

Producers deal with organizational and financial aspects of a performance. However, an eminent producer who is no longer living may continue to be named in advertisements (*The Lady of the Rose* was billed as ‘The George Edwardes Production’ at Daly’s in 1922, seven years after Edwardes’s death). Some producers are more than presenters of a show; they are involved as artistic directors or as actor managers. Occasionally, a producer may be involved in another capacity: Hassard Short, who presented *Waltzes from Vienna* at the Alhambra, London, in 1931, given on Broadway as *The Great Waltz* in 1934, also took control of the stage lighting for both productions. Sometimes, a stage director is called a producer, adding to the confusion. At other times, a programme might name a stage director as the stage manager, a job description that usually indicates someone who coordinates the work of the stage crew. In simple terms, it may be said that stage directors take rehearsals with the company, while producers take lunch with agents and sponsors. Chapter 3 explored the activities of producers as entrepreneurs, negotiators, managers, and presenters. However, because the label ‘producer’ is imprecise, some names will return in the present chapter, which is concerned with the staging and performance of operetta. A certain degree of overlap is unavoidable, since decisions about staging by directors and designers carry financial implications.

Producer Directors

George Edwardes combined the skills of artistic director and impresario. Although he appointed Pat Malone (always billed as J. A. E. Malone) stage director at Daly’s and, from 1909, asked Edward Royce to direct at times (especially the No. 1 Touring Company), Edwardes remained involved in all aspects of production, and everything took place under his supervision.¹

¹ James Jupp, *The Gaiety Stage Door: 30 Years of Reminiscences of the Theatre* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1923), 201.

He was born (without the second 'e' in his family name) in Clee, near Grimsby, the son of a customs officer, and first became interested in theatre while looking after a touring company organized by a cousin.² His first London job was as acting manager for D'Oyly Carte at the Opera Comique in 1875. In the 1890s he was credited with the invention of musical comedy, which mixed styles from both operetta and music hall and had romantic, often contemporary, plots.³ He experimented first at the Prince of Wales Theatre, before trying out this new type of show at the Gaiety. He enjoyed a breakthrough success there during 1894–96 with Ivan Caryll's musical comedy *The Shop Girl*.⁴ By the time the new Gaiety opened in 1903, Edwardes's reputation as an entrepreneur and producer was without equal.

In 1894, he took over management of Daly's Theatre, and turned it into a major West End attraction. Long runs were a sign of his accomplishment: between 1898 and 1913 there were only eleven productions at Daly's. Yet, though Edwardes was regarded as having a keen aptitude for spotting a hit show, he was not infallible. Far from foreseeing the success of *The Merry Widow*, he 'had little faith in its drawing power', and, indeed, presented it only as 'a stopgap'.⁵ A hitch in negotiations had prevented him from producing Fall's *The Dollar Princess* instead. An indication that Edwardes thought it risky was that he anticipated no more than a six-week run, and asked inventive scene designer Joseph Harker to adapt a set for Act 2 that had been used in the previous Daly's production, Hugo Felix's *The Merveilleuses*.⁶ Expecting a short run, Edwardes had commissioned a piece from Leslie Stuart (*Havana*) to follow, and had to stage it at the Gaiety instead.⁷ Edwardes knew Lehár's operetta had faced a mixed reception in Vienna (part enthusiastic, part critical), but it seemed as if a change in public taste was in the air. He had responded to a previous change in public taste in the 1890s by developing musical comedy. In the

² Ursula Bloom, *Curtain Call for the Guv'nor: A Biography of George Edwardes* (London: Hutchinson, 1954), 27, 38–43.

³ John Hollingshead, 'Good Old Gaiety': *An Historiette and Remembrance* (London: The Gaiety Theatre Company, 1903), 72.

⁴ Book and lyrics by H. J. W. Dam, with additional music by Lionel Monckton, and additional lyrics by Adrian Ross.

⁵ George Graves, *Gaieties and Gravities: The Autobiography of a Comedian* (London: Hutchinson, 1931), 88; and W. MacQueen-Pope and D. L. Murray, *Fortune's Favourite: The Life and Times of Franz Lehár* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), 61.

⁶ W. H. Berry, *Forty Years in the Limelight* (London: Hutchinson, 1939), 142.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 146; Alan Hyman, *Sullivan and His Satellites: A Survey of English Operettas 1860–1914* (London: Chappell and Elm Tree Books, 1978), 176. Edwardes still suffered doubts about *The Merry Widow* at the final rehearsal; see W. H. Berry, *Forty Years in the Limelight* (London: Hutchinson, 1939), 111.

first decade of the twentieth century, he was again correct in sensing the winds of change. The success of *The Merry Widow* in London was hailed by MacQueen-Pope as inaugurating ‘a new era in musical plays’.⁸

Edwardes took risks with his productions, as he did in his gambling at the racetrack. André Messager’s *Véronique* had been very successful in the West End in 1904, and it encouraged him to invest more money in the production of foreign operetta by bringing the same composer’s *The Little Michus* (*Les P’tites Michu*) to Daly’s the following year. He began travelling to continental Europe regularly, on the lookout for something new and exciting. He took interest in the stage works of Jean Gilbert produced in Berlin during 1910–11, while that composer was in residence at the Adolph-Ernst-Theater.⁹ In 1914, Edwardes had the misfortune of being in Germany when war broke out and found himself interned for a month. It damaged his already ailing health and he died on 4 October 1915, a few days before his sixtieth birthday. Although this occurred during the First World War, Lehár managed to send a wreath to his funeral. Edwardes was remarkable for being strong willed and astute in his judgement, but his attitude was not that of the autocrat. He would, in the end, stand by his own individual opinion, but ‘was eager to elicit criticism from all and sundry’, including general theatre staff.¹⁰ He was widely admired for his skills in both managing and producing.

Speed was the mark of his genius. . . . In one short day he would listen to the music and lyrics of a new number and suggest changes; improve the colour scheme of a famous designer’s sketches for costumes; suggest telling details in a scenic artist’s model for a big new scene; hear part of a new play; interview personally dozens of artists for present or future engagements; and, finally, discuss with his staff important work that would take months to complete and cost thousands of pounds.¹¹

Robert Courtneidge, a contemporary of Edwardes, was another producer director in London, and he exercised additional skill as an actor manager. He was born in Glasgow, but his father’s death a month later made it necessary to move with his mother and sister to Edinburgh, where his mother had found employment in a factory. She earned three shillings

⁸ MacQueen-Pope and Murray, *Fortune’s Favourite*, 115.

⁹ Marion Linhardt, ‘Local Contexts and Genre Construction in Early Continental Musical Theatre’, in Len Platt, Tobias Becker, and David Linton, eds., *Popular Musical Theatre in Germany and Britain, 1890–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 44–61, at 53.

¹⁰ Graves, *Gaieties and Gravities*, 111.

¹¹ D. Forbes-Winslow, *Daly’s: The Biography of a Theatre* (London: W. H. Allen, 1944), 50–51.

and sixpence a week, and the family were so poor they slept on straw.¹² Courtneidge's first job, at 13, was as messenger boy for a stationer's, and it was there that he met Frank Laubach, who was from a German family of musicians. Courtneidge was soon borrowing books from a circulating library kept by Frank's sisters.¹³ Frank was engaged to play in the orchestra of the newly rebuilt Theatre Royal, and this was how Courtneidge became familiar with the pleasures of theatrical entertainment.¹⁴ Courtneidge was determined to become an actor. He moved to Manchester and got a job as 'super' (caretaker) at the Prince's Theatre.¹⁵ He then began to act in minor roles at various theatres, public halls, and even public houses. He continued as an actor for twenty years. At the close of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, Courtneidge gained experience of production and management at Manchester's Prince's Theatre. It was there he made the acquaintance of George Edwardes, who attended its annual pantomimes. Edwardes offered him the opportunity of producing Ivan Caryll's comic opera *The Duchess of Dantzic* at the Lyric, London, in 1903. Courtneidge then leased the Shaftesbury and spent £12,000 reconstructing the auditorium.¹⁶ He went on to produce and direct Fall's *Princess Caprice* (*Der liebe Augustin*) and Gilbert's *Cinema Star* there.

Stage Directors

A stage director may appear in the programme as 'stage manager' or 'stage producer', sometimes as 'producer', and sometimes following the phrase 'staged by'. To add to the complication, a producer might share in some of the direction. J. J. Shubert, for example, was credited with supervising *The Lady in Ermine* (1922), while Charles Sinclair directed, and with being supervisor of *Katja* (1926), which Jesse C. Huffman directed. Jacob Shubert, always known as J. J., enjoyed stage directing and was sometimes named as sole director, as he was for Kálmán's *Her Soldier Boy* (1916), Straus's *Naughty Riquette* (1926), Kálmán's *Countess Maritza* (1926) and Kollo's *Three Little Girls* (1930). He also shared credits as a co-director, as he did with J. Harry Benrimo for *The Girl from Brazil* (Winterberg's *Die schöne Schwedin*) in 1915, J. C. Huffman for *My Lady's Glove* (Straus's *Die schöne Unbekannte*) in 1917, and, after the war, with Fred G. Latham for

¹² Robert Courtneidge, *I Was an Actor Once* (London: Hutchinson, 1930), 15. Three shillings and sixpence would be the equivalent of around £20 in 2015.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 23. ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25. ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28. ¹⁶ Courtneidge, *I Was an Actor Once*, 207.

