

Introduction

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After the Girl—by way of a prescript

Several months before the outbreak of the First World War, a new piece of popular musical theatre opened at the Gaiety Theatre in London's West End. *After the Girl* told the story of Doris Pitt, the daughter of a Cincinnati millionaire sent to Brussels to complete her education. When her father arrives on a visit in Paris, he finds her 'corrupted' and determines to send her back home. Doris, however, has other ideas. Pursued by an anxious father, she runs away—first to a school friend in Amsterdam, then to Budapest and then on to Berlin, where Mr Pitt finally catches up with her. She is performing as a singer in a variety hall. Father and daughter are eventually reconciled, and the show ends with them celebrating the New Year at the Carlton Hotel in New York.

After the Girl reads like a comment on popular theatre before the First World War. Although it appears to be a musical comedy in most respects, its title and subtitle signify distance from that genre. The show takes on the dimensions of a hybrid commodity, becoming a 'Revusical Comedy'. Its writers acknowledge the form, which had been dominant across Europe and America since the 1890s, but at the same time emphatically identify the new show with revue, the rising genre popular on the Continent and in New York since the early 1900s, but which did not start to gain real momentum in London until shortly before the outbreak of the First World War. *After the Girl* marked the moment when the West End's hitherto most popular genre,

musical comedy, faced a challenge that was to prove decisive. The ambiguities of the show's title positions *After the Girl* very specifically in a post-girl world, beyond the 'girl shows' which had been so much part and parcel of musical comedy culture up to that time, albeit simultaneously making a not quite final contribution in this respect.

The further interest lies in the roaming disposition of the show's central character. Doris Pitt, the American who travels all over Europe, can be read as a symbolic representation of cultural exchange in popular theatre. Paris, Vienna, Budapest, Berlin and New York were, together with London, part of a transnational network through which plays, music, dances and performers were endlessly exchanged. Many continental operettas were adapted as musical comedies in Britain, just as many West End musical comedies travelled all over the continent. Since the hugely popular 1897 show *The Belle of New York*, America had been actively participating in this process. The growing cultural influence of the United States before the First World War explains, incidentally, why Doris, a character in a West End show, is American rather than English. That she ends her journey as a singer in a Berlin variety theatre is also suggestive, since London and Berlin were important in this network from the late-nineteenth century on, and the theatre exchange between these two cities was especially vibrant.

West End and Friedrichstraße/Britain and Germany

The emphasis in this collection on London and Berlin in the decades between 1890 and 1939 responds to a number of issues. On the one hand it fills an obvious gap. As a number of contributions to *Popular Musical Theatre in London and Berlin* show, the enduring quality of the operettas of Jacques Offenbach and Johann Strauss has led popular musical theatre to be emphatically associated with the cities of Paris and

Vienna. Particularly focused on in such early texts as Siegfried Kracauer's magisterial *Offenbach and the Paris of his Time* (1938), the operettas of both composers and their influence on the musical theatre of other nations are now established in the contexts of urbanization and modernity. By comparison, London and Berlin have been comparatively neglected, despite the fact that both cities developed their own brands of musical theatre from the 1880s in all the most popular forms—operetta, musical comedy and revue—with Berlin in particular gaining in reputation as 'one of the most vibrant entertainment centers in turn-of-the-century Europe.'¹ A study of London and Berlin from this perspective, set against the wider contexts of sites like Paris, Vienna and New York, not only adds to our knowledge of the theatre history of this period, but also to our understanding of the wider cultural histories of these cities. Perhaps even more importantly, it sheds new light on European cultural relations.

This leads to another reason why the popular musical theatre of a century ago is still of interest today. The relations between Britain and Germany in the 'Age of Empire' have long been viewed in terms of an essential and almost unbridgeable Anglo-German hostility. Only recently have historians begun to reconsider this relationship, placing the undeniably difficult public political context against a more everyday reality where things were more ambiguous and nuanced. As Dominik Geppert and Robert Gerwarth point out in their introduction to a 2008 collection of transcultural essays entitled *Wilhelmine Germany and Edwardian Britain*, 'intense feelings of cultural proximity' between Britain and Germany seemed to go hand in hand with 'widespread antagonism', certainly at the broader cultural level—a contradiction illustrated right across *Popular Musical Theatre in London and Berlin*.²

To put it rather differently, musical theatre in these two cities was a compelling example of what the anthropologist Marie Louise Pratt has termed a 'contact zone',

predicated in part on business cultures and structures, but also on an aspirational sense of metropolitan style culture—except that here, suggestively, the dynamic was established not across an advancing centre and retreating periphery, as in the familiar anthropological model, but, rather, across centres competing for authority in, if not ascendancy over, the modern.³ Cultural exchange between London and Berlin in the field of popular musical theatre illustrates this dynamic very clearly. To take London and Berlin as examples thus reintroduces two neglected centres back into the transnational network of popular theatre and, by considering two nations which, perhaps more than any others, exhibited mutual hostility across the late-nineteenth and early- to mid-twentieth centuries, throws new light on much wider issues, including the practices that once typified Anglo-German historiography. Against this context, London and Berlin theatre zones become complex sites of fundamental contradiction, not least in the sense that both are deeply inscribed with markers of local and national identity and yet both representative of a modern cosmopolitan commons.

