Zurich, Leipzig and Vienna, 1947), p. 70.

[15] Brigitte Hamann, *Hitlers Wien, Lehrjahre eines Diktators* (Munich, 1997), p. 282.

[16] Stefan Frey, 'Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.' *Franz Lehár und die Unterhaltungsmusik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a.M. and Leipzig, 1999), p. 328, quoting Johannes Heesters, *Es kommt auf die Sekunde an* (Munich, 1978), p. 127.

Yet it seems to me that we concentrated too exclusively on Hitler's fondness for Wagner, for he loved operetta just as much as he did Wagner's grand operas. In all seriousness he regarded Franz Lehár as one of the greatest composers in the history of music. Hitler ranked *Die lustige Witwe* as the equal of the finest operas. ... After one performance of *The Merry Widow* conducted by Lehár himself, then in his seventies, the composer was introduced to him. For days afterward Hitler expressed his pleasure at this significant meeting. [17]

Hitler's interest in musical theatre may well have inspired much of his political thinking. His speeches were expressed with the gestures, timing and tonal variety of an actor. His rallies were professionally designed object lessons in theatrical spectacle. "We must bring the masses illusions," he once said. "They have enough of life's grim realities. Just because life is grimly real, people have to be exalted above the routines of every day." [18]

In the end illusion turned to delusion for Hitler, but his loyalty towards his favourite operetta went on. Based in his 'Wolfsschanze' ('Wolf's Lair') near Rastenburg, scene of the assassination attempt of 20 July 1944, Hitler found comfort not in Wagner but, as one of the female assistants there recalled, "immer nur *Die lustige Witwe*" ("nothing but *The Merry Widow* all the time")! [19] Even in the final hours of the Reich there was still

[17] Albert Speer, *Spandau: the secret diaries*, tr R. and C. Winston (London, 1976), p. 106.

[18] Speer, *Spandau: the secret diaries*, p. 103.

[19] Hamann, *Hitlers Wien*, p. 46.

time to listen to recordings of Lehár. [20]

The question will no doubt be asked whether Lehár enjoyed this adulation from the German dictator, and whether there was reciprocal admiration for Hitler from Lehár. At the time of the boycott threat Lehár maintained that he was a creative artist caring nothing for politics. “Ich lebe als Künstler für mein Schaffen und kummere mich nicht um die Politik.” [21] This is endorsed by his sympathetic biographer, Peteani, who remarks that “Not everyone is born to be a political hero” (“Nicht jeder ist zum politischen Helden geboren.”) [22] On the other hand, Peter Herz, lyricist of the song ‘Komm, die Nacht gehört der Sünde’ (interpolated in *Frühlingsmadel* and the 1925 revision of *Clo-Clo*) reported that

Franz Lehár, it must in truth be established, was a bedazzled admirer (‘ein verblendeter Bewunderer’) of Hitler, especially in the first period of that unjust regime. Even in 1925 he was speaking with his favourite librettist Béla Jenbach about the ‘significance’ of the Nazi leader, an assessment which Jenbach as a Jew naturally did not accept. [23]

Yet not even Herz, critical though he is of Lehár’s pro-Hitler leanings, is

[20] Traudl Junge, *Until the final hour: Hitler’s last secretary* (London, 2003), pp. 80-81.

[21] Franz Lehár, ‘In eigener Sache! Meine Werke sollen in Deutschland boykottiert werden’, *Neues Wiener Journal*, 7 July 1933.

[22] Maria von Peteani, *Franz Lehár* (Vienna and London, 1950), p. 203.

[23] Frey, ‘Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.’, p. 317, quoting Peter Herz, ‘Der Fall Lehár. Eine authentische Darlegung von - -’, *Die Gemeinde* (Vienna), 24 April 1968.

prepared to explain it as anything other than political naivety.

Political considerations were not uppermost in Lehár's thoughts during the first years of Hitler's dictatorship in Germany. The Lehárs had just recently acquired a new home in Vienna, the Schikaneder-Schlössl, and Lehár's professional commitments had been extended by the founding of his publishing house, Glocken-Verlag, which he based at his property in the Theobaldgasse. As well as his numerous conducting engagements he had to supervise arrangements for the Paris production of *Frasquita* with Conchita Supervia in 1933, which was followed by the production of *Giuditta* in Vienna in 1934.

Nazi interference with Lehár's operettas became more evident in the ensuing years. A new production of *Die lustige Witwe* at Charlottenburg in 1935 was presented with new scenery and textual revisions by director Hans Batteux. For a new production of *Der Graf von Luxemburg* on 4 March 1937 at the Theater des Volkes, with Hans Heinz Bollmann in the title role and Lehár as musical director, the names of the librettists were deliberately omitted from publicity materials.

All this was happening against a background of political pressures that would change Austrian cultural and political life irrevocably. The occupation of the Austrian Chancellery and the murder of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss by Nazi agitators in July 1934 was a foretaste of future events. In February 1938 Dollfuss's successor, Kurt von Schuschnigg,

was invited to Berchtesgaden where Hitler gave him no choice but to release jailed Nazis and even find positions for some of them within the Austrian government. On 9 March 1938 Schuschnigg made one last-ditch attempt to defeat the encroaching Nazi influence with his rallying cry of “Mander, ’s ischt Zeit!” (“Men, now’s the time!”) to announce a plebiscite. Two days later the Germans began their march into Austria. In recognition of its position as eastern outpost of the German Reich, Austria was given a new name, Ostmark. [24]

The Anschluss, the annexation of Austria, posed a potential threat to Lehár’s lifestyle, his livelihood and his standard of living because of his connection with Jews, whether professionally through the theatre, or personally through his marriage to Sophie. How great a threat this was may not have been fully appreciated at first, but details relayed from Jews in Germany forced many Austrians to act quickly. Those who had the necessary finances fled the country. Many of Lehár’s colleagues and associates emigrated to America: these included the singers Gitta Alpar, Jarmila Novotná, Fritzi Massary, and Vera Schwarz, librettists Grünwald and Reichert, and composers Oscar Straus, Robert Stolz and Emmerich Kálmán. A few, including Richard Tauber, fled to England.

With his international connections Lehár could very easily have emigrated

[24] For a full account of these events, see Dieter Wagner and Gerhard Tomkowitz, *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*, tr Geoffrey Strahan (London, 1971).

as well, but for him it seemed easier not to. He was an elderly man who liked a simple quiet life (“Er empfand Sehnsucht nach Ruhe, nach Einfachheit...”), as Peteani claimed. He saw no reason to go. His Jewish wife had accepted Roman Catholic baptism, he was a Hungarian citizen. His priorities were the defence of his work and his wife. [25]

Lehár made his decision as a favoured Aryan with a Jewish spouse. His was by no means a unique case. The actor Hans Albers (1892 – 1960) enjoyed a protected career throughout the years of the Third Reich; his marriage to Hansi Burg was deliberately denied by the Nazi authorities to avoid embarrassment. [26] The actress Henny Porten (1890 – 1960), despite refusing Goering’s demand that she divorce her Jewish husband, was likewise untroubled. [27] While many actors, musicians and composers were blacklisted by the Nazis there were many others listed as ‘specially approved’ (‘Sondergenehmigungen’) even though they may have been judged ‘politically handicapped’ (‘politisch belastet’) or tainted by marriage to a Jew. [28]

[25] Peteani, *Franz Lehár*, p. 203.

[26] David Welch, *Propaganda and the German cinema 1933-1945*, rev.ed. (London and New York, 2001), p. 84.

[27] Zentner and Bedürftig, *The encyclopedia of the Third Reich*, p.719.

[28] Oliver Rathkolb, *Führertreu und Gottbegnadet, Künstlereliten im Dritten Reich* (Vienna, 1991), pp. 26-36.

The case of Richard Strauss is another example of political compromise. Although he had a Jewish daughter-in-law and had collaborated with Jewish librettist Stefan Zweig with whom he still corresponded, carelessly expressing criticism of Nazi artistic policies in letters intercepted by the Gestapo, the only punishment meted out to Strauss was removal from the presidency of the Reichsmusikkammer. Certain extreme Nazis were keen to denounce him yet only one Strauss opera, *Die schweigsame Frau*, was banned during the Nazi era. Those at the highest level of political authority realized that it was expedient to protect Strauss, not only because of his stature as German music's elder statesman but also (as Hans Johst admitted to the mayor of Hamburg) "because he brings in a lot of foreign cash" ("weil er ein grosser Devisenbringer ist"). [29]

Being similarly successful in his own field Lehár could also be guaranteed to attract much needed foreign currency. In addition to his enjoyment of the Führer's personal admiration Lehár had a further advantage - a useful contact in the cultural establishment. This was Hans Hinkel.

As Berta Geissmar once remarked, "the reader may well ask, who was Hinkel?" [30] A shadowy figure in the history of Nazi culture, Hinkel has been overlooked, perhaps not surprisingly, in almost all Lehár biographies,

[29] Boguslaw Drewniak, *Das Theater im NS-Staat, Szenarium deutscher Zeitgeschichte 1933-1945* (Dusseldorf, 1983), p. 295.

[30] Berta Geissmar, *The baton and the jackboot: recollections of musical life* (London 1944/1947), p. 167.

and only in some of the more recent literature on the Nazi period has he emerged from the shadows. [31] Geissmar describes him as a pompous individual, one of the many “unqualified and inept busybodies” in the Reich civil service who was given power over the greatest musical talents in Germany.

The son of a successful industrialist, Hans Hinkel was born in Worms am Rhein on 22 June 1901. He was brought up in the Protestant faith and educated at the ‘Oberrealschule’ in Worms. In 1919 he enrolled as a student of political science and philosophy at the University of Bonn. He left Bonn after a year and went to the University of Munich until 1923, alternating his studies there with national service with the Oberland Freikorps. His years in Munich were to leave lasting impressions upon him for there he first encountered Adolf Hitler and Hitler’s promoter, the poet Dietrich Eckart (1868 – 1923), one of the strongest intellectual forces behind the Nazi party, the NSDAP. On 4 October 1921 Hinkel joined the NSDAP; 287 was his membership number.

[31] Grun has one fleeting reference to Hinkel, as does Endler. Frey and Haffner have substantial details about Lehár’s dealings with Hinkel but only sparse details on Hinkel himself. Brief references to Hinkel may be found in Michael Meyer, *The politics of music in the Third Reich* (New York, etc., 1991/1993), pp. 138-139 and 161; in Sam H. Shirakawa, *The Devil’s music master: the controversial life and career of Wilhelm Furtwängler* (New York and Oxford, 1992), pp. 197 and 373; in Erik Levi, *Music in the Third Reich* (Basingstoke and London, 1994), pp. 32, 172 and 246. There are more substantial references in Martin Goldsmith, *The inextinguishable symphony: a true story of music and love in Nazi Germany* (New York, etc., 2000), pp. 51-67, 123-124, 187-191, 242-243.

An active and fanatical Nazi, he was expelled from the occupied Rhine-land territories on 12 March 1923. The French occupying authorities sentenced him to eight years' penal servitude if he should ever offer "further resistance" to the army of occupation. [32] In November 1923 he took part in the unsuccessful Munich putsch led by Hitler and Ludendorff. For his role in this landmark event Hinkel received the award of the Blood Order (Blutorden).

After university Hinkel embarked upon a career in journalism, working primarily at editorial desks of daily newspapers in Bavaria. From 1924 to 1925 he was editor-in-chief of the *Oberbayerische Tageszeitung*. Hinkel's support of the Nazi party was manifest at this time by his joining the storm troopers (the SA or Sturmabteilung).

In 1928 Hinkel surrendered his membership of the Sturmabteilung when he moved to Berlin to accept the editorship of Nazi journals published by Kampfverlag Berlin. Two years later he was nominated for the Reichstag and on 14 September 1930 he became a member of the German parliament.

His career, and with it his influence, now progressed in leaps and bounds. On 1 October he joined the editorial board of the Berlin office of the *Völkische Beobachter*. For a time he was publications manager of *Der Angriff* while also managing the Nazi press office for the Gross-Berlin

[32] Biographical details from Stollberg, *Das Deutsche Führerlexikon*.

district, his duties there being more censorial than editorial. At this time, and until 1933, he served on the board of the 'Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur' ('Fighting federation for German culture'), an organization founded by Alfred Rosenberg (1893 – 1946) to encourage German culture by actively discouraging degenerate (in practice, foreign and Jewish) influences on the arts.

The Nazi party was now growing in strength throughout Germany, and in March 1931 Hinkel joined the SS. In May 1933 the 'Kampfbund' became recognized as a major cultural force within the Nazi party when Hinkel was appointed its director. Hinkel had more significant responsibilities as a result of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor on 30 January 1933. He was given a ministerial position as State Commissioner (Staatskommissar) of the 'Amtlicher Preussischer Theaterrausschuss' ('Official committee for Prussian theatre') based in Berlin at Unter den Linden 4. The organisation was affiliated to the Reichstheaterkammer but in reality was part of the Prussian Ministry for Science, Art and Education of the People. As head of the Berlin office Hinkel was answerable only to the Prussian Prime Minister in his capacity as Prussian Minister of the Interior. Hinkel was also president of the 'Gesellschaft für Deutsche Kultur' ('Society for German culture').

Hinkel knew nothing about theatre but his team at the 'Theaterrausschuss' was well chosen both for theatrical expertise and impeccable Aryan

lineage. Hinkel's deputy was a doyen of theatre in Wiesbaden, actor and stage director Bernhard Herrmann. The permanent staff included Benno von Arent, film and theatre designer, whose later stage credits included Richard Strauss's *Arabella* ; his most notorious work was as designer for the great Nazi rallies.

Published correspondence from Hinkel shows him to have been a willing intermediary for anyone he judged to be of importance or influence. A request for an autographed photograph of Hitler from Japanese conductor Viscount Hidemaro Konoye inspired Hinkel to write a grovelling letter in October 1933 to Dr Hans Heinrich Lammers, Secretary of State in the Reich Chancellery, in which he claimed that Konoye could be called "the Japanese Furtwängler" and the "finest non-German interpreter of Richard Strauss." [33]

In May 1935 SS-Sturmbannführer Hinkel became chief of the 'Kulturpersonalien' ('Cultural personal records') division, later known as the 'Besondere Kulturaufgaben' ('Special cultural tasks') department, within

[33] Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich*, p. 94. Hidemaro Konoye (1898–1973) was an influential conductor and composer in Japan, and founder of the New Symphony Orchestra of Tokyo, now the NHK Symphony Orchestra. He studied composition in Europe under Vincent d'Indy and Max von Schillings and conducting under Erich Kleiber. As a conductor he worked with the NBC Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra of La Scala, and the Berlin Philharmonic. He also conducted the first recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 4. His compositions include original works in Japanese traditional styles and orchestral arrangements of European music such as Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and the Schubert C major Quintet.

the Propaganda Ministry. Popularly known as the 'Reichskulturwalter' ('governor of Reich culture') Hinkel had a more long-winded job title as 'Sonderbeauftragter für die Überwachung und Beaufsichtigung der Betätigung der im deutschen Reichsgebiet lebenden nichtarischen Staatsangehörigen auf künstlerischem und geistigem Gebiet', that is, as a special executive responsible for the supervision and checking of all non-Aryan cultural and artistic activity.

It was Hinkel's job to separate Jewish arts organizations from mainstream German cultural life, thereby ensuring that Jews were removed from universities and from the more influential areas of artistic endeavour. For a time these Jewish arts associations thrived in relative safety. Under the auspices of the 'Kulturbund deutscher Juden' ('Cultural association of German Jews') five hundred opera performances and six hundred concerts were mounted from 1933 to 1941 when internment of Jews throughout the Reich forced its dissolution.

In 1937 Hinkel wrote his first book, a sprinkling of self-congratulatory autobiographical memoirs mixed among rampaging tracts of intense Nazi dogma, all of which he dedicated to his sons, Rheinwart and Innfried. To this article of Nazi faith he gave the title *Einer unter Hunderttaussend* ('One among a hundred thousand'), explaining in his preface that

As one among a hundred thousand I found the auspicious path,
as one among a hundred thousand I marched along later in the
fighting columns of the German future, as one among a

hundred thousand I experienced the mighty struggle for the Third Reich.

As it falls to us as loyal followers of Adolf Hitler to guard the holy flame of the great struggle that we are engaged upon for the New Germany it would mean endless happiness for me if, simply by reading this book, our young people might feel something of the ardent spirit with which we old National Socialists desire to serve and do our duty today and tomorrow just as we did in years past. [34]

That key word in Nazi jargon, 'Kampf' ('struggle'), figured frequently in Hinkel's writing. When the book was published in 1938 a footnote after the main text promised a sequel about the "years of struggle" from 1928 to 1933 with the more grandiose title *Einer unter Millionen*, ('One among millions').

In spite of his obsessive support for the Nazi cause Hinkel's personal shortcomings annoyed his superiors. In diary entries for 1938 Goebbels referred to Hinkel as a "loathsome intriguer" and a "bug". Yet when Hinkel's management of the forces' entertainments section of the Propaganda Ministry was praised by Hitler another diary note by Goebbels (15 November 1940) conceded that "Hinkel has a few faults but otherwise he is a useful man." Hinkel's management was rewarded by promotion to SS-Brigadeführer. Goebbels planned to reorganise the RKK, separating it from the Propaganda Ministry with a new management team, and in his diary (18 March 1941) Goebbels expressed a hope that Hinkel, as head of the team, would "restore order to this pretty chaotic outfit." While Hinkel

[34] Hans Hinkel, *Einer unter Hunderttausend* (Munich 1938).

could be relied upon as a manager, ambition often got the better of him as he loved to have an impressive title for each job, and as head of the RKK he would have the title of 'Generalsekretar' ('Secretary general'). "When all is said and done," wrote Goebbels (diary: 2 April 1941), "he is a vain fellow." [35]

Further duties lay ahead for Hinkel. When Dr Heinrich Glasmeier (1893 – 1945) of the German broadcasting company, the Reichs Rundfunk GmbH, fell out of favour in October 1941 Hinkel was given responsibility for all entertainment broadcasting. As Commissioner for the Radio's Entertainment Sector he had to supervise broadcast performances of light dance music, cabaret programmes, classical music and "sophisticated" music (which included film scores and contemporary operetta).

Hinkel tended to favour classical or light music ('Unterhaltungsmusik') that could inspire the best in Nazi ideals - heroism, comradeship, joy through struggle, affirmation of life, grandeur of ceremony. Music he saw as something of the people and for the people - he was fond of amateur music-making in the home ('Hausmusik') - as long as it was German, supportive of the German national spirit. [36]

[35] Fred Taylor (ed./tr), *The Goebbels diaries 1939 – 1941* (London, 1982). Translations from the 1938 diaries are from Horst J. P. Bergmeier and Rainer E. Lotz, *Hitler's airwaves: the inside story of Nazi radio broadcasting and propaganda swing* (New Haven and London, 1997).

[36] Albrecht Riethmüller, 'Komposition im Deutschen Reich um 1936', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, Jahrgang XXXVIII, Heft 4 (Wiesbaden, 1981), p. 253.

Jazz inevitably was banned from Hinkel's broadcasts. He loathed such 'entartete' ('degenerate') music. He would not even allow mention of the word 'jazz' in any programmes. Forces' entertainments formed part of his output, but national music was prioritised above sentimental songs such as *Lili Marleen* which Hinkel denounced as "defeatist chirping." [37]

By 1943 Hinkel had become a Gruppenführer in the SS. In May 1944, as the German war effort was showing marked signs of crumbling, Hans Fritzsche (1900 – 1953) was given overall charge of radio broadcasting and Hinkel was given a new posting in June as Director of the Reich film industry (Reichsfilmintendant). During these last months of the war he produced propaganda films with the assistance of colleagues in the SS, his prime purpose being the indoctrination of young people.

Fanatical in his politics, fawning in his power-seeking, Hinkel was capable of unexpected compassion on the one hand and cruel heartlessness on the other. In the early years of Nazi government in Germany, when Jews were treated as a people apart, Hinkel regarded himself as an expert on Jewish cultural matters and was positively supportive to the 'Kulturbund' founded by Dr Kurt Singer:

Of course, he was fairly independent in his decisions and, in time, his office grew into a large organization with readers,

[37] Bergmeier and Lotz, *Hitler's airwaves*, p. 188. Ironically Hinkel appears as a character in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's (1980) film *Lili Marleen*, and perhaps coincidentally Charlie Chaplin adopted the name Adenoid Hynkel for the title character in his *The great dictator* (1940).

censors, clerks and secretaries, but compared to the careers of other pre-1933 Nazis, the post was not a startling advancement for the erstwhile leader of the 'Kampfbund', and more than once he had to side with the Jews against his party colleagues. No doubt Hinkel had a genuine regard for Dr Singer, and without this personal liking the whole idea of separate Jewish cultural activities would never have been able to run the gamut of official objections. At a time when Jewish gatherings, especially in the provinces, suffered from the whims of the local party and police bosses, the Hinkel office saw to it that all functions within its orbit proceeded without interference. Not seldom there were skirmishes behind the scenes between the Gestapo and Hinkel in which, as a rule, he emerged the victor. [38]

Yet in 1944 this same Hinkel personally directed the filming of one of the most sickening executions. In the wake of the July 1944 assassination plot against Hitler a number of disenchanted Nazis and conspirators were arrested and hastily condemned to death by hanging:

These executions and those that followed were filmed by a crew supervised by the Reich cultural administrator and director of the film department in the Propaganda Ministry, Hans Hinkel. Goebbels himself commissioned the film *Verrter vor dem Volksgericht* (Traitors before the People's Court)....

When Goebbels saw the execution scenes, he is said to have turned away. That may have had to do with the method of execution - the condemned were suspended by steel bands from hooks and slowly strangled. [39]

At the end of the war Hinkel was captured and taken prisoner by Polish troops who had mistaken him for police chief Paul Hinkler. He was

[38] Herbert Freeden, 'A Jewish theatre under the swastika', Year Book 1, *Publications of the Leo Baeck Institute* (London, 1956), pp. 153-154.

[39] Ralf Georg Reuth, *Goebbels*, tr Krishna Winston (London, 1993), p. 344.

imprisoned for several years. Afterwards he was given the post of director of the Göttingen Philharmonic Orchestra in recognition, so it was said, “of his great services to German music.” [40] His health, however, had suffered severely, presumably as a result of his incarceration, and he died a broken man in 1960.

Precisely how and when Lehár first became acquainted with Hinkel is by no means clear. It may have been through one of the clubs frequented by the composer, or the link may have been effected through Hinkel’s wife, a professional singer. Whatever the circumstances, it was a particularly fortunate acquaintance for Lehár.