Künneke's operettas *Caroline (Der Vetter aus Dingsda)* in 1923, and *The Love Song* in 1925. Huffman and Benrimo were both experienced operetta directors. Huffman directed the Broadway premiere of Fall's *Lieber Augustin* at the Casino in 1913, and he and Benrimo shared the direction of Oskar Nedbal's *The Peasant Girl (Polenblut)* at 44th Street Theatre in 1916 before Benrimo went on to conduct Lehár's *Alone at Last* that same year at the Shubert Theatre.

There were others who directed operetta frequently, but whose reputations have faded. One such is George Marion, who directed Broadway productions of *The Merry Widow*, *The Gay Hussars* (Kálmán's *Ein Herbstmanöver*), *The Love Cure* (Eysler's *Künstlerblut*), *The Spring Maid* (Reinhardt's *Die Sprudelfee*), *Gypsy Love*, *Modest Suzanne*, *The Rose Maid* (Granichstaedten's *Bub oder Mädel?*), *The Woman Haters* (Eysler's *Die Frauenfresser*), *The Purple Road* (Reinhardt's *Napoleon und die Frauen*), *Sári* (Kálmán's *Der Zigeunerprimás*), and *Maids of Athens* (Lehár's *Das Fürstenkind*). Marion's prestige dwindled, perhaps, as a consequence of his bestowing on his son the same given name as himself. When George Marion, Jr achieved fame as a Hollywood screenwriter, he eclipsed his father's achievements.

Some prominent directors of operetta in London have already been mentioned, such as J. A. E. Malone. Philip Michael Faraday, like J. J. Shubert, mixed producing and directing. He directed *The Girl in the Taxi*, *Nightbirds*, *Love and Laughter*, *The Laughing Husband*, and *Mam'selle Tralala* at the Lyric, 1912–14. After the war, Fred J. Blackman and Felix Edwardes directed several well-received operettas. At the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, William Abingdon directed *The Land of Smiles* and *Wild Violets* in 1932, and *Ball at the Savoy* the year after. The producer of the latter was none other than Oscar Hammerstein II, who had also written the book and lyrics of the English version. It is another indication of links between the West End and Broadway, even if this particular operetta was not given in New York.

Musical Directors

The careers of directors working in both London and New York exemplify the cultural exchange taking place. Stanislav Stange directed both the Broadway and West End productions of *The Chocolate Soldier* (for which he had written the English book and lyrics), and J. Harry Benrimo conducted *Soldier Boy!* in London. Musical directors, too, would sometimes

appear in both cities. Frank Tours, who worked for six years at Daly's, the Gaiety, and the Prince of Wales Theatre, moved to New York in 1912 to conduct at the New Amsterdam and the Casino; he then returned to the UK in 1920, but went back in 1934 to conduct *The Great Waltz* at the Center Theatre. Harold Vicars, who conducted half a dozen operettas on Broadway, was musical director for *The Dollar Princess* at Daly's in London, where Merlin Morgan was the regular conductor for many years.

Those responsible for the musical direction and conducting of English versions of continental European operetta in London and New York were often involved in more than coaching singers and conducting. They were expected to make arrangements of the music when necessary and were often asked to compose songs for interpolation into the operetta, perhaps to showcase the talent of a certain member of the cast. In addition, a publisher might ask a musical director to make medley of tunes from the operetta that could be sold as sheet music. Not least of the demands on a conductor were those made by record companies, who were keen to release discs of successful shows. That might entail rehearsing with one or more new singers, if members of the cast were not available for the recording dates.

Some conductors went on to build substantial reputations. Max Steiner, who was to achieve fame as a film composer, was invited to London by Edwardes to conduct a performance of *The Merry Widow* in 1909. Steiner's paternal grandfather had been the manager of the Theater an der Wien in the later nineteenth century, and Steiner gained professional experience of the theatre from the age of 15. In London, Steiner soon found himself employed as musical director for all Edward Moss's theatres, which included the Adelphi and the Hippodrome.¹⁷ When war broke out, he was interned as an enemy alien, but the Duke of Westminster obtained exit papers allowing him to travel to New York in December 1914. In the USA, he was to be found on Broadway in 1921 conducting Walter Kollo's operetta *Drei alte Schachteln*, given as *Phoebe of Quality Street*.

There were many other musical directors who left less of a historical trace and, in certain cases, time seems to have drawn a thick veil over their life in the theatre. Little is known of Gustave Salzer, who conducted many operettas on Broadway, or of Oscar Radin, a frequent musical director for the Shuberts. Gaetano Merola, who founded San Francisco Opera in 1923, has received little recognition for his previous work as a Broadway operetta

¹⁷ Peter Wegele, *Max Steiner: Composing, Casablanca, and the Golden Age of Film Music* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 56.

conductor. Musical directors tend to fall between the cracks in dictionaries and encyclopedias of the stage. Consider the case of Jacques Heuval, who conducted many important shows at the Lyric Theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue. Between 1910 and 1930 he conducted the West End premieres of operettas by Straus (1910 and 1913), Gilbert (1912 and 1914), Eysler (1913), and *Nightbirds* (1911), an adaptation of Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* (see Appendix 1). After the war, he conducted Kálmán's *A Little Dutch Girl* (*Das Hollandweibchen*) in 1920, Eduard Künneke's *Love's Awakening* (*Wenn Liebe erwacht*) at the Empire Theatre in 1922, Franz Lehár's *The Three Graces* (*Der Libellentanz*) at the Empire in 1924, and the same composer's *Frederica* (*Friederike*) at the Palace Theatre in 1930. Yet, in spite of all this activity, sources of information about his life and character are scarce.

Musical directors can be a source of insights not found elsewhere, and, because Broadway was less consistent in using particular musical directors for operetta from the German stage, I am choosing two British figures. The first is Ernest Irving, whose first extended employment was as musical director of Charles Cuvillier's *The Lilac Domino* at the Empire Theatre in 1918. This was actually an operetta taken from the German stage, because Cuvillier, though French, had composed it to a German libretto for Leipzig in 1912. By 1930, Irving's status was such that he was engaged as musical director for Franz Lehár's *The Land of Smiles* at Drury Lane in 1931, starring the internationally renowned Richard Tauber.

Irving was engaged for Stanley Scott's production of *The Dubarry* in 1932. The star was Anny Ahlers, who had previously performed in Berlin in Künneke's *Lady Hamilton* and Benatzky's *Casanova*. Irving wrote in his autobiography, 'I have never seen anybody quite like Anny. Her personality was unique and overwhelming'.¹⁸ He was determined to do his best for her, in spite of the troubles that beset her.

Irving explained how he coached Ahlers in the singing of the song 'I Give My Heart', which was actually Mackeben's own composition and not in the original Millöcker operetta.

She had a loud raucous singing voice, but we kept that a secret while she learned to speak the English dialogue. The day came when a decision had to be made, and at the first rehearsal with the orchestra I said to Anny, 'Don't sing, act the scene, speak the words, sing a note or two here and there but no top ones, and leave the rest to

¹⁸ Ernest Irving, *Cue for music* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1959), 124. Irving died in 1953 before completing a last chapter to his autobiography, which was published posthumously.

us'. I then trained the musicians in twenty different variations of 'I Give My Heart', so that artist and orchestra became united in emotional expression.

On the recording made of this song in 1932, it is evident that, despite the coaching, Irving is sometimes anticipating and sometimes following her performance, rather than directing it.¹⁹ In the second verse, he is gauging her flexible approach to tempo and, at the end of the refrain, he is trying to assess exactly when she will begin each of the final two phrases that follow on from notes on which she pauses. Each time, he is just a little late bringing in the orchestra.

Musical directors developed a practical experience that gave them an awareness of what did and did not work on stage. In a letter to Ralph Vaughan Williams, Irving offers his opinion in verse on the use of an off-stage singing voice while dialogue is in progress. Here is an excerpt, addressed to an imaginary stage director or composer:

I very much regret to state
Your scheme for treating number 8
Has pulled us up with quite a jerk
Because we fear it will not work.

Miss Mabel Ritchie's off-stage tune,
Besides annoying Miss Lejeune,
Would cover, blur, confuse and fog
Our most expansive dialogue.²⁰

Humorous it may be, but the advice is that of the seasoned hand who knows what mixture of sounds fails to work in the theatre.

Long runs were welcome relief from the insecurity of the theatre world and, similarly, an operetta that was produced regularly could offer job security for performers who excelled in a particular role. In Germany, Artur Preuss played Schubert in Heinrich Berté's *Das Dreimäderlhaus* over a period of ten years. In the UK, Frederick Blamey, who played the same role in George Clutsam's adaption of Berté's operetta as *Lilac Time* when it was revived in 1925, went on the play Schubert in some 1800 performances by 1930. Irving makes us aware, however, that a successful show

¹⁹ Anny Ahlers, with Her Majesty's Theatre Orchestra, 'I Give My Heart', *The Dubarry* (English book by Desmond Carter and Rowland Leigh, lyrics by Leigh; music by Carl Millöcker, arranged by Mackeben and Grun; this particular song was composed by Mackeben). Parlophone R 1205, Matrix no. WE 4550-2 (1932).

²⁰ Quoted in a tribute by Ralph Vaughan Williams in *Music and Letters*, 35 (1 Jan. 1954), 17-18, and reproduced by Derek Hudson, 'Prologue', in Irving, *Cue for music*, 11.

such as *Lilac Time*, which ran initially for two years at the Lyric, can have its downside for a musical director.