At first glance there appear to be deep differences between London and Berlin and their central theatre districts, the West End and Friedrichstraße. While London had been an important European capital since medieval times, Berlin really started to develop into a metropolis only after the mid-nineteenth century. Apart from differences in sheer size, this resulted in distinctions between how Londoners and Berliners identified with their respective cities. As distinct from the popular theatre of an earlier period, London as a subject did not play a huge representational part on the stage from the 1890s to the First World War.⁴ This is not to say that West End musical theatre took no pride in London—on the contrary, it seemed to take London's capital city status as self-evident. The Berlin stage, on the other hand, was nothing

short of obsessed with the city and city self-identification, denoting the capital's newer development and its aspirations for the future. Indeed, it was on the stage that Berlin first claimed to be a *Weltstadt*, a world city—this as late as 1866 and at a time when its position in Germany was far from uncontested. While London was old and established, Berlin was a relative upstart, compared by Mark Twain with all the frontiership of a place like Chicago, which is why popular theatre took every opportunity to declare itself in relation to the new German metropolis.⁵

But there were also many commonalities between London and Berlin. Like Paris or New York, both were places where new, rapidly accelerating versions of modernity were being experienced in all their contradictions. The potentially opposing pulls of nationalism and cosmopolitanism; shifting gender identities and the conflict between new freedoms and the imperative to register new boundaries, not least in relation to sexualities; the challenges of new science; the fads and fashions of consumerism, which so shaped the emerging leisure culture and entertainment industry—all developed more or less simultaneously in these cities around 1900, through processes that took place not in isolation but in growing relatedness and interconnection. London's West End was admittedly bigger than Berlin's Friedrichstraße district both in terms of numbers of theatres and venue concentration. Its music halls and theatres could hold no less than 300,000 people per night in 1900, potentially handling up to 100 million attendances a year. But the Berlin stage, though smaller, was comparable in relation to relative populations.⁶ In addition, Berlin's theatre had long been dominated by its court theatre, which was subsidised by the crown and catered first and foremost to aristocratic society, whereas London theatre had been an independent, commercial endeavour since the time of Shakespeare. But this difference lost much of its importance in the 1860s, when Berlin witnessed a

‘pandemic in theatre building’.⁷ All the new theatres were private, commercial enterprises, and their development took place in the context of a newly designed entertainment zone, just as the eastern half of London’s West End around Northumberland Avenue, Charing Cross Road and Shaftsbury Avenue was rebuilt at this time. Although the concentration of music halls and theatres in the West End was unprecedented in Europe, only surpassed in this respect by New York’s Broadway, Berlin developed its own *Theatergegend* (theatre district), on Friedrichstraße, a long, straight street stretching from the southernmost part of the city to its north, intersected by Unter den Linden, Berlin’s famous boulevard. At one time seven theatres, including the biggest and most upbeat variety theatre of the city, as well as a circus, lay on or next to Friedrichstraße, which was close to the Gendarmenmarkt, where the Royal Theatre and the Royal Opera House were located. Although there were a number of theatres in the suburbs of Berlin, as in London, the theatres in the centre came to dominate much of the theatre culture of their respective nations.

West End and Friedrichstraße, then, were converging in these ways and shared further characteristics. Both spaces were not only entertainment districts—with theatres, music halls, bars, restaurants and dance halls—they were also intensely commercialised shopping districts. Theatres shared the neighbourhood with big department stores like Selfridges in London or Wertheim in Berlin, as well as other fashionable shops and tailors. Other ‘spaces of modernity’ like railway stations, grand hotels and cinemas were also located here, the railway as well as the new underground lines delivering thousands to the doors of the theatres.⁸ These sites were associated with modernity—with mobility, speed, fashion and, of course, entertainment. In the usually intensely segregated cities they were new social spaces where the divides between classes and sexes were bridged or suspended. Theatres like the Gaiety or the

Metropol-Theater were fashionable places where ‘everyone who was anyone’ visited, showing off status and surplus income in a celebration of conspicuous consumption. They were also ‘new heterosocial spaces’ where conventional ‘hierarchical gender messages’ could be challenged.⁹ Here men and women met, on terms that were relatively ‘equal’, to witness spectacular renditions of city life, performed on a twice-nightly basis—all to musical accompaniment.

Popular modernity: musical theatre and cosmopolite capitals

Musical theatre was one of the most important popular cultures of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. It represented a key stage in the modernization of the theatre and had a major impact on theatre aesthetics. In the case of revue, it produced challenging alternatives to the conservative progressivism of the book musical, making claims for itself as a characteristically modern cultural form.¹⁰ It also engaged in complex ways with ideas about the modern world, registering and shaping contemporary attitudes to class, gender and national identities and articulating mainstream political issues.

In both West End and Berlin versions, musical theatre across the period 1890-1939 made substantial claims for itself as a characteristically new, urban form, a fact not lost on contemporary observers, who understood it as highly symptomatic of a generic mass culture that appeared to transcend national boundaries. The early sociologist of the metropolis, Georg Simmel, himself extremely critical of popular culture and especially of variety theatre, which he despised, had cabaret, musical hall, variety and revue in mind when he described the aesthetics of ‘the fragment, the mere allusion, the aphorism, the symbol, the undeveloped artistic style’, aligning these qualities with the urban condition and a ‘blasé outlook’.¹¹ Other contemporary

responses did little to undermine such readings of musical theatre. For theorists of modern decadence and degeneration, musicals signified nothing less than the decline of the West, demonstrating in their characteristic disposition for ‘gaiety’ how Europe had become feminised, unmanned. Wyndham Lewis, an iconoclast of Western modernity, reserved a special place for denigrating musical theatre and its exponents in the first issue of *Blast* (1914) where ‘Daly’s musical comedy’, the ‘Gaiety Chorus Girl’, George Edwardes—the famous producer-manager of the Gaiety and Dalys’—and the musical comedy actor, writer and producer Seymour Hicks all came in for special attention.¹²

It is not difficult to see why intellectuals should so focus on musical theatre in relation to the cultural and material composition of cosmopolitan and transcultural modernity. Ever since Peter Bailey’s 1998 essay ‘Theatre of Entertainments/Spaces of Modernity: Rethinking the British Popular Stage, 1890-1914’, cultural historians have likewise become used to recognising the importance of musical theatre, and not just in terms of shaping urban space at the turn of the century. As a number of essays in this collection show, it played a considerable role in defining city architecture, influencing its characteristic zoning and impacting on transport systems and the development of retail centres in both the West End and Friedrichstraße.¹³ Like the department store, theatres like the Berlin Metropol-Theater and the Gaiety and Daly’s in London were shapers of urban style and highly self-conscious of their status in this respect. Some of the most popular shows of the period—*The Girl from Kay’s* (1902) and *The Girl Behind the Counter* (1906), for instance—were often nothing less than sumptuous celebrations of contemporary consumerism. Indeed, the differences between theatres and department stores almost vanished when shop windows were staged with lighting and curtains reminiscent of the theatre, or when musical comedies like *Our Miss*

