

# Introduction

## *Operetta in Vienna*

At the beginning of Ivan Cankar's 1901 short story "Before the Goal," Karl Jereb, a Slovenian immigrant in Vienna, takes himself to the theater.<sup>1</sup> He leaves home at six in the evening, passing workers leaving factories, seamstresses, servants, and drunks. Eventually he reaches the grand streets of tall buildings and elegant people. As the city stares back at him, his head begins to sink in shame. When he reaches the theater, he pauses to watch the wealthy arrive in their carriages before slipping through the crowd and climbing to the third gallery, the highest and cheapest level of the theater.<sup>2</sup>

When the performance begins, he does not hear precisely what is being said onstage, nor does he care. He simply enjoys the singing and the sound of the actors' voices and is enthralled when the sound of the violins soars out of the orchestra pit. An idle, sweet sensation envelops him. It is as if he were "submerged up to his face in pure, lukewarm water, somnolent."<sup>3</sup>

Karl Jereb had gone to the operetta.

For the fictional Karl Jereb, like many of the residents of the time and place now enshrined as "fin de siècle Vienna," operetta was the most popular, most glamorous, most exciting, and most novel entertainment in the city. Its beauty promised respite from the toil of manual, clerical, or domestic labor. It offered a vision of a better world, one familiar enough to seem—if only for a few hours—possible.

What has become known as operetta's Silver Age began in 1905 and extended through Austria's post-World War I First Republic.<sup>4</sup> It was multinational, multiethnic, and embedded in the empire's own internal conflicts. Like the convoluted bureaucracy that bound the empire itself, operetta achieved mass popularity through negotiation and hybridization. Operetta mixes songs and other musical numbers with spoken dialogue and dance, a structure it shares with its predecessors the *Singspiel* and *opéra comique* as well as the later Broadway musical. And while opera in Vienna was at this time primarily the domain of subsidized state theaters, operetta was performed in commercial theaters for profit. Drawing on a rich vocabulary of influences and conventions, it stood in an uneasy zone between art and entertainment, central but liminal, encompassing both vaudeville and Wagner, alternating quasi-operatic arias with the latest international dance styles, and drawing on national traditions ranging from its progenitors of French *opérette* and German *Volksstück* to Hungarian "Gypsy music." Some of its composers and performers hailed from conservatories and opera houses, others from nightclubs and army bands—and many from all of them. They went to the Café Griensteidl and they went to the circus. To write operetta was to stand in the middle of things, to understand high and low and the spaces in between at this confluence of industrialization and early high modernism. While composers of the so-called Golden Age of the nineteenth century—Johann Strauss II, Carl Millöcker, Franz von Suppé, and Carl Zeller—sought to create traditionally Viennese works, twentieth-century operettas embraced cosmopolitanism, modernity, and sentiment alongside the usual waltzes. They were central to a growing international network of mass entertainment.

This pluralism is the subject of the present study. Operetta was both a distillation of fin de siècle Viennese life and one of its most contested genres. Its unstable fusion of styles and cultural registers enabled its ubiquity and fueled controversy; among scholars working in the crowded field of fin de siècle Viennese art, it has often been judged too commercial to be accorded the sustained attention that has invigorated English-language opera studies in the past three decades. But to subject it to this attention is to participate in current disciplinary conversations regarding hybridity, the popular, and the middlebrow—and to bring the too-rarified world of fin-de-siècle Vienna into this arena. Operetta's liminal status makes it an important lens through which to see Viennese music and theater in the early twentieth century. Even as musicologists have considered an increasingly wide range of musical practices, the study of Vienna has remained a conservative realm associated with a high-art canon. This study challenges musicology to move beyond the conventional view of Vienna as a modernist "temple of art" to consider wider audiences and works usually deemed aesthetically disposable.

Operetta's transgressive status served to define discourses of art and commerce, popular and middlebrow, in an era when musical autonomy was becoming in-

creasingly prized. Operetta's twentieth-century shift into sentimental romanticism, decried by critics who favored a nineteenth-century Offenbachian ideal of detachment, catered to the needs not of an elite musical culture but of a rapidly industrializing city. The emergence around 1905 of "Silver Age operetta"—a periodic designation not without problems—as a genre was founded on composers' and librettists' close engagement with the changing demographics and theatrical audiences of industrializing bourgeois and lower-middle-class Vienna. Even as their operettas perpetuated earlier myths of Vienna and Austria-Hungary, they revised them for a changing city and an international market. Operetta and its reception were shaped by this emerging discourse of a classical canon, as creators both were defined against it and sometimes aspired to its prestige. Many operettas are self-reflexive texts, inscribing these very conversations into their librettos and scores.