Soon after the seizure of Austria on 12 March 1938 the Nazis had moved quickly to legitimize what was indeed an illegal annexation. Schuschnigg had been deposed and replaced by Arthur Seyss-Inquart as Chancellor. On 13 March Seyss-Inquart placed before President Wilhelm Miklas a document for his signature, a legal acknowledgement that Austria was now reunited with the German Reich. Miklas refused, and resigned. Seyss-Inquart took over the Presidency, and signed in the name of the Austrian people.

On 10 April 1938 there was a referendum of the people of Austria to approve the Anschluss, in effect nothing more than a token gesture of acceptance of the inevitable. On 26 April 1938 a decree was passed

[40] Curt Riess, *Knaurs Weltgeschichte der Schallplatte* (Zurich, 1966), p. 166.

whereby all Jews had to declare any savings they had in excess of 5000 marks. Anything in excess of that sum was to be 'invested' - in reality, confiscated - for the benefit of Nazi organisations.

When it became clear that this law had direct implications for the Lehárs the composer contacted the Reichskulturwalter in some alarm. "My wife is a Roman Catholic," he wrote, "and you will understand that it is painful for me to have to give statements which are not required by Hungarian law." Hinkel's first reaction, knowing as he did that Sophie was classed as 'Volljüdin' ('completely Jewish female'), was respectfully dismissive. Lehár wrote again:

Highly respected Herr Reichskulturwalter,
Am keenly awaiting the words of deliverance concerning my wife's declaration of assets. In truth my wife possesses nothing at all. She brought nothing into the marriage, and the jewels she wears are in the truest sense of the word my property.
As I am a Hungarian citizen and my wife belongs to the Catholic Church I believe that nothing will happen. All the same I should be happy if I could have in my hand a line from you to protect us against any eventualities.
Heil Hitler!
Yours sincerely,
Lehár. [41]

This time Hinkel was sympathetic. On 29 August 1938 he sent a letter to Reichsminister Goebbels in support of Lehár's case:

Franz Lehar (on whose behalf I have spent recent months brushing aside all obstacles that might limit his working

[41] Ingrid and Herbert Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ... : Das Franz Lehar Buch* (Berlin, 1998), p. 179.

potential) is right now presenting me with a most urgent request for assistance in the following matter.

According to regulations generally in force Lehar, as is well known, is duty bound to declare by 30 September all assets belonging to himself and his wife, a baptized Catholic and completely Jewish woman. Not even a letter showing that he and his wife have Hungarian citizenship will release them from this obligation.

Lehar feels unusually *persecuted* by this duty of asset disclosure for Jews and their spouses, his legal representative must have explained to him that a single word from some competent authority can release him from this duty, and so *in a state of great despair* he is asking me for advice. I *immediately calmed him down* and promised to inform the Minister at once. I should like with respect to suggest that Reich Economics Minister Funk, who knows Franz Lehar very well indeed, be requested to *release* Herr and Frau Lehar from this obligation, or rather to show him *some way out of it*.

With regard to this may I make the additional observation that the pecuniary circumstances of the Lehar couple are already *very complicated* because Franz Lehar as a Hungarian citizen maintains those well known properties in Vienna and Bad Gastein and a further property in Hungary. Furthermore there are his substantial royalty claims against the German STAGMA and the former AKM in Vienna, the consequence being that a statement of the artist's assets is in fact compounded by all sorts of complications. [42]

The letter achieved its object, convincing Goebbels that in the bureaucratic confusion that may ensue the Lehars were more trouble than they were

[42] Letter quoted in anonymous article, 'Kulturspiegel: Der Fall Lehar', *National-Zeitung* (Basle), 23 or 24 November 1946, from a cutting in the Lehar file, Wiener Library, London.

STAGMA is the acronym for the German performing rights society, the 'Staatlich genehmigte Gesellschaft zur Verwertung musikalischer Urheberrechte'. During the Nazi era it was at Adolf Hitler Platz 7-11, Berlin-Charlottenburg, and its director was Leo Ritter. The equivalent organization in Austria was the AKM, the 'Gesellschaft der Autoren, Komponisten und Musikverleger'.

worth. On 8 September 1938 Hinkel sent a letter to Funk with instructions that would guarantee financial security for Lehár:

Herr Reichsminister Dr Goebbels would welcome it if through your Ministry it could be arranged for Lehár to be *exempt* from the obligation to provide a statement of assets or if *some way out* could be shown him. It is for this reason that I presume to state a request that yourself, very honoured Reichsminister, give appropriate instructions to your personal senior executive, Herr Walter [43]

This matter had hardly been resolved in Lehár's favour when a more embarrassingly personal problem was presented to Hinkel. The subject this time was blackmail. The affair was at least partially disclosed in Bernard Grun's biography of Lehár:

Its basis was another pronounced Lehár characteristic, his love of respectability, or rather his efforts to conceal behind an inbred love of respectability an innate *psyche erotica*. Through one of his former leading ladies Lehár had come into the circle of Frau W., a fashionable figure in Viennese society. She was in the habit of arranging gay little *divertissements* which appealed to her select guests. [44]

The German version of Grun's biography added that the *divertissements* pleased her select guests, "according to their humour, as wicked or harmless" ("je nach Temperament als verrucht oder harmlos"). [45]

[43] Quoted in 'Kulturspiegel', *National-Zeitung*, - details as note [42].

[44] Bernard Grun, *Gold and Silver: the life and times of Franz Lehár* (London, 1970), p. 255.

[45] Bernard Grun, *Gold und Silber: Franz Lehár und seine Welt* (Munich and Vienna, 1970), p. 278.

According to Grun's account Lehár was an occasional visitor to these events until he had a visit from a "polite elderly gentleman", allegedly Frau W.'s cousin, claiming that he needed some financial assistance. Lehár duly obliged, but two weeks later the man returned, this time with his cousin Frau W., and a legal adviser. This time the request was not so polite, and photographs of a compromising nature were produced. Grun shrouds his story with a certain air of mystery. To get a clearer picture a few more facts need to be unveiled and these shady characters (the former leading lady, the elderly gentleman, the legal adviser, and the enigmatic Frau W.) properly identified.

From another source it is learned that one leading lady in the story was Louise Kartousch (1886 – 1964), soubrette in no fewer than nine of Lehár's operettas. She it was who introduced Lehár to Edith Windbichler, whose title was Fräulein, not Frau. Edith Windbichler was no society madam but the "pretty little dark-blonde daughter of a hotelier", barely twenty when Lehár first met her sometime about 1929. [46]

Lehár was susceptible to the charms of young and attractive women. He enjoyed their company, he flirted with them - and they in return inspired his composing. As Decsey remarked, "his works are built on erotic foundations and are declarations of love for unknown women." [47]

[46] Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ...* , p. 112.

[47] Ernst Decsey, *Franz Lehár* (Vienna, 1924), p. 137.

In the case of Edith Windbichler this was no casual flirtation. She became his mistress, regularly spending the summers in Bad Ischl where she was installed first in the Tallachinigasse and later in Room 48 of the Kurhotel Elisabeth. [48] It was the sort of affair that may have been an open secret in theatrical circles, and Sophie Lehár appears to have turned a blind eye to it, but what may have been acceptable within a coterie of professional colleagues may have been less kindly considered elsewhere.

The first blackmail approach was made in 1935. In Schneidereit's account (and in the somewhat derivative biographies by Endler and Linke) the blackmailer is wrongly identified as Paul Guttman. [49] Both Paul and his twin brother Emil were former actors and later stage directors at the Theater an der Wien; between them they mounted no fewer than six productions of Lehár operettas. When Emil committed suicide in March 1934 his widow, the soubrette Polly Koss-Guttman, received a letter of condolence from Lehár together with a gift of two hundred schillings. As the surviving twin was living in rather straitened circumstances it was assumed by Schneidereit that Lehár's gift to the brother's widow suggested the composer as a rich target for extortion.

Yet the real culprit, the "elderly gentleman" of Grun's account, was the twins' elder brother, Arthur Guttman (1877 – 1952), a singer and

[48] Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ...* , p. 113.

[49] Otto Schneidereit, *Franz Lehár: eine Biographie in Zitaten* (Berlin, 1984), p. 290.

character actor highly regarded for his playing of comedy roles at the Raimund-Theater and the Theater an der Wien. He was the husband of another of Lehar's former leading ladies, Mizzi Zwerenz (1876 – 1947), who had created the role of Ilona in *Zigeunerliebe*. [50]

Guttmann demanded fifty thousand schillings in return for the non-publication of photographs secretly taken of Lehár at Edith Windbichler's rooms. Lehár filed charges at the provincial court. Guttmann and Zwerenz were taken into custody and held on remand pending a trial which Lehár was at pains to delay. The charges against the Guttmanns were eventually dropped. [51]

For over two years there were no further developments. Lehár assumed that the Guttmanns had learned from the experience. His hope were dashed when Sophie was contacted by Dr Karl Philipp Samuely, the Guttmann's legal adviser, who demanded even more blackmail money for the Guttmanns. [52] Once again Lehár presented his case before the provincial court. By the authority of the state prosecutor Guttmann and Samuely were arrested in July 1937.

[50] Marie (Mizzi) Zwerenz married Guttmann in 1905. In her heyday a regular artist at the Carl-Theater and Raimund-Theater she also created the roles of Franzl in *Ein Walzertraum* (1907) and Jana in *Die geschiedene Frau* (1908). Further details on www.aeiou.at/aeiou.encyclop.

[51] Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ...*, p. 119.

[52] Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ...*, p. 181.

For various reasons, not least being the changing political situation in Austria, it was late in the following year when without warning Lehár received news of the trial date. Fearing for his reputation he wrote to Hinkel on 3 November 1938:

Highly honoured State Councillor,
This concerns a charge of blackmail made against the Jewish actor Arthur Guttman and his Jewish solicitor Dr Samuely. In charge of the case is state prosecutor Dr Hans Pulpan.

Acting on behalf of these two Jews is the Jewish lawyer Dr Eitelberg. Arthur Guttman and Dr Samuely are certain to be found guilty ... but they intend to make a big issue of it, which is why they want to employ Dr Eitelberg, the most notorious Jewish lawyer in Vienna. Dr Eitelberg wanted me to call him today, between 4 and 6 o'clock. This I flatly refuse to do.

The circumstances of the case are as follows:

Arthur Guttman, who has tried time after time to blackmail me, contacted Dr Samuely by letter suggesting that he should represent him against me. Dr Samuely agreed, but after he had written me a letter providing me with a clear overview of the situation I preferred charges against these now villainous gentlemen at the provincial court. The two Jews were immediately taken into custody.

During this time a thorough search was made of Dr Samuely's house, and the Guttman letter addressed to Dr Samuely was found. In it there was the following passage: 'I have been blackmailing Franz Lehár.' This admission prompted state prosecutor Dr Pulpan to put Dr Samuely on a charge as well, for under such circumstances he could not be allowed to undertake the representation.

The affair lay dormant for some time - then came the upheaval - and after that came the court vacations. Today I discover that the trial is fixed for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Therefore their intention is to confuse the facts of this case with an affair that took place several years ago, the circumstances of which I cannot

describe here. It suffices if I tell you that half a dozen Jewish lawyers have ganged up against me. All the strength I need for my work has been sapped. Several people implicated in this case have been held on remand. Among them Guttmann and his wife. A trial on a huge scale was threatened. Under the circumstances of the time this business would have been circulated throughout the Jewish world press, and even if all had been convicted - my name would have been dragged through the mire.

When those accused who are currently held on remand lodged an appeal for a dismissal I sanctioned it so that once and for all I might at last have some peace. And there was complete peace, only Guttmann turned up from time to time making blackmail attempts again. When this latest blackmail plan of Guttmann and Dr Samuely began, as I described, with Dr Samuely writing me that threatening letter and I filed my statement, the state prosecutor Dr Pulpan was so incensed that he wanted to step in with the full severity of the law. However, I asked if he could hang fire. I felt that the two men were sure to have been cured by several days' imprisonment.

Then, as I mentioned before, came the court vacation and I thought no more of this affair. And then now there comes news of the trial, scheduled for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday!!

That villain Dr Eitelberg now has the matter in hand, and his fixing a three-day trial period is proof of his intention to expedite his probably fast approaching retirement with a first-rate sensation.

With all my heart I ask you, Councillor, to have all the files sent to you. You will gather from these how erstwhile recognized artists could be considered fair game by Jewish lawyers and their cronies. [53]

In some historical accounts of Nazi Germany and Austria it has been suggested that an apparently politically neutral individual could be

[53] Letter among the Hinkel Papers, Berlin Document Center, quoted in Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ...*, pp. 182-183; in slightly abridged form in Frey, *Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*, pp. 335-336; in much abridged form in 'Kulturspiegel', *National-Zeitung*, - details as note [42].

assumed to share to some extent the anti-semitism of his more vocal, more obviously pro-Nazi neighbour. [54] It is a questionable assumption, as questionable as the Nazi belief that a typical Jew would be corrupt, greedy, a threat to the German-ness of Germany. Yet anti-semitism in Austria was far more evident after the Anschluss. The police state encouraged denunciation. Grievances, major and minor, became routine excuses for informing the authorities and settling old scores. [55] It is therefore a sad reflection on the principal players in the Lehár blackmail scandal that the composer, from a Jewish standpoint, was acting as a stereotypical Austrian in denouncing two criminals who, from a Nazi standpoint, were stereotypical Jews.

In this case there may have been an element of personal vendetta on the part of Samuely against Lehár. In 1914 Samuely had represented a Rumanian composer, Romulus Popescu del Fiori, in a plagiarism trial against Lehár. Samuely's prosecution failed. Now, with Hinkel's help, the composer was set to win again.

Hinkel's intervention is indicated by a telex which he sent to the Vienna office of the Propaganda Ministry. In it he described how

Franz Lehár was most upset by the news that the hearing against Guttman was about to take place because he had

[54] Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's willing executioners, ordinary Germans and the holocaust* (New York and London, 1996), p. 440.

[55] Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, vol. 1, p. 325.

been called as a witness.

And Hinkel went on:

I am of the opinion that we can have no interest in the continuation of these proceedings as it is more likely to damage Franz Lehár than be of service to him because of the media coverage at home and abroad.... For this reason I have for the time being telephoned the nominated state prosecutor to get him to adjourn the hearing. [56]

The case was postponed to 26 May 1939. Then it was delayed yet again.

In the meantime Samuely died in August. The other defendant, Arthur Guttmann, was found guilty and served a six-month sentence.

In these increasingly dangerous times it was inevitable that any Jew attracting unwelcome attention from the Reich authorities risked a grim fate. And so it happened that Arthur Guttmann was deported in November 1941 - but at least he survived the experience. His younger brother Paul was deported to Minsk in 1941. Dr Eitelberg, despite his involvement as middle man for the Gestapo in collecting funds for Adolf Eichmann's emigration office, was transported to Poland. [57]

Edith Windbichler apparently committed suicide some time during the 1940s. She had been living with Louise Kartousch at a Turnitz farmhouse, a gift from the composer, in an alleged lesbian relationship. [58]

[56] From 'Kulturspiegel', *National-Zeitung*, - details as note [42].

[57] Frey, '*Was sagt Ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*', p. 337.

[58] Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ...*, p. 115.

While Lehár's accusations may not have contributed directly to the fate of Dr Eitelberg or the Guttmanns there is a final letter to Hinkel which provides an ironic addendum to the whole affair. The letter, written from Bad Ischl on 17 June 1944, reads:

I thank you wholeheartedly for taking care of my interests. The police authorities in Vienna will be taking further steps on my behalf. In the Vienna Staatstheater *Friederike* is currently in preparation. Once again my most heartfelt thanks for your support.

Heil Hitler!

Yours very sincerely,
(sgd) Franz Lehár.

[59]

A final letter from Hinkel to the 'very honoured Master' at Bad Ischl was dated 8 January 1945:

Accept for the new decisive year my heartiest wishes for your prosperity and your creativity. My wife (the 'Angele' *in over 80 performances* of your *Graf von Luxemburg* at the Berlin Metropol Theater about four years ago) likewise sends greetings in honour of your work.

Heil Hitler!

(sgd) Hinkel.

[60]

In 1949, after Lehár's death, there was an aftermath to the Guttmann blackmail episode when substantial claims for damages were made against the composer's estate by Dr Eitelberg's brother Cornelius and by Dr Samuely's widow. The claims failed on a technicality, for they were lodged with the courts in Vienna, and Lehár had spent much of his last

[59] From 'Kulturspiegel', *National-Zeitung*, - details as note [42]; also in Frey, 'Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.', p. 338.

[60] From 'Kulturspiegel', *National-Zeitung*, - details as note [42].

days in Switzerland, immune from Austrian jurisdiction.

As friends Hinkel and Lehár certainly made an odd couple: on the one hand the ambitious Nazi functionary who clearly enjoyed the celebrity of association with an artistic milieu to which he could not otherwise aspire; on the other, an elderly leading figure in light music, no doubt looked upon as a vulnerable relic of Viennese 'fin-de-siècle' decadence, reliant upon a powerful representative of a system to which he could not belong. For Lehár, however much he may have admired Hitler in the early years of Nazism, was not a member of the Nazi party nor (even assuming that he wished to join) could he ever have been. Nor could he have held any post within the Reichsmusikkammer. The reason for his exclusion was his Jewish wife. (For this reason Eduard Künneke lost his position within the Reichsmusikkammer as well as his Nazi party membership). [61]

Yet even the support of a well placed contact such as Hinkel could not obviate the need for caution in the day-to-day existence of the Lehárs for there was always the risk of danger to Sophie in particular. In Vienna she was hounded by Jew-hating Nazis. In Bad Ischl she only narrowly escaped arrest by the Gestapo when Lehár was able to intervene by contacting the local Gauleiter; this incident was described by Lehár in a statement dated 14 March 1947 quoted originally by Grun. [62]

[61] Drewniak, *Das Theater im NS-Staat*, p. 164.

[62] Grun, *Gold and Silver*, p. 267.

Despite the risks Lehár was never tempted to leave Austria. Granted he had his business interests there, and he could surely have afforded the 'Reichsfluchtsdole' (the tax imposed on would-be emigrants), but he had a deep-seated and genuine love of his homeland. Even when he had been offered a guaranteed \$1000 a week by a representative of the Columbia Broadcasting Corporation he still refused to leave. [63]

In 1940 the occasion of Lehár's 70th birthday became an opportunity for political manoeuvring in the interests of the composer. A flurry of activity within Nazi circles was triggered by news that the municipal authorities of Ödenburg (the Hungarian border town of Sopron) intended to confer the freedom of the city on Hungary's popular composer. The second-in-command in the Propaganda Ministry, Leopold Gutterer, sent a hastily written note to the Reichsminister announcing that

The Magyars are engaged in a fierce struggle to prove that Lehár is a Magyar and that he is a world famous composer producing Magyar music.

As Sopron had been traditionally regarded as disputed territory by both Austria and Hungary the planned award was in effect a political statement by the Hungarians. Gutterer concluded:

We owe it to ourselves and to our people not to allow a composer such as Lehár, who acknowledges his German-ness ("der sich zum Deutschtum bekennt") and whose operettas are held in such high regard by the Führer, to be

[63] Robert Stolz, *Die ganze Welt ist himmelblau*, ed Bakshian (Bergisch Gladbach, 1986), p. 331.

released without a struggle into the hands of inferior
Magyars. [64]

Goebbels, knowing that Lehár did not admit to his German-ness at all, was reluctant to do anything other than allow Lehár the title of Professor.

Then just three days before the composer's birthday there was a press statement issued from Berlin:

Press release no. II/297/40 of 27 April 1940 from the Reich Propaganda Office Berlin.

In recognition of the 70th birthday of Lehár on 30.4.40 a special honour is to be bestowed on him. (The following details are intended for editorial information and not for publication). As the Hungarians claim him as one of their own on account of Lehár's Hungarian nationality but he is in fact of German extraction, he should be referred to in the press not as the 'Hungarian' composer Lehár but as the Master of German operetta. All polemics in respect of Lehar's music and person are of course undesirable.

To:

A I,
B I,
D I.

By order
Wittenberg
Press officer

Stamp:
Reich Propaganda
Office Berlin.

[65]

For his birthday Lehár was awarded the Ring of Honour by the city authorities of Vienna. Perhaps perversely, when one considers how some considered *Friederike* as an insult to Germany's national poet, Hitler sent him the Goethe Medal. [66] The silver 'Goethe-Medaille für Kunst und

[64] Drewniak, *Das Theater im NS-Staat*, p. 337.

[65] Marcel Prawy, *Die Wiener Oper* (Vienna, Munich, Zurich, 1969), p.159.

[66] Grun, *Gold and Silver*, p. 266.

Wissenschaft', instituted in 1932, was now traditionally conferred in recognition of a lifetime of achievement in the arts and sciences. Besides Lehár there were two other recipients in 1940, Carl August Froelich and Hanns Johst. [67]

Awards and titles were favoured forms of recognition among the cultural and academic elite of the Nazi empire. In 1936 Goebbels had invented the honorific title of 'Reichskultursenator' for those whom he judged to represent the best in German culture. Institutions with which these 'senators of culture' were associated could bask in their reflected glory. Senatorial privileges included priority booking of the best seats in theatres, opera houses, cinemas and concert halls. Among these Senators were Wilhelm Furtwängler, Karl Böhm, Heinrich Schlusnus, Hans Pfitzner, Benno von Arendt, and Hans Hinkel. Richard Strauss and Franz Lehár were nominated but for some reason their names were deleted. [68]

Non-inclusion on the Senators' list was one of the very few things that Strauss and Lehár had in common. Strauss despised Lehár, and many of Strauss's friends and associates were careful to echo his loathing in correspondence with him. In a letter dated 20 July 1928 Hugo von

[67] Carl August Froelich (1875-1953), film director, had been appointed president of the Reichsfilmkammer by Goebbels in 1939. His achievements included *Mädchen in Uniform* (1931). Hanns Johst (1890-1978), dramatist and writer, was the author of the 1932 play *Schlageter*, dedicated to Hitler, one of the most performed works during the Nazi era.

[68] Drewniak, *Das Theater im NS-Staat*, p. 158.