Gibbs (1909) were set in department stores evoking places like Harrods or Wertheim. The early Metropol revues—*Neuestes, Allerneuestes!* (1903), *Ein tolles Jahr* (1904), *Auf in's Metropol* (1905), *Der Teufel lacht dazu* (1906), *Das muß man sehn* (1907), *Donnerwetter – tadellos* (1908), *Halloh! Die große Revue* (1909), *Hurrah, wir leben noch* (1910), *Die Nacht von Berlin* (1911), *Chauffeu – ins Metropol* (1912)—operated similarly, often featuring scenes set in well-known Berlin department stores. Here escalators and revolving doors were reproduced as emblems of the modern age; songs applauded the apparently endless diversity and glamour of the modern shopping experience; costume often became product placement in a symbiotic relationship as department stores sold theatre tickets, decorated their shop windows like stages and sometimes bought stocks in theatre companies. Reflecting their consumerist age, the production costs of these spectacular shows were so high that a single failure could bring a theatre to the brink of bankruptcy. Richard Schultz, manager of the Metropol-Theater, spent the fantastic sum of 200,000 Reichsmark on the *mise-en-scène* of a single Berlin revue, while the Royal Opera House in Berlin had to make do with a budget of 30,000 RM for a revival of *Aida* in the same year.¹⁴ There can be little doubt that popular musical theatre in both centres reflected booming economies and the conditions that produced for the first time in England a rise in per capita incomes to ‘a comfortable 150 per cent above subsistence in 1914’.¹⁵ Growth rates in Germany were even more spectacular. Peter Fritzsche, for example, writing specifically about street car traffic and visits to Luna Park, notes how, ‘despite deep pockets of poverty, more and more workers could afford weekend entertainments and metropolitan diversions.’¹⁶

Perhaps the central defining characteristic of turn-of-the-century musical theatre, however, was its embrace of change, a quality that not only typified it as an urban

culture, but also threw it once more into conflict with the intelligentsia. While intellectual culture typically mourned what was perceived as a loss of hierarchy and distinction in the modern world, musical theatre, certainly up to the First World War, was virtually unanimous in its celebration of the inventive consumerism of mass culture, demonstrating a technological authority that could reproduce the twentieth-century city through spectacular staging and effects.

Both modern and modernising dimensions of musical theatre were reflected in all elements of theatre production, finance and administration. They were also immanent in the narratologies of hundreds of shows, especially in the pre-war period, which repeatedly reproduced for their audiences an upbeat experience of living in contemporaneity, sometimes in ways surprisingly resonant for later generations. Alongside characteristically turn-of-the-century perspectives on such issues as race, class, gender and sexuality, there was a strong sensitivity shown to what we might now conceptualise in terms of ‘hyperrealities’ or the ‘ceremonising of the world’.¹⁷ Thematically obsessed with the representation of modern Berlin itself, the *Jahresrevuen* (annual revues) also demonstrated a parallel concern with self-reflection and image in general. In the *Kaiserreich* musical comedy *Die Kino-Königin* (1913) (*The Cinema Star*, 1914), film became indistinguishable from real life, as actual politics and their film reproduction merged into each other. In one of those strangely presentist moments so familiar to anyone who engages with this culture, a character declares that in her film image she sees herself ‘for the first time’. The same show plays with ideas about celebrity and identity formation. ‘The Picture Palace Queen Song’, sung by the female lead, who is a film actress, contains a lament not just for lost privacy, but for lost authenticity as well:

I’m all by starts and nothing long;

And luckily my nerves are strong!
 For when I sleep, or when I waken
 A picture-film of me is taken!
 And every time I sing or laugh
 It means another photograph!
 For, sad or merry, well or ill,
 The camera pursues me still,
 Till every single thing I do
 Is thus exposed to public view.¹⁸

Even earlier, the Edwardian hit *The Arcadians* (1909) contained a second act which reproduces the utopian idyll of its first act Arcadia as a London city restaurant, a theme-park simulacrum of the real thing, complete with waitresses dressed as Arcadians, a vegetarian menu and copied versions of the key Arcadian equivalent to institutions.

Between the musical theatres of these two capitals there appeared to be a great deal of common territory at the turn-of-the-century, much of it revolving around elaborate efforts to stage modernity itself, and department stores were not the only spectacle to be so reproduced. Race courses, restaurants, factories, dance halls, fairs and exhibitions—all were subject to the confident reproductive powers of modern musical theatre, as, indeed, were other cultures. In such shows as *The Geisha* (1896), *The Cingalee* (1904) and *The Blue Moon* (1904), Japan, India, Ceylon and Burma were subjected to a confident Orientalism often celebrated for what was taken to be its anthropological accuracy.¹⁹ Demonstrations of natural power, like the earthquake which erupted in Robert Courtneidge's 1911 production *The Mousmé*, for example, film sets, ancient Greece, distant planets, eighteenth-century France—nothing,

apparently, was beyond the staging powers of the musical stage as it searched for the latest new craze to bring before urban audiences.