While operetta's multifaceted identity allowed it to speak to a wide audience, this identity also caused enormous instability in its composition and reception. Its hybridity has been a disadvantage in a critical discourse that has, since operetta's own day, privileged aesthetic purity and a purportedly objective construction of aesthetic quality. For Carl Dahlhaus, it is "trivial music," important on a sociological level but insignificant on the larger musicological continuum of "compositional history" owing to its perceived lack of technical innovation and influence beyond its own boundaries of genre.<sup>5</sup> Since its canonization, operetta has generated its own internal debates over performance practice and style, and a quest for a "real" or "authentic" operetta is still evident in very recent scholarship.<sup>6</sup> But in Vienna, operetta was always synthetic. It was contentious because it attempted to cross between art and entertainment at a time when such boundaries were increasingly strictly policed, a stratification studied by scholars such as William Weber, Lawrence Levine, and Andreas Huyssen.<sup>7</sup> In the German-speaking realm, this divide is often described as a distinction between *E-* (*Ernste*, serious) and *U-* (*Unterhaltung*, entertainment) music, the latter referring mostly to the products of the industrialized popular music industry, which emerged over the course of the nineteenth century. Derek B. Scott has termed the rise of this new industry the "popular music revolution," a transformation that "brought forth musical idioms whose difference in both style and meaning from the classical repertoire created insuperable problems for those who were unfamiliar with the new conventions and lacked the particular skills demanded by the new styles."<sup>8</sup> Operetta was one such industry that was, by the twentieth century, professionalized and specialized.

Yet for Viennese operetta it was unclear whether works should be measured by the standards—or written or performed accorded to the ideals—of opera or of popular music, particularly after Johann Strauss's ambitious *Der Zigeunerbaron* (The Gypsy Baron) premiered in 1885. Even as scores' well-publicized compositional ambition assumed the mantle of serious music, operetta's commercial nature doomed it to remain forever entertainment, making it an early example of

the middlebrow.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, it was the porosity of the *U/E* boundary that made operetta so provocative. For some fin-de-siècle critics, operetta represented an ennoblement of the public taste, a stepping stone toward proper opera; to others it was a dangerously hypnotic form of escapism. For Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn, an anti-Semitic theatrical impresario, it was “an artistic bastard, which might have been conceived by a stock exchange jobber and a Parisian cocotte.”<sup>10</sup>

According to high-art practitioners and critics such as Karl Kraus, Theodor Adorno, Ernst Krenek, and many others, Viennese operetta was uppity, with pretensions to an artistic value not applicable to art with such blatantly capitalistic intentions and so broad an audience. For the more politically minded, operetta was sentimental, materialistically capitalist, and, ultimately, part of the culture industry. To these critics, Jacques Offenbach’s nineteenth-century satiric operettas represented a medium of social commentary delivered with ironic detachment, unhappily supplanted in the twentieth century by sentimental identification and mass-produced pathos.<sup>11</sup> Beyond politics, Offenbach allowed space for what Carolyn Abbate has termed “ethical frivolity,” encouraging us to “make peace with impermanence and insouciance,”<sup>12</sup> but twentieth-century Vienna created an operetta with a canon of classic, would-be immortal works. Compared with the anarchy of Offenbach, twentieth-century operetta was redolent of the rationality of bourgeois liberalism. Both its formulas and the steady production of new works marked it as industrialized commercial art for a society that increasingly devalued individual craft.<sup>13</sup> (For some of those liberals themselves, however, its category-crossing of-fended. Operetta could not win, except at the box office.)

When the time and place immortalized by Hermann Broch and Carl Schorske as “fin de siècle Vienna” is celebrated by scholars as a cultural paradise, operetta is rarely included among its achievements. (Broch refers to it as a “vacuum-product.”<sup>14</sup>) In surveys of fin de siècle Viennese culture, the grand achievements of Freud, Mahler, Klimt, and Schoenberg are given modernist purpose while operetta is mentioned in passing as a racy curiosity low in nutrition and high in calories. But its status as a historical footnote belies its tremendous ubiquity and broad appeal, as well as its role as a nexus for a variety of anxieties of the period, both those explicitly thematized on the operetta stage and those projected by fans and critics.

This ubiquity was central to operetta’s identity. Vienna’s wide world of theater included different venues for different social and economic classes—a defining feature of post-Industrial Revolution mass entertainment.<sup>15</sup> But operetta needed to appeal to as wide an audience as possible to remain economically sustainable: it was one of the most expensive and complex forms of commercial culture in the city (playing in large theaters with a sizable cast, chorus, dancers, and orchestra, plus elaborate sets and costumes) and lacked the security of a patron system or the imperial subventions which kept the Hofoper and Burgtheater afloat. While its audience was primarily middle class, it spanned the working and high bourgeoisies,

even the occasional aristocrat. Each operetta was created to be as popular as possible with everyone, wrote influential librettist Victor Léon (1858–1940). Operetta audiences contained both *Kenner* (expert) and *Liebhaber* (amateur), but the writer must compromise between the two:

What suits the aristocrat in the orchestra will not always suit the cook in the gallery, but what suits the cook in the gallery will always also suit the aristocrats. Therefore one works first and foremost for the cook, for the gallery, for the popular success. But nonetheless: constant cries for better, for quality.<sup>16</sup>

Operetta, Léon wrote with the deference of one who has read his Schopenhauer, never aspired to be “the pure product of the will of an artist, of what moves him, forced into form through psychic propulsion.” Or, in the similar words of Pierre Bourdieu,

Middle-brow art is the product of a productive system dominated by the quest for investment profitability; this creates the need for the widest possible public. It cannot, moreover, content itself with seeking to intensify consumption within a determinate social class; it is obliged to orient itself towards a generalization of the social and cultural composition of this public.<sup>17</sup>

Bourdieu argues for “generalization,” but Léon’s description contains an element of unresolved tension indicative of the issues facing operetta in his time. Operetta creators themselves struggled to reconcile art and commerce. For some, such as Franz Lehár, this dual mission could serve an explicitly didactic purpose, sneaking in musical sophistication to gradually “elevate the public taste.”<sup>18</sup> (But would it be elevated to Wagner or to more Lehár?)

As Léon suggested, the shape of a twentieth-century operetta is predictable. The *Liebhaber* can enjoy the entertainment, the *Kenner* can appreciate the finer details of execution, such as an unusually clever third act or an unusually convincing connection between the primary and secondary plot. The plot typically concerns the romantic travails of two men and two women, ending with a double engagement. Conventionally, the first couple, who receive more songs, are more experienced in life and love, and their scenes take on a somewhat more serious tone; the second couple’s romance is a subplot loosely linked with the main couple, and they are younger, more comic, and more inclined to dance numbers. The overall trajectory of plots was described dismissively by Franz Hadamowsky and Heinz Otte in their 1947 history, which contains the first prominent use of the term “Silver Age”:

The plot’s construction almost always reveals the same template: two young, pretty people, seemingly or in actuality from two opposing social spheres, fall in love with each other in the first act, are separated in Act 2 through all sorts of real or contrived misunderstandings, which could be remedied all at once with one honest word; the

obstacles become insurmountable in a grandiose Act 2 finale, which quakes with false sentimentality; nevertheless the lovers find a happy end in Act 3.<sup>19</sup>

Theodor Adorno identified a similar standardization and classified operetta as a capitalist product that had displaced folk cultures.<sup>20</sup> Yet the repetition of operetta plots was more than the necessity of an assembly line. This predictability, in fact, enabled operetta to become remarkably self-reflexive and self-critical, commenting on its own plots, allegorizing its own musical histories, and acknowledging its own clichés, even alongside the sentimental romanticism long recognized as a defining feature of twentieth-century operetta. In 1948 Arthur Maria Rabenalt suggested that the mismatched couples of so many operetta plots were an externalization of operetta's own internal conflicts:

It is notable that the storytelling invention of operetta goes almost entirely in one direction: namely toward rectifying its own illegitimacy, to rehabilitate itself in society. The only theme of operetta is misalliance, the only conflict is social difference. So thus operetta, in the false tragedy of its plot, reflects back the problem of its heritage.<sup>21</sup>

But reflexivity, prominent in many of the works considered in this volume (most notably *Die lustige Witwe*, *Die Csárdásfürstin*, and *Die Bajadere*), has been frequently overlooked by high culture critics, who were far from operetta's insular cultures and who registered only formula.<sup>22</sup>

The warmly conciliatory plots of operettas often imagined a utopia of a unified, multiethnic Austria-Hungary. The industry itself was diverse. As the most lucrative and prestigious market in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Vienna was a magnet for composers, writers, and actors, and their mix of ethnicities mirrored that of their audience—with the exception that they were much more likely to be Jewish. In a city already split not only by class but also nationality, ethnicity, religion, and education, operetta served as cultural glue. It gave the shaky coalition of the city and even the Austro-Hungarian Empire a common song, and its identity became tightly bound with the coalition of the empire. After the empire's disappearance after World War I, operetta's conventional subjects took on a whole new meaning. In the unstable First Republic, operetta became nostalgic, reimagining the empire in ever-sunnier terms. In the face of competition from film and eventual Nazi persecution of Jewish artists, Viennese operetta fragmented. Since 1950 operetta programs have consisted almost entirely of canonized classic works.<sup>23</sup>

Twentieth-century operetta's dramaturgical language strengthened its function as a refuge and dream space for its audiences. In Offenbach's day, operetta had traded in exaggerated, commedia dell'arte-like types strictly estranged from reality; in the twentieth century, characters became figures of sentimental identification for the audience. Operetta echoed high art's turn to interiority, though it stopped well short of expressionism. While it still contained spoken dialogue

and emphasized dance, twentieth-century operetta's use of more complex musical forms, increasingly chromatic harmony, and more demanding singing roles marked it as comparatively operatic. Operetta shed the dry, rhythmically driven scores of the nineteenth century, and characters declaimed their inner emotional lives in a lyrical, quasi-Wagnerian style of song. Nearly every operetta plot of the Silver Age concentrates on a romantic relationship threatened by pragmatic concerns. There are rarely any villains; only misunderstandings and social conventions threaten their relationships. Men and women fall in and out of love, worry about the impressions they make, and voice their desires in song.

Operetta librettos balance social reality and romantic idealism. Like the actors themselves, operetta characters provided fantasies for their audiences. The characters onstage were glamorous, rich, and happy in ways inaccessible to many of their audience members (as seen in Karl Jereb's journey from grim outer suburb to the glamorous theater), and yet the problems the libretto made them face spoke—absolutely intentionally—to their daily concerns. Audiences watched the beautiful people struggle with their finances, toil at boring jobs, attempt to negotiate convoluted love lives, and experience the rapid changes of fortune common both to modern city life and farcical plot mechanics.

For Marxist critics, twentieth-century operetta was a textbook example of false consciousness. In the happy ending that concludes most operettas, barriers are overcome and the ideal of a romantic marriage that is also economically advantageous always triumphs.<sup>24</sup> These sunny endings led to frequent charges of sentimentality and escapism that carried a reflexively negative judgment. These accusations would intensify as the genre became more and more grandiose in the 1920s.

#### WHY VIENNA?

Considering operetta's hybridity also forces us to consider a wider swathe of Viennese society, including populations and concerns not directly related to Brahms or Bruckner. As David Broadbeck points out in his study of the "Czech question" in Vienna, "much in this field remains to be done."<sup>25</sup> In particular, operetta invites a focus on the city's belated modernization and immense population growth. Emperor Franz Joseph I had sat on the imperial throne since 1848, but while the empire itself attempted to stop time, the city was technologically and demographically transformed. Between the *Gründerzeit* (literally, founding period) of the 1860s and the early twentieth century, the city developed from a small, relatively homogenous German-speaking political and cultural center into a cosmopolitan metropolis. Yet industrialization in Vienna was modest compared with the larger European cities of Paris and London, and the modern industrial world coexisted with the stubborn traditional one in an uneasy alliance between old and new. The city was geographically stratified such that the lower echelons were invis-

ible to the upper—a division that has been replicated in much scholarship—but operetta’s physical and symbolic location in between the upper and lower zones is a rare point of contact.<sup>26</sup>

Most important for popular entertainment, the rising demand for unskilled labor was accommodated by a major demographic shift. Between 1860 and 1910, Vienna experienced enormous population growth and diversification. The city grew from 476,000 inhabitants in 1857 to 1,675,000 in 1900, thanks partly to the incorporation of outlying suburbs into the official city limits. In 1910 the Viennese numbered 2,031,000.<sup>27</sup> The new inhabitants came largely from within the empire, especially the less industrialized areas of Bohemia and Moravia, and the majority were unskilled laborers.<sup>28</sup> The previously homogenous, often provincial Viennese were now in the most literal sense surrounded by strangers with new languages, new food, and new traditions.

Vienna’s most illustrious residents lived in the city’s core, known as the *innere Stadt* (inner city), officially numbered as 1, which was circled by the *Ringstrasse* (see the 1905 city map on page xii). Surrounding the inner city was the *Vorstadt*, numbered as districts 2 through 9 and home to the bourgeoisie. The *Vorstadt* was the site of most of the city’s operetta and other commercial theaters (only the exalted, state-supported Burgtheater and Hofoper were located in the *innere Stadt* on the inner edge of the Ring). It was in the outer districts beyond the *Vorstadt* (on the other side of a second ring road, the *Gürtel*) that the new migrants congregated, prompting a construction boom in the last decades of the nineteenth century. These districts were incorporated into the city by 1890.<sup>29</sup>

This topography created a clear hierarchy, tidier than those found in London and Paris. An 1859 ordinance had recommended that the rapidly developing outer suburbs be built in a geometrical grid pattern, contrary to the irregular streets of the older districts. The rigid urban plan—the straight lines of the streets filled with poor-quality tenement housing and the hierarchal organization of the city itself—created an impersonal, alienating experience for populations already in shock as a result of their relocation from rural to city environments, particularly when combined with the strictly regulated labor schedules associated with industrialization. The geographic compartmentalization also made the outer suburbs easy for the more privileged classes to ignore.

In scholarship, the dubious charms of Viennese operetta hover at the margins of a magnificent historiographical construct: the cultural paradise of “fin-de-siècle Vienna.” In his study *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (1979), still popular and influential among musicologists today, Carl Schorske argued that the conservative atmosphere of a decrepit Austro-Hungarian Empire created the conditions that would nurture the Modernist movement. According to his thesis, in the face of their political decline in the late nineteenth century, the Austrian liberal elite retreated from public life and politics to explore the psyche. While Schorske’s



work, along with William McGrath's *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* and Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin's *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, did much to bring Vienna to the forefront of English-speaking scholarship on modernism, his concentration on elite cultural circles has often led to the fetishization of a narrow slice of Vienna's culture and population as "a treasure chest of high culture's most precious objects," as historians Wolfgang Maderthaner and Lutz Musner write in their study of Vienna's lower classes.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, historians such as John Boyer and Pieter Judson have argued that the liberals considered by Schorske were not alienated from public life at all.<sup>31</sup>

It is here that operetta provides a particularly informative lens: Vienna was socially compartmentalized to a greater degree than most cities, and operetta was one of the few cultural forms that bridged gaps between cultural groups and economic classes. But operetta's wide appeal did not correspond to the mass political movements of the early twentieth century—particularly because it was written primarily by Jews at a time when Viennese politics were turning increasingly anti-Semitic. (Nor can it be securely classified a protest against anti-Semitism, an issue that will be examined in more detail in chapter 2.)

Indeed, operetta's in-betweenness is an ideal example of the middlebrow, an artistic category that has been largely ignored when it comes to this time and place. As argued by Christopher Chowrimootoo in his recent study *Middlebrow Modernism*, the label "middlebrow" was often wielded to "shore up the great divide by discrediting those who fell 'in between.' Yet, evidently, it also had the opposite effect, calling attention to those institutions, artists, critics, and audiences that—more or less consciously—sought to mediate its supposedly irreconcilable oppositions."<sup>32</sup> Chowrimootoo dates the term itself to 1920s England, a time and place later than and geographically distant from the balance of this study. Yet such an aesthetic category, initially wielded as an insult, is apt for many of the sentiments expressed by critics of operetta, who often found operetta's transgression of aesthetic categories offensive. In his consideration of Eduard Hanslick's nineteenth-century criticism of Johann Strauss II, Dana Gooley describes the critic's desire that "works clearly invoke the genres to which they belong, because without such reference points, aesthetic judgment is impossible," a demand that composers "respect their natural boundaries and behave in a way 'true' to their given constitution and temperament." This preference for rational order and categorization is typical of liberal thought.<sup>33</sup> Viennese critical discourse, wedded to the binary lens of *E-* and *U-* music, did not recognize the middlebrow as a legitimate category—not even as one of dubious merit—but operetta nonetheless embodied it.

By the twentieth century, Viennese operetta was fully congruent with Scott's "popular music revolution," a professionalized industry with a well-developed community of theaters, performers, composers and librettists, critics, publishers, and audiences, as well as a larger network of provincial theaters that extended

across the Austro-Hungarian Empire and eventually were linked with musical theater enterprises of various sorts around the world. But despite this clearly defined ecosystem, its role within the larger artistic world remained unstable. Operetta has never shed its reputation as an arriviste. Indeed, this pull toward “high art” is as much a feature of its criticism and subsequent historiography as its history to date. As operetta became increasingly canonically conscious, histories began to proliferate. Like early critical writing, most early histories were preoccupied with the legitimization of operetta as an art form, concentrating on the training and accomplishments of composers and the glorification of their accomplishments. The first such study, written by Otto Keller in 1926, described a two-pronged genealogy based on Mozartean *Singspiel* and *Volksstück*. One of operetta’s parents is artistic, the other popular; neither carry the stigma of commercialism and mass production that afflicted operetta in the 1920s.<sup>34</sup> Keller’s history was followed by Karl Westermeyer’s *Die Operette im Wandel des Zeitgeistes: von Offenbach bis zur Gegenwart* in 1931 and Franz Hadamowsky’s *Die Wiener Operette* in 1947. More recently, Richard Traubner’s *Operetta: A Theatrical History*—the only comprehensive history of the operetta genre in English—practices a similar art of legitimation, sorting worthy works from dross to prove that the genre as a whole is worthwhile.<sup>35</sup>

More recent historians, however, have reevaluated both the research and the assumptions behind these older histories. In fact, in the past ten years there has been something of a boom in operetta studies (as well as performance projects). Marion Linhardt’s work in theater history has illuminated the complex topographies of Viennese theaters, Stefan Frey’s series of well-researched biographies has solidified the historical record, and Camille Crittenden’s critical study of Johann Strauss brought unprecedented attention to operetta among anglophone scholars.<sup>36</sup> Even more recently, Ulrike Petersen’s dissertation and Kevin Clarke’s multiple studies have supplied in-depth studies of largely forgotten interwar works, Mattias Kauffmann has written the first comprehensive study of operetta during the Third Reich, and Barbara Denscher has offered an unusual large-scale study of a librettist in her work on Victor Léon.<sup>37</sup> Laurence Senelick has also offered an illuminating, often revisionist biography of Offenbach through his works.<sup>38</sup> They make a strong case for operetta’s importance as a topic of study, and a recent collection issued alongside an exhibit at the Austrian Theater Museum demonstrated the diversity of recent approaches to operetta.<sup>39</sup>

This book continues this work by examining several works of operetta—some well known, some obscure—through the aesthetic conversations and social issues that defined their meaning. I consider operetta’s dependency on market forces, conventionally considered a liability, a central feature of the genre. Most of the operettas I examine were exceptionally successful, and their subsequent performance histories in opera houses, on film, and in a million recital encores are not

typical. Despite their fame—many are still staged in Central Europe and beyond—they have been subjected to virtually no scholarly scrutiny in English. In addition, popularity means that their composition and premieres were unusually well documented in the Viennese press, making them rich texts for study. Their success also made them immediate subjects of imitation by other composers and librettists.

Rather than separating the works and their reception, I consider both simultaneously. Close readings of operettas reveal that these works contain nuances, intertextuality, and allegorical readings that cannot be appreciated in a more generalized study. These readings reveal a theatrical culture in which reception and composition were closely linked: issues frequently discussed in the press wound their way into operetta plots, sometimes in stealthy fashion. At the same time, the reception of operetta, including by figures who were not themselves part of operetta culture, most importantly Karl Kraus, can reveal aspects of operetta's meaning not evident in the texts themselves. Many studies have either narrowly considered operetta texts or broadly examined their entire culture; this study argues that the two are best considered together.

Many of these operettas were also successful internationally, and these transnational histories have recently become of great interest to historians, for example in studies by Kevin Clarke, Tobias Becker, and Derek Scott as well as a recent collection of essays centered in the interaction between London and Berlin.<sup>40</sup> The fame and fortune that could be gained through a success in London or New York became an incentive for composers and librettists to tailor their works to more generic rather than specifically Viennese tastes or to heavily adapt (or have others adapt) their works for a foreign audience. This book, however, locates Viennese operetta within the orbit of Austro-Hungarian and Viennese studies and makes a case for the specific theatrical culture of the city of Vienna, a discrete culture of composers, librettists, actors, critics, audiences, and cultural expectations. I argue that Viennese world of operetta constituted a particular habitus in Bourdieu's sense—that is, “a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices.”<sup>41</sup> For this reason, I only rarely shift my focus to Berlin and largely do not discuss other cities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, such as Prague, Budapest, and Graz, which had their own theatrical traditions. The international reception and adaptation of these works in other urban centers—what might be called operetta's international networks—can be understood only when we have acquired a more vivid sense of their origins.

#### SCOPE AND STRUCTURE

In this study I trace the history of Silver Age operetta and its reception through key works by the four of its most important composers: Franz Lehár, Oscar Straus,