Hofmannsthal reminded Strauss of a comment he had once made, when he claimed that “in a couple of bars by me there’s just more music than in the whole of one Lehár operetta” (“in ein paar Takten von mir liegt eben mehr Musik als in einer ganzen Leharschen Operette”). [69]

Strauss looked upon operetta composers as “musical cheats and poisoners of the people”. [70] His jaundiced opinion is illustrated by an anecdote told by Hans-Severus Ziegler, organiser of the Exhibition of Degenerate Music (‘Entartete Musik’), in 1938:

It was a few weeks after the Exhibition when Richard Strauss came to Weimar - for rehearsals, I believe, or to play skat. He invited me among others into the hotel, the *Erbprinz*, together with my MD Paul Sixt, and said he thought we had forgotten to have in the Dusseldorf exhibition the complete works of Franz Lehár (!!) - and that they were the degeneracy of operetta!! (whereupon he laughed, half savagely, half jestingly) - with the addition of the four Jews in his *Salome* singing in a purely atonal style. We felt a good and very warm kinship for Maestro Strauss, though we recognized his weaknesses. Between ourselves, he had never been able to forgive Lehár his *Lustige Witwe* which came out at the same time as *Rosenkavalier* and was of course a commercial success. [71]

In February 1942 Strauss attempted to take a stand on behalf of serious music (‘Ernste Musik’) before Goebbels who had summoned him to a meeting to challenge the composer’s opinions of the workings of the

[69] Willi Schuh (ed), *Richard Strauss / Hugo von Hofmannsthal – Briefwechsel* (Munich and Mainz, 1990), p. 650.

[70] Rathkolb, *Führertreu und Gottbegnadet*, p. 184.

[71] Fred K. Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat* (Frankfurt, 1982), p. 212.

performing right society, STAGMA. The composer Werner Egk had been ordered to attend in support of Strauss. It was unlikely to be a meeting of like minds. Goebbels considered Strauss to be “immoderate, senile and obstinate.” [72] Strauss thought of Goebbels as no more than “a little squirt of a minister.” [73]

And so it proved. After berating Strauss for daring to suggest in a letter to Leo Ritter, the head of STAGMA, that Goebbels should not be meddling in matters of performing right shares, the Minister screamed, “Be silent, and take note that you have no idea who you are and who I am!”

The harangue went on. “Furthermore, I hear that you referred to Lehár as a street musician! I have the power to launch reports of your insolence throughout the world press! Are you aware what will happen then? Lehár has the masses, you don’t! Put a stop once and for all to this piffle about the meaning of ‘serious music’! You’ll not improve your creditworthiness with it! Tomorrow’s culture is different from yesterday’s! You, Herr Strauss, belong to yesterday!” [74]

Turning to Egk, who had once casually discussed STAGMA over dinner in a Munich hotel, Goebbels advised him to beware of taking part in

[72] Rathkolb, *Führertreu und Gottbegnadet*, p. 189.

[73] Grun, *Gold and Silver*, p. 262.

[74] Translated from Werner Egk, *Die Zeit wartet nicht* (Percha am Starnberger See), 1973), pp. 342-343.

forbidden gatherings. In a state of some shock the two composers were shown the door, Strauss, as Egk recalls, tearfully wishing he had taken his wife's advice and stayed in Garmisch.

Serious as this particular instance of reprobation was, Strauss still had some status. There was another Nazi list, the so-called Endowed by God ('Die Gottbegnadete Liste'), also referred to as the List of the Heavenly Ones ('Die Liste der Himmlischen'), which was headed by Strauss, Pfitzner and Furtwängler. These were musicians, writers and artists whose names Goebbels had decreed should be immortalised as leading figures in Reich culture. Lehár's name, in spite of his popularity with Hitler, was not included. [75]

Lehár could not be ranked among the Heavenly Ones, yet he remained an invaluable asset to the Nazis because of his mass appeal. While some careers faltered and struggled, his continued to thrive. At the end of December 1940 he went to Paris for a conducting engagement lasting several weeks. During this season he volunteered his services as military bandmaster to entertain the troops. An official report stated that

Under the personal direction of Franz Lehár five army bands gave a Viennese Evening for our soldiers. ... The rapturous applause that swept towards him, as Old Master Lehár himself said, was the finest reward that he could receive for

[75] For the names of the 'Gottbegnadeten' see Alan Jefferson, *Elisabeth Schwarzkopf* (London, 1996), pp. 259-260.

this concert, demonstrating that he had provided some hours of joy for our brave German soldiers. [76]

This certainly seems to suggest that Lehár, voluntarily or otherwise, was acting as a puppet for the German propaganda machine. Furthermore, he had to work even though (as sympathisers abroad were beginning to realize) he was much too old for exhausting tours. [77]

In January 1941 a newsreel film showing Lehár's arrival in Paris clearly indicated that he was there as a guest of honour representing German music and serving as a flagbearer for prestigious events expected there later. These included visits from the Mannheim Oper in March with *Die Walküre*, the Berlin Staatsoper in May with *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and *Tristan und Isolde*, and in September Charlottenburg Oper's *Die Fledermaus*, designed by Benno von Arent, starring Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Margaret Slezak. [78]

Throughout the Nazi era there were question marks over the political and cultural acceptability of several of Lehár's works. Mussolini was insulted by a storyline in *Giuditta* about a deserting Italian soldier. *Das Land des Lächelns* was a potential embarrassment with its mixed-race marriage

[76] Stan Czech, *Schön ist die Welt: Franz Lehárs Leben und Werk* (Berlin, 1957), p. 285.

[77] Alma Mahler-Werfel, *And the bridge is love* (London, 1958), p. 252; Alma Mahler-Werfel, *Mein Leben* (Frankfurt a.M.), p. 277.

[78] Drewniak, *Das Theater im NS-Staat*, p. 114.

scenario. Lehár had approached one bureaucrat, described as the 'Leiter des Generalreferates für das Staatstheater in Wien' ('Head of the general section for the State Theatre in Vienna'), to persuade him to have these works accepted by the Staatsoper, but his arguments had fallen upon deaf ears. [79] After some consideration *Das Land des Lächelns* was reinstated in honour of Lehár's seventieth birthday in 1940.

Except for one private performance for Goebbels in September 1940 a ban on *Friederike* was not lifted until 1944. [80] *Der Rastelbinder* with its Jewish characters was a surprisingly acceptable work, albeit subject to some adaptation. [81] Two works which remained untroubled by political considerations were *Der Zarewitsch* and *Die lustige Witwe*.

A new production of *Die lustige Witwe* was staged at the Salzburg Festival in 1940. A feature of performances of *Die lustige Witwe* from 1940 onwards was an overture composed by Lehár and first performed on his seventieth birthday. Scored on a grand scale the overture bore a dedication 'to the city of Vienna', though it is tacitly understood by some that the intended dedicatee may have been Hitler. [82]

[79] Czech, *Schön ist die Welt*, pp. 287-289.

[80] Frey, 'Was sagt Ihr zu diesem Erfolg.', p. 333.

[81] Frey, 'Was sagt Ihr zu diesem Erfolg.', p. 334.

[82] This at least was an opinion suggested by some in the London office of Lehár's publisher. The inferred association with Hitler has resulted in a tendency to recommend the Stolz overture to *Die lustige Witwe*.

The one known instance of a dedication to Hitler is a signed manuscript copy of the waltz duet 'Lippen schweigen' from *Die lustige Witwe* inserted in a booklet celebrating the fiftieth performance of the operetta on 17 February 1906. Hitler had attended that performance but did not possess a copy of the souvenir programme. Walter Funk had asked Lehár if he had one. Lehár admitted that he had, whereupon Funk advised him to give it to Hitler as a birthday present after first getting it bound in red morocco leather and decorated with a silver swastika. How willing Lehár was to provide such a collectable gift is not recorded, though he claimed afterwards that the illustration on the booklet's title page (showing Jewish singer Louis Treumann as Danilo) indicated "how *inexperienced*" he was at the time ("wie *unerfahren* ich damals war"). [83]

The discovery of this gift during a search of Hitler's mountain residence, the Berghof near Berchtesgaden, has embarrassed Lehár's supporters. How significant this booklet is among the myriad gifts, letters of thanks, congratulatory telegrams, and so on from the cultural and artistic community is debatable. Nevertheless, as one commentator has observed, "the lack of principle displayed by the majority of actors and directors in the Third Reich" (to whom one might add musicians such as singer Käthe

[83] Grun, *Gold und Silber*, p. 284. In the English version - Grun, *Gold and Silver*, p. 260 - the word 'inexperienced' is not italicised.

Dorsch and piano recitalist Edwin Fischer) “is staggering.” [84]

As the German army consolidated its occupation of eastern Europe there was an increasing need for uplifting or escapist entertainment. So confident were the occupying authorities that new subsidised theatres were constructed. On 12 September 1941 there was the official opening of the twin theatres of Katowice and Chorzów (known by their German names of Kattowitz and Königshütte): the thousand-seater playhouse opened with Schiller’s *Maria Stuart* while the 700-seater opera house opened with Wagner’s *Lohengrin* and Lehár’s *Der Zarewitsch*. [85]

For the troops stationed along the eastern front the Volga song from *Der Zarewitsch* (‘Es steht ein Soldat am Wolgastrand’), with its themes of isolation and duty to the fatherland, was to become a personal and poignant anthem. [86] Indicative of the song’s importance is a fan-mail telegram for Lehár dispatched from the Volga front by one Oberleutnant Petzold on 30 January 1943:

To the sounds of the song ‘Es steht ein Soldat am Wolgastrand’ echoing from the diaphragm of a gramophone donated for the eastern front we allow ourselves to

[84] Drewniak, *Das Theater im NS-Staat*, p. 147.

[85] Drewniak, *Das Theater im NS-Staat*, p. 98.

[86] This is borne out by personal testimony in conversation with the author of the present thesis. Mrs Lore Griffin of Radcliffe on Trent was born in Germany and lived there throughout the Nazi era until just after the war when she married an English serviceman. When playing a Rudolf Schock recording of the song she remarked upon its significance.

express a desire to ask you, highly respected Master, to send us a picture of yourself with dedication. We will accord the picture a place of honour in our Volga bunker. [87]

Another theatre opening took place on 11 October 1941 at Cracow (Krakau), this time with *Das Land des Lächelns*. Performances of Lehár operettas thrived likewise in the occupied Baltic territories. [88] In 1942 the prospect of a radio broadcast of his *Paganini* inspired Lehár to send the following telegram:

Would be very happy if you would listen to the Paganini radio broadcast on 4 July 20.15 – 22.00. Taking part under the direction of my baton are singers of the Staatsoper.

The invitation was addressed to the Nazi hierarchy of Hitler, Goebbels and Funk as well as to the most prominent and approved representatives of German culture, civic leaders, and civil servants. [89]

Throughout the Nazi era Lehár “remained the most performed operetta composer” in theatre and radio. [90] Indeed his popularity had not diminished in any way as the need for escapism during the war years was as strong as it had been during the inter-war years of economic and

[87] Lehár Archive, Stadtamt, Bad Ischl.

[88] Drewniak, *Das Theater im NS-Staat*, pp. 106 and 137.

[89] The original list of recipients is among the papers in the Lehár Archive, Stadtamt, Bad Ischl. A slightly reduced photocopy is appended at the end of the present chapter

[90] Frey, ‘*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*’, p. 317.

political depression. [91]

There was nowhere as grimly in need of escapism as the concentration camps where so many of Lehár's theatrical and musical colleagues were interned. The vast camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where librettist Fritz Löhner-Beda met his death, had a celebrated women's orchestra led by Alma Rosé (1906 – 1944), a virtuoso violinist whom Lehár had himself heard play at Bad Ischl when she was only fifteen. [92] The women's orchestra had a repertoire encompassing standard popular classics by Austrian composers, selections from well known Italian operas, and "arias and medleys ... drawn from *The Merry Widow*, *The Land of Smiles*, *The Gypsy Princess*, and *White Horse Inn*." [93]

Lehár had one last stage work to compose during the Second World War. *Garabonciás* began as a reworking of the *Zigeunerliebe* libretto but it became a total revision, in effect a transformation from the Viennese operetta style with its emphasis on music, song and dialogue, to the Hungarian through-composed style with its emphasis on music, song, and dance. The new libretto was in Hungarian, and the first performance of *Garabonciás* was on 20 February 1943 in Budapest.

[91] George Clare, *Last waltz in Vienna: the destruction of a family 1842-1942* (London, 1982), p. 119.

[92] Richard Newman with Karen Kirtley, *Alma Rosé, Vienna to Auschwitz* (Portland, 2000), p. 50.

[93] Newman with Kirtley, *Alma Rosé*, p. 263.

Lehár was immensely proud of this work, and in a letter to his brother Anton he expressed his confident belief “that *Garabonciás* is my best work; the libretto is magnificent.” [94] Lehár’s last composition was a piece of dance music from *Garabonciás*, the ‘Feentanz’ (‘Fairy dance’) which he completed on 16 January 1943 in a cold Budapest apartment. Working on *Garabonciás* had seriously undermined his health. Soon after the premiere he was complaining of severe kidney pains. He returned to Vienna and thence to Bad Ischl where poor health kept him confined to his villa for virtually all of the next two years.

By January 1944 he was sufficiently recovered to be able to spend a few moments each day at the piano, but it was a grimly depressing time as news of the fate of his Jewish colleagues and their families reached the Lehárs in Bad Ischl. These not only included librettists but also some principal artists, such as Louis Treumann, the first Danilo in *Die lustige Witwe*, who perished at Theresienstadt on 5 March 1943. [95]

A later Danilo, Johannes Heesters, provided a brief respite from the ghastly realities of the time when he visited the Lehárs on 30 March 1945 and received a treasured souvenir, an autographed photograph of Lehár dedicated “to my dear friend, the *truly* best Danilo” (“meinem lieben

[94] Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ...* , p. 195.

[95] Frey, ‘*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*’, p. 322.

Freund, dem *wirklich* besten Danilo”). [96] On 6 May 1945 Lehár was well enough to entertain some of the first American GIs to arrive in Bad Ischl.

In the immediate aftermath of the war and the fall of the Nazi regime there was, as Grun depicts vividly in his biography of another composer, an uneasy atmosphere in Bad Ischl as its inhabitants tried to come to terms with the past. When Oscar Straus returned there he

noticed people greeting him with a respect which sometimes seemed to suggest a guilty conscience. It was well known that nobody had been ‘really a Nazi’, everyone had more or less valid excuses for what they had or had not done in 1938. [97]

The feeling of suspicion that Straus detected among his neighbours in Bad Ischl has hung as a cloud over Lehár’s reputation ever since the war.

While history may rightly praise Robert Stolz (1880 – 1975) for smuggling Jewish musicians out of Germany during the early years of Nazism a sense of outrage by some, even outright condemnation, has been heaped upon Lehár because he not only stayed on in Austria throughout the Nazi era but also, they allege, “declined to use his influence on Hitler ... to secure freedom for his main librettist Dr Fritz Löhner-Beda.” [98]

[96] Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ...* , p. 197.

[97] Bernard Grun, *Prince of Vienna: the life, the times and the melodies of Oscar Straus* (London, 1955), pp. 193-194.

[98] Peter Gradenwitz, *The music of Israel, from the Biblical era to modern times*, 2nd ed. (Portland, 1996), p. 318.

Löhner was one of many Jewish librettists to work with Lehár, important in his own right but certainly not (in numerical terms) the main one. His work (as will be discussed later) demonstrated more of a conventional Jewish character and feeling, and so it is understandable that his loss should have been keenly felt by Jewish traditionalists. Yet to compare Lehár with Stolz is to overlook the cardinal differences between the two, such as age (Stolz being ten years younger) and personal circumstances (Lehár's marriage to a Jew), not to mention opportunity.

At the time of the threatened boycotting of his works by the Nazis in 1933 Lehár had portrayed himself as an apolitical person, as an artist who cared more for his art. Yet in 1942 he was making a political statement of sorts through his art in the writing of *Garabonciás*, a large-scale affirmation of Hungarian identity by the so-called "master of German operetta." For a work on this scale to have been written by a septuagenarian in poor health and in such difficult times is remarkable, particularly when one considers what Lehár wrote in 1946 in his *Bekenntnis* ('Confession'):

As for the creation of new works, however, that requires inspiration. You have to forget the world around you. That of course is just about impossible at the present time.

[‘Um aber neue Werke zu schaffen, dazu gehört Begeisterung. Man muss die Welt um sich vergessen. Das ist natürlich in der jetzigen Zeit fast unmöglich.’] [99]

[99] Franz Lehár, *Bekenntnis* (Zurich, 1946).

It has been suggested that Lehár's limited output after the Anschluss was a retirement after the manner of Rossini. [100] The political situation may have affected the inspirational process, but the only deep-seated sentiment that Lehár admitted to was not political but artistic disenchantment. He was aggrieved by 'improvements' imposed on his operettas by American directors. [101] Perhaps a very cogent reason for Lehár's staying in Austria was that at least there his works were still performed with a respect for style and authenticity that they would not receive elsewhere. With regard to Lehár's politics - his thoughts on Hitler and the Nazi regime - there is no documentary evidence to corroborate the claim by Peter Herz that he was an uncritical admirer of the Führer. The correspondence with Hinkel bears the 'Hitlergruss' (the 'Heil Hitler' greeting), but there is nothing to show whether this was motivated by devotion or diplomacy. When discussing 'holier than thou' attitudes towards Lehár with Max Schönherr, Andrew Lamb finally concluded that "anybody who did not live through those times should hesitate to pronounce judgement on the actions of those who did." [102]

The adulation of the Nazis for Lehár can be explained by his usefulness

[100] Stefan Frey, *Franz Lehár oder das schlechte Gewissen der leichten Musik* (Tübingen, 1995), p. 144.

[101] Lehár, *Bekenntnis*, p. 6.

[102] Andrew Lamb, in correspondence with the present author, letter dated 18 February 1998.

for them, whereas the ‘serious music’ establishment had nothing much to offer to the Nazi cause beyond historical prestige. The attitude of the ‘serious music’ establishment seems to have been motivated by envy, personal dislike, or political anti-semitism because of his association with Jews. Only a year before Lehár was to be deemed the “master of German operetta” Furtwängler had declared that

Lehár has as little meaning for Germany as Schönberg.
Both are parts of a whole, and Lehár certainly
corresponds to a real, if primitive, need ... [103]

Furtwängler’s attitude may at least in part be personally motivated by the recollection of his conducting *Die lustige Witwe* which was not one of his most outstanding achievements for

At one performance he was so preoccupied that he
missed a musical cue, and the tenor had to come to the
edge of the stage and shout at him to bring him back to
the world of Lehár. [104]

At least Richard Strauss was prepared to change his mind about Lehár when he admitted, “I was unjust to Lehár.” [105] Perhaps it is time to reassess the contentious subject of Lehár in the Nazi era, and at least accept that in the absence of firm evidence any verdict must remain open.

[103] Wilhelm Furtwängler, *Notebooks 1924-54*, tr Shaun Whiteside, ed Michael Tanner (London, 1995), p. 104.

[104] John Ardoin, *The Furtwängler record* (Portland, 1994), p. 24.

[105] Michael Kennedy, *Richard Strauss, man, musician, enigma* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 283.

39

for for

An den Führer- Berlin

Hauptpersonen: Kille und Kalkthausen 47 Berlin
 & Kerner des Mannichs 17 Wien 78 110
 Grosse Weidinger Edelweiss Berlin 5
 & N. Ring Aufgebundene 19 Berlin

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The Lehár / Peteani correspondence

The first visit to the Lehár Villa by the present author was made one summer when the building was not officially open as some renovation work was being undertaken. However, an elderly housekeeper kindly offered access to the hall and the exhibits. Among the available souvenirs was the Lehár biography by Maria von Peteani which, the lady was keen to point out, was the best. Bad Ischl, she explained further, had been home to several famous operetta composers but, she maintained, “Lehár was the master!” (“Lehár war der Meister!”).

The word ‘Meister’ is indicative of the veneration and adoration which Lehár inspired. In the correspondence that eventually led to her writing what has become the ‘official’ biography, Maria von Peteani used the word frequently in combinations such as ‘Lieber verehrter Meister’ (‘Dear revered master’) which occurs three times, ‘Verehrter Meister’ (‘Revered master’) another three times, and ‘Geliebter Meister’ (‘Beloved master’) twice. Sometimes she addressed Lehár as ‘Verehrtester’ (‘Most revered one’), and once as ‘Lieber goldiger Meister’ (‘Dear sweet master’).

She signed off her letters in either a casual friendly way, offering him and his sister ‘a thousand greetings’, or in a more intimately affectionate manner, with ‘Nun gute Nacht, du lieber!’ (‘Now good night, you

darling!') or even 'Inniges Bussi' ('Fond kiss').

Since the death of her husband she had been living in Linz at her parents' address, Mozartstrasse 26. This remained her base during the 1940s when her writing career was terminated on account of her part-Jewish ancestry. After her death there on 28 July 1960 her most important personal papers were bequeathed to the city archive. These include thirteen copies of letters to Lehár dating from 9 November 1947 to 21 September 1948, just before the composer's death. In addition there are four questionnaires which she prepared for Lehár to fill in to provide information for her biography. Three of these contain Lehár's handwritten replies to her questions.

There are thirty-one items documenting communication from Lehár to Peteani in the form of brief notes, messages on postcards, handwritten letters, and telegrams. Among the earliest items is a programme dated 4 August 1915 for three concerts at Bad Ischl - two daytime events and a Lehár Evening presented by the Kurorchester (spa orchestra). The programme is autographed by Lehár.

Additionally there is a letter from Vienna publisher Bernhard Herzmannsky to Lehár, a handwritten letter from Lehár to his sister about *Garabonciás*, and a typewritten letter from Lehár to an unidentified male friend. Also in the collection is a typewritten letter to Lehár, couched in the same adoring terms as the Peteani correspondence, from a lady in Vienna who identifies herself only as Erika.

The earliest items of correspondence from Lehár to Peteani date from 1914 and are addressed to her in the very formal style, befitting her status as widow of an aristocrat, beginning 'Verehrte gnädige Frau' or 'Geehrte gnädige Frau' which, though equivalent to 'Dear Madam', are more literally (though not necessarily acceptably) translatable as 'Revered gracious lady' and 'Honoured gracious lady'. He signs off with the standard formal 'Ihr ergebener' or 'Innigst Ihr sehr ergebener'.

The first of these is a postcard addressed to Mizzi von Peteani, Linz an der Donau, Mozartgasse, and dated 12 February 1914 which Lehár, in his characteristic manner of recording dates numerically, writes as 12/2 914.

Evidently replying to an invitation he writes:

Dear Madam,
Do not be cross with me for not replying before now.
There are over 5,000 unanswered letters lying around at home. I am at my wit's end. Besides which I have been ill. I am better now. Tomorrow I am going to Budapest. It was hardly possible for me to get to Linz at this time. The question of my coming to Linz is not to be ruled out for I would very much look forward to being able to surprise you and your dear lady friend.
Yours faithfully,
Lehár.

On 3 October 1914 Lehár sent a brief note to an unnamed lady (Peteani?):

Dear Madam,
Do not be cross with me for not replying before now.
My brother is in the sanatorium, very seriously wounded.
That explains everything! - -
Yours most sincerely,
Lehár.
Regards to your Mama!