Musical theatre at this time reflected the modern urban experience back to its urban and suburban spectators in very particular ways, constructing a version of modernity not only at odds with the dominant intellectual cultures of the day, but also with the realities of modern life. With astonishing consistency, the fantasist narratives of these shows celebrated a seemingly limitless capacity for assimilation and accommodation, quite contradicted in most respects by urban contemporaneities. A show like *Nelly Neil* (1907), for example, celebrated a harmless sing along version of socialism; *The Quaker Girl* (1910) embraced religious dissent, repositioning plainness of dress and manner as Parisian haute couture; *An Artist's Model* (1895) was one of many shows that attempted to reconcile an alienating avant garde with the commercial world; *The Shop Girl* (1894) put new class and gender identities within the all-encompassing embrace of the modern. Revue in this pre-War period, often represented as an outgrowth of music hall and variety, worked similarly. Despite the fact that it typically broke with narratological coherency, it used other structures to replace the same obsession with an assimilating order. Writing about the 1907 Metropol revue *Das muß man sehn*, Marline Otte shows how conservative and liberal spirits were reconciled through the figures of an agrarian *comperé* and the liberal *Fräulein Freisinn* (the *commère*). The twinning, Otte argues, had racialised dimensions inasmuch as agrarian conservatives were often associated with anti-Semitism and liberalism often constructed in terms of a Jewish politics. In the show's version of things, these potentially conflictual forces end up not quite in agreement, but at least firmly cemented through matrimony. Children are subsequently produced and the tale concludes with an explicit plea for harmony. The suggestion of this

framing narrative was clear. As Otte points out, for all the playing up to city pride and patriotism, ‘no antagonism in German society was too great to overcome’, at least in theatre land, a message repeated over and over both in individual sketches and other more encompassing frameworks in revue, especially, again, in those produced before the First World War.²⁰

More than a convenient motif or disposable fashion, this appetite for cohesion was the central organising principle of musicals at this time, in Berlin as in London. Just as evident in pre-war operettas as in musical comedies, it transcended genre. Franz Lehár’s 1905 game-changing operetta *Die lustige Witwe* (*The Merry Widow* 1907), for example, was similarly a configuration of accommodating modernity. Far from retreating to a fantasy ‘Ruritania’, it reconciled traditional aristocracy (Count Danilo) to a version of modernity more substantial than the decadent hedonism of bohemian Paris would allow. Agency here is represented by Anna, a figure who makes the transformation from peasant to become the engaging and astute widow of a figure most emblematic of the modern world in many of its guises, including current ones—a powerful banker. Leo Fall’s *Die geschiedene Frau* (1908) (*The Girl in the Train*, 1910) was, again, an operetta styled in modern terms, as was *Die Dollarprinzessin* (1907) (*The Dollar Princess*, 1909), set in New York City and ‘Aliceville’, Canada in the London version. The latter opens with a chorus of female typists and the narrative challenge where new money is in the ascendancy and traditional aristocracy has been reduced to servitude. The gender counterpart to this potentially destabilising inversion, entirely commonplace in these shows, is that the brains behind the agency are female. Thus it is Alice, the dollar princess, who successfully advises her father on investments, at the same time making a personal fortune for herself ‘on the side’. The working out of these farce elements into

harmonious resolution constituted the central narratological device of the show around which all the songs and social dances circulated.

Transfer/Exchange

Marion Linhardt's contribution to this collection, 'Local contexts and genre construction in early Continental musical theatre', shows that there were strongly individuated traditions shaping the early formulations of the most popular genres at this time in all the key European centres—London, Paris, Berlin and Austria. The convergence in the later nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries, however, operating from music to book through to performance styles, staging and dance routines, was clear. Musical theatre became notable for its consistency and hybridity, its crossing of national boundaries as a matter of course. This collection traces and analyses these movements, with a particular focus on the London/Berlin axis. The essays here explore the most intensive and creative part of this exchange history, from the mid 1890s to 1914, and the much-changed terms of its reinstatement after the interruption of the First World War.

In 'Berlin/London: London/Berlin—an outline of cultural transfer 1890-1914', Len Platt gives an overview of how shows transferred and were adapted in particular relation to the seemingly contradictory drivers of cosmopolitanism and nation formation. The chapter focuses on the systems supporting and circumscribing, in the broadest sense, 'the flow and direction of traffic and the popularity of one form over another'. It identifies the nature of 'translation' in this early period and raises the issue of what contemporaries might have invested in the wider processes of adaptation.

The breadth of this chapter is contrasted by chapter four, '*The Arcadians* and *Filmzauber*—adaptation and the popular musical theatre text', where Tobias Becker

undertakes a textual analysis of how the specific musical theatre play text became transformed in the process of adaptation. Through critical readings of *The Arcadians/Schwindelmeier & Co.* (1909) and *Filmzauber/The Girl on the Film* (1912/1913), this chapter gets closer to the minutiae of adaptations, the people who made and the local social, cultural and political circumstances shaping their particular 'translations'.

The last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth centuries make it clear that the significance of the European metropolises for processes of transfer in popular theatre varied widely. In chapter 2, Marion Linhardt argues that Vienna and, later, Berlin were dominant in the transfer of operetta, regardless of how far-reaching the adaptations for the London and New York stages may have been. The chapter insists that, when dealing with cross-cultural exchange in popular theatre, the respective local contexts are critical. It tackles such issues as the structural relationships between operetta, musical comedy, revue and other genres of musical theatre and entertainments like opera or variety, and shows how these in turn reflected the diverse conditions of the modern city.

The wide registration of the transnational success of these shows is analysed and interrogated by Derek Scott. In chapter three, 'German operetta in the West End and on Broadway,' Scott examines why changes and adaptations were made to German operettas for productions in London and New York, scrutinising in particular audience expectation and the reception accorded to these operettas in those cities. He considers why operetta was so popular among British and American audiences in the pre-War years and charts the musical appeal to German composers of American syncopated dance styles.

As almost all the chapters in this collection indicate, the internationalism of these shows was far from unproblematic. In chapter five, Stefan Frey sees transfer and adaptation as contested territory. ‘National traditions were still present’, Frey writes, at the same time as West End performance values were becoming dominant across the whole of the ‘transcultural entertainment industry’. This was an industry formulating itself, in Frey’s account, not only around a common culture of consumerism, but also in relation to the popularisation of psychoanalysis in the early-twentieth century and to shifts in gender roles and public attitudes taken towards sexuality.