Such a long engagement is a soul-destroying affair, even with a little Schubert thrown in, but if the conductor is to have security of tenure, he cannot expect excitement as well.²¹

Nevertheless, Irving conducted the revival of *Lilac Time* at the same theatre in 1925, and, in 1933, when Richard Tauber visited the UK to present his own version of *Das Dreimäderlhaus* at the Aldwych with a Viennese opera company, Irving accepted the role of musical director. He then began to work more and more in film music and was appointed musical director of Ealing Studios in 1935. Although he composed for films himself, he championed many British composers, such as John Ireland, Alan Rawsthorne and Ralph Vaughan Williams. When the latter turned his film score for *Scott of the Antarctic* into *Sinfonia Antartica* he dedicated it to Irving.

Another well-known musical director was Arthur Henry Wood, who acquired early professional experience playing violin and conducting in such diverse places as Harrogate, Bournemouth, and Llandudno. His first experience of conducting continental European operetta in London was André Messager's *Véronique* at the Apollo in 1904. His outstanding ability ensured that he was employed at the most prestigious of London theatres, most significantly, the Gaiety (1917–21), Daly's (1922–26), and His Majesty's (1928–29). Wood presided over West End premieres of operettas by Fall, Gilbert, Stolz, Straus, Lehár, and Benatzky. He also conducted the revival of *The Merry Widow* at Daly's Theatre in 1922, a triumph despite the absence of its adored former star, Lily Elsie. In the 1930s, Wood was often on tour outside London.

Like Irving, he is a source of information regarding unexpected situations in which a musical director becomes embroiled. Forbes-Winslow relates a story told to him by Wood regarding a calamity that befell Straus's *Cleopatra* (*Die Perlen der Cleopatra*) during its try-out at the Opera House, Manchester, on 11 May 1925.²²

On the morning of the first performance, while I was having a last band rehearsal, a water main burst in the street outside. We looked up to find rivers flowing down the gangways, and since water finds its own level, these emptied into the orchestral

²¹ Irving, *Cue for music*, 96.

²² It was an adaptation by John Hastings Turner, with lyrics by Harry Graham, of *Die Perlen der Cleopatra* (1923).

pit. By the time the orchestra had saved their instruments and scrambled out, the water was four feet deep. With the aid of the Fire brigade it was pumped out – or most of it. But the theatre was permeated through and through with the odour of damp and dusty plush. Everything was damp, the orchestra pit especially. In order to make it habitable at all, we had to put planks down, and the musicians kept their feet on these, while three inches of water swirled round their chair-legs. The elite of Manchester, drawn to a fashionable first night, got something of a shock that evening. They arrived to find the floor of the stalls deep in sawdust. As for me, I conducted the performance clothed in evening dress and gum boots.²³

Thanks to Edison Bell cylinder recordings made in 1922, we can hear the Daly's Theatre Orchestra, conducted by Wood in a selection from *The Merry Widow*.²⁴ On recordings issued by Columbia in the 1920s, the Gaiety orchestra conducted by Wood, performs music from Gilbert's *Katja, the Dancer* – although he was not the musical director for this operetta at the Gaiety.²⁵

As with many other musical directors, Wood was not merely a conductor, but also contributed to performances as an arranger. Arranging was necessary if structural changes had been made in the English version of a German operetta, or if the theatre orchestra differed in size from that called for in the composer's original score. Wood was co-arranger with Constant Lambert of Kálmán's *A Kiss in Spring (Das Veilchen von Montmartre)* at the Alhambra in 1932. He also composed additional music, and contributed interpolated numbers to Gilbert's *The Cinema Star* at the Shaftesbury 1914, Straus's *Cleopatra* at Daly's in 1925, and Gilbert's *Yvonne (Uschi)* at Daly's in 1926. Despite all this activity, Wood has been almost forgotten today – although millions of British radio listeners are familiar with one of his compositions that serves as the theme tune of the long-running BBC radio series *The Archers*.²⁶

There was little social mingling between orchestral musicians and actors, but, as musical directors, Irving and Wood were closely involved with members of the cast – for instance, working with singers to shape their interpretations of songs. Robert Courtneidge remarked that the 'erudite Ernest Irving' and the 'genial Arthur Wood' were welcomed in dressing rooms, theatre clubs, and social gatherings, but not those who played in the orchestra.²⁷

²³ Forbes-Winslow, *Daly's*, 166.

²⁴ *The Merry Widow*, Daly's Theatre Orchestra under Arthur Wood, Edison Bell Velvet Face 565, X1279 (1922).

²⁵ He also made records for Columbia of Daly's Theatre Orchestra in *Madame Pompadour*, a work he was musically directing himself.

²⁶ 'Barwick Green: A Maypole Dance', the fourth movement of *My Native Heath* (1925).

²⁷ Courtneidge, 'I Was an Actor Once', 205–6.

Professional musicians had begun to feel the necessity of organizing in order to have greater negotiating power over work conditions. T. L. Southgate wrote anxiously in 1894 of the associations of musicians being formed in Manchester and London, and their intention to control the work practices of all British musicians.²⁸ However, not all musicians joined these associations, and they remained weak. The Amalgamated Musicians' Union had been founded in 1893, but when the orchestra of the Grand Theatre, Leeds, walked out in dispute in 1895, the management hired a new orchestra and faced down the threats of boycotts and picketing.²⁹

Theatre musicians in New York had also been making demands in the nineteenth century. The American Federation of Musicians replaced the National League of Musicians in 1896, but the status of the theatre musician rarely rose above that of professional skilled worker, whereas singers were regularly viewed as artists, albeit of lesser or greater quality. That did not mean that stage performers were without their own labour struggles. London variety artists went on strike in January and February 1907, demanding a minimum wage and a maximum working week. In New York, there was a five-week actors' strike during August and September 1919, when the Actors' Equity Association demanded reforms, such as payment for a stipulated number of rehearsals, and extra pay for extra performances. The Producing Managers' Association at first refused to negotiate, but public sympathy was largely with the actors, and a compromise was reached.³⁰

Dance Directors

The Merry Widow included a memorable waltz routine, which encouraged dance directors to find ways of capturing the audience's attention. Act 2 of the production of Lehár's *The Count of Luxembourg* at Daly's contained an inspired sequence, devised by Edward Royce and choreographed by Jan Oy-Ray, in which Lily Elsie as Angèle and Bertram Wallis as René waltzed up a grand staircase on one side of the stage, continued along a balcony at the top, and descended a staircase on the opposite side. The effect was

²⁸ T. L. Southgate, 'The First Step in Musical Trades-Unionism', *Musical News*, 6 (1894), 57. See George Kennaway, 'Opera Orchestral Contracts Considered as a Research Resource', in Anastasia Belina-Johnson and Derek B. Scott, eds., *The Business of Opera* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 119–32, at 124.

²⁹ See Kennaway, 'Opera Orchestral Contracts', 124–25.

³⁰ Burns Mantle, ed., *The Best Plays of 1919–1920* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1920), 1–3.

sensational and was imitated in the Broadway version.³¹ Of course, waltzing on a staircase posed difficulties: Wallis tripped and fell one evening in 1912, but he was unhurt, so Daisy Irving who had taken over the role of Angèle at that time, gamely chose to join him in his fall, much to the audience's amusement.³² Ironically, the person most likely to have fallen was Elsie, who, in the early performances of this operetta, was taking morphine to counteract the pain of an operation for appendicitis.³³

The task of an operetta dance director could differ markedly from that of an opera choreographer, as, for example, when Fred Farren had to arrange a variety of comic dance moves for the male sextet 'Women!' in *The Merry Widow* at Daly's. It was a number that, in the words of cast member Bill Berry, 'brought all the nuts of that "Marsovian" village together on the stage at one time'.³⁴ Dance is vital to operetta, and singers are expected to be able to dance (Richard Tauber was a rare exception).³⁵ Choreographers, therefore, were sorely needed – hence the importance of Louis Grundlach in Vienna and Berlin, and Julian Mitchell, Jack Mason, and Albertina Rasch in New York. Some dance arrangers worked on both sides of the Atlantic, such as Max Rivers, who was responsible for the choreography of *White Horse Inn* at both the Coliseum and the Center Theatre, Broadway. The innovative ballet choreographer Frederick Ashton devised the dances for Benatzky's *The Flying Trapeze* (*Zirkus aimé*), produced at London's Alhambra Theatre in 1935.

Designers

Designers involved in operetta fall into two categories: those concerned with sets and those who focus on costume. Costume designers received

³¹ 'Mr Bertram Wallis and Miss Lily Elsie waltz together up a staircase . . . a feat that was successfully accomplished twice . . . the audience roared for more'. 'The Count of Luxembourg', *The Times*, 22 May 1911, 10. '[The] Count and his bride, who thus far does not know that she is his bride, [waltz] up and down a long flight of stairs. The thing is very gracefully done and, of course, creates a mild sensation'. 'The Count of Luxembourg', *New York Times*, 17 Sep. 1911, 11. The staircase duet ('Are You Going to Dance?') for Angèle and René was a duet for Juliette and Brissard in the Vienna version ('Mädel klein, Mädel fein').

³² Forbes-Winslow, *Daly's*, 98.

³³ Ernest Short, *Sixty Years of Theatre* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1951), 148. The *Times* reviewer seems aware that Elsie is physically weak on the opening night and imagines her delight at having had a 'triumph – or escape' with the successful performance of the staircase waltz. 'The King and Queen at Daly's Theatre', *The Times*, 22 May 1911, 10.

³⁴ Berry, *Forty Years in the Limelight*, 152.