This note at least provides confirmation, if any were needed, that Anton Lehář had been wounded in 1914.

The next item in date order is the autographed programme of August 1915 which may have been kept as a souvenir of a first face-to-face meeting between the composer and his future biographer.

There is just one item dating from the inter-war years, a letter from Lehář to an unnamed lady (again Peteani?):

Franz Lehář
Bad Ischl
Rudolfskai no 6

12/8 923

-
Telephone 84

-
Dear Madam,
It is definitely convenient, Director Heininger is in Ischl on Tuesday evening which is when I shall hand him the letter in person forthwith. I trust that he will keep his word and that he will indeed come. At any rate he did stay on just for today but he will be wanting to speak to me on Tuesday and I shall be at home.

Warmest regards to you and your esteemed Mama,
Yours sincerely,
Lehář.

As there is no mention of Heininger in any of the Lehář literature the subject matter of this letter must remain unexplained.

Until further evidence comes to light it is impossible to judge how much contact was maintained between Lehář and Peteani in the course of the next two decades. That some contact may have been made is indicated by the mention of an article by her, bearing the title 'Ein Sommerabend bei

Lehár' ('A summer evening at home with Lehár'), which appeared in the Linz *Tagespost* on 19 September 1928. [1]

The next three letters belong to the year 1946. In these and in subsequent correspondence the reader is challenged by the deteriorating handwriting of a septuagenarian in poor health. Furthermore, the writing is in the old German or Gothic cursive style which of course Lehár had grown up with (and which incidentally Hitler had actively promoted as part of Nazi educational policy). The decipherment of some of Lehár's cacography is at best difficult, occasionally dubious, sometimes impossible. [2]

This part of the correspondence begins with a letter from Zurich on 14 February 1946:

My highly esteemed dear friend,
I await with some tension your article which I suppose appeared some time ago. If it should still be illegal to post newspapers into Switzerland just send me the article as a normal letter. I am getting better now but slowly. I am not yet able to work on anything here. These past 7 years have not gone by without leaving their mark.

Most affectionately,

Yours truly,

Franz Lehár.

[1] Max Schönherr, *Franz Lehár: Bibliographie zu Leben und Werk* (Vienna, 1970), p. 20.

[2] The decipherment was initially undertaken by Mrs Lore Griffin from photocopies of the correspondence; as there were many dubious areas left the task was assigned to Norbert Kriechbaum who studied the originals in Linz. Some words still remain doubtful, but all significant sections are clear. Translation was undertaken throughout by the present author.

While there was a certain informality in tone throughout this letter it should be noted that he still addresses her as 'Sie', the polite form of the word for 'you'. Soon afterwards he sent her this telegram:

NACH JAHRELANGER FREUNDSCHAFT DARF
ICH DIR WOHL DAS DU WORT ANBIETEN
UM DIR BESSER DANKEN ZU KOENNEN
FUER DEN SCHOENEN SEELENVOLLEN
ARTIKEL UND FUER DIE GLUECKWUENSCHEN
ALLERHERZLICHST= FRANZ LEHAR

[After yearlong friendship may I, I wonder, offer you the Du word in order to be able to thank you better for the lovely soulful article and for your felicitations. Most affectionately, Franz Lehár]

The date stamp on the telegram reads '20. Ma...', probably indicating May if the "felicitations" were a birthday greeting. The 'du' form of address gave Maria von Peteani the status of an intimate and trusted friend.

Another telegram, sent on 21 September, refers to the article which she has just had published:

LIEBE MARIA BITTE DICH WENN MOEGLICH
POSTWENDENDE ZUSENDUNG VON DREI
EXEMPLAREN DER ZEITUNG WO DEIN
ENTZUECKENDER ARTIKEL UEBER MICH
STEHT= HERZLICHST FRANZ LEHAR

[Dear Maria, (I) ask you if possible to forward by return three copies of the newspaper which contains your charming article about me. Affectionately, Franz Lehár.]

The article (unlocated for the present, not being listed in the Schönherr *Bibliographie*) was promptly sent, to the evident delight of Lehár. Just

days afterwards the second of the 1946 letters followed with the promise of 'ein Liebespaket' (literally 'love package', in other words, some special personal gift):

Zurich, 29/9 1946

Dearest Maria!

Thank you most warmly for dispatching the 3 copies. I am sending you a gift package and hope that it will soon be in your hands.

Most affectionately yours,

Franz.

Yet not everything that Lehář was to read in newspapers that year was to bring as much pleasure as the Peteani article. On 28 November 1946 an anonymous article, 'Die Schweiz und der Fall Lehář' ('Switzerland and the Lehář case'), revealed details of the correspondence from Lehář to Hinkel. It was published in Vienna's *Die Weltpresse*, a newspaper edited by the British news service in Austria.

Shocked and distraught, Lehář hastily scribbled a letter to his "dearest friend" on 6 December:

In haste!

Dearest friend!

Perhaps you have been reading in *Die Weltpresse* that foul article about me. I should not like you to form a poor opinion of me. That is why I enclose for you a copy of [?] letters of my lawyer at that time.

My wife was not aryanised.

Go and show the letter to Fraulein Wozta.

Most affectionately

Yours truly,

Franz.

The article had clearly touched a nerve, but it is of interest to note that his chief concern was for his wife. ('Meine Frau ist nicht arisiert worden').

The underlined 'nicht' ('not') underlines the hurt he was feeling on Sophie's behalf.

Peteani's reply is not among the papers, but to judge from later letters it may be safe to assume that her response was supportive. Publication of parts of the Hinkel correspondence may have provided the incentive for a Lehár biography over which Lehár himself could have some control. If Peteani was to be the biographer, as Sophie Lehár intended, Lehár needed to know that he could trust her. The correspondence of 1947 shows a clear development of intimacy and trust.

In response to a 'Liebesbrief' ('love letter') from Peteani in the summer of 1947 Lehár penned the following quirky letter:

Stamped: Military Censorship
2741
Civil Mails

In haste! 1/9 47
Dearest Maria!
If you are going to write me such a nice love letter
you are going to receive from me in return a really
genuine folk remedy: 'Flea-wort'.
First thing in the morning you pour a tablespoonful
into some water, leave it to stand for the whole
day, and take it in the evening.
You are a dear sweet child and the main thing is
that you should get better and not have a painful
lapse of that sort.
Most affectionately yours,
Franz.

Until further explanation is forthcoming the “schmerzhaften Fehltritt” (“painful lapse”) must remain a mystery. The light-hearted nature of the letter shows a genial sense of humour as well as some knowledge of traditional herbal treatments. [3]

The joyful mood was short-lived, for on 3 September 1947 he sent a telegram with the starkest of messages:

MEINE LIEBE FRAU IST GESTORBEN=
FRANZ LEHAR

[My dear wife has died. Franz Lehár]

It would appear that by now Maria von Peteani had agreed to write the composer’s biography, a task important to Lehár in the wake of the Hinkel revelations, the grief over his wife’s death, and an awareness of his own mortality as his health declined.

Towards the end of October he wrote:

Franz Lehár	Stamped: Military Censorship
Baur au Lac	2734
Zurich	Civil Mails
3.00 morning	25/10 1947

Dear friend,
Do not be cross with me for not getting in touch.
I am still unable to stay calm all the time.
I am dreadfully unhappy and not capable of anything.
We will have to postpone the biography business to a later moment in time. I am absolutely

[3] Flea-wort (*plantago psyllium*) is commonly used in modern herbalism as a laxative and for the treatment of colitis and irritable bowel syndrome.

delighted that you are taking on the task. I shall place myself entirely at your disposal. Just now I am really ill, both in body and soul.

Most sincerely yours,
Lehár.

The letters from Peteani to Lehár show her as an uncritical and adoring fan. It may be cynical to think that Lehár needed someone to launder his reputation, or at least to depict him in the best possible light. For the task in hand this sometime writer of light fiction could hardly be bettered. [4]

In November she sent her reply:

Maria v. Peteani
Linz a.D.
Mozartstrasse 26

Linz 9 November 1947
telephone: 25-43-54

Dear revered master!

A thousand thanks for your letter which moved me deeply.

It was an error of judgement on my part to believe that the biography business could charitably distract you at this time. I should have known that after such serious shocks one's spiritual and even more so one's physical powers are wont to fail.

I of all people should have considered it, my life being one uncommonly afflicted by strokes of fate; all those dear to me I lost when young, and since my 25th year I have been scrapping against all adversity, alone and *smiling*.

Now, as you know, dear friend, what's delayed can still be made.

In the meantime I have been plunging again into my novel-writing labours which, owing to the present boom

[4] Peteani's fictional writings include the following: *Susanne* (1934), *Der unbekannte Freund* (1937), *Frauen im Sturm* (1946), *Alexanderstrasse 66* (1950), *Junger Herr aus Wien* (1952). Her post-war titles were published by Ibis-Verlag. Her last novel, *Der Page vom Dalmassa-Hotel*, was published posthumously in 1961.

in the Austrian book trade, are growing into veritable mountains.

Notwithstanding that, whenever you need me I shall be at your disposal.

That's all for today, together with my heartfelt wishes for your recovery.

Lehár was in better spirits in February 1948 when helping her to prepare her researches. The following letter was written on black-bordered notepaper:

Franz Lehár
Baur au Lac
Zurich

9/2 48

Dearest Maria,
For safety's sake I am giving you details again of my brother's address: Major-General Anton Baron Lehár, Vienna XIII, Kopfgasse 9, tele. R37556.

I am glad you have found a solution, for my brother has much more material at hand than I had ever imagined.

Naturally we will also have a think then about a properly drafted contract. It can then be translated into other languages too.

Dr Otto Blau, Glockenverlag Ltd.,
33 Crawford Street, London W1
is my London representative. He will sort everything out.

Most affectionately yours,
Franz.

This letter and a telephone call inspired the next letter from Maria:

Maria v. Peteani
Linz, Donau
Mozartstrasse 26.

Linz, 10 February 1948
tel: 25-43-54

Master
Franz Lehár
Zurich
Baur au Lac.

Revered master!

It was an exciting joy to hear your dear voice. It sounded fresh, energetic, young and purposeful, and I understood perfectly.

Tomorrow I shall be writing to Baron Lehár in Vienna. For the biography I have already done half a book full of notes. However the structure, chapter division, is not yet fixed, and until I have that I cannot begin. As soon as I have a clear idea about it I shall get down to the business ...

May God grant that in the truest meaning of the word it will be my "masterpiece".

Just recently I have been doing an enormous amount of work. Eleven books to bring out in new editions is no joke. And a lot more besides, e.g. with America (film) and France (translations) - though I've no idea if the pipe dream can go on like this.

I am dreadfully sorry about your eye troubles. Does it come from writing musical notes or, more likely, is it just simply because those little goodness-gracious-me eyes all too often shone in glittering crystals when they saw a pretty woman ...

That your dear sister is with you gladdens me very much. I believe I made her acquaintance some 44 years ago in Ischl. Of course she will not remember for at that time I was just a nonentity with hanging pigtails.

The abiding image of your sister, as I recall her, is roughly like this - about as tall as me, or maybe I should say, as small, dark-blonde, rather a pale complexion, and characterised by a special warmth when smiling and talking. She was young and single then. Is that about right?

When I am in possession of the material from Vienna and have rummaged through it a little I shall write to you again.

Until then in loyalty

Yours

Ten days later she was writing again. Grammatical or typing errors, as well as mis-spellings, are overlooked in her enthusiasm:

Linz, 20 February 1948
tel: 25-43-54

Master Franz Lehár
Zurich

Beloved master!

Well, the link between your brother and me is in operation already! I am delighted with the way he cleverly and correctly falls in with my intentions. I shall not bother you with details - - we are going to pull it off.

Your telephone call and letter of 9 Feb has (sic) had the effect upon me of an electric signal for take-off. I have immediately stopped work on all the other projects and plunged into Lehár.

Without material, without nothing - just with enthusiasm.

The consequence of this is that following the arrival of some material today I shall have to rewrite everything again ... It doesn't matter. Herewith one little questionnaire for which I request return as soon as possible.

Just recently Else Rambousek brought into the 'Haus der Komiker', the newly founded cabaret in Vienna, a parody on 'Meine Lippen, die brennen (sic) so heiss' ending with the punchline "There is only one Lehár, o come back!" [5]

That's all for today. A thousand greetings and regards to your esteemed sister!

Yours

This first questionnaire was concerned not so much with biographical details but more with contractual and procedural matters. Should she send copies of the first chapter to Blau as well as to Lehár and Baron Lehár?

[5] The first line of the song should have been 'Meine Lippen, sie küssen so heiss', from *Giuditta*.

To this Lehár scribbled a definite affirmative “Unbedingt auch Dr Blau schreiben.” Of prime importance to her was a contract that would be safe and secure (“unter Dach und Fach”). As Blau had recently been in Zurich to discuss among other things this very topic Lehar was able to assure her that Blau would arrange matters as she wanted.

The third and final topic in this questionnaire was the curious matter of the pronunciation of the composer’s name. She writes:

Do you have anything against my including the following?
‘The name Lehár is seldom pronounced correctly. The stress, you see, dear reader, lies not on the first but on the second syllable. Le-HAR! When once young Franz came to Vienna to begin his fairy-tale ascent he used to explain this with zealous urgency to all people whose acquaintance he made ’

A marginal note from Lehár explains that the problem as such arose when he was in different countries, Italy and Russia in particular, whereas in England or France the pronunciation was correct:

In Italien sprach man L a a r
“ Russland “ “ Le g a r
In England und Frankreich nur Franz Lehár.

Madame Peteani had gone on to write a second paragraph on this subject, suggesting at one point that perhaps the stress on the first syllable was the result of a more melodious conjunction with the name Franz (“ ... weil sie in Verbindung mit ‘Franz’ melodischer klingt...”), to which Lehár scribbled a suggestion that she could include it if she really thought it would be of interest. (Fortunately somebody had second thoughts before

the book appeared; on the other hand, her first suggestion - with only minor excisions, and an absolute disregard for Lehár's marginal notes - forms the beginning of the published book). [6]

Her next letter raises one or two points of interest. Not only does her hero-worshipping of Lehár plunge deeper into troughs of cloying inanity but her decision to "say much less about the libretti" - consequently, much less about the Jewish librettists - suggests that she may have been motivated by 'Selbsthass' or Jewish self-hatred, that embarrassment that certain Jews felt at being Jewish that was manifest not only in a denial of their own Jewishness but also in contempt for fellow Jews. She could of course have felt that the subject was embarrassing for Lehár because of the Hinkel revelations:

Linz, 5 March 1948

Revered master!

A thousand thanks for the very lovely letter and excellent responses to the first questionnaire. From Dir. Blau I have received letter and just now replied to him.

I am working at top speed. Stopping for the time being at Pola.

It is my prime concern to present your personality as distinguished and as if cast from a single mould. Furthermore, I should like in the second part to say much more about the music and much less about the libretti.

(Just incidentally: During the work on Barmen-Elberfeld, Losoncz and Pola it struck me that perhaps an operetta could be made of it.

Principal character the young Lehár and of course his music).

[6] Maria von Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben* (Vienna and London, 1950), p. 9.

Just now I am feeling 'leharesque' to the very
ends of my nerves ...
Herewith questionnaire 2.
Fond kiss.

This last suggestion was even too much for Lehár. Among his recent correspondence was a letter dated 1 March from Bernhard Herzmannsky, head of the music publishing company of Ludwig Doblinger Kom. Ges. In Vienna, who had written about some reprints of a few of Lehár's scores for the composer to check over. On the reverse of this letter Lehár hastily wrote:

Dear Maria!
The idea of doing an operetta with my character
in it is quite inconceivable.

A second (undated) note among the papers bears a similar message. This second note is reproduced in facsimile in her book:

Liebe Maria
Eine Operette mit mir als Hauptperson?
Ganz ausgeschlossen.
Ich bin ja nicht wahnsinnig.
Dein,
Franz.

[Dear Maria
An operetta with me as principal character?
Quite out of the question.
After all, I'm not mad.

Yours,
Franz] [7]

Soon after this she received something of much greater importance, a very hastily written letter drafted at a time of heightened emotion:

[7] Peteani, *Franz Lehár*, p. 214.

Franz Lehár
Baur au Lac
Zurich

7/3 48

Confidential

Dear friend Maria!

You are in contact with my brother and he may have already sent you various documents which he himself has written. Despite the severity of the wound which has afflicted him from 1914 to the present he remains a soldier through and through and is what they call a 'daredevil'.

He is going all out against the Nazis and attacking Goebbels without justification. I am unwilling to prosecute people who are no longer able to defend themselves. Therefore you may not make use of him. In the final analysis you are the one writing the biography – not him. As for all the press attacks against me I have allowed matters to drop because it was beneath my dignity to reply to them.

Herr Kretschy (Linz), who surely visited you, has been in Zurich. He is a really nice chap and I discussed various matters for the first time. But that really is all. You can certainly take from that what you need. As for the rest I want nothing more to do with the Nazi period. Every attempt I make to clear up matters will be seen as proof of guilt, and I wish nothing more than to be left in peace.

Dr Blau is in Leipzig but going back to London in 4 or 5 days. He has asked you to make some suggestions of your own regarding the publishing house. Be sensible – the work has to be paid for and we will find a great publisher. Glockenverlag cannot publish the book – people will regard that as propaganda.

Cordial greetings from
Your Franz.

Any reassurances Lehár needed were provided in Peteani's reply:

Linz, 14 March 1948

Dear revered master!

Your letter headed 'Confidential' made me very happy because it is completely in accord with my own views. Your brother definitely did not send me the document in question, but even if that had been the case I would never have written in the sense implied by you.

You are an artist and you have nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with politics. I can say the same for myself, too. *Ergo*, I am steering clear of everything that might in any way arouse displeasure in the present climate of incalculable currents of opinion and universally prevalent hypersensitivity.

That your family history and your younger years are set in Austria is something that admittedly I am unable to alter, but I'll keep on showing it under the noses of foreign readers that this is the monarchist 'old' Austria.

This subject raises some questions (for which I request replies on the enclosed sheet as soon as possible) as does the Kretschy business.

When he was with me he said he wanted me to endorse the publication of his article in a feature section of the *O. Oe. Nachrichten*, saying in the name of Austria something along these lines:

Wicked people have been slandering L., and we Austrians are furious about it, etc.

I refused to have anything to do with it.

Firstly because I have the feeling that defensive actions all too easily become accusation (as you quite correctly mention in your letter); secondly, because an article of that sort carrying my by-line might possibly lead to the mobilisation of the opposition and then from that to controversy. The newspaper would have a field day, for controversy is what the public find so very entertaining, but neither you nor I have any need to muddy ourselves with it. You need your rest - that's the first commandment!

There will be a more favourable opportunity when I can speak about you in the press or on radio.

And as for the shenanigans being tried on by the wobbly-legged competition, they have no more significance than when a dog cocks his leg up. And that will dribble away in the sand just the same!

I am extraordinarily grateful for your interest in the business side of my work.

I am working day and night. Don't go out, and don't receive anyone.

Greetings to you a thousand times!

Among the Peteani documents are two questionnaires with the same heading, 'Fragebogen II', one for Lehár and one for his brother, Baron Anton. It was Anton who had the more searching questions:

- 1) It was, I guess, *Die lustige Witwe* that was the first operetta to find its way abroad? Where was the first foreign performance? Which countries followed? Publicity if possible please about prominent exponents in Paris, London, etc

She went on to ask about the journeys abroad that Franz had undertaken - apart from his time with the Marines in 1895; when he bought his residential properties; when the first operetta recordings were made; who were the publishers of the earlier compositions. To most of these questions the Baron provided concise replies, mentioning the foreign successes of *Kukuška* and *Der Klavierlehrer*, his brother's journeys to St. Petersburg, London, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Constantinople and Lisbon, and the publishers Hofbauer in Vienna, Craz in Leipzig, and Schmiedell in Trieste.

In contrast the questions for Franz Lehár hardly transcended the gossip column. His replies, handwritten in the right margin of her questionnaire,

are given below in italics:

- 1) Are your eyes light blue or grey? I had the feeling they are 'silver blue'. Right?

Grey blue

- 2) Who first put down on paper the music of Opus 1, 'Ich fühl's dass ich tief innen kränke'? Your father?

Naturally I myself!

- 3) Do you write the first concept of your compositions in pencil or ink?

A special pencil? Fountain pen?

Always in pencil!

- 4) Is it true that you work mostly at night? Was that right from the start or only later?

From the first

I always worked at night

On only one question did she dare to touch upon more personal matters:

- 5) I believe you got to know Sophie one summer after *Die lustige Witwe*. You need not get alarmed. I should like to present the matter in a different way from the previous biographers. Or do you wish me to skim over the marriage as briefly as Descey [*sic*] or Czech did?

It depends on how you present the subject. In any case I should like to have sight of the outline.

A final question, asking if he had a special theme from *Kukuška* for the music samples in the book, remained unanswered.

A further letter from Lehár dated 17 March 1948 was primarily concerned

with the welfare of Else, a person who appears to have served Madame Peteani as personal assistant and general factotum:

Dear Maria,
I send Else my regards. If the operation is of greater benefit earlier then don't postpone on my account. The *Rastelbinder* matter is of no urgency.
Blau informed me of the amount you are claiming for Else. Naturally your wish will be fulfilled. He must let us know the best way to deal with matters.
Franz.

Her next letter outlines Else's situation, incidentally providing some insight into the difficulties of obtaining medical supplies in post-war Austria. There is a rebuke for Lehar, because he used an indelible marker of some kind when writing his replies to the questionnaire. All the same, the correspondence goes on to reveal her more as a spin-doctor than a probing biographer, a puppet in the hands of the master:

Linz, 2 April 1948

Beloved master!
Heartfelt thanks for your charming letter with the greetings for Else and the Easter telegram! On the Tuesday after Easter Else went straight into hospital but she didn't allow herself to be deprived of the task of first finishing the typing of the enclosed pages of manuscript. Her admiration of you is beyond description.
The operation takes place tomorrow. At the moment they are doing some extensive preliminary checks - heart, etc. - which they couldn't do earlier.
Dir. Blau wrote to say that you had informed him that I was in need of medicines from Switzerland for Else; that, however, is a misunderstanding. I

need the medicines for myself, but there is no rush as I still have a supply. It has to do with the means without which I unfortunately cannot go on living, which is the reason for my plan to send Else to Berne in the summer or the autumn, and for which I require the assistance of Swiss francs. If Else should not be able to travel, if for instance my supply should run out earlier, perhaps the easiest thing would be to transfer the amount to her sister so that she can send me the items. I'll let you have the address in good time. I'll write to Dir. Blau about the whole shambles as well. In any case I thank you with all my heart for your kindness, for your sympathy!! With all my heart! All your answers to my questions were clear and splendid! You just need to write down key words and I'll know what it's about. - I send you here the first 77 pages of the manuscript. With some nice printing and spacing it should provide approximately 50 printed sides.