In the last chapter in this part of the collection, “‘A happy man can live in the past’—musical theatre transfer in the 1920s and 1930s’, Platt and Becker develop new historiographies in relation to the later period. These decades saw dramatic shifts in the ways that transfer culture operated. While pre-war Berlin musical theatre shared with the West End a distinctly modern stylisation, thereafter it returned to ‘the security of more conventional Viennese forms’. Here a one-time defining mix ‘of localism and cosmopolitanism, firmly positioned in terms of a confident negotiation of the modern world’, became displaced by historical romances, or shows positioned ‘in mythic no time and fairytale no place’. In a new version of transcultural exchange, contemporaneity was dispensed with in favour of ‘a return to the safeties and securities of aristocratic order, traditional romance and waltzes—the standard components of a “Viennese” musical theatre’ now being virtually mass produced in Berlin. This chapter examines the significance of these substantial shifts.

As the above indicates, the Berlin-London trade route was the product of a much wider network of influences and relationships—Austrian, French and, with particular force in the earlier part of the twentieth century, American. Part two of the collection, ‘Transatlantic Traffic’, acknowledges the importance of American culture across all

parts of the transnational scene. Peter Bailey's chapter, '*Hullo Ragtime! West End revue and the Americanisation of popular culture in pre-1914 Britain*', seeks a full reconstruction of the phenomenal success—intellectual, popular and international—of ragtime and its revues across Britain and on the Continent, relating the specifics of play texts, songs and performance, critical notice and social commentary to what Bailey calls 'the larger historical and transcultural moment' of the pre-War years.

Similarly, Kerstin Lange's 'The Argentine tango. A transatlantic dance on the European stage', reconstructs the global diffusion of the tango by artists who travelled around the world and the modification of the dance that resulted from cultural reinterpretation. The case of the tango illustrates precisely how cross-cultural exchange coexisted with processes of appropriation—on the stage of popular musical theatres as well as between artists and audience. In this way travelling artists became mediators of a global repertoire of popular culture in the metropolis.

Looking at a different kind of crossover, in chapter nine David Linton and Len Platt examine the case of the 1923 revue *From Dover to Dixie*, a show of two halves, one performed by a white cast, the other a plantation revue brought from New York by C. B Cochran and performed by an all-black cast. The central figure here is the 'Harlem Queen', Florence Mills, making her first international appearance against a background of racial conflict in Britain. Linton and Platt examine the contexts producing the extraordinary show and explore the unexpected relationship between its two halves. *Dover Street to Dixie*, they argue, is a 'highly mediated version of cultural exchange, taking place across a number of controversial and potentially destabilising borders and checkpoints'.²¹

The final chapter in this section, 'The transculturality of stage, song and other media: intermediality in popular musical theatre', by Carolin Stahrenberg & Nils

Grosch, places the Americanisation of musical theatre in relation to cultural transfer across an ‘intermedial’ media, manifested firstly by the growth and spread of the sheet music industry and shown by the exploitation of the newly invented gramophone in the late-nineteenth century. Here the notion of popular song overcomes the temporal, spatial and social limits of theatre, becoming crucial for the reception of musical theatre in the twentieth century and for our broader understanding of transfer as ‘transculturality’ in this field.

Against such contexts the idea of national development, once the paradigmatic structure for history writing, becomes challenged by a different set of concerns—‘cultural encounter, contact, interaction, exchange and hybridization.’²² Musical theatre seems particularly well suited for such research, not least because at one level the transfers were particularly literal—planned, direct and contracted products which moved between sites—as well as a matter of forms and styles moving imperceptibly and sometimes mysteriously across national borders.

Popular musical theatre and research in theatre history

In the USA, traditionally more accepting of popular culture than Europe, the musical has a high cultural status, often closely connected to the formation of national identities. More than just a simple celebration, it has embodied America’s mastery over modernity in particularly amiable ways, as entertainment. This potent combination has rendered the musical the subject of academic research in the US. Traditional modes of musicological analysis have been translated from one field to another, the aim being not just to construct a canon within music theatre history, but also to position musical theatre alongside familiar forms of aestheticisation and institutionalisation. Taking the procedures of codification, classification and

musicological analysis more usually associated with high-status music culture and applying them to the fields of American ‘popular’ music and ‘entertainment’, which thus becomes legitimised, the American academy has in these ways elevated the musical. As a result, the form has fallen substantially under American curatorship.

Outside the United States, however, popular musical theatre has tended to remain on the margins of the academy. Here it has enjoyed limited prestige in relation to cultural history and debates that continue to take place around ideas of the theatre as agency and the politics of performance—especially where these invoke working class and otherwise exoticised and outsiderly cultures. Since the 1970s and 80s figures like Jacky Bratton, Dagmar Kift, Thomas Postlewait, Maria Shevtsova and Erika Fischer-Lichte have been engaging with a wide-ranging sense of intervention that elevates the dynamism of performance over conservative notions of ‘static’ theatre.²³

Moving away from the primacy of the canonical text, this project has developed our understanding of the politics of performance. Genres like music-hall and cabaret have taken on some importance against this background—the former articulated as a working-class culture; the latter, following Walter Benjamin, understood as a version of bohemianism mediating between ‘the mindlessness of the popular variety show and the incomprehensible esotericism of the avant-garde.’²⁴ Such forms of musical theatre have often been seen as illustrations of an intervention theorised in the 1970s and 80s as the ‘carnavalesque’, or now, more soberly, as what some historians have been calling ‘an alternative public sphere’. As distinct from the more familiar formations described by Jürgen Habermas—the ‘rational discourse’ of middle class men in ‘voluntary associations’—popular theatre here evokes a parallel site, a ‘redefined public sphere in the first decade of the twentieth century’, which becomes an essential part of the ‘decentred’ politics of the conservative modern.²⁵