³⁵ Carl Dahlhaus notes that the importance allotted to dance music stems from the Viennese operetta tradition. 'Zur musikalischen Dramaturgie der "lustigen Witwe"', *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift*, 12:40 (1985), 657–64, at 657.

some attention in Chapter 3, and they included figures such as Comelli, Lucile, Ernst Stein, Cora MacGeachy, and Homer B. Conant. Another notable figure was Wilhelm [William John Charles Pitcher], who had designed costumes for Gilbert and Sullivan productions before he created the costumes for *The Girl in the Train* at the Vaudeville and *Madame Pompadour* at Daly's. Prior to his becoming a celebrated director, Vincente Minelli had worked in costume and set design, and was responsible for the costumes in the New York production of *The DuBarry* at the George M. Cohan Theatre, in 1932. There were others who worked hard and long but whose names are less known: Mrs Field, wardrobe mistress at Daly's, made the costumes for many of those in *The Merry Widow*. After twenty-five years of service to that theatre, she became wardrobe mistress at Drury Lane.

In preparation for the opening night, the importance of stage scenery for creating an impact on the theatre audience should not be neglected. Among West End set designers, few attained the prestige of Joseph Harker. Forbes-Winslow calls him 'the greatest scene painter of his generation'.³⁶ He was from Manchester, and his mother, a well-known actress, Maria O'Connor, had instilled in him a love of the stage. Before enhancing the visual impact of productions at Daly's, he had worked for D'Oyly Carte creating memorable sets for the Savoy operas.³⁷

One of the most admired scene designers on Broadway was Joe Urban, an Austrian who had emigrated to the USA in 1912 and worked frequently for Florenz Ziegfeld.³⁸ P. G. Wodehouse and Guy Bolton, who provided the book and lyrics for Kálmán's *Miss Springtime* (*Der Faschingsfee*) at the New Amsterdam in 1916, praised his work on that production and claimed Urban was 'making history with his stage-settings and even more with his revolutionary stage lighting'.³⁹ The next year, his scenery for *The Riviera Girl* (*Die Csárdásfürstin*) was acclaimed in the *New York Times* for its 'monumental stateliness and rich simplicity in color'.⁴⁰ The scene designer the Shuberts gave most consistent employment to in the 1920s and 1930s was Watson Barratt, although they hired others.

³⁶ Forbes-Winslow, *Daly's*, 94.

³⁷ Raymond Walker and David Skelly, *Backdrop to a Legend: D'Oyly Carte Scenic Design over 100 Years* (Silsoe, Bedfordshire: published by the authors, 2018), 80–84, 124, 136, 141, and 241.

³⁸ Amy Henderson and Dwight Blocker Bowers, *Red, Hot & Blue: A Smithsonian Salute to the American Musical* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 44–48.

³⁹ P. G. Wodehouse and Guy Bolton, *Bring on the Girls: The Improbable Story of Our Life in Musical Comedy, with Pictures To Prove It* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1954), 50.

⁴⁰ "'The Riviera Girl' Charms Musically', *New York Times*, 25 Sep. 1917, 9.

The Background and Training of Singers

The closing decades of the nineteenth century witnessed an increasing number of actors coming from higher social strata.⁴¹ This was undoubtedly part and parcel of what Michael Booth has described as ‘the slow but sure upper-middle-class takeover’ of the theatre, and its consequent growing respectability.⁴² There was also a striking growth in the number of women entering the theatrical profession. The English census of 1851 recorded 1398 male and 643 female actors but, in the census of 1891, women outnumbered men by 3696 to 3625.⁴³ In the theatre, it was possible for women to earn more than men and for wives to earn more than husbands. Seymour Hicks, as a leading comic actor, accepted a three-year contract at the Gaiety in 1894 that gave him weekly earnings of £15 rising to £25 over that period, but his wife, Ellaline Terriss, as ‘leading lady’ was offered a similar contract for £25 rising to £35.⁴⁴

A promising lead singer would be engaged at Daly’s at £10 a week, rising by £5 each year of a three-year contract.⁴⁵ Audition days were held once a week, and could attract two hundred hopefuls from the UK and continental Europe each time. In the first decade of the twentieth century, salaries for theatre performers were higher in London than in Vienna or Berlin.⁴⁶ Some of those auditioning were seeking a place in the chorus, which had now become professionalized.⁴⁷ The chorus was a good training ground for learning stage craft – for example, how to move and gesture. Many ex-chorus girls became stars in their own right at Daly’s: Mabel

⁴¹ Michael Sanderson, *From Irving to Olivier: A Social History of the Acting Profession in England, 1880–1983* (London: Athlone, 1984), 12–23, 331, and Appendix 1. Tobias Becker provides a comparative study of the social background and training of professional performers in Berlin and London in *Inszenierte Moderne: Populäres Theater in Berlin und London, 1880–1930* (Munich: Oldenburg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2014), 238–64.

⁴² Michael Booth, ‘The Metropolis on Stage’, in H. J. Dyos and Michael Woolf, eds., *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), 211–24, at 224.

⁴³ Christophe Charle, *Théâtres en capitales: Naissance de la société du spectacle à Paris, Berlin, Londres et Vienne* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 2008), 107.

⁴⁴ Figures from Seymour Hicks, *Seymour Hicks: Twenty-Four Years of an Actor’s Life* (London: Alston Rivers, 1910), 176.

⁴⁵ Forbes-Winslow, *Daly’s*, 40.

⁴⁶ See Charle, *Théâtres en capitales*, 134, Table 6B. In the 1900s in London, a leading actor could earn £40 to £60 a week (women often earning more than men), and those playing small parts could expect 25 shillings or more a week, a sum exceeding the average weekly wage of 23–24 shillings for a man in this decade. Sanderson, *From Irving to Olivier*, 80.

⁴⁷ Forbes-Winslow, *Daly’s*, 40–41. Salaries of chorus members (male and female) were typically £3 a week in 1918; see Gordon Williams, *British Theatre in the Great War: A Re-evaluation* (London: Continuum, 2003), 26–27.

Russell, Mabel Green, Gladys Cooper, Winifred Barnes, Maidie Andrews, Madeleine Seymour, Phyllis le Grand, Daisy Irving, Effie Mann, and Isobel Elsom. Evelyn Laye also began her career as a chorus girl, although not at Daly's, and went on to become a highly paid star of operetta in London in the 1920s and 1930s, appearing in *The Merry Widow* (revival 1923); *Madame Pompadour* (1923); *The Dollar Princess* (revival 1925); *Cleopatra* (1925), *Lilac Time* (revivals 1927 and 1928), *Helen!* (Offenbach, arranged by Korngold, 1932); and *Paganini* (1937).

Singers often took their first steps on the stage in pantomime. Derek Oldham, who achieved stardom as Bumerli in the revival of *The Chocolate Soldier* at the Lyric in 1914, had performed as a child in pantomime in the North West. Phyllis Dare also started out in pantomime.⁴⁸ In her teens, she studied music, singing, and dancing, while also performing in theatre. Robert Courtneidge regarded Dare with immense esteem, remarking, 'I never had an artist under my management who worked more assiduously at rehearsal, gave less trouble, or for whom I have a greater respect'.⁴⁹ In 1910, she played the divorce-case co-respondent Gonda van der Loo in *The Girl in the Train*. Ironically, Dare's father was a divorce clerk. Her one and only appearance at Daly's was as Mariana in *The Lady of the Rose* (1922).

Other singers had received operatic training, most notably Maggie Teyte, who had studied with the renowned Polish tenor Jean de Reszke in Paris. Teyte's domain was opera, but she accepted the role of Princess Julia in the West End production of Kálmán's *The Little Dutch Girl*. Constance Drever, born in Madras, India, and educated in Brussels and Paris, also had a trained operatic voice. She enjoyed huge success as Nadina in *The Chocolate Soldier* at the Lyric in 1910. Robert Evett, Daly's leading tenor during 1905–8, honed his vocal technique singing with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, and later starred in *The Merry Widow*, *A Waltz Dream*, *The Girl in the Train*, and Kálmán's *Autumn Manoeuvres*. Bertram Wallis had studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London, but first made his reputation in musical comedy on Broadway in the first decade of the twentieth century. He was sought out to play romantic leading roles in *The Count of Luxembourg*, *Love and Laughter* (Straus), *Madame Pompadour*, and *A Waltz Dream* (1934 revival). In some cases, professional training can only be assumed, given the roles performed. Wilda Bennett, for instance, sang the leading parts in Broadway productions of *The Riviera*

⁴⁸ Phyllis Dare, *From School to Stage* (written with the assistance of Bernard Parsons) (London: Collier, 1907), 8.

⁴⁹ Courtneidge, 'I Was an Actor Once', 193.



Figure 4.1 Donald Brian (1877–1948) as Danilo, cover of *The Theatre*, vol. 8, no. 84 (Feb. 1908).

Girl (1917), *The Lady in Ermine* (1922), and *Madame Pompadour* (1924), but little is known of her musical education – although her turbulent personal life was well reported.

Tenor Donald Brian became a major star of Broadway versions of German operetta in the first two decades of the twentieth century. He learned to sing in his local church choir in St John's, Newfoundland, where he was born and remained until the age of eighteen.⁵⁰ He won acclaim as Danilo in the Broadway premiere of *The Merry Widow* (Figure 4.1). His singing ability meant that, unlike Coyne, he was next able to play the romantic lead Freddy in *The Dollar Princess*. He also took leading parts in *The Siren* (1911), *The Marriage Market* (1913), *Sybil* (1916), and the revival of *The Chocolate Soldier* in 1921. Another prominent male singer was baritone John Charles Thomas, who had studied singing at the

⁵⁰ Charles Foster, *Donald Brian: The King of Broadway* (St John's, NL: Breakwater Books, 2005), 10 and 22.