This time I ask for your corrections to be made only with the usual pencil!

Not indelible pencil!

Anything unpleasant for you, just cross it out. If there's not enough space for you in the empty margin, write on an additional sheet with a reference to the number of the page to which it belongs.

I would like to get to say something about *Tatjana* after *L[ustige] Witwe*. You are bound to observe that I seldom pull events forward but set them in the time to which they belong.

These subtitles marked in pencil by the chapter headings are to be printed in smaller script and at the same time serve to assist the reader to get his bearings in the table of contents.

That you are sending me the musical examples is marvellous; so I shall not need anything further from Glockenverlag Vienna. I shall cut out your manuscript slips and stick them in.

You have already sent me Opus 1, 'Ich fühl's dass ich tief innen, etc.' as well as the General's song, *Kukuška*. Nor do you need to send me examples

from *Rastelbinder* because I have my piano score and can write them out myself. The same applies to the *Gold and Silver* Waltz.

On the other hand I do need the items on enclosed questionnaire.

Of *Die lust[ige] Witw[e]* I shall not need anything at all, I have it in piano score.

The next chapter will have the heading 'Die Lustige Witwe' and will be concerned exclusively with this work. For the subtitle in small print I should like to put: Veuve joyeuse - Merry widow [*sic*] - Vedova allegra - and so forth, all or at least the most important foreign titles.

Now your brother has unfortunately written to tell me that the documentary evidence for the performances abroad has gone "missing" in the Schikaneder-Schlössl. What are we going to do? The foreign performances are very important! You will find questions concerning this on the enclosed questionnaire.

I would be very grateful if directly after reading the MS you could write a couple of lines so that I will know how much you like it. You know yourself how nervous a person can be in such instances.

Admittedly the opening chapters, bound up as they are with factual detail, offer few opportunities for development, and it was only from the *Gold a[nd] Sil[ver]* Waltz that I could express any of my own feelings in writing. It will have to turn into a book of progressive development, just as indeed your triumphs got better and better.

Dir. Blau wrote to me saying that he would prefer it if I made proposals for the contract. I'll do it in that case - but only when Else is out of the worst and I am free to get my head round it.

Now good night, you darling!

Let me hear from you soon.

On 8 April she was sent a telegram:

BRUDER SANDTE ODER SENDET DIR

GUTGEMEINTEN GEBURTSTAG ARTIKEL
DER VIELE IRRTUEMER ENTHAELT BITTE
VORLAEUFIG ADACTA LEGEN
HERZLICHST= FRANZ LEHAR

[(My) brother sent or sends you well-intentioned
birthday article which contains many mistakes.
Please provisionally file away.
Affectionately, Franz Lehár]

A letter of the same date addressed to his “Dearest friend Maria” reads:

I send you herewith my brother’s article in its correct
form. He certainly had good intentions, but on
Puccini he is way off target.
There was a Léhar Concert here yesterday in the
Kongresshaus. The excellent town band (100
musicians) was playing and Montegazzi conducting.
I was simply in attendance. I was collected by 2
ladies in Swiss national costume. The audience was
roused to enthusiasm. The hall was overcrowded -
they had to open up the adjoining rooms and finally
even the police had to intervene. Those Zurich
people can really go into raptures.
I am already looking forward to your other [?]
manuscript. How is Else? Did she get through
everything all right? I send her my kind regards.
Affectionately
Your Franz.

The concert was probably one referred to in Peteani’s book. [8]

As Lehár observes in later correspondence Madame Peteani was not
particularly skilled as a businesswoman, and when she found herself
pestered by the unsolicited advances of a greedy publisher she could not
cope. To Lehár she turned for advice:

[8] Peteani, *Franz Lehár*, p. 214.

Linz, 5 May 1948

Most revered one!

Today the purpose of my writing is one which lies beyond the biography, and I must ask your forgiveness for making this exceptional request of you for confidential information.

Herr Wolfgang Börner, a German of the Reich, resident at Bad Aussee, Haslauerweg, (one-time manager of Robert Stolz), is now the director here of the new and go-ahead publishing company, Ibis-Verlag. These people are pressing me to give them some of my old works for a new edition.

Herr Börner phoned me just now regarding this and told me that he had just got back from Zurich yesterday and that he had visited you there. He seems to have no notion about my connections with you for (like all who have chanced to pass your way on the odd occasion) he got really swollen-headed as if he had known you for a good long time. I took it all in, while all the time keeping my own counsel.

Now I must ask you in sincerity to fill in the enclosed questionnaires and dispatch them to me immediately if possible.

On Friday 14 May he will be coming in person to see me and then I must decide if I am going to sign up with him. The contracts have been lying around here for weeks and I keep on putting him off because he talks such a lot and that is what makes me suspicious.

So please, please, reply immediately.

The rest of the letter expresses thanks “for your dear lovely telegram”

(which is not among the Peteani papers) in which Lehár had thanked her for articles she had sent. The letter ends with her joy at rediscovering the *Adria* Waltz in a broadcast from Radio Salzburg on 30 April.

On the evening of 11 May he sent her a telegram:

WARNE DICH HABE SCHLECHSTE
ERFAHRUNGEN MIT BETREFFENDEN

AUCH STOLZ HAT IHN AUFGEGBEN=
HERZLICHST FRANZ LEHAR

[(I) warn you (that I) have worst experiences
with (the person/s) concerned. Also Stolz has
given him up. Affectionately, Franz Lehár]

It was not in Lehár's interests to have his biographer distracted by pressures elsewhere. Not only did he help her with advice, he also provided financial aid. Among the Peteani papers is a note dated 24 May 1948 and signed by E. Blatter, confirming that Lehár had had 250 Swiss francs transferred to Madame Peteani. Thanks to his generosity she was able to order the much needed medical supplies, referred to in the following letter as the 'Berne business':

Maria von Peteani
Linz, Donau
Mozartstrasse 26

Linz, 27 May 1948
tel: 25-43-54

Master
Franz Lehár
Zurich
Baur au Lac

Dear revered master!
Many thanks for your telegram regarding the Berne business.
I did not reply immediately because I wanted to wait for confirmation from Frau Elvira Blatter. As this has just arrived I express to you my warmest thanks. Now I can order what I so urgently need.
I very much hope that you have recovered again from the stresses and strains of the medics, and I am thinking of you - quite apart from the biography - always.

For the past two days I have been at work again, for Else - thank God - is now able to manage the housekeeping. I am frequently disturbed only because I am enjoying an incomprehensible success here with a novel written ages ago (*Der unbekannte Freund*) and the dear readers are storming my house. Anyone bringing honey or butter is allowed in. ... I have written to Dir. Blau to say that I am in agreement with his suggestions and that I await the contract. Now I shall have to work very hard so that in the event of the Ischl plan materialising I shall have ready all those questions that crop up during the course of the work. But have no fear that I shall be tiring you! I myself am more than sensitive. For today just for you and your charming sister
Kindest regards from

In the meantime Lehár sent her his replies to the third questionnaire:

- 1) Shall I mention the episode about Kaiser Wilhelm in Pola? I think not. He is unpopular.
Not worth mentioning!

- 2) Shall I include the episode of the Emperor Franz Josef's "Aha, that's the one who didn't turn out that time."

(Lehár corrects this to " ... that's the Lehár who ... ")
To my mind it would be rather suitable.

Can be included

- 3) I have omitted to mention the Slavic element in your music. Sorry, because this actually does belong in a scrupulous biography. Especially with regard to *Der Rastelbinder*, to which I am just coming, I suggest this may be necessary. On the other hand ... Should I ask Director Blau about this?

The element you mention is well known throughout the material. Rastelbinder is Slovak and Jewish. Frasquita Spanish, Land des Lächelns Chinese, Paganini Italian and so on.

*It is truly my [... ? ...] that I
created the sounds of different
lands. Zarewitsch is Russian.*

A fourth question dealt with the inclusion of musical examples, but then
she returned to more personal matters:

- 5) Was Sophie in fact musical? I believe she wasn't.
Adele Strauss wasn't either.

*She was not musical but she was
familiar with every bar of my
works and [... ? ...] operetta.*

- 6) She told me once about your weakness for the Casino in
Monte Carlo. May I include that if it is discreetly worded?

*I was in Monte Carlo very often
and gambling was my other
passion. I often won but in the
end it was always [... ? ...].*

In a final handwritten question she asked if the surname Lehár should be
written with or without the accent. The reply was an incontrovertible
“*Unbedingt Lehár.*”

By June the first half of the book had been completed in typescript and
Madame Peteani sent another progress report:

Linz, 14 June 1948

Most revered master!

I send you herewith the chapter ‘Lustige Witwe’,
pages 78 – 103. There is one minor chronological
error in it in that Captain Alberti’s expedition
(1910) is described after the German performance
which took place in 1913. That just requires some
rearrangement. I did not want to type it out again
for this would be done anyway should there be
any other changes.

For the moment I am stopping at 1918, including
Wo die Lerche singt. Naturally I am not depicting
every premiere as extensively as I do the Widow.

(Even though I am much fonder of the Lark and especially *Endlich allein*). I have known all the works up to the present in meticulous detail - known by heart, not from the score. I almost believe that neither Descey (sic) nor Cech (sic) were so thoroughly 'leharised'. [9]

From this point on I know only *Land des Lächelns* thoroughly, the *Zarewitsch* and *Friedericke* (sic) fleetingly and *Giudita* (sic) not at all.

I thank you sincerely for putting me in touch with Prof. Pirchan. [10] It would be nice if I could get something interesting from him. I cannot provide him with anything, though, because the little I have I shall need myself.

Some days ago I was visited by Max Wallner, Karl Wallner's son. [11] The last time I saw him he was still a little scamp. At the time of the bombing of Berlin he moved to Prague but got thrown out there and in consequence has lost everything. He is now living with his wife in Mondsee and waiting until people can work with Germany again.

Now for the most important matter: How are you? I would be grateful to your dear sister if she could let me have a couple of words about the state of your health.

Fondest regards to the two of you
from your

[9] The Peteani neologism in German here is 'leharisiert', comparable with 'leharesk' in her 5 March 1948 letter, translated as 'leharesque'.

[10] Emil Pirchan (1884-1957), scenic artist, costume designer, and architect, an exponent of the Expressionist movement, designed productions for the Berlin Staatstheater, Deutsche Theater in Prague and the Vienna Burgtheater. In 1936 he was appointed Professor at Vienna's Akademie der bildenden Künste.

[11] Karl Wallner (1859-1935), actor, later theatre director. As financial backer and business partner of Wilhelm Karczag at the Theater an der Wien, he shared responsibility for the first productions of six operettas by Lehár including *Die lustige Witwe* and *Der Graf von Luxemburg*.

In the final paragraph of her letter of 27 May (above) Madame Peteani had made some mention of an "Ischl plan." Precisely what the plan entailed is revealed in an adulatory communication dated 8 July 1948 from an otherwise unidentified Erika. In the course of her letter she asked:

How are you, I mean in your health, revered master? Will you be, and do you really want to be, moving back to Ischl? Or perhaps have you - even as I write - arrived back in Ischl already? If you have not done so yet then may I be allowed to advise you to wait until weather and temperature conditions improve!

It is certainly a great decision for you, highly revered master, to leave Switzerland; but please do it only if you really feel well enough to be able to live in so much more restricted circumstances. Please, please be so good and kind as to write me a couple of lines about how you are and whether or when you will be going to Ischl!

A return to Bad Ischl may have been inspired by emotional needs, but there was a practical aspect to such a decision in that Lehár would be closer to his business interests in Vienna, closer too to Madame Peteani in Linz. He was still in Zurich when she sent another progress report:

Linz, 17 July 1948

Dear sweet master, you are guessing my secret wishes; it is like a telepathic effect.

While at work on your second creative period I kept on thinking "If only I had some musical material!" But I did not want to be a bother, particularly as I thought I had it all in my head. Now here come the first two notebooks and it transpires that two minor discrepancies have passed unnoticed, and I had even forgotten one song, 'Ich möchte' wieder einmal die Heimat seh'n'! Even though the two of us, Else and I, are

very often singing at the tops of our voices.
I thank you therefore many many times!!!
I think I've had an idea regarding the music

At this point, giving an example with the Volga song refrain ('Hast du dort oben vergessen auf mich?') from *Der Zarewitsch*, she described her idea, suggesting that it would be better not to place lyrics directly under the notes of music examples but in smaller format, slightly separate and to the right. [12] This she justified because

The readership will go straight for the texts, especially the younger ones. Now, God willing, let us talk it over together.
In the complete work there will be about a hundred music examples. Naturally some can be deleted if you wish but I would be reluctant to let any go.
A thousand greetings to you and your dear sister who has already won a firm place in my heart.
Most devotedly,
Maria.

As Madame Peteani mentions in her book, the summer of 1948 was unusually bad (which would account for the advice about travel in the Erika letter). A letter dated 12 July, from Lehár's sister Emmy to Madame Peteani, mentioned that the passes were still snowed up. It was therefore the end of July before the Lehárs could undertake the journey from Zurich to Bad Ischl, first by the Arlberg express train to Salzburg, and from there by car to Bad Ischl.

[12] This became the approved format for all her music examples. For the extract from *Der Zarewitsch* see Peteani, *Franz Lehár*, p. 165.

Eventually the Lehárs arrived safely back at the villa. [13] Fairly soon afterwards Madame Peteani received an invitation to stay with them. This exciting prospect inspired another piece of gushing correspondence:

3 August 1948

My dear most revered ones!
After getting over that very first moment of joy and jollity I come in all modesty to give you one mighty shout of

Welcome !!

(As I see it, at the end of my biography I shall have to add several superlatives, for there's no precedent to what people are able to achieve with the master! He will certainly need several days to recover from an overdose of love.....).

In my telephone book there is nothing else but - Lehár Franz ... enchanting! I was nearly tempted to dial the number 488 just now, but then I thought to myself, "No, those poor people will be completely worn out because of the move, so let's leave them in peace."

Naturally I am rather thrilled too on account of my own trip, besides which it is terribly hot here and, in a nutshell, I would like to get to Ischl for the very first days of next week!

If you are not yet in the mood for chatting with me, dearest master, that doesn't matter. I will first have to regain some composure too!

You will not notice a thing with us two little mice in your villa. Else naturally will tidy up for us, we will go to a hotel for our meals, so I shall not require any domestic staff at all.

There is only one point on which I must make bold: We need two rooms because I cannot share a room with Else on account of my insomnia. Should this not be technically feasible then sleeping accommodation would have to be found for Else somewhere nearby.

[13] Peteani, *Franz Lehár*, pp. 215-216.

So that's that - I have now explained what is on my mind and ask you to phone as soon as possible.

She concludes the letter with a foray into Viennese dialect, writing that she could say with Girardi: "Majestät, Sö wären a aufgereg't, wann S' bei an Kaiser wohnen soll'n!!" ("Majesty, you'd be thrilled too if you were to live with an Emperor!!").

Behind all this gushing enthusiasm for the 'Meister', the girlish humour and occasional lapses into vulgarity, here was a very insecure woman who treated Lehár as someone to turn to for advice about almost anything.

Her distrust of business matters is referred to in a letter, dated 28 August 1948, from Lehár to 'Mein lieber Freund' ('My dear friend'), evidently (from remarks in an opening paragraph) a highly trusted person, perhaps a senior executive of Glocken-Verlag (such as Otto Blau). Lehár was now in very poor health. He had dictated this letter and had it typed, probably by his sister who, as he assured the addressee, "weiss genau was mir vorschwebt" ("knows precisely what I have in mind").

After this preamble he discussed the biography and his biographer:

Now about the Peteani business. Madame Peteani is an extremely obliging authoress and she, with the best will in the world, has placed her skills at our service. She has been staying with me for the past three weeks and I have got to know her extremely well. She is very frightened, always has the feeling that by appending her signature she is doing something foolish that might have fateful consequences for her. I have come to the conclusion

that a solution has to be found that might damage neither her nor our interests in any way.

My feelings one way or the other about biographies were in fact known only to my wife. To be honest I have to confess that I read only a few extracts from the Decsey biography. When in due course the Czech biography appeared I only skimmed through it. I cannot bear any puffery about me.

Now just lately there have been at least ten proposals, all to be taken seriously, regarding the production of a new Lehár biography. To devise a suitable method of turning them down gently I repeatedly gave them the name of Peteani and now, as it so happens, we have found each other. I definitely had no thoughts about the work coming out quickly but, as circumstances have proved, her extremely charming letters have prompted me to take an interest in the matter.

I invited her to come to Ischl but at that time I had no idea that I would be so unwell here and so incapable of assisting her. One week after my arrival she came to Ischl, bringing her maid with her, and made herself at home here. She is tremendously hard-working and would like to have her work finished as soon as possible. With the best will in the world I am unable to carry through my intended plan of assisting her as circumstances are at present. So there is a danger that now a third biography will appear with which I shall in fact have no kind of in-depth contact.

Then along came your draft contract which she was expected to sign. Now she is getting the wind up about the reference to repayment of the advance. I found her objections justified and have therefore decided that the ten thousand schillings which she gets in monthly instalments will be regarded as non-repayable and that in any case she has earned the money. But now she has also raised objections with regard to the translations of the work, particularly as to how she was to be protected against the percentage claims of the translators, and whether you or the publisher decide this matter and how she could come

to some arrangement over this question in order to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

I took the only possible and immutable decision - that the biography must in the first instance be finished, complete with illustrations, submitted to me and sanctioned by me before any approach is made at all even to a German publisher.

... .. And a translation should only be considered if the book takes off and promises to be a success and conditions as a result become more favourable for us too, perhaps even to the return of normal times when questions of foreign currency exchange are easier to settle. How long it takes is a matter of no consequence here - on no account should the work be rushed out as it shall be my last biography. Once again I assure you of my most devoted friendship and have uttermost faith in all your decisions.

Sincerest regards to you and Rita,
Yours faithfully,

It is my firm resolve that Glockenverlag Vienna should remain in the condition in which it is now, that no dismissals may be made, and that we should chance everything in helping it to weather these dreadfully difficult times.

Physically frail he may have been, but Lehár remained mentally astute as a businessman. Of particular interest too in this letter are his comments about biographers. His cursory reading of the two works mentioned may indicate a lack of interest in the genre, perhaps even contempt for biographers' attempts at musical comment or analysis, yet neither Decsey nor Czech could be accused of the 'Lobhudelei' ('puffery') which Lehár professed to scorn so vehemently. On the other hand he had in Maria von Peteani a biographer who could lapse into ecstasies of 'Lobhudelei' at any

given moment. The one saving grace about her endeavours was the closer contact she had with him.

While Lehár was successful in dealing with Madame Peteani's anxieties about contractual issues there still remained a chief concern, his health.

On 16 September he dictated a note which was handwritten by Emmy:

Dear friend,
Many thanks for your news that everything is
going all right.
I am temporarily unable to think about doing
any work as I am still very much enfeebled.
In any case we shall have to postpone the
biography for the time being.
Most affectionately yours

Lehár managed to sign it in an unsteady scrawl. In a footnote there was a greeting for Else, signed by a 'niedergedrückte' ('dejected') Emmy.

By now Madame Peteani was back home in Linz. A further and final letter from Madame Peteani to Lehár is a brief response to the letter above. At this critical time it almost appears as if she was not fully aware of the seriousness of his condition as she bizarrely describes the state of her own health and, in so doing, finally explains why she needed Lehár's herbal remedy:

21.9.1948

Master
Franz Lehár
Bad Ischl
Lehár Kai 8

Revered friend and master!
Many heartfelt thanks for your dear card.

For the past few days I have been having one of those bouts of intestinal colic that crop up from time to time and been lying in bed. Things are definitely improved but still not quite better. I am sending you herewith a copy of a letter from Director Müller and my reply. As it is not of current importance it would not be of great interest to you but I am doing it just to be orderly. With warmest blessings for you and sincerest regards from bed to bed I am
Yours

Two days later Emmy wrote to report no change in his condition, and on 10 October there was a telegram for Madame Peteani from Lehár to say there was some improvement. In the Peteani biography this was noted briefly as:

Am 10. Oktober ein Telegramm: "Es geht mir etwas besser! Franz." [14]

This is abbreviated from the actual telegram sent on that date which in its complete form shows that Lehár, the pragmatic businessman, was still keeping a check on Madame Peteani's financial condition:

BITTE MITTEILUNG WIEVIEL
MONATSRATEN DU BEREITS ERHALTEN
HAST ES GEHT MIR ETWAS BESSER
HERZLICHST DEIN =LEHAR

[Request notification how many monthly instalments you have received already. I am somewhat better. Affectionately yours, Lehár]

The optimism engendered by the telegram was short-lived, for two weeks later, at 3.00 p.m. on 24 October, Lehár breathed his last.

[14] Peteani, *Franz Lehár*, pp. 231-232.

Two years later the Peteani biography of Lehár was published. A second enlarged edition followed within the same year, and it is this edition that has been reprinted now for over fifty years.

A reading of the book quickly reveals its faults: the cursory interest in the librettists; the scant consideration of the years of Nazi occupation which cost some (like Peteani) their livelihoods, but cost many their lives; worst of all, the gushing rhetoric of a writer held in the thrall of her subject.

The book was never translated, either because of Peteani's reluctance to share the proceeds of her labours with translators, or perhaps because the book was not commercial enough. It was not accepted for publication by a large publishing company in Austria but, contrary to Lehár's wishes and anxiety about 'propaganda', published by Glocken-Verlag. If the book about her 'master' was not, as she punningly expected, her 'masterpiece' in the fullest sense, the fault is hers alone for producing a work of too much gloss and too little depth.

Perhaps the author has some excuse for her omissions, for 1950 was still very close to the worst of the recent past. More recent biographies can discuss the sensitive issues deliberately censored out of her writing with greater openness. The process has begun. Yet Peteani's work should not be dismissed as valueless. No other biographer worked as closely with Lehár as she, and so there are moments within her whimsical text when the reader can be sure that the voice of Lehár himself is speaking.

Lehár and the stage - From the beginnings to The Merry Widow

1891 - 1905

Discussion in earlier chapters has been focused on areas of Franz Lehár's personal biography that need to be reassessed. There are areas too of his professional work in need of reconsideration. The content and quality of his operas and operettas has been only partially addressed by some of his biographers, as has commentary on the music. There are errors of detail and inconsistencies, compounded by writers who have accepted facts as recorded in an earlier work as correct. The librettists, and the variety of libretti they produced, have received little - and in some cases, no - attention.