The genres most associated with the commercialization and industrialization of music theatre at the fin-de-siècle, and with middle-class audiences, have until recently remained largely outside this zone of interest, for reasons which must have once seemed convincing enough. The idea of theatre as agency works best in the contexts of theatres self-consciously designed in terms of radical social and political engagement, as many were. Musical comedy, revue, operetta and all the endless variations in between, however, operated for the most part in a very different domain.²⁶ Although these theatres have often been associated with both aristocratic glamour and bohemianism, the general audiences of both capitals were in fact much more everyday—middle class men and women, and, seasonally, their children, enjoying institutionalised forms of public performance.²⁷ The productions to which they flocked at the turn of the last century were designed as commercial entertainment. Success was measured not least according to the extent that shows made financial surpluses. Sometimes teasingly associated with the dangerous glamour of the *demimonde*, popular musical theatre was in fact defined much more typically by its formalising of the limits of the acceptable. It ceremonialised the shifting boundaries where the urban respectable became manifest, and that is a central part of its fascination and significance. The pleasure it generated was contingent on the delights of familiarity and recognition, as well as on escapism, fantasy and spectacle—removed from the challenges of an art theatre that appealed mostly to intellectuals and was often outspokenly anti-popular, although in reality there were more crossovers in this respect than is often acknowledged, especially in revue. C. B. Cochran's 1921 West End production *The League of Notions*, for example, included:

a 'Hell's Kitchen' belonging to the Moscow Art Theatre; a 'fete des Mannequins' staged by M. Paul Poiret; 'An Episode with Benda Masks' that

recalled the modern mask school; and a ‘Persian Dance’ that had stepped out of ‘The Russian Ballet’; and there were bits of scenery by Marc Henri of the Belgian New Art School.²⁸

Only since the late 1990s have scholars, often influenced by cultural studies and the theoretical work of such figures as Stuart Hall and Richard Dyer, turned their attention to this bourgeois entertainment.²⁹ Peter Bailey’s groundbreaking work in the field has been significantly developed in such accounts as Erika Rappaport’s *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London West End* (2000); Len Platt’s *Musical Comedy and the West End Stage, 1890-1939* (2004); Tracy C. Davis’s work on gender and Marline Otte’s *Jewish Identities in German Popular Entertainment, 1890-1933* (2006).³⁰ Peter Jelavich’s earlier work in *Berlin Cabaret* (1993), a study that includes substantial material on revue, has had a particular influence on methodologies deployed by historians in this field. In analysing wider political, social and cultural developments at the First World War through a study of popular theatre, Martin Baumeister’s account *Kriegstheater: Großstadt, Front und Massenkultur* (2005), for example, follows Jelavich in this respect—as does Otte’s work on circus, Jargon theatre and revue to some extent.³¹

Popular Musical Theatre in London and Berlin continues in the traditions of such research, focusing on popular forms of musical theatre, with a particular emphasis on musical comedy, operetta and revue—the genres most susceptible to travel between Britain and Germany and, as such, indicative of some of the issues at stake in the business of cultural transfer and translation. Almost all of the contributions here illustrate how far genre formations and notions of cultural value were shaped by versions of national identity that characterised relations between cosmopolitan centres in this period. Many contributions show just how deeply

musical theatre, for all its apparent lightness and ‘gaiety’, engaged with the wider world of turn-of-the-century Europe in other ways. These shows formulated comforting narratives and escapist spectacles, but they also reproduced the larger cultural politics of a complex, contradictory and sometimes more dangerous world, evidenced with particular force in part three of this collection, ‘Representation in Transition—Stage Others’.

Chapter 11, Viv Gardner’s ‘The Sandow Girl and her sisters—the construction and performance of the healthy female body in *fin de siècle* musical comedy’, examines the 1905/6 musical comedy *The Dairymaids* in relation to gender identity formation, showing how the Edwardian entertainment industry tapped into and exploited contemporary discourses on women’s bodies, and, in the 1900s, the fashion for women’s gymnasia and exercise regimes. The following chapter, Platt’s ‘West End musical theatre and the representation of Germany’, charts the staging of Germans and Germany in West End shows from the colonial and domestic rivalries of the pre-1914 period through to the development of increasingly divergent political ideologies in Britain and Germany in the interwar years.

The collection closes with two related chapters, both of them focusing on musical theatre under the Third Reich, both challenging some of the long-held simplifications about the Nazi response to popular culture in the 1930s. Susann Lewerenz’s ‘*The Tropical Express*—an exotic non-stop revue in Nazi Germany’ traces the complex and fascinating story of how a transnational entertainment, Doorlay’s *Non-Stop Revue Tropical Express*, retained its license to perform a modern song and dance show, much implicated with the staging of the exoticised Other, against the seemingly unlikely background of a ‘well-organised, emotionally charged and ethnically homogeneous *Volksgemeinschaft*’. In ‘Operetta and propaganda—the

politicisation of popular musical theatre in the Third Reich', Matthias Kauffmann's subtle reading of the Heinz Hentschke operettas produced at the Metropol-Theater between 1934 and 1945 complicates the idea that the Nazi appropriation of operetta as a genuinely national, racial form of popular culture was achieved by a decisive break with the past.

The studies in this collection of essays illustrate how musical theatre not only formulated comforting narratives for the modern world, but also how it displayed itself as modern product. Like the contemporary worlds it aimed to reproduce, it had an astonishing capacity for reinvention, which allowed it to dominate metropolitan stages over a period of some thirty years and fundamentally shape the entertainment zones of places like London and Berlin. It penetrated deeply into ordinary lives, and not just through formal performance, as Stahrenberg and Grosch show in their chapter on 'Transculturality'. The notion of popular song overcame the temporal, spatial and social limits of theatre, crossing over into a wide range of other media. Centrally, the collection shows how a commercial musical theatre, once considered to be apolitical, ephemeral and generally worthless, has taken on new significance as a historical theatre intimately placed in relation to the European middle classes and crucial to an understanding of the politics of social cohesion and consent at the turn of the century and beyond.