Peabody Institute, Baltimore. He made a distinguished reputation for himself in the second decade of the century, singing in *Alone at Last* (1911), *Her Soldier Boy* (1916), and *The Star Gazer* (1917). It can be seen in Appendix 1, however, that there was more diversity in performers taking leading roles in Broadway productions of operetta from the German stage than there was in the West End. Howard Marsh, for example, gained his reputation as a star tenor after singing Baron Schober in *Blossom Time* (1921) but appeared in just one more German operetta, *The DuBarry* (1932), and tenor Dennis King's sole appearance in a German operetta was as Goethe in *Frederika* (1937).

The least operatic of singers were the comedians, who played character roles more rooted in music hall, vaudeville, or burlesque, than opera. William Henry Berry was a favourite with West End audiences because of his skill in comedy roles.⁵¹ He was always 'W. H. Berry' in cast lists, but known to acquaintances as Bill. Perhaps the name Bill Berry was thought too similar to bilberry for a theatre programme. He had worked initially for Keith Prowse, ticket agency.⁵² After appearing first in *The Merveilleuses* (1906), he spent ten consecutive years at Daly's Theatre. He played Foreign Office messenger Nisch in *The Merry Widow* (1907) and appeared, also, in *A Waltz Dream* (1908, and its revivals in 1911 and 1934), *The Dollar Princess* (1909), *The Count of Luxembourg* (1911), *Gipsy Love* (1912), *The Marriage Market* (1913), and the 1927 and 1928 revivals of *Lilac Time* at Daly's. Leo Fall found Berry hilarious as Bulger in *Dollar Princess* despite the differences between Austrian and British comedians: the latter made more of movement and gesture, and often used comic props – one such being Berry's tennis racket with an overlong handle in Act 2.⁵³

George Graves, perhaps the most celebrated comedian of the period, was born in London of Irish parents. He first appeared at Daly's in *The Little Michus* (1905), but his greatest triumph was playing Baron Popoff in *The Merry Widow*. Courtneidge asked him to appear in *Princess Caprice* at the Shaftesbury in 1912 and declared him 'audaciously funny'.⁵⁴ He had to pay him £200 a week, a far cry from the wage of £3.10s a week Graves had earned when he had hired him for the first time, years earlier.⁵⁵ Like other British stars, Graves toured abroad (including the USA, Canada, Russia, and South Africa). Charles B. Cochran praised Graves's 'unexcelled talents

⁵¹ Graves, *Gaieties and Gravities*, 95. ⁵² Berry, *Forty Years in the Limelight*, 23–25.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 155–58. ⁵⁴ Courtneidge, *I Was an Actor Once*, 218.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 218. Graves expresses his delight at this salary in his autobiography *Gaieties and Gravities*, 188.

as a comedian'.⁵⁶ He was known for inserting extra comic material into his roles, but it was not a practice exercise unique to the West End. At the Liberty Theatre, New York, in 1910, Tom McNaughten, a comedian from the UK, found an excuse to interpolate a recitation in Heinrich Reinhardt's *The Spring Maid* that had gone down well in London's music halls.⁵⁷

There is little room to do more than summarize some other comic performers. George Grossmith, Jr was both a comedian and actor-producer. He first made his name in musical comedy, but played a leading role in *The Girl on the Film (Filmzauber)* in 1913. G. P. Huntley [George Patrick Huntley], praised by Courtneidge as a 'light comedian unsurpassed in his own particular time',⁵⁸ first appeared at Daly's in Viktor Jacobi's *The Marriage Market* (1913). Another celebrated comedian, Huntley Wright, performed at Daly's more than 5000 times before the theatre closed.⁵⁹ His appearances included roles in *The Little Michus* (1905), *The Girl in the Train* (1910), *The Count of Luxembourg* (1911), *The Lady of the Rose* (1922), and *Madame Pompadour* (1923).

The International Market for Singers

Pat Malone, stage director of *The Merry Widow*, appears to be the source of journalist Henry Hibbert's assertion that Edwardes had at first booked the original star, Mizzi Günther, for the title role, but, taken aback at her size when she arrived in London, had felt obliged to reject her and pay financial compensation.⁶⁰ It was, supposedly, only after attending operetta performances in Vienna with William Boosey, that Edwardes became aware that leading singers in Vienna tended to be larger in physique and some years older than those appearing in London's musical comedies.⁶¹ That said, Mizzi Günther was no more than 26 years of age when she appeared in *Die*

⁵⁶ Foreword to Graves, *Gaieties and Gravities*, xi–xiii, at xi.

⁵⁷ Harry B. Smith, *First Nights and First Editions* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1931), 253–54.

⁵⁸ Forbes-Winslow, *Daly's*, 141. ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁶⁰ Henry G. Hibbert, *Fifty Years of a Londoner's Life* (London: Grant Richards, 1916), cited without pagination in Hyman, *The Gaiety Years*, 146. However, I have been unable to locate any reference to Günther in Hibbert's book. In any case, Hibbert is not reliable: on page 228, he attributes the composition of *A Waltz Dream* to Leo Fall (and also begins its title with a definite article instead of the indefinite). It may be the story is apocryphal, but the comedian Bill Berry, who took the role of Nisch in *The Merry Widow*, does seem confirm that Günther was 'in the running' for the part. W. H. Berry, *Forty Years in the Limelight* (London: Hutchinson, 1939), 38.

⁶¹ Fritzi Massary played characters on stage that were younger than her own age; for example, she was in her mid-thirties when she took on the role of Kondja in the Berlin production of *The Rose of Stamboul*. However, that was in 1917.

lustige Witwe, and would have been only 28 had she performed at Daly's in 1907. Ethel Jackson, who played the widow in New York, was 30. The story of Günther's rejection does not square with William Boosey's claim that he persuaded Edwardes to purchase the rights at the last minute on their joint continental trip.⁶² Moreover, Boosey's assertion that Edwardes was convinced that the 21-year-old Lily Elsie would be a hit in the title role casts further doubt upon the hiring of Günther.

Nevertheless, many performers from outside the UK appeared in operettas in the West End. Coyne was not the only American to land a role in *The Merry Widow*; it also featured Elizabeth Firth from New Jersey as Natalie, the 'highly respectable wife' of the ambassador. May de Sousa, who played Juliette in *The Count of Luxembourg* was American, too, and prior to her appearance at Daly's had performed at the Moulin Rouge in Paris and the Winter Garden in Berlin.⁶³ Charles Frohman had been unable to book her for *The Dollar Princess* on Broadway, but the Shuberts obtained her services for *Lieber Augustin* in 1913. Performance opportunities came in both directions across the Atlantic: Ethel Jackson, born in New York, had studied piano at the Vienna Conservatoire, before obtaining her first professional singing engagement in the chorus of *The Yeomen of the Guard* at the Savoy Theatre in 1897. Prior to taking the title role in *The Merry Widow*, she had appeared in operetta on Broadway playing Countess Sedlau in Johann Strauss's posthumous *Vienna Life* (1901). Coincidentally, Ethel Jackson, like Lily Elsie, quit the stage unexpectedly early, although both were to return to the boards from time to time. Elsie surprised Edwardes by declaring her intention to marry and retire from performance after appearing in *The Count of Luxembourg*. Jackson fainted twice while performing in *The Merry Widow* in spring 1908 and suffered additional anxiety from rumours concerning her imminent divorce proceedings. She obtained her divorce in August, and promptly married the solicitor who handled her case in October.⁶⁴

International stars were an important part of the transnational entertainment industry. Danish singer Carl Brisson (real name, Carl Pedersen), who had begun his career as a dancer and revue performer in Stockholm,

⁶² William Boosey, *Fifty Years of Music* (London: Ernest Benn, 1931), 167. The story does not tally, either, with the account given in David Slattery-Christy, *The Life and Times of Lily Elsie: Anything but Merry!* (Milton Keynes: Author House, 2011), 106–113.

⁶³ 'New York To See "Dollar Princess"', *New York Times*, 24 Apr. 1908, 9.

⁶⁴ 'Ethel Jackson Faints Again', *New York Times*, 18 Mar. 1908, 1; 'Divorce for Ethel Jackson', *New York Times*, 4 Aug. 1908, 7; 'The Merry Widow Is Again a Bride', *New York Times*, 27 Oct. 1908, 9.

played Danilo (to Evelyn Laye's Sonia) in the *Merry Widow* revival at Daly's in 1923 and, according to the musical director Arthur Wood, could barely speak English when he was hired.⁶⁵ Robert Michaelis, who became a Daly's favourite after playing Freddy Fairfax in *The Dollar Princess*, was born in St Petersburg, educated in London and Paris, and studied singing in Vienna from an Italian (Felice Bottelli). Among other roles, he played the romantic Gipsy lead, Jozsi, in *Gipsy Love*. Playing opposite him in that operetta was Sári Petráss, born in Budapest, and making her London debut. Edwardes said of her,

she is essentially a personality that fascinates you at once. She is not a great singer, but her phrasing is perfect.⁶⁶

Her last London appearance was as Sylva in *The Gipsy Princess* (1921). She drowned at the age of 41, when a car in which she was travelling plunged into the River Scheldt in Antwerp in 1930.