Lehár was first drawn to the stage as a would-be serious opera composer. His first forays in this direction date from 1891, and this last decade of the nineteenth century witnessed several abortive attempts by Lehár in this genre.

The prime fault lay with his unwise choice of librettists, some of whom were army colleagues or friends where he was stationed, all of whom were amateur writers, none of whom had any professional theatre experience.

Lehár's first librettist was a railway clerk at Losoncz (Lučenec), one Gustav Ruthner, of whom nothing is revealed in the Lehár biographies other than the fact that he was eventually promoted to the rank of station-

master at Vienna's Ostbahnhof. [1] Ruthner offered a script for an opera, *Der Kürrassier*. Lehár made a start upon the project but he abandoned it very quickly. As the partial score is not listed in any archive location it would appear that the manuscript has been lost. [2]

In 1892 a second libretto was provided by a colleague in the army, Oberleutnant Rudolf Mičoch, whom Lehár later recalled as being a muddleheaded genius ("ein wirrer aber genialer Kopf"). [3] It was written in response to an opera competition established by Duke Ernst II of Coburg-Gotha, a German language equivalent of the Sonzogno Competition which had successfully promoted Italian verismo opera since its inception in 1883.

As in the Sonzogno Competition the operas entered were one-act works. Lehár and Mičoch put forward their collaboration, *Rodrigo*, a romantic drama. The libretto was lacking in originality, full of unrestrained and

[1] Maria von Peteani, *Franz Lehár: seine Musik, sein Leben* (Vienna and London, 1950), p. 32; Stefan Frey, 'Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.' *Franz Lehár und die Unterhaltungsmusik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a.M. and Leipzig, 1999), p. 36; Ingrid and Herbert Haffner, *Immer nur lächeln ... : Das Franz Lehár Buch* (Berlin, 1998), p. 25.

[2] Main prime locations for original manuscripts are the Stadtamt and the Lehár Villa, Bad Ischl, and the Lehár Archive in Vienna (see Appendix 4). Printed material is kept by the publishing company, Josef Weinberger, which has principal offices at Neulerchenfelderstrasse 3-7 Vienna; 12-14 Mortimer Street, London; and Oeder Weg 26, Frankfurt am Main.

[3] Franz Lehár, 'Mein Werdegang', quoted in Frey, 'Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg,' p. 36. The article was published originally in two parts in the Feuilleton section of *Die Zeit* (Vienna) on 13 and 25 October 1907.

second-rate melodrama. The score, as Lehár inscribed on his manuscript, had been written as felt (“so empfunden, so geschrieben”). [4] Judging from the ‘Preludium Religioso’, an instrumental intermezzo with violin solo, the scoring is solidly unadventurous but melodically sound. [5] It is furthermore typical of the era, lying midway between the rather more famous intermezzi from *Cavalleria rusticana* and the ‘Méditation religieuse’ from Massenet’s *Thais*. Yet *Rodrigo* made no impact upon the judging panel. The score was returned without comment, and the prize went to the Styrian composer Josef Forster (1845 – 1917) for his *Die Rose von Pontevedra*.

Lehár embarked upon a more ambitious operatic undertaking when serving as musical director at Pola (Pula) in 1895. His librettist this time was corvette commander Felix Falzari (1859 – 1912), a Venetian by birth, a man of literary pretensions whose series of seven poems under the title *Waidmannsliebe* were set to music by Lehár in 1894. Lacking any unified character, these poems would have defeated any composer’s hopes of achieving a cohesive song cycle, and Lehár’s floridly ambitious piano writing was more in opposition to, than supportive of, the vocal line. Even so, he thought sufficiently well of them to have them published, later (in

[4] Frey, ‘*Was sagt Ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*’, p. 36. (The score survives with a full set of parts and is located at the Lehár Archive, Vienna).

[5] The Preludium Religioso from *Rodrigo* is on CD cpo 999 761-2.

recollection of local geology) with the title *Karst-Lieder*.

Lehár's desire to write a large-scale opera was given further stimulus by his acquaintance with an Italian composer, born in Pola and still resident there, Antonio Smareglia (1854 – 1929). In honour of this locally famous but now forgotten composer Lehár had included three preludes from Smareglia's opera *Cornil Schut* in his debut concert at Pola. Smareglia in return introduced Lehár to Wagner's *Ring* cycle and *Tristan und Isolde*. The inspiration of Wagner's orchestral palette together with the quality of a first-rate orchestra at Pola allowed Lehár's imagination to take wing when Falzari produced his libretto for *Kukuška*.

“When others compose at the piano Lehár composes at the orchestra!”

Years later this remark was quoted by Lehár in one of his autobiographical articles. [6] It may well have applied to his activities as a composer in Pola. Falzari's romantic scenario, with its Russian setting, allowed Lehár to indulge a penchant for exotic melody and dance. By May 1895 a piano score was ready, and by the middle of the following year the orchestral score was complete. The work received its first performance at the Leipzig Stadttheater on 27 November 1896. [7] The published vocal

[6] Franz Lehár, ‘Musik - mein Leben’, *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 23 September 1944, p. 2.

[7] Not 28 November as in Peteani, *Franz Lehár*. Correct dating of the operas and operettas will be a recurrent topic in this chronological survey. As far as may be ascertained, correct dates are listed in Appendix 1.

score was dedicated to Her Imperial and Royal Highness, the Archduchess Carolina Maria.

Structurally the work had three acts divided respectively into six scenes, four scenes and five scenes. A prelude preceded each act, and there was an additional intermezzo between the fourth and fifth scenes of the third act. The storyline, ending with the deaths of two lovers in the snow-covered wilderness of Siberia, juxtaposed the 'Liebestod' idea from *Tristan und Isolde* with borrowed ideas from other operas.

The quality of the music was variable. While there were some fine examples of melodically strong ensemble writing there were linking passages where both pace and interest sagged. On the other hand the orchestration was reliable, with some solid Brahmsian writing in the first two preludes and a more delicate orchestral texture, rather reminiscent of a Grieg Norwegian dance, in the third. A set of interpolated 'Russian peasant dances' provided some exotic interest with hints of Dorian modality, but generally the flavour was more Hungarian than truly Russian.

Reviews were mixed, tending to favour the music, with some reservations about its verismo character. [8] One reviewer, shrewdly detecting the

[8] Otto Schneidereit, *Franz Lehár: eine Biographie in Zitaten* (Berlin, 1984), p. 44. On verismo in Germany, cf. Ulla Zierau, *Die veristische Oper in Deutschland* (New York, etc., 1994) and Josef Lederer, *Verismo auf der deutschsprachigen Opernbühne 1891-1926* (Vienna, 1998).

derivative elements within the score, suggested that Lehár had been suffering from “a plainly awful bout of Mascagnitis” (“an einer geradezu entsetzlichen Mascagnitis”).

Although *Kukuška* was destined to bring Lehár but limited fame and little fortune he thought sufficiently well of it to revise the work. Revision was to be a regular aspect of Lehár’s career as a composer, and this is particularly evident in his music for the stage. Revision could involve any number of procedures, singly or in combination - such as expansion, contraction, interpolation, deletion, re-orchestration, partial or complete change of lyrics or libretto - the result of which could be a restaging of the work as a new production, either under the original title, or with a new one.

The first obvious change to *Kukuška* was a change of title to *Tatjana*, but there were changes within the score too. The preludes and Russian dances were retained, but elsewhere the musical score was trimmed down so that the opera, originally in a vocal score of 201 pages without the interpolated dances, was now in a vocal score of 183 pages including the dances. The overall dramatic structure remained intact, except that there was now an additional scene in the third act to accommodate the dances. [9]

The greatest changes were in the libretto which was thoroughly rewritten.

[9] The three preludes and Russian peasant dances from *Kukuška/Tatjana* are recorded on CD cpo 999 423-2. The complete opera *Tatjana* is on CD cpo 000 762-2.

The heroine, called Anuška in the original opera, was now Tatjana. The libretto revision had been entrusted to one of the most influential music critics in Vienna, Max Kalbeck (1850 – 1921), who was already known as a translator of Italian libretti, but whose abiding fame was to be assured by his biography of Brahms. Kalbeck began his work on *Kukuška* in 1903, and the revised opera *Tatjana* was first performed on 21 February 1905 at the Stadttheater in Brünn (Brno) under the baton of Robert Stolz. Yet even with a new title and new libretto the opera fared little better, and it was soon dismissed as an interesting if inadequate example of Lehár's music.

The years between the premieres of *Kukuška* and *Tatjana* had witnessed an evolution in Lehár's music for theatre, a movement from serious opera to operetta. According to the literature there was no new work for the stage from Lehár after *Kukuška* until 1900. A clear period of three years with no attempt at further stage writing seems uncharacteristic, for Lehár was convinced that this was where his destiny lay.

Now there is in the Lehár Archive in Vienna a reference to an undated work which, one may tentatively suggest, belongs to this interim period and may perhaps be dated as circa 1898. Listed as no. 188 in the Archive catalogue is a draft vocal score for what the archivists describe as “an operetta” in original manuscript, “mainly complete” and with some dialogue. No author is given for what exists of the libretto. Its title is *Die*

Spionin. What makes this work intriguing is its omission from lists of Lehár's works in standard reference works and from all but one of the Lehár biographies. [10] Several musical numbers are sketched in the manuscript - solo songs, duets and ensembles, including an act one finale. The historical placing of *Die Spionin* to this 'fin-de-siècle' period is suggested by thematic borrowings from the 'Preludium Religioso' from *Rodrigo* and the later purloining of a duet from *Die Spionin* that was adapted for *Wiener Frauen*.

The year 1900 saw a burst of activity with Lehár working on three stage compositions. Of the first, *Georg Stromer*, there is little to be said other than the fact that this was an opera project that was aborted quickly, for only an introduction has survived in manuscript.

For *Fräulein Leutnant*, a play by one Arthur Kolhepp, Lehár composed three pieces of incidental music. The play purported to be a historical drama "from Austria's glory days in the period 1794 to 1801". [11]

Lehár's three incidental pieces bore the titles 'Soldatenspiele', 'Scanagatta Marsch' and 'Hochzeitsklänge'; the original manuscripts are nos. 185, 186 and 187 in the Lehár Archive, Vienna. They were later published by Glocken-Verlag as Op. 68.

The one vague detail mentioned about Gustav Schmidt, the next known

[10] The exception is Frey, '*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*', p. 420.

[11] Frey, '*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*', p. 420.

librettist to provide a script for Lehár, is that he was a “comrade”. [12]

The intended work was to be an operetta, *Die Kubanerin*. [13] This was another to join the list of abandoned incomplete compositions. The only surviving extract is a duet with some dialogue, scored for voice and piano. The manuscript is no. 184 in the Lehár Archive, Vienna.

While Lehár the theatre composer was struggling for recognition, Lehár the composer of light music and marches was becoming gradually more successful. His conducting of one of his marches, *Jetzt geht's los!*, in the Stadtpark led to a turnaround in his theatrical endeavours. The march was a favourite of a 12-year old girl, Felicitas (‘Lizzy’) Léon, who persuaded her father to listen to Léhar’s music. [14]

Her father was Victor Léon, one of the most influential men in Viennese theatre. A well-educated Jew and a Wagner enthusiast, Léon was an experienced librettist whose past work had included Strauss’ *Simplicius*, Heuberger’s *Der Opernball* and *Ihre Excellenz*, and the posthumous Strauss adaptation, *Wiener Blut*. [15] Léon was much more than a theatre

[12] Stan Czech, *Franz Lehár: sein Weg und sein Werk* (Vienna, 1948), p. 54.

[13] This is the title as listed in the catalogue of the Lehár Archive, Vienna. The Lehár literature has the title *Arabella, die Kubanerin*.

[14] Victor Léon, ‘Meinem Freunde Lehár’, *Neues Wiener Journal*, 27 April 1930.

[15] On Léon’s work with Strauss see Camille Crittenden, *Johann Strauss and Vienna: Operetta and the politics of popular culture* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 226-239.

writer; he was a journalist, publisher and dramaturge, experienced in every aspect of artistic direction in theatre.

His real name was Victor (or Viktor) Hirschfeld, and his brother Leo (who kept the family name) was a partner in the publishing business. Born in Vienna in either 1858 or 1860, Léon spent his entire career in the city. [16] He was dramaturge at the Deutsches Volkstheater, but it was at the Carl-Theater that many of Léon's operettas were produced.

When Léon met Lehár there was some discussion of a new work for the Carl-Theater, *Das Club-Baby*, which Léon was writing. When Lehár saw the libretto he reportedly had some misgivings about the work for it was a very lightweight entertainment of the 'Posse' or burlesque variety. [17] The work was never produced, and whatever existed of the manuscript has been lost.

An operetta collaboration which did bear fruit was made as a result of Lehár's contacts within the Schlaraffia association. One of the members, Friedrich Schmiedell, had a brother, an actor whose stage name was Emil Norini. Norini had been adapting a French farce, working on dialogue

[16] References such as *The New Grove* dictionaries (ed Sadie) or the Österreich Lexikon website www.aeiou.at/aeiou/encyclop give 4 January 1858 as the birthdate. Martin Lichtfuss, in his register of operetta librettists in his *Operette im Ausverkauf: Studien zum Libretto des musikalischen Unterhaltungstheaters in Österreich der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Vienna and Cologne, 1989), has 1 January 1860.

[17] Stan Czech, *Schön ist die Welt: Franz Lehárs Leben und Werk* (Berlin, 1957), p. 103.

himself, while the lyric writing was entrusted to a co-writer, a news editor with the *Neues Wiener Journal*, Ottokar Tann-Bergler. [18]

Norini and Tann-Bergler produced a script for an operetta, *Wiener Frauen*, apparently their only collaboration together. Only one other stage work by Emil Norini (1862 – 1918) has been discovered in this research - a 1904 burlesque, *Der Strohvitwer*, written jointly with Julius Horst, with music by Rudolf Ehrich. A slim volume of posthumous memoirs is apparently his only other work. [19]

Ottokar Tann-Bergler was the pseudonym of Hans Bergler (1859 – 1912). In his writing, whether for stage or storybook, he depicted the ‘echt wienerisch’, the typical characters of Vienna, in humorous satirical sketches. One of his popular creations was a Herr von Pomeisl. His stage writing seems to be limited to the Norini collaboration and two later works with Alfred Deutsch-German - *Am Lido* (1907), music by Karl Ziehrer, and *Ein Tag auf dem Mars* (1908), music by Edmund Eysler.

In keeping with Tann-Bergler’s predilection for all things Viennese the

[18] In Bernard Grun, *Gold and Silver: the life and times of Franz Lehár* (London, 1970), p. 71, the French play is identified as *Le maître des forges* by Georges Ohnet. There is, however, no detectable link between Ohnet’s work (which began as a narrative fictional work) and the eventual operetta. Frey, in ‘*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*’, p. 60, has a different source, identified only by a title in German, *Der Schlüssel des Paradieses*. No author is given for this work.

[19] Emil Norini, *Ja, das Herz! Ernste und heitere Theatererlebnisse* (Wolfenbüttel, 1920).

new operetta was to be a vehicle for one of the greatest artists in the genre, the tenor Alexander Girardi (1850 – 1918). For two decades from 1874 he had enthralled audiences at the Theater an der Wien where he created some of the greatest operetta roles for the greatest operetta composers. With his cocked hat and swaggering gait he embodied the ‘echt wienerisch’. Yet he was not a Viennese by birth, for he was born at Graz. The Viennese, he maintained, loved nothing but themselves and his success, as he once confessed to Robert Stolz, lay in giving them what they wanted - “ihr Wienertum” (“their Viennese-ness”). [20] To write for Girardi was by any standards a demanding task, especially so for a composer unfamiliar with the great man’s style. Lehár, however, was keen to prove his worth, and so *Wiener Frauen* was produced on 21 November 1902.

The work might be effectively described as a domestic situation comedy with music. While its Viennese-ness would have appealed to the traditional followers of Girardi this same quality has perhaps restricted its appeal, which would no doubt explain the lack of interest in the work beyond Austria-Hungary. Even in Germany the work had to be staged not only with script revisions but with a different title, either as *Die lieben Frauen* or *Der Klavierstimmer*. [21]

[20] Robert Stolz, *Die ganze Welt ist himmelblau*, notes and memoirs compiled by Aram Bakshian (Bergisch Gladbach, 1986), p. 181.

[21] Grun, *Gold and Silver*, p. 78.

This was very much a 'numbers' show, with very little musical development except perhaps in some of the finale writing. The overture was structured along pot-pourri principles - a march, a waltz, a march, a waltz, and so on - with only an offstage piano to provide more imaginative interest. In the work as a whole, while there was some usage of popular dance forms (mazurka, polka and waltz), the predominant tempo was march tempo. The one song that won the enthusiasm of the Viennese audiences was the *Nechledil-Marsch* with a refrain, as one commentator has observed, rather reminiscent of 'It's a long way to Tipperary'. [22]

The weakest element in the work was the libretto. In 1906 it was restaged as *Der Schlüssel zum Paradies* and achieved a degree of popularity in this new format in Leipzig. [23] Textual revision was undertaken by Norini in collaboration with Julius Horst. [24]

Lehár's work on *Wiener Frauen* for the Theater an der Wien coincided with preparations for another operetta score for the rival Carl-Theater to a libretto by Victor Léon. If *Wiener Frauen* was a statement about

[22] Frey, '*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg.*', p. 62.

[23] Czech, *Franz Lehár: sein Weg und sein Werk*, p. 73.

[24] Julius Horst was the pen-name of Josef Hostasch (1864-1943), writer of musical comedies and farces. Another of Horst's co-writers was Alexander Engel (1868-1940); their farce *Der Schrei nach dem Kinde* was the source inspiration for Lehár's *Cloclo*.

Viennese-ness, Léon's new work, *Der Rastelbinder*, was a statement about Jewishness. Léon maintained that "an operetta audience wants to laugh through its tears, and that is precisely what we Jews have now been doing, ever since the destruction of Jerusalem." [25] The leading role of the itinerant tinker, Pfefferkorn, was played by a Jew, Louis Treumann. Because of the anti-semitism that prevailed among Viennese press and public, Treumann had been reluctant to take on the part, but Léon had insisted. [26] Pfefferkorn was to be a sympathetic portrayal of an underprivileged and denigrated type whose basic character, according to the stage instructions, was "tenderly comical with a tinge of irony." Moreover, there was to be "no caricaturing, either in clothing or in speech and conduct." [27]

This was character comedy with a distinctive folk quality in, for example, Pfefferkorn's dialect songs. In essence it was also a Jewish parable about true love winning in the end after conflicting with manmade tradition (in this instance, a childhood betrothal). Lehár's response was music of greater depth and variety than that which he had written for the Theater and der Wien. Minor tonality was exploited to produce more exotic

[25] Stolz, *Die ganze Welt ist himmelblau*, p. 307.

[26] Schneidereit, *Franz Lehár: eine Biographie in Zitaten*, p. 75.

[27] "... weder in Kleidung, noch im Sprechen und Gehaben zu karikieren": stage instructions in Victor Léon, *Der Rastelbinder* libretto, rev. ed (London and Vienna, 1980).

colouring, and the blend of march, waltz, mazurka and polka was more evenly spread.

Dance music was a strong feature in *Der Rastelbinder*. There was some lively polka writing, but even more successful was Lehár's waltz composition as demonstrated in the refrain to the duet for Milosch and Janku ('Hab' einmal ein Herz gehabt', Act 1, no. 5) and in 'Wenn zwei sich lieben' (Act 1, no. 10).

The dramatic structure of *Der Rastelbinder* comprised three acts, designated as a prologue (Vorspiel) followed by Acts 1 and 2. Most of the action takes place in Act 1, the Vorspiel providing the background to the action and Act 2 the denouement. Léon used the same structure for his next operetta, *Der Göttergatte*, co-authored with Leo Stein.

Leo Stein, whose real name was Rosenstein. (1861 – 1921), had worked with Léon before, most notably on *Wiener Blut*. Formerly a student of law and a railway official, Stein had been writing for the stage since 1892, his earlier collaborative work being with Julius Horst. He had also translated the Sidney Jones musical comedy *A Greek slave* into German. The new work with Léon was another excursion into Ancient Greece.

Greek mythology had served Offenbach well in *Orphée aux enfers* and *La belle Hélène*. Gilbert and Sullivan had enjoyed a modest success with *Thespis*. These works belonged to an earlier generation. The first obvious flaw in *Der Göttergatte* was in its retrospectiveness. Its other main flaw

was in lacking the quality of these forebears.

The plot, like *Thespis*, involved Olympians in theatrical machinations.

Maenandros (Menander), the Greek comic dramatist, has come to Olympus to consult Thalia, the Muse of Comedy, who proposes a new theatrical genre which she has just invented: “Operetta,” she says, “that’s a thing in three acts in which ladies show off their legs and muscles with musical accompaniment.” [28]

Jupiter embarks on an operetta plot, playing a trick on a perfect couple, Amphitryon and Alcmene. According to myth Zeus (or the Roman God Jupiter in the operetta) impersonated Amphitryon to seduce Alcmene. The plan is thwarted in the Léon/Stein scenario as Juno, wife of Jupiter, impersonates Alcmene and is therefore seduced by her husband.

Adulterous intrigues and mistaken identities had been so much more effectively treated in French and Viennese operettas of the past. If *Der Göttergatte* was an attempt to recapture the spirit of Offenbach, underlined (so it would appear) by the many French expressions scattered within the Juno/Jupiter dialogue, it was a misguided one.

There was little that Lehár could do to enliven such dire material. The overture followed the pot-pourri formula, and there was a good mix of dance styles. Two waltz songs - Jupiter’s ‘Cupido’ (Act 1, no. 10) and

[28] “Die Operette - das ist so eine Sache in drei Akten, wo die Damen bei Musikbegleitung ihre Beine und Muskeln sehen lassen.” Victor Léon and Leo Stein, *Der Göttergatte* prompt book (Vienna, n.d.), p. 17.

‘Was ich längst erträumte’ for *Amphitryon* (Act 1, no. 12) - may be judged more distinctive than the rest. Whatever the merits in the libretto, whatever the merits in the score, the problem as Grun observed was that “they did not fit together.” [29]

Even so, *Der Göttergatte* enjoyed some limited success in Austria and Germany after its opening at the Carl-Theater on 20 January 1904. yet operetta as a musical genre was in a state of flux. Some dismissed it as a theatrical form in decline; others in the meantime argued for its transformation. While the music of Lehár was rooted in an Austrian tradition of dances and marches, his librettists tended to find their inspiration in French operetta and shaped their libretti accordingly. When Julius Bauer proposed an operetta set not only in contemporary times but also in America here was something very different.