The sources

In both England and Germany the archive for musical theatre has some institution-based integrity, although this is nothing like as developed as in the United States. Much of the material remains dispersed in private collections, one exception being the British Library, which contains copies of the playscripts of all the musicals performed

in the West End in the period under consideration, a by-product of the censorship laws not repealed until 1968 in Britain. The Lord Chamberlain's plays are virtually a complete textual record, often including revisions and 'additional' scenes, as well as, for a large number of plays, correspondence between the Lord Chamberlain's officers and play producers. As a source of information about the social, cultural and political worlds in which this culture operated and with which it engaged, they are of considerable significance. Through them we are able to study the narratological designs as well as the detail of local allusion that entertained audiences at this time. They are a primary source of information about theatre aesthetics and performance. Not least, in showing the physical marks of the censor's blue pencil, they tell us a great deal about how musicals were situated in terms of the wider political context.³²

The situation regarding sources in Berlin is similar to that in London. Every play was subject to censorship and had to be sent to the Königlisches Polizeipräsidium before it could be performed on the stage. Except for those lost, all plays performed before 1918, when censorship was abolished, are now held at the Landesarchiv Berlin (the collection holds 16,000 plays). Thereafter scripts were not kept in any centralised way and are now dispersed in private and public archives. In Germany as in Britain, most were not published, but the Landesarchiv Berlin contains play scripts from across the period—many of them complete—and there is an important collection at the Theaterhistorische Sammlung Walter Unruh, Archiv des Instituts für Theaterwissenschaft der Freie Universität, Berlin. This includes, for example, Julius Freund's copies of the scripts for the Metropol-Theater's annual revue.³³

Unlike the playscripts, musical scores for these shows, or at least the songs made famous by them, were often published, partly a sign of their significance in terms of parlour-song culture. These, again, are a vital source for musicological work, which,

as yet, has attracted little attention from scholars. A number of important questions, then—about change and continuities in musical style for instance, and the musical relation between musical theatre at the turn of the century and earlier forms (Gilbert and Sullivan, for example)—remain virtually untouched.

There is also a huge amount of relevant material in such forms as biographies, reviews, autobiographies, photographs, fanzines (like *The Play Pictorial*), trade journals, postcards, reviews and so on, some of it in the hands of private collectors. Contributors to this collection have used, for example, the theatre archives at the Westminster Library, the theatre and performance archive at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the University of Bristol theatre collection. In the case of Berlin, a large collection of photographic evidence is to be found at the *Theaterhistorische Sammlung* Walter Unruh and at the *Theatersammlung of Stadtmuseum* Berlin.

Notes

¹ Marline Otte, *Jewish Identities in German Popular Entertainment, 1890-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4.

² Dominik Geppert and Robert Gerwarth (eds), *Wilhelmine Germany and Edwardian Britain: Essays on Cultural Affinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 2.

³ See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁴ London was a dominant theme in an earlier stage of London drama, as suggested by the titles of Victorian plays like *The Heart of London* (1830), *The Scamps of London, or the Crossroads of Life* (1843), *London by Night* (1845), *London Vice and London Virtue* (1861), *The Work Girls of London* (1864), *The Streets of London* (1864), *The*

Poor of London (1864), *Lost in London* (1867), *The Great City* (1867), *The Great Metropolis* (1874), *The Lights of London* (1881) and *The Great World of London* (1898). Later musical theatre was differently disposed, towards ‘girl’ shows, for example, although London was returned to as the subject of later revues like *London Calling* (1923) and *The London Revue* (1925). See Michael R. Booth, ‘The Metropolis on the Stage’, H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City*, vol. 1, (1973; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), 211-24.

⁵ Berlin was not only much newer as a capital city than London. It also had a much more substantial industrial base. Writing about London, Paris and Berlin, Jay Winter and Jean Louis Gordon advise that ‘it would be unwise to argue for the existence of a common urban culture in these three cities, without major qualification with respect to *quartier*, gender, class, profession, generation, and origin.’ Jay Winter and Jean Louis Gordon, *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1997), 47.

⁶ Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), 292. For further details on Berlin theatre see Martin Baumeister, ‘Theater und Metropolenkultur. Berlin um 1900’ in Erika Fischer-Lichte and Matthias Warstatt (eds), *Staging Festivity. Theater und Fest in Europa* (Tübingen: Francke, 2009), 193-215.

⁷ Siegfried Jacobsohn, *Das Theater der Reichshauptstadt* (München: Albert Langen, 1904), 23.

⁸ See Peter Bailey, ‘Theatre of Entertainments/Spaces of Modernity: rethinking the British popular stage 1890-1914’, *Nineteenth Century Theatre*, 26/1 (1998), 5-24.

⁹ Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight, Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago Press, 1994), 45-6.

¹⁰ Bertolt Brecht wrote about the influence of revue across Europe and America. See John Willet (ed.), *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Methuen, 1964), 153. See also Huntley Carter, *The New Spirit in the European Theatre 1914-1924* (London: Ernest Benn, 1925), 10; Allardyce Nicholl, *English Drama, 1900-1930: The Beginnings of the Modern Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 169. More recently Gordon Williams connects revue to the avant-garde. See *British Theatre in the Great War: A Re-valuation* (London: Continuum, 2005), especially chapter 2.

¹¹ Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, edited by David Frisby, translated by Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (Boston and London: Routledge, 1978), 474, 484.

¹² Lewis shows a surprising capacity for discrimination in singling out Gertie Millar, the musical theatre actress, for praise. Instead of being ‘blasted’, she, for some unstated reason, is ‘blessed’. Wyndham Lewis, *Blast 1* (1914; London: Thames and Hudson, 2009), 11, 21, 28.

¹³ For further treatments of this theme see Erica Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London’s West End* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), and Tobias Becker, ‘Feste des Konsums? Unterhaltungstheater und Warenhäuser in Berlin und London um 1900’ in Erika Fischer-Lichte, Matthias Warstat (eds), *Staging Festivity: Theater und Fest in Europa* (Tubingen: A. Franke, 2009), 216-37.

¹⁴ See Franz Born, *Berliner Luft: Eine Weltstadt und ihr Komponist* (Berlin: Apollo-Verlag, 1966), 135.

¹⁵ Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain 1870-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 33.

¹⁶ Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 66.

¹⁷ Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, translated by Philip Beitchman and W. G. J. Niesluchowski, ed. Jim Fleming (London: Semiotext(e)/Pluto, 1990), 166-79.