Emmy Wehlen, born in Mannheim, was the substitute merry widow for two weeks in April 1909, while Elsie took a holiday. Wehlen played to great acclaim as Olga in *The Dollar Princess*, and starred in both the West End and Broadway productions of *The Girl on the Film*. Despite the public admiration she garnered, she came under suspicion as a foreigner during the First World War, as did Petráss.⁶⁷ That did not prevent the renewed success of German and Hungarian singers in the West End once the memory of war began to fade. For example, Lea Seidl, who had sung the title role in the Viennese performance of *Friederike* in 1929, was warmly received in London playing the same role the following year. *Theatre World* was fulsome in its praise: 'her singing of perhaps the most beautiful song in the score ("Why Did You Kiss My Heart Awake?") is a revelation of the way in which good acting and singing may be combined'.⁶⁸ Seidl also sang at the Coliseum in *White Horse Inn*. Hungarian soprano Rosy Barsony played Kathi Mihazy in *Ball at the Savoy*, Drury Lane, 1933, and her husband Oskar Dénes was Mustapha Bei, attaché at the Turkish Embassy. Findon, in *The Play Pictorial* was bowled over by their routines together: 'They are as animated as quicksilver . . . They are here, there, and everywhere, laughing at and with themselves, and sending the audience into fits of hilarity with song and dance.'⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Quoted in Forbes-Winslow, *Daly's*, 159. ⁶⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 104.

⁶⁷ George Grossmith, 'G. G.' (London: Hutchinson, 1933), 92–93.

⁶⁸ N. H., 'Frederica', *Theatre World* (Oct. 1930), 102.

⁶⁹ B. W. Findon, *The Play Pictorial*, 63:379 (Mar. 1934), 54.

Two other well-known performers had a French connection. Yvonne Arnaud, who, like Ethel Jackson, originally planned to be a pianist, had studied at the Paris Conservatoire. She made her name in the West End playing Suzanne in *The Girl in the Taxi*, Zara in *Love and Laughter*, Etelka von Basewitz in *The Girl Who Didn't* (*Der lachende Ehemann*), and Noisette in *Mam'selle Tralala*. Parisian Alice Delysia, a star in her home city and New York, sang the title role in *Mother of Pearl* (*Eine Frau, die weiß, was sie will!*) at the Gaiety, a role that A. P. Herbert had reworked as a vehicle for her particular talents.

Operetta and Star Culture

Many singers already mentioned were part of a glamorous star culture (names of star performers and others playing key roles in operetta productions can be found in Appendix 1). One of the biggest names in Berlin was Vienna-born Fritzi Massary [Friederike Massaryk]. As a revue star at the Metropol, she demonstrated her skill at adopting different accents and playing a variety of characters. She gained recognition as an operetta singer after playing Princess Helene in Fall's *Der liebe Augustin* at the Neues Theater, in 1912. Her status as Berlin's leading female operetta star of the 1920s was established following her appearance in Straus's *Die Perlen der Cleopatra* (1923). She was Lutheran by religion, but Jewish by heritage, and left Germany in late 1932. She resided for a while in London, where Noël Coward became a friend. His stage work *Operette* of 1938 contained a role specially written for her. From 1939 on, she lived mainly in Beverly Hills, California.

Richard Tauber was Berlin's leading male star but rarely seen together with Massary. She was famed for roles in operettas by Fall and Straus (taking the lead in premieres of six Straus operettas), while Tauber became Lehár's favourite tenor after playing Józsi in a revival of *Zigeunerliebe* in 1920. His frequent partner in Lehár premieres was Croatian singer Vera Schwarz (*Paganini*, *Der Zarewitsch*, *Das Land des Lächelns*). Tauber married the singer Carlotta Vanconti in 1927, but they divorced the next year. She continued to extract money from him, however, by threatening to write a book about his inability to satisfy her sexually. It ended when she was found guilty of extortion in 1932.⁷⁰ Tauber's earnings at that time

⁷⁰ Charles Castle, with Diana Napier Tauber, *This Was Richard Tauber* (London: W. H. Allen, 1971), 86–88.



Figure 4.2 Richard Tauber (1891–1948) in Lehár’s *The Land of Smiles* (Drury Lane, 1931).

were, indeed, large: the year before Vanconti’s conviction, Stanley Scott had engaged him at £1500 a week (worth £96,880 in 2017) for his London debut in *The Land of Smiles* (Figure 4.2).⁷¹ George Grossmith described Tauber as an ‘indifferent actor’ with ‘no pretence of good looks’, who radiated a rare stage magnetism.⁷² He sang the lyrics mainly in German but spoke dialogue in English. On 8 May, the opening night, at which Lehár was present, Tauber took many curtain calls, then sang ‘You Are My Heart’s Delight’ in English.⁷³ This was ‘Dein ist mein ganzes Herz’, specially composed by Lehár to display Tauber’s lyrical skill to advantage. The *Times* reviewer was not happy with Tauber mixing German and English in his singing:

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 62. *Measuring Worth* gives this figure as an equivalent using changes in the UK’s RPI: www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ukcompare.

⁷² Grossmith, ‘G. G.’, 278. ⁷³ ‘Lehar Operetta in London’, *New York Times*, 9 May 1931, 21.

When for the sake of his audience, he moves from German to English, the delicacy and precision of his singing falter and he relies on methods of attack that are appropriate to artists not of his quality; but when he uses his own language he is a singer of exceptional power and discretion.⁷⁴

According to MacQueen-Pope, Tauber began 'You Are My Heart's Delight' softly, then belted out the repeat of the refrain, at the close of which he was rewarded with a noise resembling the crowd at Wembley Stadium.⁷⁵ The success of *The Land of Smiles* was, however, stopped in its tracks: an inflamed throat began to affect Tauber on the second night, and he failed to sing at the third performance. He took a week off, but it was soon clear that he needed to withdraw from the cast.⁷⁶ Robert Naylor substituted for him and did well, but the audience wanted Tauber. Bookings dropped off and did not fully recover when Tauber returned, since his appearances could not now be relied on. MacQueen-Pope shows no sympathy for Tauber and claims he 'just did as the whim took him'.⁷⁷

Scott planned to replace Tauber with Alfred Piccaver (a British-American tenor at the Vienna State Opera). Tauber was intensely jealous of him, and persuaded Lehár to tell Piccaver that he should not go to London.⁷⁸ Tauber returned but it was too late to rescue the show, and the operetta that promised to be the sensation of the season, thus petered out.⁷⁹ Lehár had been unlucky enough to suffer a similar fate on Broadway, when the prospects of *Gypsy Love* were damaged by Marguerite Sylva's loss of voice in the middle of the first act during its premiere.⁸⁰ In the end, there were just seventy-two performances of *The Land of Smiles*, 'all because of the temperament, the bad sportsmanship, the complete unreliability of a tenor', railed MacQueen-Pope.⁸¹ Nevertheless, Diana Napier Tauber insists in her biography *This Was Richard Tauber*, published in 1971, that his throat trouble was genuine.⁸² The following year, Tauber sang in a three-week revival at the Dominion Theatre, accepting a reduced weekly

⁷⁴ 'Drury Lane, "The Land of Smiles"', *The Times*, 9 May 1931, 10.

⁷⁵ MacQueen-Pope, *Fortune's Favourite*, 195–97.

⁷⁶ 'Herr Tauber and "The Land of Smiles"', *The Times*, 27 May 1931, 10. The *New York Times* reported that he was being paid a weekly salary the equivalent of \$5,000. 'Tauber Loses Voice Again', 26 May 1931, 24.

⁷⁷ MacQueen-Pope, *Fortune's Favourite*, 200. ⁷⁸ Castle, *This Was Richard Tauber*, 93–94.

⁷⁹ 'Old Drury's Bad Luck', *Play Pictorial*, 58:351 (Nov. 1931), 2.

⁸⁰ Smith, *First Nights and First Editions*, 256. On the opening night, she had to resort to speaking rather than singing her lines, see 'Mme. Sylva Sings To-night', *New York Times*, 25 Oct. 1911, 13.

⁸¹ MacQueen-Pope and Murray, *Fortune's Favourite*, 202.

⁸² Castle, *This Was Richard Tauber*, 64.

salary of £900, but doubts about his reliability remained: the *Theatre World* hailed him as ‘Herr Tauber of the golden voice and temperamental larynx’.⁸³

In September 1933, Tauber was back in the UK with his own version of *Lilac Time* at the Aldwych and began appearing in British films. In 1937, he sang in a production of Lehár’s *Paganini* at the Lyceum, managing, according to one reviewer, to solve the ‘difficulty of resemblance’ between himself and Paganini by ‘converting the hero into a portly flirt’.⁸⁴ The sets and décor for *Paganini* were by Ernst Stein, whose costumes for *White Horse Inn* had been extensively praised, and who was almost always credited with the title ‘professor’. The reception of *Paganini* had been lukewarm in Vienna but was a major success at the Deutsches Künstlertheater, Berlin, in 1926, starring Tauber and Schwarz. The director of the theatre, Heinz Saltenburg, had been convinced *Paganini* would fail, as it had done in Vienna. He told Tauber, ‘I’ll be happy to get through the first night without scandalizing the audience!’⁸⁵ Unfortunately, success eluded *Paganini* when Charles B. Cochran, whose name was a guarantee of quality, brought it to London, for, despite audience enthusiasm, the numbers attending were small. *The Play Pictorial* commented, ‘Franz Lehár’s operetta contains some of this distinguished composer’s finest work, and his flowing melodies are brilliantly sung by Richard Tauber and Evelyn Laye, two superb artists who give of their best’.⁸⁶ It contained songs that soon became favourites – ‘Girls Were Made To Love and Kiss’, ‘Love at Last’, and ‘Love, Live Forever!’ – and Tauber took a cut in salary to help keep it going – but it still failed. It was a sign of decreasing appetite for operetta, because, six years earlier, Cochran had made £50,000 profit out of Coward’s *Bitter Sweet* at His Majesty’s, despite its higher production costs.⁸⁷ This declining taste for operetta was occurring on both sides of the Atlantic; *Paganini* was not produced in New York, although the rights had been bought by J. J. Shubert in 1923.⁸⁸

Tauber settled in the UK in 1938 and that year played Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* at Covent Garden. In 1940, he took on British nationality. His final appearance in a London revival of *The Land of Smiles* was at the Lyric in summer 1942. Tauber’s talent was not confined to singing, he had studied composition at the Frankfurt Conservatory, and his operetta *Der*

⁸³ D. C. F., ‘The Land of Smiles’, *Theatre World*, 18:90 (Jul. 1932), 13.

⁸⁴ ‘Lyceum Theatre’, *The Times*, 21 May 1937, 12.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Castle, *This Was Richard Tauber*, 46.

⁸⁶ Anon., *The Play Pictorial*, 71:420 (Jul. 1937), 5. ⁸⁷ Castle, *This Was Richard Tauber*, 99.

⁸⁸ ‘J. J. Shubert Gets Lehár’s Operettas’, *New York Times*, 6 Aug. 1923, 14.

singende Traum had been given a warm reception in Vienna in 1934. He composed an English operetta, *Old Chelsea*, in 1943, which included the hit song 'My Heart and I'. Tauber enjoyed conducting, too, and was the musical director for *Gay Rosalinda*, a version of *Die Fledermaus*, which had a lengthy run at the Palace Theatre, 1945–46. It was not until September 1946 that Tauber was engaged to sing at the Shubert Theatre in *Yours Is My Heart*, the Broadway version of *Das Land des Lächelns*.⁸⁹

Lily Elsie, whose performance in the title role of *The Merry Widow* propelled her into West End stardom, was born in Wortley, Leeds, as Elsie Hodder (becoming Elsie Cotton after her mother's marriage). She was always called Elsie, not Lily, by those who knew her. Her step-father William Cotton was a theatre worker, and, when the family moved to Manchester, Elsie showed talent for performance as a child in variety theatres in Manchester and Salford. Her West End début was in Howard Talbot and Ivan Caryll's *A Chinese Honeymoon* (1903).⁹⁰ She was then taken up by George Edwardes and appeared in several of his productions, including Felix's *Madame Sherry* (1903) and Messenger's *The Little Michus* (1905). In addition to taking the title role in the London premiere of *The Merry Widow*, she also sang in the first Irish performance, at the Gaiety, Dublin, in August 1908, and, in October that year, played the widow at Manchester's Prince's Theatre with Edwardes's No. 1 Touring Company. Her subsequent role was Alice Condor in *The Dollar Princess* (1908), which attracted the attendance of King Manuel of Portugal twice in one week in December 1909.⁹¹ Next, she was Franzl in a Daly's revival of *A Waltz Dream* and, after that, Angèle Didier in *The Count of Luxembourg*. She retired during October 1911, to prepare for her marriage in November, and was replaced by Daisy Irving. She returned spasmodically to the stage during 1915–17, but then appeared rarely. She performed in *Pamela* (a comedy by Arthur Wimperis, with music by Frederic Norton) in 1917, and took the lead role in Stolz's *The Blue Train (Mädi)* at the Prince of Wales Theatre in 1927. Her marriage had ended in divorce in 1922 and, in that decade, the bouts of anxiety and melancholy she had long suffered were becoming more frequent. In later life, she underwent electric shock therapy, and then had a frontal lobotomy, which caused a severe personality

⁸⁹ A production had been planned by the Shuberts in 1930, and again in 1932, when they engaged American tenor Charles Hackett for the leading role, but both fell through. 'To Give New Lehar Works', *New York Times*, 11 Sep. 1930, 22, and 'Hackett to Sing in "Land of Smiles"', *New York Times*, 27 Oct. 1932, 22.

⁹⁰ Book by Charles Dance, lyrics by Harry Greenbank, music by Howard Talbot and Ivan Caryll.

⁹¹ Forbes-Winslow, *Daly's*, 82–83.

change.⁹² She died in St Andrew's Hospital, Dollis Hill, of bronchopneumonia on 16 December 1962.

Her one-time co-star, Joe Coyne, was born in New York, where he performed at Niblo's Garden at the age of 16. He tried his hand in London in 1901, then returned to New York, but came again to London in 1906. Like Lily Elsie, he lacked confidence in taking on a leading role in *The Merry Widow*. Nonetheless, George Graves recalls sardonically that Coyne believed his voice might someday 'give birth to a demi-semi-quaver or two', and thus, at times, he 'had to be restrained'.⁹³ In particular, his rendition at rehearsals of the melancholic 'There once were two prince's children' proved disconcerting, until it was recommended that he recite rather than sing the lyrics. The effect was striking, and, according to Graves, the mood he created, affected all who heard him.⁹⁴ In the 1923 revival, Carl Brisson continued the practice of reciting those lines, and can be heard doing so still on a recording made for Decca in 1931.⁹⁵ Because Coyne lacked vocal technique, he could not play the romantic hero Freddy in the next Daly's production, *The Dollar Princess*, so, instead, took the role of the millionaire Conder (Coudier in the German version). Thus, in London, Conder became the brother of dollar princess Alice, rather than her father. In spite of these changes, Fall, who had conducted the rather different Manchester try-out, was informed by his London agent Ernest Mayer that the reviews were glittering.

One of the most prominent British stars was José Collins. Born in Salford, in 1893, she started her career in music hall, where her mother Lottie Collins had achieved fame with the song 'Ta-ra-ra-Boom-de-ay' (words by Richard Morton, music arranged by Angelo A. Asher). Her acting and singing skills motivated the Shuberts to invite her to New York in 1911, and she appeared with Gaby Deslys in Eysler's *Vera Violetta* at the Winter Garden. She achieved stardom at the Casino the next year playing the lead role of Countess Rosalinda Cliquot in *The Merry Countess*, an adaptation of *Die Fledermaus* by Gladys Unger (given as *Nightbirds* in London). She revealed herself capable of singing the notoriously difficult csárdás, and, at barely twenty years of age, was earning the equivalent of £100 a week.⁹⁶ She then appeared in Lehár's *Alone at Last* and in the Ziegfeld Follies. She returned to London to perform in Seymour Hicks's *The Happy Day* at Daly's in 1916, but it was the next production there,

⁹² Slattery-Christy, *The Life and Times of Lily Elsie*, 192, 199, 206–7. ⁹³ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 90. ⁹⁵ Matrix GB 3949, Decca F 2820 (1931).

⁹⁶ José Collins, *The Maid of the Mountains: Her Story* (London: Hutchinson, 1932), 85.



Figure 4.3 José Collins (1887–1958) in Straus's *The Last Waltz* (Gaiety Theatre, 1922).

Fraser-Simson's *The Maid of the Mountains*, that gave her the role with which she was forever associated and which provided her with the title of her autobiography published in 1932. After this remarkable success, Collins continued to play leading roles for six consecutive years at Daly's Theatre. She took her leave after playing the title character in *Sybil*, in 1922, a role for which she had her hair bobbed and set a fashion for this new style among women in town.⁹⁷ She then played the leading role of Vera Lisaveta in *The Last Waltz* at the Gaiety in December 1922 (Figure 4.3).

She was a singer of exceptional skill as well as a fine actor. Her mother was of Jewish heritage, her father of Spanish heritage, and she also claimed

⁹⁷ Ibid., 155–56.

a Gipsy ancestry. Her ethnic background was undoubtedly the reason she became associated with exotic roles. Some critics regretted that she never played Carmen, although she often played Carmen-type roles – Frasquita being an obvious example. Perhaps the mezzo role of Carmen was not ideally suited to a soprano who was comfortable singing the csárdás from *Die Fledermaus*. She had a nervous breakdown after the failure of Lehár's *Frasquita* in 1925. Evett, its producer, decided to go into retirement after this flop. The following year, she found that her extravagant spending had brought her to bankruptcy. For a while she returned to performing in vaudeville and variety to try to pay off debts, but in 1927 she was left a large sum of money in the will of one of her friends, Frank Curzon.⁹⁸ Her singing career did not take off again. She was never drawn to syncopated styles, and was happiest in the Ruritanian realm of stage entertainment. Her career faded simultaneously with the diminution of appetite for operetta from the German stage.

The Trials of Stardom

Many operetta performers in the early twentieth century were celebrities in the wider sense in which we now understand that term. This is not surprising, given that operetta in this period was one of the first examples of a global theatrical entertainment. The personal characters and day-to-day activities of operetta stars became of interest to the public, and the stars themselves could gain or suffer as a consequence of the attention of the communications media. On top of the demands of celebrity came the stress and insecurity of stage performance; as already mentioned, even the apparently self-assured José Collins suffered a nervous breakdown after the failure of *Frasquita*.

The leading stars of the West End *Merry Widow* were two of the first to suffer the stresses of the stage in the modern age of star culture. Edwardes had taken Elsie to Vienna to see Mizzi Günther in *Die lustige Witwe*. She liked the part but was 'terrified' that she would not be able to play it.⁹⁹ In fact, nobody thought she was up to its demands except Edwardes.¹⁰⁰ Joe Coyne, too, was made anxious by the vocal requirements of his role. At the time of his engagement as Danilo in 1907 (Figure 4.4), David Slattery-Christy describes him thus:

⁹⁸ Ibid., 263–66. ⁹⁹ Graves, *Gaieties and Gravities*, 89. ¹⁰⁰ Forbes-Winslow, *Daly's*, 79.



Figure 4.4 Joseph Coyne (1867–1941) as Danilo in Lehár's *The Merry Widow* (Daly's Theatre, 1907).

Coyne was an eccentric and rather dour soul who always saw his glass as half empty. He could often be seen standing on a street corner in Covent Garden having a heated discussion with an unseen companion, or walking along the Strand having similar conversations with unseen friends. On stage he was a master of comedy and his eccentric behavior had yet to become damaging to his personality or career.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 118. Coyne's habit of talking to invisible people is remarked upon by MacQueen-Pope (*Fortune's Favourite*, 86)

He was prone to melancholy moods and dealt with increasing mental health problems after the First World War. Yet, according to George Grossmith, Coyne 'made one of the greatest successes of his long career' when he appeared as Jimmy Smith in *No, No, Nanette* at the Palace Theatre in 1925.¹⁰² He died in England of pneumonia in 1941. It is often said that Coyne could barely sing at all.¹⁰³ He may not have been a fine singer, but he was more than capable of putting over a song, and recordings reveal that when he sang he was generally in tune. He was also capable of singing a countermelody, as evidenced on his recording of the duet 'That Dear Old Home of Mine' with Violet Loraine.¹⁰⁴

Sometimes the pressures of stardom had tragic consequences, as in the case of the 25-year-old German singer Anny Ahlers. She was born in Hamburg and became famous in London as the star of Stanley Scott's production of *The Dubarry*, which opened at His Majesty's Theatre on 28 May 1932. Before that, she had played leading roles in German productions of *Lady Hamilton*, *Madame Pompadour*, *Viktoria und ihr Husar*, and *Die Blume von Hawaii*. The critic James Agate, who was not known for a love of operetta, wrote of her performance, 'such vitality is altogether unknown among our lighter English actresses; her appearance over here will obviously do a world of good'. In unwitting tribute to Irving's coaching, he adds: 'Her singing voice is magnificent.'¹⁰⁵ A review in the *Morning Post* declared that Anny Ahlers possessed enormous fire and flung herself into the part of the courtesan 'without any hypocritical pursuit of those dulcet ditherings which are deemed to make stage-play prostitutes safe, and even sacrosanct, in suburbia'.¹⁰⁶

Unfortunately, she developed trouble with laryngitis, which meant the theatre had to close for a week in September. Far worse followed: Ahler's life, like that of the real Dubarry, was cut short in a shocking manner. Countess Dubarry did, at least, enjoy fifty years of life before she was guillotined in 1793, but Anny Ahlers was just 25 when she was found with her neck broken, after having apparently jumped out of the window of her London flat on 14 March 1933. One theory was that she was sleep walking and

¹⁰² Grossmith, 'G. G.', 211.

¹⁰³ Among others, this opinion is shared by Graves (*Gaieties and Gravities*, 89), MacQueen-Pope (*Fortune's Favourite*, 97), Bloom (*Curtain Call for the Guv'nor*, 213), and Short (*Sixty Years of Theatre*, 146).

¹⁰⁴ HMV 04196, rec. 1917, from the revue *The Bing Girls Are There*, book by George Grossmith and Fred Thompson, lyrics by Clifford Grey, music by Nat D. Ayer.

¹⁰⁵ Both quotations from James Agate, *Immortal Toys: A Survey of Light Entertainment on the London Stage, 1920-1943* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1945), 93.

¹⁰⁶ Review of *The Dubarry* in the *Morning Post*, reprinted in 'Plays of the Month', *The Play Pictorial*, 60:362 (Oct. 1932), 5.

unconsciously re-enacting the balcony scene from *The Dubarry*, since the window of her flat had a large balustrade outside. However, she was known to like a drink or two. A witness said that she had drunk one glass of champagne with her that evening but returned two hours later to find the bottle empty. At the theatre itself, Ahlers was said to regularly imbibe half a bottle of champagne, as well as drinking brandy between the acts. The coroner asked if she took rather a lot of brandy ‘for a young woman’.

A doctor’s report showed that that her liver had been affected by drugs and drink over a long period of time. The coroner, however, was concerned to make known that Ahlers overindulged only when feeling ‘the strain of her part’, and insisted: ‘She was worrying because she could not sleep properly or perform properly because of her nose, her headaches, and her voice.’¹⁰⁷ A large stash of narcotic drugs was discovered in her flat, some imported from Germany. The jury concluded that she had committed suicide, reaching a majority verdict of 7 to 2. Sylvia Welling took over her role briefly, but Ahlers was much loved and her death so upset the cast that Stanley Scott felt compelled to announce, ‘I am withdrawing “The Dubarry” . . . Ever since the death of Anny Ahlers the actors have been playing with tears in their eyes.’¹⁰⁸ Whatever her technical weaknesses, Ahlers was a tremendous success in her role. Irving writes in his autobiography: ‘London rose to Anny. In all my sixty years I have never seen such a triumph.’¹⁰⁹ *Theatre World* declared that she had ‘taken all London by Storm by her vivacious acting and dramatic singing in the role of the famous courtesan . . . she invests the role with any amount of fire and passion’.¹¹⁰ Figure 4.5 shows her in erotic attire that suggests the twentieth rather than eighteenth century.

In addition to the anxiety engendered by stage performance, stars had to deal with the risks created by audience adulation. One morning after a rehearsal at the Vaudeville Theatre, Phyllis Dare writes that she was ‘almost mobbed by a crowd of several hundred people who had collected outside the stage door’.¹¹¹ First, and foremost, however, stars required the stamina to cope with an exacting workload. Dare details her hectic schedule two days before a tour in 1907:

¹⁰⁷ ‘Late Anny Ahlers: Inquest and Funeral’, unidentified and undated newspaper cutting in Bristol Theatre Collection, box MM/REF/TH/LO/MAJ/45.

¹⁰⁸ *Daily Herald*, Mar. 1933. Undated newspaper clipping in Bristol Theatre Collection, MM/REF/TH/LO/MAJ/45.

¹⁰⁹ Irving, *Cue for music*, 124.

¹¹⁰ Anon., ‘The Star of “The Dubarry”’, *Theatre World*, 18:90 (Jul. 1932), 39.

¹¹¹ Dare, *From School to Stage*, 114–15.



Figure 4.5 Anny Ahlers (1907–33) in *The Dubarry*, 1932.

Three visits to my theatrical dressmaker; two visits to my own dressmaker; measured for theatrical shoes; measured for private footgear; six hours at Messrs. Foulsham & Banfield's, my theatrical photographers; four hours at rehearsals; business connected with my appearance in pantomime at Birmingham at Christmas; two visits to theatrical milliners; visit to a well-known song-writer to try over some new songs he was writing for me; an hour's practice at two new dances; signed over three hundred picture postcards, and replied personally to thirty-four letters.¹¹²

¹¹² Dare, *From School to Stage*, 131–32.

Over twenty years later, the time pressures had not diminished, as may be found in a report on the performers in *White Horse Inn*, which was playing twelve times a week at the London Coliseum (twice a day from Monday to Saturday, theatres being closed on Sunday). They were feeling the strain, and felt that life had become non-stop work. Lea Seidl told a reporter,

I get up at noon because I am too tired to rise before. By 1.30 I am in the theatre, and I stay there making up or acting or singing until the curtain falls as half-past five. Sometimes I have a meal in the theatre, sometimes I have just time to rush home to a hasty snack, then return. By half-past seven I must be back at the theatre. I do not leave the theatre until a quarter to twelve. It is then time to go to bed again.¹¹³

An interest in stage gossip grew on the part of the cheaper press in the 1920s. It put added pressure on performing artists, and B. W. Findon rails against the advent of 'sensational journalism' in his editorial to the *Play Pictorial* in December 1922: 'now-a-days, we can see portrayed the progress of a popular actress from her bath to her motor, and the prettiest details of her unprofessional life are chronicled with chronic inaccuracy'.¹¹⁴ The strain of being a celebrity could land a stage performer in the newspapers for the wrong reasons.

Such strain, no doubt, led to the incidents that occurred during the run of Benatzky's *Casanova* at the Coliseum. The German production of this work was, coincidentally, the operetta that had given Anny Ahlers her early celebrity. Things did not augur well when Greta Natler fainted on stage during the opening night in May 1932. Then, in August that year, Marianne Winkelstern, the prima ballerina in the production, faced manslaughter charges. To cap it all there was a fight on stage on the closing night in 1933 between Arthur Fear and Charles Mayhew. This meant that, next day, they shared headlines with Adolf Hitler on the front page of the *Daily Express*.¹¹⁵ These two singing-and-dancing alpha males had both played the role of Casanova during the long run. Charles Mayhew turned up for the final night, determined to get his share of applause, and that displeased Arthur Fear. They threw punches at each other during the curtain call. Fortunately, in true operetta fashion, the Empress of Austria (in the shape of Marie Lohr) stepped between them and put an end to their fisticuffs.

¹¹³ Unidentified press cutting in box MM/REF/TH/LO/COL/19 in the Bristol Theatre Collection. There is no date, but it relates to the early weeks of the run, so it is likely to be May or June 1931.

¹¹⁴ B. W. Findon, editorial, *The Play Pictorial*, 41:244 (Dec. 1922), 1. ¹¹⁵ Mon., 30 Jan. 1933.