Julius Bauer (1853 – 1941) was by profession a journalist working as features editor for the *Wiener Extrablatt*. [30] Most noteworthy among his previous libretti had been *Fürstin Ninetta* for Johann Strauss and *Der arme Jonathan* for Millöcker. The libretto for Strauss had had a contemporary theme, but it was in the composer’s opinion nothing but

[29] Grun, *Gold and Silver*, p. 88.

[30] The journalist-librettist was by no means a rarity in Viennese operetta, e.g. Tann-Bergler, Kalbeck, Léon. Cf. Crittenden, *Johann Strauss and Vienna*, p. 26.

unpoetical “trash”. [31]

Bauer’s libretto for Lehár was certainly no masterpiece. While it had a contemporary setting, the palatial home of an American tycoon and his misandrist daughter, the plot stretched credulity with a man pretending to be a woman disguised as a man. Some of the lyrics plunged the depths of banal doggerel, while others offered a perhaps inappropriate challenge to the erudition of the audience as, for example, in the refrain to the song introducing Philly the chauffeur, played by Girardi:

Wer nie ein Automobil besass
Nie sein Brot im Staube ass,
Wer am Benzintank sich nie erfreut,
Thut mir in der Seele leid! (Act 1, no. 5)

[He who never owned a car / or never ate his
bread in the dust, / who never took delight in the
petrol tank, / for him I’m truly sorry!]

This was a pastiche of a poem from Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* which lovers of Lieder would have known from the settings by Schubert (D.480, no. 3), Schumann (op. 98a, no. 4) or Wolf (*Harfenspieler-Lieder* no. 3):

Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen ass,
wer nie die kummervollen Nächte
auf seinem Bette weinend sass,
der kennt euch nicht, ihr himmlischen Mächte.

[He who never ate his bread with tears, / who
never spent sorrowful nights / upon his bed

[31] Johann Strauss in a letter to Josef Simon, quoted in Crittenden, *Johann Strauss and Vienna*, p. 260.

sitting and weeping, / he knows you not, ye
heavenly powers.]

Die Juxheirat opened at the Theater an der Wien on 22 December 1904 and closed after thirty-nine performances. Unremarkable though the work was, Lehár's score for *Die Juxheirat* is worthy of consideration as a pointer to future ideas. He dispensed with the overture, beginning the work with a brisk opening chorus. Vocal ensemble and part writing was more ambitious, with less unison singing and even some countermelody as for example in 'Just so einen Jux' (act 1, no. 7). [32]

Two other events coincided with the run of *Die Juxheirat*. Lehár was very much involved with preparations for the staging of *Tatjana*, which took place in the following February. In the meantime Léon and Stein had begun work on a new operetta script. Taking another nineteenth-century source as their model, they had decided to update and adapt a French comedy, Henri Meilhac's *L'Attaché d'ambassade*. As they blamed Lehár for the failure of *Der Göttergatte* they were disinclined to offer him their new libretto. Instead they approached Richard Heuberger, whose setting of the Léon/Stein libretto for *Der Opernball* had been very popular. Heuberger presented a few ideas for the librettists, but as they and their leading man, Louis Treumann, did not like what they heard the association was dissolved. Treumann felt that the music should have a more erotic

[32] Franz Lehár, *Die Juxheirat* vocal score (Leipzig, n.d.), pp. 43-46.

and exotic flavour. [33]

Emil Steininger, Karczag's secretary (and a member of the Schlaraffia), suggested that Léon should reconsider Lehár. Lehár was sent the libretto and, as he recalled,

I read it through the night, and early next morning
I rushed over to ask him (Léon) to let me keep it.
By that same evening I called him on the
telephone, put the receiver on the piano and
played to him the song of the Stupid Cavalryman
(‘Dumme Reitersmann’) which I had just finished.
Soon the next numbers followed, and Leon was
convinced. [34]

The new operetta had the working title of *Der Attaché*, but according to an anecdote it was Lehár who suggested the final title. [35] The widow of a senior civil servant had been pestering the box office staff at the Theater an der Wien about her presumed continuing entitlement to complimentary tickets. Lehár overheard Steininger instructing the staff to throw out the maddening widow when next she appeared, but on mistaking the word *maddening* (‘lästig’) for the word *merry* (‘lustig’) Lehár is said to have exclaimed, “That’s the title - *The merry widow* (*Die lustige Witwe*)!”

[33] Louis Treumann, ‘Entstehungsgeschichte eines Welterfolges’ *Neue freie Presse*, 30 December 1936, quoted in Frey, ‘*Was sagt ihr zu diesem Erfolg*’, p. 71.

[34] Franz Lehár, ‘Aus der Geschichte meiner Karriere’, *Die Stunde* (Vienna), 27 April 1930, p. 5.

[35] Peter Herz, ‘Wie aus der lästigen die *Lustige Witwe* wurde’, *Neue illustrierte Wochenschau* (Vienna), 2 January 1966, quoted in Schneidereit, *Franz Lehár: eine Biographie in Zitaten*, p. 94.

Lehár's 'Merry Widow' - a reappraisal

The worldwide success of *Die lustige Witwe* has been very thoroughly described in the Lehár literature, in journal articles and programme notes. If its success suggests that there is some justification for judging it to be a masterpiece *sui generis*, there still remains a question regarding the kind of work that it was within the framework of operetta history.

The literature on Viennese operetta in general and on Lehár specifically has tended to propound the view that the latter part of the nineteenth century was the 'golden age' of operetta and that the beginning of the twentieth century marked the dawn of a 'silver age'. This idea, one suspects, is derived from the historical convenience of the death of Johann Strauss in 1899 and the first of Lehár's operetta successes in 1902. [1]

Yet some scholars have argued that this division is too simplistic.

Max Schönherr had suggested in 1980 that Lehár's works could be classified in three stages. [2] The first stage he classed as 'comedy operettas', embracing Lehár's output from *Der Rastelbinder* to *Der Graf von Luxemburg* (1909), including of course *Die lustige Witwe*. This style

[1] Moritz Csaky, *Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne: ein kultur-historischer Essay zur österreichischen Identität* (Vienna, Cologne and Weimar, 1996), p. 62.

[2] Christoph Winzeler, 'Franz Lehár – ein "Fanatiker der Kunst"?', *Schweizerische Musikzeitung / Revue musicale Suisse*, 1981, p. 230.

of operetta writing he saw as derived from classic examples of the genre such as *Die Fledermaus* which in turn was rooted in the French operetta style.

The second stage in Schönherr's classification was the 'romantic operetta'. This covered the period from 1909 to 1923 and included *Zigeunerliebe* and *Frasquita*, works which by their exotic qualities could be related to Johann Strauss' *Zigeunerbaron* (1885). Lehár's later works, Schönherr's third stage from *Paganini* to *Giuditta*, were defined as 'singers' operettas'.

A more radical reclassification of operetta genres was proposed by Robert Dressler in 1986. Setting operettas against the social and political climates in which they were written he suggested a first period of 1865 to 1885, the period up to *Der Zigeunerbaron*, being a time of liberalism, economic crisis and its consequences; a second period including *Die lustige Witwe* (1905) and *Walzertraum* (1907) which reflected a 'fin-de-siècle' mood; a third period, in which petty bourgeois ideas prevailed, leading to the first years of World War I; a fourth period from the latter part of the war to the 1920s, and including *Das Land des Lächelns* (1929), a time to reflect upon the consequences of war and the collapse of the monarchy; and a final period, including *Victoria und ihr Husar* (1930) and *Giuditta* (1934), when Austria came to terms with the past by, as Dressler put it, "radicalising divergent political opinions, which led to the corporate state

and, in the long term, to the catastrophe of Hitler's seizure of power and the Second World War." [3]

This present survey of Lehár's stage works, taking as its point of reference the principal librettists with whom he worked, will have more kinship with Schönherr's division. However, the Dressler analysis cannot be dismissed out of hand. For while Léon and Stein have clearly written in *Die lustige Witwe* a comedy operetta ('Lustspieloperette'), drawing ideas from a mid nineteenth-century French play, there are elements of cynicism and amorality in the libretto which are more in keeping with contemporary Vienna of 1905.

Meilhac's three-act comedy, *L'Attaché d'ambassade*, was first performed in Paris at the Théâtre du Vaudeville on 12 October 1861. The plot is centred on Madeleine Palmer, widow of the wealthiest banker in Birkenfeld. An attaché at the embassy, Count Prax, is assigned a special mission by the ambassador, Baron Scarpa; at all costs Madeleine is to be prevented from being seduced into marriage with a Frenchman. In a conversation with the Count (Act 1, sc.18) the widow expresses her suspicion of anyone claiming to love her. Prax takes on the rivals for her affections: one he blackmails by threatening to reveal details of some letters of exchange; with another he fights a duel; the third is persuaded

[3] Robert Dressler, 'Die Figuren der Wiener Operette als Spiegel ihrer Gesellschaft' (doctorate thesis, University of Vienna, 1986), p. vi.

to return to a former lover.

There are parallels with the operetta in moments of romance and intrigue in the play. While in the operetta Danilo and Hanna are brought together by a dance, in the play Prax and Madeleine are brought together when she sings a song and he accompanies. Both operetta and play deal with an intended relationship between young lover and young wife. The Camille and Valencienne situation in the operetta is matched by that of Mazeray and the wife of Baron Scarpa. In both instances the embarrassment of a supposed infidelity is countered by intervention from the widow.

The portrayal of the widow is more sympathetic in the play than in the operetta. Wealth has not brought happiness, it has brought distrust, and after a brief marriage to an elderly husband Madeleine has come to realize “that I am young, and it’s youth that I’m looking for” (“que je suis jeune, et que c’est la jeunesse que je cherche”). [4]

Materialism, gently mocked and ridiculed in Meilhac’s comedy, is underlined more clearly in *Die lustige Witwe* by demonstrating the hedonism and hypocrisy in Viennese society. The same theme of materialism and greed was more savagely portrayed and cynically explored in Friedrich Dürrenmatt’s *Der Besuch der alten Dame*. The ‘old lady’ in this black comedy, Claire Zachanassian, is directly descended from Hanna Glawari and Madeleine Palmer, the relationship with her

[4] Henri Meilhac, *L’Attaché d’ambassade* (Paris, 1861), Act 3, sc.6, p. 78.

immediate forebear being demonstrated when a radio plays the music of *Die lustige Witwe*. [5] The wealth of Claire Zachanassian becomes a catalyst for greed, irresponsibility and inhuman behaviour.

All of these widow characters are representative, each in her own way, of a process of emancipation for women, providing greater independence and more involvement in politics, education and sport - a topic of current debate at the beginning of the twentieth century. [6] In his comedies and libretti (most famously and lastingly for Offenbach) Meilhac, in common with contemporaries in France and elsewhere, was largely concerned with making tolerable the social and political wrongs of his day by means of ridicule and satire. Dürrenmatt had a different agenda - using comedy to expose the consequences of corruption.

Midway between the two lay *Die lustige Witwe*. Here was a libretto that at least on the surface was French operetta in an updated format, full of the expected laughter and merriment, based on a genuine French comedy and given a setting in the French capital. Underneath the surface, however, there was a mirror of Viennese society, an image that was nothing to laugh at.

Theatre censorship restricted an overt portrayal of high society in Vienna

[5] Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Der Besuch der alten Dame*, ed Paul Kurt Ackermann (London, 1957/1979), p. 83.

[6] Gaston Deschamps, 'Die moderne Frau', *Neue freie Presse* (Vienna), 25 December 1900, pp. 30-31.

in that from 1900 it was forbidden to have official uniforms worn as stage costumes. [7] As the Meilhac original employed characters representative of embassy officialdom an Austrian team of functionaries in uniform was out of the question. Meilhac's Birkenfeld therefore became Pontevedro, a name chosen to divert the censor's gaze towards Montenegro.

By reputation a trouble spot Montenegro had been judged with Serbia as potentially volatile. As Crown Prince Rudolf had noted in 1886, the whole Balkan peninsula was a volcano waiting to erupt. [8] Mountainous, clannish, isolated, fiercely independent, Montenegro was a haven for banditry. Formerly known as Dioclea or Duklje, the area occupied by Montenegro was also known as Zeta.

Ever since 1696 the land had been ruled by a succession of prince-bishops, members of the Petrovic family from the clan Njegos, based in Cetinje. [9]

[7] Christian Marten, *Die Operette als Spiegel der Gesellschaft: Franz Lehárs 'Die lustige Witwe'* (Frankfurt a.M., 1988), p. 89.

[8] Brigitte Hamann (ed), *Kronprinz Rudolf - Majestät, ich warne Sie: geheime und private Schriften* (Vienna, 1979), p. 175.

[9] After Danilo I, 1696-1735, the succession passed to Sava whose nephew Vassili reigned as prince while Sava served as bishop. Vassili died in 1766 and the throne was usurped by an impostor, Scepan Mali, who was murdered in 1774. Sava was then nominally reinstated but the reins of government were held by a triumvirate which included deputy bishop Petar Petrovic. In 1782 the pro-Austrian bishop Plamenatz succeeded but when political support tilted towards Russia he disappeared. The throne went to Petar Petrovic (Petar I), then to Petar's nephew Rada (Petar II). Another Danilo established a secular principedom. In 1860 the throne passed to Nikola I, son of Mirko, who took the title of King in 1910 after fifty years as Prince; he lost the throne in 1918 and died in 1921.

The line of succession generally passed from uncle to nephew, certainly during the first hundred and fifty years of the dynasty, but a single ruling family was no guarantee of stability. For many years Montenegro had been dogged by economic and political pressures which had forced allegiances with Hungary in the 12th century, with Russia in the 16th, and later with the Habsburg monarchy. The Balkan carve-up decided upon at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 may have provided a coastal access for Montenegro, but for the Montenegrins this was undue interference by the super powers of the time. [10] Idealists had admired the Montenegrins' independence, described so fulsomely in Tennyson's *Montenegro* (1877): "O smallest among peoples! rough rock-throne of Freedom!"

At the time of the production of *Die lustige Witwe* in 1905 the ruling Prince of Montenegro was Nikola I. Some interesting allusions to him are suggested within the text of the operetta. Prince Nikola, in common with Petar II, the last of the prince-bishops, was a man of literary skills. A fervent nationalist, he not only enforced the wearing of the red-crowned cap invented by Petar II, but also wrote for each tribe "a Kolo song to be

[10] Tom Gallagher, 'Folly and failure in the Balkans', *History today* (London), September, 1999, p. 48; Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, twentieth century*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1983), p. 35. See also: John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as history* (Cambridge, 1996); M. Edith Durham, *Twenty years of Balkan tangle* (London, 1920); John Treadway, *The falcon and the eagle: Montenegro and Austria-Hungary 1908-1914* (West Lafayette, USA, 1983).

danced at festive gatherings, to stimulate nationalism.” [11] Nikola’s poetry may have inspired the idea for the inclusion of the Vilja song in the operetta, for the title of one of his poems is *Pjesnik i vila* (‘A poet and a fairy’). [12] The desirability of Hanna Glawari’s marrying a citizen of Pontevedro is matched by Nikola’s attempts to make alliances with other royal or aristocratic families to secure his family’s influence in Europe. Furthermore, it can certainly be no coincidence that the Act 1 setting for *Die lustige Witwe*, an embassy party celebrating the 64th birthday of the Pontevedran Prince, should have been first seen in the same year of 1905 when Prince Nikola of Montenegro - born 7 October 1841 - had celebrated the same birthday.

As if to underline the Montenegrin link several characters in the operetta were given names derived from the royal household and national history of Montenegro. Meilhac’s Baron Scarpa became Baron Mirko Zeta, the Birkenfeld embassy’s right-hand man Monsieur Figg became the chancery clerk Njegus, and Count Prax became Count Danilo Danilowitsch. Some other references demonstrating the Montenegrin link have been obscured in translations of the operetta and are only clearly evident in the German score and libretto, as for example in the opening of Act 2 when Hanna

[11] Durham, *Twenty years of Balkan tangle*, p. 33.

[12] See website www.cetinje.cg.yu/engelski/istorija/Nikola_1.htm for further details about Nikola and his poems. For details of writings of Petar II Petrovic Njegos see www.montenet.org/culture .

sings:

Ich bitte, hier jetzt zu verweilen,
wo allsogleich nach heimatlichem Brauch
das Fest des Fürsten so begangen wird,
als ob man in Cetinje wär' daheim. [13]

[I beg you now to spend some time here / where
in the tradition of my native land / we'll celebrate
the Prince's (birthday) feast / as if we were back
home in Cetinje].

Stage instructions thereafter describe the entrance of a band of 'guslars' playing their instruments, accompanied by a troupe of male and female dancers, all of whom are dressed in the Montenegrin national costume.

The chorus sings an invitation to dance in the Serbian language, and the dancers dance a 'kolo', a traditional round dance. [14]

In keeping with the symbolism of the round in the dance, Hanna then

[13] Victor Léon and Leo Stein, *Die lustige Witwe* prompt book (Vienna and Munich, 1906), p. 51. The vocal score replaces 'Cetinje' by 'Letinje'.

[14] A 'guslar' - as defined in the *Wahrig Deutsches Wörterbuch*, rev. ed (Munich, 1986) - was a Balkan folksinger and instrumentalist. His instrument was the single-stringed 'gusle' and this was used to accompany both epic and lyric verses. In this respect the 'guslar' tradition was very much akin to mediaeval minstrelsy.

I am grateful to Professor Jan Smaczny, The Queen's University of Belfast, for providing details of the characteristics of the 'kolo' in correspondence dated 8 April 1997. A "fast round dance in duple time" the 'kolo' may also have been used in Haydn's Op.33, no.3, finale, and in the seventh of the Slavonic Dances (second set, op.72) by Dvořák. Further research has discovered the 'kolo' in the symphonic and operatic works of Croatian composer Jakov Gotovac. The word 'kolo' is derived from a Slavonic root meaning 'circle' or 'wheel', and it has been suggested in some sources that the 'kolo' dance was originally a communal dance for women, the circle being associated symbolically and ritualistically with the life cycle.

introduces “unsern Ringelreim / Von einer Fee, die - wie bekannt - / Bei uns die Vilja wird genannt!” (... “our roundelay / about a fairy who, as you know, / we call a Vilja back home!”) [15]

Lehár’s response to all the elements in this scene is particularly appropriate. The cyclic quality suggested by ‘kolo’ and ‘Ringelreim’ is complemented by an overall cyclic musical structure: an orchestral introduction - Hanna’s first solo statement (“Ich bitte ...”) - a first ‘kolo’ - chorus - second ‘kolo’ - Hanna’s second solo statement - the Vilja song - third ‘kolo’. The orchestration underpins the folk character by the use of an additional *tamburica* ensemble comprising *tamburica* 1, *tamburica* 2, bass *tamburica* and guitar. [16]

Of course it should not be overlooked that the general structure of the operetta was defined by the libretto. Lehár, when writing *Die lustige Witwe* in 1905, may have been admired as a composer but as yet he did not have the clout to sway a librettist towards any ideas which he may

[15] In a study of Dalmatian folklore by Johann Danilo, the *vile* are described as “maidens with horses’ hooves” who live in hollows and assemble by river sources. These mythical creatures are well disposed to men who have proved their worth through courage or talent; Danilo’s description is quoted in Csaky, *Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne*, p. 91.

[16] The *tamburica* (in German spelling, ‘tamburizza’) is a long-necked fretted instrument with metal strings - cf. Stanley Sadie (ed), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 7 (London, 1980), p. 866; also 2nd ed. (London, 2001) - and not a ‘tambour de Provance’ (sic), as stated by Edward M. Gold in *By Franz Lehár – the complete cosmopolitan* (London, 1995).

have had with respect to musical structure. His biographers may have ignored his librettists, but Lehár had no hesitation in attributing the secret of his success to them. In 1928 he wrote:

The success of an operetta is essentially dependent most of all on a good libretto. The characters in the script should be depicted so true to life that the audience can really be concerned with their fate. I can only decide upon a libretto when I fall in love with the heroine, when I can experience the hero's adventures as if they were my own, and when the confusion of all the tragic events touches me as if they mattered to me. [17]

The characters in *Die lustige Witwe* can hardly be judged as the most attractive. Indeed there is an anti-heroic quality about all the principals in the story: Danilo is a diplomatic drop-out; Hanna is a schemer; most of the menfolk relish the thought of adulterous affairs with the grisettes and their like, while their wives either flirt or offer only a show of reluctance when would-be lovers flirt with them.

In Act 1, sc. 6, Danilo is first encountered, singing his 'Auftrittslied' in what the libretto describes as a "harsh Slavic accent" and displaying his contempt for "the fatherland". Unaccountably troubled by the special assignment (that is, the seduction of the widow) Danilo suggests by his behaviour in Act 1, sc. 9, that he and Hanna have met before. This is confirmed when Danilo reveals that she should have been his wife, had it not been for his uncle, and Hanna retorts:

[17] Franz Lehár, 'Das Geheimnis meines Erfolges', *Neue freie Presse*, 19 July 1928.

“Your dear old uncle had very aristocratic views which did not allow his aristocratic nephew, still on active service at the time as a cavalry lieutenant, to present his aristocratic love to an ordinary girl!” [18]

Hanna, it appears, was the daughter of a tenant farmer who had fallen on hard times. By marrying the elderly court banker Hanna had effectively cleared her father’s debts. Class conflict was not a new topic for operetta, but here was something different and not altogether tasteful, a suggestion of sexual abuse.

The quality of the former relationship between the banker and Hanna perhaps corresponds with the unsatisfactory alliance of ambassador Baron Zeta and Valencienne. She likewise had married young, and is supposedly still in her teens at the time of the action of the operetta. This would account for her being constantly addressed or referred to as ‘Kind’ (‘child’) by Zeta.

Zeta is diametrically opposed to Danilo by his genuine affection for the fatherland. Yet the librettists have managed to ridicule both his materialism and his patriotism by a wicked pun, recalling but misquoting the “dulce et decorum” line from the third book of the Odes of Horace, when Zeta says how sweet it is to ‘inherit’ (‘erben’) for the fatherland instead of ‘die’ (‘sterben’) for the fatherland. [19]

[18] Léon and Stein, *Die lustige Witwe* prompt book, p. 28.

[19] Léon and Stein, *Die lustige Witwe* prompt book, p. 8.