¹⁸ G. Okonowski, *The Cinema Star* (British Library: Lord Chamberlains Plays (LCP), 1914).

¹⁹ See, for example, Len Platt, *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage, 1890-1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), chapter 3 and Martin Claydon and Bennett Zon (eds), *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s-1940s: Portrayal of the East* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

²⁰ Otte, *Jewish Identities in German Popular Entertainment*, 265.

²¹ For further discussion of black performance see Rainer Lotz and Ian Pegg (eds), *Under the Imperial Carpet: Essays in Black History 1780-1950* (Crawley: Rabbit Press, 1986) and Samir Dayal, 'Blackness as Symptom: Josephine Baker and European Identity' in Heike Raphael-Hernandez (ed.), *Blackening Europe: The African-American Presence* (London: Routledge, 2004), 36.

²² Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 5. For the theory behind transnationalism see Johannes Paulmann, 'Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer: Zwei Forschungsansätze zur europäischen Geschichte des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts', *Historische Zeitschrift* 267, (1998), 649-85; Michael Werner and Benedicte Zimmermann, 'Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung: Der Ansatz der Histoire Croisée und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28, (2002), 607-36 and Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor (eds), *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2004). For particular reference to Anglo-German cultural transfers see

Rudolf Muhs (ed), *Aneignung und Abwehr: interkultureller Transfer zwischen Deutschland und Großbritannien im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bodenheim: Philo, 1998); Geppert and Gerwarth (eds), *Wilhelmine Germany and Edwardian Britain*. For cultural transfers in the theatre see Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Das eigene und das fremde Theater* (Tübingen: Francke, 1999).

²³ See Jacky Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Maria Shevtsova, *Theatre and Cultural Interaction* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1993); Thomas Postlewait, 'Theatre History and Historiography: a Disciplinary Mandate and Survey', *Theatre Survey*, 45/2 (2004), 181-88 and Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: a New Aesthetics*, introduction by Marvin Carlson (London: Routledge, 2008).

²⁴ Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 26. See Benjamin's description of cabaret as a space where 'the bourgeoisie mingle with bohemia' in 'What is Epic Theatre? [First version]' in *Understanding Brecht*, translated by Ann Bostock with an introduction by Stanley Mitchell (1973: London: NLB, 1977), 6.

²⁵ Otte, *Jewish Identities in German Popular Entertainment*, 13.

²⁶ For an account of earlier work on musical comedy see Len Platt, *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage*, 1-23; for operetta see Volker Klotz, *Bürgerliches Lachtheater: Komödie, Posse, Schwank, Operette* (München: dtv, 1980) and his *Operette: Porträt und Handbuch einer unerhörten Kunst* (München: Piper, 1991). In the case of Berlin revue, studies up till now have addressed the genre conventionally, decrying it as upper class and conservative while overlooking its impact on popular culture. See, for example, Franz-Peter Kothes, *Die theatralische Revue in Berlin und Wien 1900-1938* (Berlin: Henschel, 1977); Christa Hasche, *Bürgerliche Revue und Roter Rummel:*

Studien zur Entwicklung massenwirksamen Theaters in den Formen der Revue in Berlin 1903-1925 (Berlin: Phil. Diss. 1980); Wolfgang Jansen, *Glanzrevuen der Zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin: Hentrich, 1987); Jens-Uwe Völmecke, *Die Berliner Jahresrevuen 1903-1913 und ihre Weiterführung in den Revue-Operetten des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Köln: Phil.Diss., 1997). In the case of London, revue has hardly been investigated at all. See Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *Revue: A Story in Pictures* (London: Davies, 1971); Allardyce Nicoll, *English Drama 1900-1930*, 167-79.

²⁷ Royalty and aristocracy famously patronised London's musical theatre, especially the Gaiety Theatre and Daly's. This was less the case in Berlin. Whereas the Gaiety was reputed to be Edward VII's favourite theatre, Kaiser Wilhelm never visited the Metropol-Theater and, despite Otte's suggestion to the contrary, traditional elites in fact rarely attended (see Otte, *Jewish Identities in German Popular Entertainment*, 206-13). The sources suggest that premieres and balls of this famous theatre were attended by a different elite, the *nouveau riche* of *Gründerzeit* Berlin—bankers, lawyers and industrialists.

²⁸ Huntley Carter, *The New Spirit in the European Theatre*, 85. Cochran's show suggestively included a sketch called 'High Low Brow' where a character named 'Harold' defines himself as 'a high-low-brow ... who can live with Beaumont and Fletcher, yet laugh with Beatie and Babs—who can chant his Oscar Wilde yet chew with Oscar Asche.' See *The League of Nations* (British Library: LCP, 1921).

²⁹ See, for example, Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular' in Samuel Raphael (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge, 1981); Richard Dyer, *Only Entertainment* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

³⁰ See, for example, Bailey's '“Naughty But Nice”: Musical Comedy and the Rhetoric of the Girl' in Michael R. Booth and Joel H. Kaplan (eds), *The Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and 'Theatre of Entertainments/Spaces of Modernity'; Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: their Social Identity in Victorian Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991). See also Rhonda K. Garelick, *Rising Star: Dandyism, Gender and Performance in the Fin de Siécle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

³¹ See also Nic Leonhardt, *Piktoral-Dramaturgie: visuelle Kultur und Theater im 19. Jahrhundert, 1869-1899* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2007) and Peter W. Marx, *Ein Theatralisches Zeitalter: bürgerliche Selbstinszenierungen um 1900* (Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 2008).

³² See Dominic Shellard and Steve Nicholson (eds), *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets... A History of British Theatre Censorship* (London: British Library, 2000); David Thomas and David Carlton and Anne Etienne (eds), *Theatre Censorship: from Walpole to Wilson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Nicholas de Jongh, *Politics, Prudery and Perversions: The Censoring of the English Stage 1901-1968* (London: Methuen, 2000).

³³ See Leonhardt, *Piktoral-Dramaturgie*, 43-9; Gary D. Stark, *Banned in Berlin: Literary Censorship in Imperial Germany 1871-1918* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).