The contrasting attitudes of both Danilo and Zeta to the fatherland allow scope for the kind of political satire that was expected within the older operetta traditions. Comedy of human relationships, the battle of the sexes, operated on two levels: the trio of Valencienne, Camille and Zeta provided reminders of a traditional stock situation derived from the *commedia dell'arte* and Italian intermezzo, with Zeta functioning as the buffo who is so very neatly cuckolded by his wife's young admirer. [20] Danilo and Hanna provide a more challenging and more modern kind of relationship, sparring together as equals.

Her emancipation is evident in the Act 1 finale. In this interplay of song and dance the essential point is the 'Damenwahl' ('Ladies' Choice') which allows the lady to choose her dance partner. To the dismay of the French aristocrats Hanna sings:

Den ich als Tänzer möchte ... (aside)
ist Einer, der sich giebt den Schein,
als ob ich ihm egal möcht' sein.

[The one I'd like as partner ... (aside)
is one who makes himself appear
as if I might be his equal.]

Throughout this sequence there is a clever juxtaposition of the human comedy with political satire, for the term 'Damenwahl' could easily be taken as a topical reference to votes for women. [21]

[20] Marten, *Die Operette als Spiegel der Gesellschaft*, p. 87.

[21] Csaky, *Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne*, pp. 99-100.

Die lustige Witwe follows the conventional dramatic structure of three acts: the first setting the scene and presenting character contrast and conflict; the second leading to a point of potential resolution which is then changed into a quasi-tragic situation (the result, in this instance, of a misunderstanding); the third presenting the final resolution (of the misunderstanding). Each act, as one commentator has observed, has a celebration of some sort (a useful device for gathering the characters together). [22] The Act 1 party is a formal reception presented by Zeta. By the end of the first act Hanna is already taking control, and the Act 2 and Act 3 gatherings are her responsibility, further pointers to her emancipation.

The second act demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of the chief protagonists, Hanna and Danilo, through a clearly balanced structure of its own. It begins and ends with narrative songs, and it is centred upon the famous waltz after a moment of playful courtship sparring in the 'Dumme Reiter' duet.

The two narrative songs (Hanna's 'Vilja' and Danilo's 'Königskinder') and the 'Dumme Reiter' duet are each analogous to the past relationship between Hanna and Danilo. The 'Vilja' song tells of a wandering huntsman seduced by a *vila* who suddenly disappears when she has had enough of his kisses, leaving him hurt and perplexed. The 'Dumme

[22] Marten, *Die Operette als Spiegel der Gesellschaft*, p. 89.

Reiter' duet more obviously reflects their past relationship as Danilo had been a cavalry officer, the "dumme Reitersmann, der mich nicht verstehen kann" ("stupid cavalryman who cannot understand me") as Hanna expresses it in the song. Danilo, in this same duet, seems to think that by leaving her to marry the banker he made a wise move as a "kluger Reiter" ("clever horseman").

After Danilo and the other men have philosophized about the problem of understanding women in the lively march septet, with the refrain 'Ja das Studium der Weiber ist schwer', Hanna and Danilo meet again for the melodramatic scene with the well-known 'Merry widow' waltz (Act 2, no. 10). Whatever the outward spoken expressions between these two people, however much they may try to deny their mutual affinity, there is a sexual chemistry that constantly pulls Hanna and Danilo together, and this is most powerfully portrayed through dance. The chemistry was there at the end of Act 1 when Danilo danced around Hanna until she gave in and danced with him. Now here it is again.

Against lightly orchestrated background music in duple time they indulge in a teasing conversation, Hanna saying she is seriously considering marriage to a Parisian, Danilo suggesting she will be well entertained at the balls in the Pontevedran embassy. He invites her, in strongly accented French, to dance the 'kolo'. They dance, but Hanna (against a motivic reminiscence of Danilo's 'Maxim' song) says she wants something more

typically Parisian. This provides Danilo with an opportunity to describe his favourite nocturnal haunt where “the band will play a sweet waltz, and so in that three-four time a person will become oblivious to three-quarters of his virtues!” [23] This leads directly to the ‘valse moderato’, the ‘Merry widow’ waltz.

There is a quasi-Wagnerian quality about this scene in that for thirty-two bars of orchestral music Hanna and Danilo say nothing, sing nothing, but simply dance. The music at this moment, as Carl Dahlhaus observed, is more eloquent simply because there are no words (“Der langsame Walzer ... ist gerade darum beredt, weil er textlos bleibt.”). [24] The act of dancing displays the sexual chemistry - but it is the type of dance chosen that determines the level of intimacy. The ‘kolo’ did not have the desired effect; “Das ist nix!” said Hanna afterwards. The ‘kolo’ was for communal gatherings, but now they had chosen the waltz - a dance which two could dance alone. In a sixteen-bar central section there is some small talk from Danilo before the main theme returns. They continue dancing, humming the melody in unison.

The libretto, not unexpectedly, makes provision for an encore with a repetition of the waltz and additional dialogue. Hanna begins with a

[23] Léon and Stein, *Die lustige Witwe* prompt book, p. 75.

[24] Carl Dahlhaus, ‘Zur musikalischen Dramaturgie der *Lustigen Witwe*’, *Österreichische Musik Zeitschrift* 12, (Vienna, 1985), p. 662.

comment aside: “He danced with me, but he still hasn’t said a word!” (“Getanzt hat er mit mir, aber gesagt hat er noch kein Wort!”). Danilo offers to take her to the latest nightspot, the Cabaret Noir, where clients pretend to be wild savages - the men clad in “elegant swimming trunks” (“elegante Schwimmhose”), the women being in rather less. “And what do people do there?” (“Und was tut man dort?”), asks Hanna. “They dance!” (“Man tanzt!”) is the reply. [25]

The developing relationship between Valencienne and Camille, and the ensuing compromise, allows Hanna to stage the misunderstanding that provides the ultimate challenge for Danilo in the Act 2 finale. Conflicting sentiments are expressed against a reprise of Camille’s *romanza* (‘Wie eine Rosenknospe’) as Hanna has declared that she is to marry Camille. Danilo, in a solo, expresses his contempt for her, concluding with the remark that “there is something rotten in the state of Denmark!” (“s’ist etwas faul im Staate Dänemark!”) [26]

While Danilo stalks off, Hanna leads the company in a wild celebration of her acceptance of a Parisian lifestyle, the music appropriately now being more Offenbachian in style. Danilo returns to offer an engagement present in the form of a story. He sings a slow waltz which, like the waltz he danced earlier with Hanna, is in ternary form. His voice carries the greater

[25] Léon and Stein, *Die lustige Witwe* prompt book, p. 76.

[26] Franz Lehár, *Die lustige Witwe* vocal score (Vienna and Munich, 1906), p. 103.

part of a melody shadowed by string chords and harp accompaniment.

The dramatic importance of this narrative song is suggested by a footnote in the vocal score: “This scene must be alternately sung or spoken, often without any rhythm, delivered with utmost passion.” [27]

Danilo’s narrative song tells of a prince and princess who, though they apparently loved each other, for some reason could not be united, and how the princess played “a gruesome trick” (“ein grausames Spiel”) by marrying another. The crux of the story is a deliberate *double entendre*, an allegorical reference to Hanna’s marriage as well as a direct reference to her displayed affection for Camille.

As the emotionally shattered Danilo starts to leave Hanna asks where he is going. The musical underlay immediately provides the answer even before Danilo has put his reply into words, for there is a reminiscence of the ‘Maxim’ refrain stated in the same way (with same harmonies and solo cello, though at quicker tempo) as it had appeared when used to introduce the ‘Maxim’ reprise leading to the so-called ‘Merry widow’ waltz, (Act 2, no. 10). [28] The ‘Maxim’ reprise as sung by Danilo here is laced “with caustic irony” (“mit beissender Ironie”) but he has hardly time to finish singing when he is interrupted by the Offenbachian galop as the company

[27] Lehár, *Die lustige Witwe* vocal score, p. 112.

[28] Lehár, *Die lustige Witwe* vocal score: see p. 82 from bar 88(b) and p. 115 from bar 389.

resume the festivities.

While what has been referred to as a quasi-Wagnerian quality in the melodrama and waltz scene (Act 2, no. 10) may have been the result of collaborative thought by both librettists and composer, there are other suggestions of Wagnerian influence which may be ascribed more definitely to Lehár alone. The previously mentioned reprises of the 'Maxim' refrain are not the only examples of reminiscence technique. Although there is nothing as well developed as the *leitmotif* of Wagnerian music drama there appears to be a conscious use of motifs underlining the interplay of changing emotions throughout the operetta. This is most evident in the finales.

The first act finale (Act 1, no. 6) opens with a 16-bar orchestral reprise in G major of the refrain of Hanna's entrance song (Act 1, no. 3; bar 80) when she sang of the value in financial terms of a rich widow. The men enter, singing of the "Damenwahl" ("Ladies' choice"), to the tune of the brisk C major march that had heralded the embassy celebrations at the beginning of the act (Act 1, no. 1; bar 41). Hanna's reaction to their persistence is set against a variant of the march in F sharp minor, and Danilo's supportive comments continue in the same key before changing to the major.

Lehár uses not just thematic motifs but also rhythmic motifs. The dismay of Cascada and St. Brioché is expressed in a D flat major march (Act 1,

no. 6; bar 68) which - at least initially - is rhythmically recalled by the song of the grisettes (Act 3, no. 14; bars 18-19). When Cascada and the men have had their say a recitative for Danilo, accompanied by sequential fragments of the 'Damenwahl' march, introduces the waltz in ternary form for the 'Ballsirenen', the sirens of the ball who divert the men's attention for a while.

A rhythmic motif occurring throughout the operetta is formed by a pattern of four semiquavers followed by two quavers. This could be dubbed the 'Vaterland' motif as it is encountered in Danilo's song (Act 1, no. 4; bar 8) when he sings "O Vaterland du machst bei Tag ...". A variant in triple time, beginning with the same words, is treated sequentially in a Danilo recitative directly after the Ballsirenen Waltz. Fragments of the waltz are then conjoined with the 'Vaterland' fragment to form an ongoing accompaniment for a recitative which finally brings Valencienne and Camille onto the scene.

Cascada's D flat major march is repeated in D major as Danilo hears Valencienne suggestively put forward Camille as a suitable dance partner for Hanna. After a chorus of protest from the men the opening of the march theme is treated sequentially as it modulates through flat keys to accompany the recitative in which Hanna chooses Danilo (Act 1, no. 6; bar 318).

A diminished seventh pushes the tonality back towards D major for an

orchestral reprise of the 'Vaterland' theme from Danilo's entrance song as an accompaniment to the conversational phrases sung by Danilo and Hanna. The song melody is picked up by Danilo when he declares that the dance he has been offered is his property. A new refrain, using the 'Vaterland' rhythm motif, continues (Act 1, no. 6; bar 344) as Danilo puts the dance offer up for sale and relishes the reaction of the men. This is developed (Act 1, no. 6; bar 360) in the accompaniment with fragments of the Cascada march theme as Danilo sings a B flat major reprise of the 'Damenwahl', pointing out to Hanna the men's financial embarrassment. The men depart, but a brief recitative - using modulating sections of the 'Damenwahl' theme - allows Camille one chance to call Danilo's bluff. His chance is thwarted by Valencienne, who has other ideas. At this point (Act 1, no. 6; bars 376-379) there is a subtle motivic interplay with fragments of the 'Damenwahl' and 'Vaterland' themes.

As Camille is dragged away by Valencienne the music has now modulated to G major, the tonality of the beginning of the finale, with a 32-bar restatement of the same waltz refrain (from Hanna's entrance song) that opened the finale. Danilo and Hanna are alone, and as one waltz slowly finishes, another, the second of the 'Ballsirenen' themes, follows as a 'valse moderato'. The two have been testing each other psychologically - Danilo claiming he cannot dance, Hanna now refusing to dance - but as the tempo picks up with a reprise of the first of the 'Ballsirenen' waltzes

(Act 1, no. 6; bar 431) Danilo dances around her and she is literally swept of her feet by the power of the dance.

Although the Act 2 finale is probably more important from the dramatic standpoint, as outlined earlier, there are some further moments of motivic writing which are worthy of comment. After an Offenbachian galop for Baron Zeta's suspicions about his wife the incipit to Valencienne's refrain (Act 1, no. 2; bar 32, "Ich bin eine anständ'ge Frau") is briefly recalled as Hanna sings "Und war der Baron so indiskret ..." (Act 2, no. 12; bar 29) before the Camille 'Rosenknospe' romanza is reprised and developed into an operatic ensemble as all the conflicting emotions are laid open (Act 2, no. 12; bars 60-84).

The Zeta galop returns in E major as misunderstanding and argument degenerate towards farce. The seriousness of Danilo's personal situation is expressed in an A minor mazurka (Act 2, no. 12; bar 132) accompanied by a woodwind figuration that recalls Cascada's reaction to the 'Damenwahl' in the first act finale (Act 1, no. 6; bar 68).

The dramatic importance of the remainder of this finale (Hanna's opting for the Parisian life, and Danilo's reaction in narrative song) has been discussed earlier. One point worth mentioning about the 'Königskinder' song is its metrical similarity to the Goethe poem, 'Es war ein König in Thule'; Dahlhaus has suggested that there is a deliberate kinship between the setting of the Goethe poem by Carl Friedrich Zelter and Lehár's

narrative song. [29]

The familiar 'Vaterland' figure from Danilo's entrance song is totally absent from the Act 2 finale. Throughout this finale the flavour, whether in the Offenbach quality of much of the music or in the dramatic situation, is very French - almost as if the entire operetta has stepped back into the nineteenth century. Danilo's immediate solution to his problems is equally French - a return to Maxim's and the expansive, if expensive, adoration of his favourite grisettes, as the rest of the company ignore him and carry on as before. As the curtain falls the orchestra plays out the act with a recollection of the 'kolo' danced in the 'Vilja' scene. The last word, it seems, will be Slavonic - not French.

There are only six musical numbers in the third act, two of which are new. After a reprise of the 'Maxim' refrain the stage is set for a cabaret and the orchestra strikes up the first of the new numbers (Act 3, no. 13) together with an on-stage orchestra. This, a cake-walk which uses the 'Vaterland' rhythmic motif as its incipit, heralds the arrival of Danilo who enters into the spirit of the occasion and joins in the dance.

This is a stage set within a stage set, as part of Hanna's sumptuous residence has been transformed to look like Maxim's. Members of the embassy staff are sitting at tables with their ladies, drinking champagne, when the music begins for the main entertainment, specially for Danilo's

[29] Dahlhaus, 'Zur musikalischen Dramaturgie der *Lustigen Witwe*', p. 662.

benefit, the song of the grisettes. The stage instructions describe the grisettes as “ladies dressed in the most stylish attire, with hats.” [30] The six grisettes are joined by a seventh, none other than Valencienne enjoying some self-indulgent role-play.

As the artificial conflict between Hanna and Danilo is resolved there is a reprise of their ‘valse moderato’, the ‘Merry widow’ waltz, this time with words, ‘Lippen schweigen’ (Act 3, no. 15). For Hanna there could be no other partner than Danilo, for the waltz - this particular slow waltz - is theirs and theirs alone. Camille could never have been a serious rival, for Valencienne and he had their own repertoire of sexual expression through dance, as Valencienne had coquettishly explained in the act 1 finale (Act 1, no. 6; bars 291-306):

Der junge Mann tanzt Polka,
ich hab’ es ausprobiert.
Auch tanzt er famos Mazurka,
ich hab’ es ausprobiert.
Nach rechts und links kann er tanzen,
ich hab’ es ausprobiert.
Im Walzer hat er excelliert,
drum wird er von mir protegirt.

[30] Léon and Stein, *Die lustige Witwe* prompt book, p. 100. This stage instruction has been ignored in productions in which the grisettes have been presented as can-can dancers. According to *Le petit Robert, Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Paris, 1990), ‘grisette’ was originally a grey fabric worn by the lower classes; later it came to mean a female employee in the fashion industry, usually a milliner, dressed in grey; the term became associated with working class girls of loose morals, or at least of a flirtatious nature. These grisettes are evidently of higher status.

[This young man dances the polka, / I've tried it out myself. / He also dances a splendid mazurka, / I've tried it out myself. / He can dance to the right and to the left, / I've tried it out myself. / In the waltz he really excelled / and that's why he enjoys my favour.]

After the reprise of the waltz for Hanna and Danilo the operetta comes to an end with the 'Schlussgesang' (Act 3, no. 16), a reprise of the 'Weiber' march septet, led by Hanna with the full company in support.

The international success of *Die lustige Witwe* has been achieved more through the quality of the music than by the humour and subtleties within the text, much of which inevitably will have been lost through translation. Where Viennese operetta style was not understood there was a tendency towards low comedy and other inexplicable changes. [31]

It is perhaps debatable whether musical analysis of an operetta is best achieved by reference to the dramatic content or whether attention should be focused solely on the music. Edward Michael Gold opted for the latter in his study. [32] Dahlhaus, in his essay on the musical dramaturgy of *Die lustige Witwe*, finds music and drama inextricably linked. Another

[31] For the London premiere of *The merry widow* not only were names of leading characters changed (Hanna becoming Sonia, for instance) but two extra numbers were interpolated in Act 3. There were two more grisettes in this production, Zozo and Fifi, and for Fifi a song, 'Butterflies', was written. Njegus, renamed Nisch, had a solo song ('I was born by cruel fate in a little Balkan state'), lyrics by Adrian Ross.

[32] Edward Michael Gold, 'On the significance of Franz Lehár's operettas: a musical-analytical study', (Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 1993).

approach has been taken by Christian Marten. [33] After noting that the tonality of the operetta is mainly limited to the major keys of F, C, D, and A, he propounds a number of ideas which recall the 'Affektenlehre' of 18th century music theory. Each approach has its merits, adding different aspects to an overall picture.

Die lustige Witwe is an example of all things to all men. Essentially and primarily it is a comedy about money, the acquisition of national wealth. Perhaps this may explain some of its appeal for Adolf Hitler. The widow Glawari enriched and stabilised Pontevedro by marrying Danilo, just as Prince Nikola hoped to stabilise his family by suitable marriages, just as Hitler hoped to enrich Germany by the political marriage of country to country, through annexation and invasion.

The notion of the 'Vaterland' will have interested Hitler. When Zeta first informs Danilo that the fatherland requires him to marry, Danilo thinks aloud, "Aha, does the fatherland require sons and daughters?", a question which in turn puts one in mind of the Lebensborn plan, the deliberate fathering of infants by approved Aryan males.

In its dramatic and musical content this was an operetta that straddled two centuries. The rich orchestration and the inclusion of contemporary dance types, such as the lively two-step (Act 1, no. 5), are indicative of qualities that were to develop further in this so-called Silver Age of operetta. On

[33] Marten, *Die Operette als Spiegel der Gesellschaft*, pp. 90-97.

the other hand the Offenbachian galops and a cast of characters drawn from the highest and lowest strata of society, with no middle class characters at all (despite the increased interest in theatre-going by the middle classes), were factors pointing to the Golden Age.

Even though it was to become a world-wide success and spawn as much merchandise as a modern musical, thanks to adaptations and versions in all major European languages, *Die lustige Witwe* was not universally well received in Austria. In 1906 Siegmund Salzmann, writing under his pen name of Felix Salten, expressed mixed feelings, admiring the modern qualities in the work but then remarking that “this music does not have much of the Viennese in it” (“Diese Musik hat nicht viel Wienerisches in sich”). [34]

In 1907, when the popularity of *Die lustige Witwe* had gained more momentum in Austria, an article decrying the state of operetta was published. Its author, Paul Bekker, claimed that all the true originals (Offenbach, Suppé, Sullivan and Strauss) were exhausted. Now there was only the “sham art” (“Talmikunst”) of Lehár or the cheap “honkytonk” drivel from others. [35]

[34] Felix Salten, ‘Die neue Operette’, *Die Zeit* (Vienna), 1906, quoted in Otto Schneidereit, *Franz Lehár: eine Biographie in Zitaten* (Berlin, 1984), p. 107.

[35] Paul Bekker, ‘Die lustige Witwe und ihre Familie’, *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* (Berlin), 20 September 1907, p. 615.

The most surprising criticism of *Die lustige Witwe* came in the form of student demonstrations. Montenegrin students, incensed by what they perceived to be a deliberate insult to their royal family, protested outside the Viennese parliament. At Constantinople and Trieste these protests took the form of actual riots at theatres where the new operetta had opened. [36]

Yet the real target for royal dynastic satire was most probably not the Montenegrin but the Viennese royal house. There are distinct parallels between the two. Both were ruled by a sovereign advanced in years, Prince Nikola in Montenegro and Emperor Franz Josef in Austria. Both of these elderly rulers had heirs who were seen as disappointments. Franz Josef's son, Rudolf, not only upset the conservative Establishment in Austria by espousing ethnic minority interests, he also had a number of affairs and liaisons, the last with a young baroness with whom he committed suicide. As for the Montenegrin heir, Danilo, it is reported that he and his brother Mirko were young men "devoid of discipline" with "all the vices of Princes and none of their virtues." [37] If in *Die lustige Witwe* an Austrian embassy and its officials were deliberately disguised as

[36] A contemporary drawing illustrating these riots is in the Nationalbibliothek, Vienna. It is reproduced in Ann Tizia Leitich, *Lippen schweigen – flüstern Geigen: Ewiger Zauber der Wiener Operette* (Vienna, Hanover and Basle, 1960), p. 209.

[37] Durham, *Twenty years of Balkan tangle*, p. 37.

Montenegrin to fool the Austrian censors, this was certainly an effective and clever disguise - perhaps too clever.

The French setting is a diversion. The clue to this is in the music. Hanna flirts with the French lifestyle and her French would-be suitors against a background of Offenbachian galops – but all these are ultimately discarded. The ultimate winner in musical terms is not French, not even Slavonic - it is Viennese, the waltz.

The only convincing indication that Paris is the setting for the operetta is the reference to the famous restaurant in the rue Royale, Maxim's. The presence of a Maxim's in Vienna, however, would open the possibility of Vienna as a target for satire. According to a directory of Vienna dating from the beginning of the twentieth century there was in the city's first district at Rauhensteingasse 8 a 'Vernügun^gs-Établissement Maxim' - which may have been a restaurant with variety shows, or even a nightclub, certainly the sort of place to meet Viennese grisettes. [38]

With its anti-establishment satire *Die lustige Witwe* may be regarded as belonging more to the nineteenth century than the twentieth century. Its librettists looked back towards the previous century, but its composer was looking in a different direction, about to explore other (perhaps less successful) avenues, and hoping to find a more genuine voice.

[38] Details of the Vienna Maxim's from Lehmann, *Wiener Branchen- und Adressverzeichnis*, kindly supplied by Professor Dr Ferdinand Opll and Dr Michaela Laichmann of the Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv.