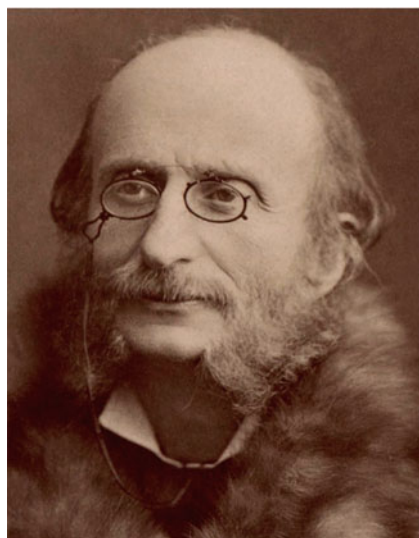


Chapter 9

Jacques Offenbach and Johann Strauss II: Operettas, Waltzes, and the Value of Brands



Manuel Santos Redondo



Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880), Photography by French artist Félix Tournachon, “Nadar”. 1860s. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). Gallica Digital Library, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b530922314>

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Johann Strauss II (1825–1899), Photography by Fritz Luckhardt, 1876

A man, whom no one has named, has helped Offenbach with advice, and supervised the magnificent production, the unprecedented splendors, the unending brilliance. His name is Billion!

Arnold Mortier, *Les soirées parisiennes*, 1874, on the expanded version of *Orphée aux enfers*.

The younger Strauss's career would not have been possible without the example of his father and was continually dependent on the contributions of his brothers, Josef from 1853 to 1870 and Eduard from 1862 to 1899. This was a family concern. To use a modern commercial analogy, the Strauss brand was more important than any one individual.

Jones, David Wyn (2023). *The Strauss Dynasty and Habsburg Vienna*. Introduction.

Introduction

When considering the origin of modern cultural industries, we use to think of cinema, radio, and sound recording as its starting point, of music as a commodity, for good or for bad. It would be a twentieth-century story, then. But in the second half of the nineteenth century, technological improvements, economic growth, and social changes were important enough to produce a European, and even global, cultural industry, with successful operettas being commercially produced and performed for a growing middle-class population, all over the world. Their composers, and not only the singers, were acclaimed, requested, and paid, as pop stars. In a similar way, in 1830s, light dance music, particularly waltzes, was a craze for all social classes and a commercial success.

We will consider two outstanding composers of that age: Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880) and Johann Strauss II (son) (1825–1899). Both were extremely talented musicians, both composed for the massive audience and were businessman of their productions. Both were global artist and toured through Europe and United States. The audience wanted not only their music, but to see and touch these early pop stars. There were important improvements in transport, railway, lithography, photography, steam press, and other changes that allowed the cultural production, when successful, to become global and performed in all European cities and also in America, Australia or Egypt. Also, there was an impressively growing urban middle-class population, who, among other things, demanded entertainment. The capitalist way of producing music, linked to massive audiences and profits, was a crucial part of these changes. This chapter is mainly the story of operettas in the second half of the nineteenth century, which can be considered a modern cultural industry that went global.

“Commercial” or “Light” Music

The opposition between “classical” and “popular” music was developed at the beginning of the nineteenth century, precisely the time when a growing middle class, urban public was demanding entertainment and spectacle: “The category of greatness, then, took shape in opposition to an emerging ‘culture industry’” (Samson 2001, p. 280). Conductors-impresarios like Johann Strauss (father) in Vienna and all over Europe, provided “commercial” or promenade concerts, alternating pieces of serious musical compositions with light or dance music. The showmanship was as important as the music; concerts were profit oriented, and the leader was both conductor and entrepreneur. Besides Strauss, Philippe Musard in Paris, Louis-Antoine Julien in London were the best examples (Weber 1975, p. 128; Scott 2008). The distinction can be made upon musical content, but it is more clearly understood in numbers. Between seasons 1826–27 and 1845–46, concerts increased in London from 125 to 381 (305%), in Paris from 78 to 383 (491%), and in Vienna from 111 to 163 (47%). In Vienna, concerts began growing earlier, and the increase since 1813 is about 300%. In the three cities, popular-music concerts outnumbered classical-music (Weber 1975, pp. 19–20, 25, 159–60.)

In opera, after French July revolution of 1830, entrepreneur Louis Véron wanted to produce shows adapted to the taste of the new bourgeois class, and the Grand opera was born, starting with Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* (1831). In the new times, it was crucial to appeal to mass audiences; but this commercial and spectacular opera was criticized by "purists". Schumann, and more violently Wagner, considered Meyerbeer music "superficial" and "written for the purpose of raising money and applause", in contradiction with pure art. So, the distinction was being established between "serious" or "high" art music (Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Berlioz, Chopin, Liszt, Schumann) and commercial one, which was regarded as entertainment, or more offensive adjectives as "philistine", vulgar, immoral, lacking "integrity", or just commercial, which was considered insulting enough. Everything spectacular and successful was criticized: Schumann accused Meyerbeer of writing "vulgar" and "immoral" music, for the masses ("the circus") (Taruskin 2006, Chapter 6). As ' points out:

The inspiration of this movement was the Romantic notion that music, like all art, should elevate the soul; that artists were the spiritual leaders of humanity, prophets and idealists, not businessmen. According to this view, any music with commercial motives could not be considered art. (Figs 2019, Chapter 2)¹

Operettas, waltzes, and dance music, conductors as pop stars, were considered commercial or light music, while opera (mostly) and symphonies were in the side of serious music. Offenbach and Strauss II were the favourites of the public, and worked on this, composing, and producing their works prioritizing audiences. Their musical talent was acknowledged, but not what they use it for ("Offenbach atrocities", wrote Berlioz).

The distinction, or the terms of the discussion, starts and consolidates in the nineteenth century. Being the bestselling author does not guarantee being accepted among the best artists. Scherer points out, that "financial success during a composer's lifetime did not project systematically into reputational success over a longer historical perspective." (Scherer 2004, p. 107). Offenbach is now much more important for the sociological history of his time than for musicology. Something similar could be said of Johann Strauss. Some critics considered his works to be entertainment rather than profound works of art. Strauss (like Offenbach) preferred dance rhythms, catchy melodies, and accessible music, as this was necessary for being successful with the audience. Of the well-respected "high art" music composers of the nineteenth century, probably Verdi was the one who achieved popular fame and serious recognition (Scott 2008; Sorba 2006).

Let us consider the stars of this cultural industry: Who is more relevant, the composer, or the singers? If we consider it in money terms, the singers were the main part of the business. We can see how the expenses are distributed in Fig. 9.1. Artists' salaries were the largest part of expenses, mainly for the pay for soloists, both singers

¹ Dahlhaus provides a more sophisticated explanation, although related: "music of quality (meaning romantic music), though it actually addressed a small circle of devotees, was forced by its technical difficulties to go outside the world of domestic music-making and into the bright glare of the public concert" (Dahlhaus 1989, "Romanticism and Biedermeier Music", pp. 170–171).

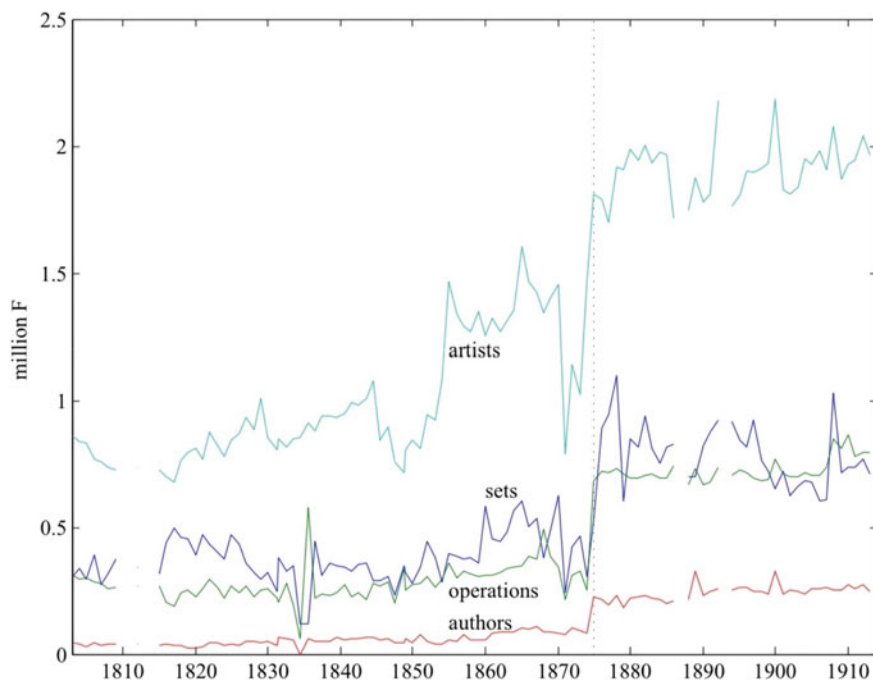


Fig. 9.1 Main categories of expenses of the Paris Opera, 1803 to 1914. Artists. Sets and costumes. Operations and maintenance. Authors. Million Francs, current (Source Velde 2015, Fig. 17)

and dancers, and their cost also grew during this period of social and technological change (Velde, 2015). But the author's role was crucial. The production of a play was expensive; more for opera than for operetta, but opera had some kind of aid from the government. The key to financial success was the number of representations, and this depended on the taste of the audience. The same was valid for dance music and promenade concerts, but the expenses were much lower, and so was the financial risk.

Singers' salaries were not only a big part of expenses, but also those growing faster. Opera houses directors in Paris complained about competition from London and St. Petersburg, which raised the pay to top singer; but knew that even Paris, to remain a premier opera house, needed to attract the best singers. What are the reasons for these high salaries, and for their growth? An obvious one is productivity: the singer may be a spoiled diva, but she must sing every day; if the play is successful, fixed costs decrease, but not this. The author may appear and conduct the orchestra at the premiere or when a particularly important person is attending; or just appear for the public to see him. But the singer must sing every day. As for the raise of their salaries, one explanation maybe the fact that the railways made the European cities much closer, and both singers and conductors could travel more quickly and comfortably. Also relevant was the star system that was essential to the mass market.

The famous and respected singer Pauline Viardot-García was criticized by her friend Clara Schumann for singing in mass concerts, because she “sacrifices her taste to the public” (Scherer 2004, Chapter 6; Figs 2019, Chapter 2; Velde 2015).

Popularizing Opera: “The Three Tenors”, 1994–2003

It may be helpful to see the criticism that nowadays has received those trying to popularize opera. Between 1990 and 2003, “The Three Tenors”, Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo, and José Carreras, had a great success performing in stadiums or other large arenas for huge audiences. They sang pieces of serious operas, together with Neapolitan songs and pop hits. The recording, in sound and video, became the highest-selling classical in history. Critic Martin Bernheimer, among others, depicted the event: “the singing seemed virtually irrelevant. This was a night for celebrating personalities and personality-cults” (Bernheimer 1994–07-18); “golden voices of Carreras, Domingo and Pavarotti were reduced to overamplified tin for the delectation of some 53,000 delirious fans in quest of painless culture” (Bernheimer 1994–08-30). They were paid a fortune: \$1 million each to sing at the event, plus royalties on the recording and video sales; and this was severely criticized. Pianist Anton Kuerti (1996) was equally critic: “newspapers devote huge blocks of their arts sections to the big show. Surely this information belongs (if anywhere) in the sports or business section, for any connection these spectacles may appear to have with the arts is phony”.

I found two concurrent explanations for the success of this mammoth concerts, now or in the nineteenth century. One is the “pop star” appeal; audience want to see, to touch, the idol, at least as much as listening to his music. And there are far less connoisseurs than massive audience for music and opera: As Chandler (2009) points out about the success of Lloyd Webber’s *The Phantom of the Opera*: “the desire to like opera is far stronger than actual opera appreciation. This has led to a great proliferation of what might be termed “entrance level” materials”.

Both Jacques Offenbach and Johann Strauss II toured through Europe, with their ensembles and orchestras; they toured for money, and for global fame, which then produced more money. They also toured in the United States, Strauss in 1872, Offenbach in 1876. The reason was money, like when Strauss performed in San Petersburg. Some events were pretty similar to those of “the three tenors”, except for the recording. They were, most of the times, polite in public about their guest country. But when the trip was over, they clearly depicted the system. The opposition between promenade concerts and a “serious” one seems minor when the quality of the event is totally subordinated to just having the presence of the famous conductor and composer, a pop star, which is the main motivation of the public. In the mammoth Boston coliseum, there were 1,000 orchestra members and 10,000 people in the chorus, to sing the Blue Danube Waltz. Strauss had a hundred sub-conductors distributed by the place. Those are, says Eisenberg, his words:

There were thousands of singers and instrumentalists on stage. This I was supposed to conduct! In order to control the masses, I was assigned twenty sub conductors, only a few of whom I could see so that, despite previous rehearsals, the idea of an artistic presentation or its approximation or even of just holding the thing together was nigh impossible. A cancellation would have been at the price of my own life. Just imagine my predicament, there, atop the highest podium, in front of 100,000 Americans in the audience!

There I stood. How will it all begin and how will it end? Suddenly, a canon shot, the gentle signal for the 20,000 of us that the concert was to begin. The program was to begin with “The Blue Danube”.

I gave the sign. My twenty sub-conductors followed me as quickly and as well as they could. The spectacle was off [Heidenspektakel]—something I’ll never forget in all my living days. Since we had started at approximately the same time, that worry was over, and now all my energies were concentrated on only one thought, that we should all STOP at the same time. Thank God. Even that I managed to pull off. That was all that was humanly possible. The 100,000 spectators roared their approval, but I was able to breathe long sigh of relief only after I found myself in the open again with solid ground under my feet.²

Technological Improvements: Towards Cultural Industry

In his 1935 essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, Walter Benjamin claims that around 1900, lithography, photography, and technical reproduction of sound, were changing, for bad, the quality of art: “the masses seek distraction whereas art demands concentration”, and the culture industry becomes a powerful agent in perpetuating capitalism. Music movies are not even mentioned. His fellow scholars from the Frankfurt school Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, working in the United States, developed the topic in 1944 and coined the term “cultural industry” with a derogatory meaning, similar to Benjamin. Adorno wrote several essays on music; and severely criticized “popular music”, or similar terms like “light”, folk, vulgar, or “commercial”, all of them opposed to “serious” or “high art” music. Adorno is anti-capitalism and anti-market (and anti-bourgeois values), and anti-industrial revolution: “The industrial development of light music annulled the last aesthetic responsibility and transformed light music into a market article” (quoted and discussed in Witkin 2003, p. 92).

But, with his hard criticism of “vulgar” and “commercial” music, Adorno somehow saves Offenbach, the waltzes of Strauss and Viennese operetta; treats them with “a kind of paternal tolerance” (Paddison 1982).

² Eisenberg 1894 p. 168 wrote “as Strauss himself told to a friend” (“so erzählte Strauß selbst einem Freunde”). The numbers look exaggerated, but real figures are not very different. The Coliseum was designed to hold 100,000 people but was reduced during construction. Nevertheless, it was impressive enough: 100 m. wide and 183 m. long, capable for 60,000 people. There were 1,000 orchestra members and 10,000 people in the chorus. The English translation is taken from *Austrian Information*, September 1, 1966.

Music Publishing Industry. Property Rights

Moving to the income, the main sources of income in the music theatre business were ticket sales (and, for the serious opera, the subsidies). In case of a successful operetta, performed internationally, the legal system had much to say, both in the published scores and in the royalties for performances.

Music publishing was a new source of income, depending on the agreement, the composers could become the owners of their music and collect a fee for the right to publish it. For most of the composer, even the most popular ones, the money they collected for their publishers was far away from their earning from performances (Figs 2019, Chapter 2 “A Revolution on the Stage”).

Operetta, a Suitable Commercial Product

What is operetta, and why was this musical theatre, and not opera, the preferred entertainment for both the audience and theatre managers in the industrial era?

Operetta has different names in different countries: *opera comique*, *opera bouffe*, *opérette*, comic opera; and some differences in content, but the general concept is clear. Part sung and part recited, its model is opera—for Offenbach, Mozart, and Rossini -, but also vaudeville and farce (Sorba 2006). It is considered an entertainment for private, commercial theatres, for popular consumption. Commercial motivation was as important, in the conception of operetta, as the artistic ideas of its composers. Their topics are not serious, epic, or tragic, but light, witty, frivolous, maybe sentimental. Accordingly, the score looked for a contagious melody, not pretentious but accessible. Precisely for this mass. Commercial orientation, operetta had a bad name in the establishment “high art” musicians and critics. Offenbach is a very important figure in the social history of nineteenth century, but in music history is rarely considered, except for his serious opera *Les contes de Hoffmann*, composed with effort precisely for this purpose. The fact is that in the second half of the nineteenth century, operetta became the most popular of theatrical shows, dominating the stage in Europe and America. We can defend the musical merits of operetta that have been unfairly ignored. But, from the economic and social point of view, there is no need for that, its importance being totally acknowledged both by critics and fans (Dahlhaus 1989, pp. 226–236; Traubner 2003, Introduction, pp. vii–xvi).

Cultural Industry and Globalization: Parisian Operetta Goes Global

In 1867, with International Exposition in Paris, Jacques Offenbach was really fashionable all over the world. Verdi and Wagner may be the kings, and also Brahms or

Tchaikovsky, but the favourite of the public were Offenbach's operettas and Strauss' Waltzes. Their music is often classified as "light" and commercially oriented; and operetta, as immoral, but both ruling and middle classes loved it. Operetta became the herald of global cultural industry; music experts consider it second class, and something more in the realm of sociology than music history. "Serious" opera has a very relevant economic side, as other chapters of this book study. But operetta and "light" music is, no doubt, the king of popular music in the nineteenth century. It is not my task to rescue the music merits of Offenbach's operettas. Even himself worked to compose a serious opera: *Les Fées du Rhin* 1864; in German translated as *Die Rheinnixen*; and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, posthumous, 1881. And it is mostly acclaimed for them among serious music public (Dahlhaus 1989, pp. 282–3). We well consider his musical talent and merits, but our chapter deals mainly with the global cultural industry in which he was the champion of his age.

Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880)

Jacques Offenbach was the son of Isaac Eberst Offenbach (1779–1850), a Jew musician born in Offenbach, near Frankfurt. He moved to Deutz, the East bank of the Rhine of today's Cologne, where most Jews lived (Senelick 2017, p. 29). It was linked to Cologne by a yaw cable ferry since 1674 and by ship bridge since 1822. A fixed bridge railway and road bridge was built in 1859. In 1808, forced or by convenience, Isaac took the name of his village, Offenbach.

Jacques learned to play the violin as a child, in Cologne, and then took lessons of cello, with musicians Joseph Alexander and then with Bernhard Breuer.

Paris was a more tolerant city for Jews than then Cologne. And more of a city than any other one, with any criteria. Even compared with musical German cities, Paris was the Mecca for music and theatre. In 1833 Isaac Offenbach, having seven children (plus two daughters that had died, being two and nine year-old), at least three of them, Julius, Isabella and Jakob, gifted for music, considered moving to Paris. In November 1833, after getting some help from people in the city, took Julius, 16, and Jacob, 14, to Paris (Yon 2000, Introduction). It was a four-day journey from Cologne. In 1839 and again 1840 the two brothers come to see their family. In 1848 Offenbach will spend time in Cologne and would compose and perform for the Prussian authorities.

It is important to notice the change in the conditions of travelling during those years. In 1833 it was a long journey of 4 days. By 1846, it was possible to travel through 476 km of railway, crossing Belgium, with several train transfers, but totalling about nine hours of train. The Paris-Brussels railway line opened that year, linked to different cities in Belgium, the Netherlands and Prussia, and was heralded, specially by the French, as "the beginning of Europe's unification under the cultural dominance of France" (Figes 2019, Introduction). A similar comparison may be done with other musicians' tours. In 1847, Berlioz went to Russia. Travel to Brussels and Berlin was already by train, but after Berlin it was by stagecoach, and then a covered sledge for four days, totalling a two-weeks journey. He describes it as a terrible experience in

his *Memories*. By contrast, in 1867, an ageing and ill Berlioz could travel to Saint Petersburg all the journey by train, “after Berlin the railway carriages are heated rooms, with beds and everything required”, in four days. In England, same changes did happen before: Johann Strauss father, during his tour in Britain in 1838, was able to change city everyday Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and find it very different to his tours in continental Europe.

Jacob was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire by its director Luigi Cherubini and joined the violoncello class. Isaac tried unsuccessfully to get a position at a Paris synagogue, so he left his two sons in Paris, sending them some money for the first year; and they lived on their own afterwards. They changed their names to Jules and Jacques.

Jacques became a well-known cellist virtuoso. In 1841 he met the parents of Herminie, and the 15-year-old lady. He composed pieces for her and asked her parents to marry her. In May 1844 Jacques travelled to London, probably helped by his soon-to-be father-in-law. He had an extensive repertoire of his own compositions for the cello. He was well received,³ played accompanied by the best virtuosos, and performed for the Queen in a concert, and received a jewel as a pay. It was an artistic and financial success. So he went back to Paris, convert to Catholicism, and marry Herminie.

In 1850, Arsène Houssaye appointed him conductor of the orchestra of the *Comédie-Française*. It was a salaried position. But Offenbach wanted his musical theatre compositions to be performed, and he didn't find any open door. Only the singer, composer, librettist and conductor, Florimond Ronger, “Hervé”, manager of the small theatre Folies-Nouvelles, commissioned a short piece from Offenbach, *Oyayaye ou La reine des îles* (June 1855). In his small theatre, Hervé was only allowed, by law, to perform one act, two characters spectacles, and can be considered the forerunner of operetta. Then Offenbach would try the same, as a manager himself:

I stayed at the Théâtre-Français for five years—from 1850 to 1855. It was at this time that, faced with the persistent impossibility of getting myself played, the idea came to me of founding a music theatre of my own. I told myself that the Opéra-Comique was no longer the Opéra-Comique, that music that was truly bouffe, gay, witty, music that lived, at last, was gradually being forgotten. Composers working for the Opéra-Comique were making little grand operas.—I saw that there was something to be done for young musicians who, like me, were languishing at the door of the Théâtre-Lyrique. (Martinet 1887, p. 16)⁴

³ In London his concerts were promoted by theatre impresario John Mitchell, not to be confused with his father-in-law, Michael George Mitchell. They were probably related. (Yon 2000, pp. 62–64. Faris 1980, following Martinet 1887, pp. 7–9).

⁴ André Martinet (1860–1920), French historian and writer, and friend of the family, published a biography of Jacques Offenbach in 1887. He used letters and notes from him, provided by his widow: “In a few pages recently found among the countless notebooks and bundles of letters he liked to keep, the Master himself jotted down memories of his early years”. He quotes many phrases from Offenbach, without more info about the date or anything. Faris acknowledge Martinet many times (Faris 1980 p 233: “excellent, concise and personal”). Martinet biography is quite good. I have tried to acknowledge his text in French when followed by Faris or other authors.

There was a small theatre, Lazaze, closed and available for hire. Offenbach needed money, and he was backed by Hippolyte de Villemessant (1810–1879), who would provide, through *Le Figaro*, much more than financial support.

A company was duly formed. Offenbach would draw a salary as manager and receive the royalties of his music. Villemessant was to have a backer's percentage. He had just started publishing *Le Figaro* and regarded the Bouffes Parisiens as a twin enterprise. It was decided to open the theatre on 5 July 1855, which gave Offenbach less than a month in which to equip the theatre, recruit actors, orchestra and staff, find authors to write materials for the opening programme — and compose the music. (Faris 1980, p. 51. Martinet, Chapter 2)

After his success with the short pieces *Les Deux Aveugles* (Two Blind Beggars, July 1855, Bouffes-Parisiens, Champs-Élysées) and *Ba-ta-clan* (December 1855, Bouffes-Parisiens, winter theatre), the business seemed to be going well; the theatre was at capacity, but the finances were bad. In May 1857, the company was divided in half, and part of it, twenty musicians and some actors, went to London in tour. They played in French, but were quite successful, got contracts for another month, and brought the rest of the company to London. Queen Victoria attended a performance (Faris 1980, pp. 58–59. Gammond 1980, pp. 28–9). Then they came back to France, where Theatre Marigny had been newly decorated, after only one year (Faris 1980, p. 60).

Orphée Aux Enfers

The solution to the financial problem would be the success of *Orphée aux enfers* (*Orpheus in Hell* or *Orpheus in the Underground*), his first two-acts operetta. Now the legal restrictions on small theatres had been lifted, and Jacques could use plenty of chorus members and extras. Still today is the most represented and popular work of Offenbach. But the first week was not so good. Then, a furious debate, provoked by Offenbach, with the main theatre critic of the time, Jules Janin, about the play being unrespectful to mythology, profanation of holy and glorious antiquity, said Janin, and the librettist claiming that the phrases are taken from Jenin's texts (Yon 2000, p. 211, 2014). The public flocked to the theatre, for 228 performances. Offenbach arranged a four-act version with ballet, staged in 1874 at the Gaité, which run for another 290 performances. And Offenbach finances were saved. He was even able to buy, and then rebuild after a fire, a good villa in Étretat, the fashion village in the cost of Normandie where he used to spend the summer.

Offenbach was granted French citizenship by Napoleon III, in 1860, and next year was appointed *Chevalier* of the *Légion d'Honneur*, together with, among other musicians and writers, most important being French comic dramatist Eugène Labiche (Yon 2000, p. 260).

Offenbach was quite successful in 1860s, with only a few failures. In 1864, *La belle Hélène*, with Hortense Schneider as singer and diva, made sensation and would be a success all over the world. Soon before the 1867 Paris Exhibition, *La Vie Parisienne* premiered, followed by *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, also with Hortense

Schneider. Both were a must for anyone, middle class or aristocracy. Offenbach was the favourite of both the public and the ruling classes. After the Paris Exhibition, in a time with most of the technological improvements of industrial revolution already working, Offenbach operettas were a global thing, performed in all Europe but also in America, Australia or Egypt. He was hated by the defenders of “serious” music: Berlioz, Wagner, and considered “commercial”. But he was acclaimed by the public, was a prominent cultural and even political figure in the French Empire and in Europe.

On the 19th of July 1870, France declared war on Prussia, backed by public opinion and the parliament. Offenbach was at Bad Ems spa, and on July 3rd he had been conducting the orchestra of his *Chanson de Fortunio* in the presence of Prussian King (later German Kaiser) Wilhelm on the occasion of the commemoration of the battle of Sadowa, the big victory of Prussia over Austrian Empire. It was a usual gesture for Offenbach in the operetta season in Bad Ems. Offenbach returned from Ems to Étretat, travelled to Bordeaux, Milan, and then to San Sebastián, Spain, where Herminie and the family already were (Los Santos 2018; Sherr 2021; Mejías 2020) and there went Jacques. He was more a Rhinelander than a Prussian, and much more a French, or Parisian, of German origin than anything else. But “1870 was no year for a man with divided loyalties” (Faris 1980, p. 162. See Schwartz, 2018, p. 193). Offenbach was denounced as a traitor by both the Prussian and the French press. He had written two German patriotic songs in 1848, as Jacob, and a French one, *Dieu garde l'Empereur*, in 1862, reissued now. The Prussian press denounced him as a traitor, the French just as a Prussian. He sent an open letter to *Le Figaro*, explaining the insults in the German press, and proud to be a Frenchman, “which I have earned by honest toil”.

But nothing would be the same for him after 1870. In February 1871, *La Princesse de Trebizonde*, premiered in 1869, was staged at the Bouffes. Critics opposed the play because of the author being “Prussian”, and it was a failure. Offenbach persevered, often successfully, providing works designed for the audience. But he was considered the main representative of the “decadence” and “absence of values” of the Second Empire, and the downfall of France (Lelièvre, 2022). But he kept working on what the public wanted.

Offenbach achieved success with audience in many creations during the Republic. He became manager of the Gaîté theatre on July 1873. He had been commissioned *La Roi Carotte* in 1869, by the manager Maurice Boulet, but the war kept it on hold. Boulet wanted the Gaîté to outdo any rivals in lavishness of productions, with “an army of musicians, battalions of dancers”. Dramatist Victorien Sardou wrote the libretto, after a story by E. T. A. Hoffmann. The production was calculated to cost 6,000 francs a night. Finally, it was staged on January 15, 1872. It was a great success, during seven months and 150 performances. So, Offenbach made great plans, first contracted by Boulet, then, at his death, taking over the theatre. The lease was 316,000 francs, and he began “spending in the grand manner, as in the old days at the Bouffes” (Faris 1980, p. 168. Martinet 1887, p. 186). Painting, carpets, and furniture, for an additional 154,000 francs before reopening in September. *La Jolie Parfumeuse* was successful, and Offenbach decided to mount a spectacular enlarged production of *Orphée aux enfers*, with 120 choristers, 60 orchestral musicians, a

military band of 40, 8 principal female dancers, and a corps de ballet of 60. It was an enormous success, made 1,800,000 francs, and Offenbach himself conducted the hundredth performance. The daily profit was calculated in 3,000 francs.

So, Offenbach went on with grandeur. He composed *La Hain* ("Hatred"), with dramatist Victorien Sardou, which premiered in his own theatre on December 3, 1874. The scenery, the décors, were *grand opera* style. The stage accommodated 435 persons. Offenbach had invested 360.000 francs to put it on stage. Receipts were 8,000 francs per performance for two weeks, then fell to 5,000 francs. After 27 performances, Offenbach decided to stage back *Orphée aux enfers* instead. But it wasn't enough. It was a financial disaster. Offenbach has to sell part of his shares in the theatre and get a mortgage on his royalties for three years. And he now needed to compose music to pay for his debts. And so he did: *Le voyage dans la lune*, with Zulma Bouffar, based on Jules Verne's novel, premiered in 1875 at the Gaîté, with 185 performances, 965,000 francs in box office, and staged in London and Vienna. *La creole*, and *Le Boulanger a des ecus*, thought for Hortense Schneider. This last premiered in October 1875, and was the last collaboration of the successful team: Offenbach, Halévy and Meilac.

In the summer of 1875, Offenbach was approached by American opera manager Maurice Grau, through Lino Bacquero, for a concert tour through the United States in the following year, 1876, the centenary of the Declaration of Independence. His health wasn't good, and his family was not in favour; so he was reluctant. But the offer was 30,000 \$ in advance, and he decided to go. On the 21st of April 1876 he embarked in Le Havre, with just one stop at Plymouth. The journey was hard, because of mechanical problems and a storm; on May 5 they arrived to New York. The public was enthusiastic. The criticism of indecency was present, too. The *New York Times* was particularly harsh:

M. Offenbach, the creator of "the fleshly school of music" ... long ago found that to use his gift of melody in the service of immorality was a sure path to fortune. ... [*La Belle Helene*] is simply the sexual instinct expressed in melody. ... When its chief representative [of opera-bouffe] is welcomed with such as much honour as could be paid to Wagner or Liszt, an insult [...] is inflicted upon every great and honourable artist. (*New York Times*, May 8, p. 4)

His first concert was a failure, and precisely for the opposite reasons that concerned the *New York Times* critic. There was serious music, all from Offenbach; his fellow conductor, Henri Boulard, was criticized as dull. And no singers, no dancers, no can-can. Offenbach was not happy; but Grau just reacted: lower prices, pieces of Weber, Strauss, Vieuxtemps, Gounod, Berlioz and Meyerbeer, and a second conductor, Max Maretzek. People bought tickets again. And Grau quickly mounted *La Vie Parisienne* at the Both Theatre, with the diva Marie Aimée, and Offenbach conducting. The tour was then a financial success. Offenbach went on to Philadelphia and other cities, and embarked for France on the 8th of July.

In his last years, Offenbach continued to produce successful operettas. In 1877 he began to work on *Les contes de Hoffmann*. His aim was to produce a serious opera: he was working for posterity. He was much quicker in composing his comic and light operettas. He had never depicted light music, but now it was different. Be it because

of the critics during the Republic, or the financial failures, he was trying to make a name for posterity as a serious composer. We have seen that in 1864 he composed *Les Fées du Rhin* (“The Rhine fairies”), a grand romantic opera. It was commissioned for the Theatre am Kärntnertor in Vienna; but Offenbach, probably expecting to have it staged in Paris, worked on a libretto in French by Charles Nutter, and then have it translated. It premiered in Vienna as *Die Rheinmühen* (“The Rhine mermaids”) on the 4th of February 1864, instead of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* (No wonder Wagner hated him!) and then in Cologne in 1864 (Faris 1980, pp. 108–109). It was received “respectfully but without enthusiasm” (Senelick 2017, p. 42). But Offenbach, in the pursue of a serious, full sang opera, reused several pieces for *Les contes de Hoffmann*, including his most famous “Barcarolle” (*Belle nuit, ô nuit d’amour*).

Musical Merits of Offenbach

Offenbach was a social, historical and almost a political figure, as much as a musical one (Faris 1980, p. 114). He is well studied by political, social and cultural historians; but is nor important for musicology. In his age, he was enormously successful with the public, but endured a similar disdain from the intellectual and musical elite. His *operettas* were considered musically “commercial” and “light”, and morally questionable. When Napoleon III made Offenbach a *Chevalier de la Legion d’honneur*, it was questioned on this basis: a composer of light opera. His operettas were criticized by Berlioz (called them “atrocities”). As authoritative an author as Dahlhaus wrote: “Operetta had little impact on the history of composition, but it is closely bound to the social history of its day” [And music history includes] “the performance, reception, and institutions of music” [and operetta] “played an inestimable part in the everyday musical life of the public” (Dahlhaus 1989, pp. 227–228).

An Assessment on Offenbach as Entrepreneur

Let us consider the business of Music Theatre, and then we will be able to assess if the unusual role of Offenbach, being at the same time composer and manager (together with the whole control of the production) was good for him, in both the artistic and the economic sides. This manager role was not unusual in the business of light music or promenade concerts. But producing an opera or operetta is much more costly and complex; it involves a big and expensive theatre, most of the times provided by the government, at least in the case of the larger, official ones.

Offenbach would be throughout most of his career as the manager of the whole business. Was it good for creativity, for the final work? Was it good for his profits, did he earn more money? Let us answer the two questions.

In the words of Faris:

As an entrepreneur and artistic director of immensely strong personality he controlled the style and dramatic content of the presentations. He would often have an idea of his own for an operetta, choose a librettist, and then work closely with him on the form of the piece as well as composing the music. He even suggested song titles. Whoever his collaborator, Offenbach's own wit, his percipience of social foibles and hatred of pretentiousness were fingerprints in all the operettas.

In this sense, his role as manager, much more than composer, was quite good. He was creative, and also consciously tried to satisfy the taste of the public.

Another part of the management is marketing himself as a legend, and as a character. He was good at it: "the legend that he was industriously building" (Gammond 1980, p. 29, about his London tour) But this is not part of the management; any economically successful virtuoso had to be a legend in order to increase the profit in the nineteenth century, Paganini being the master. The company also had a big amount of arrangements to do. The England tour of 1857 is a good example of this.

But there is another task of the manager: to control expenses and to provide adequate financial means. This role is difficult to fit with the other one. And Offenbach, we are told by many sources, was terrible. Faris, following Martinet, repeatedly mentions his "incurable extravagance as a manager" (Faris 1980, p. 58).

When he saw the takings staying nearly at capacity Jacques spent money without counting. Whole lengths of velvet were swallowed up in the auditorium; costumes devoured width after width of satin. On top of the architects' estimates came the cost of the decor ordered from the official scene-painters at the Opera. The till was open to anyone in distress; discreet and unassuming generosity became the accomplice of brash and impressive prodigality. [In 1858] The spectre of Clichy [the debtors' prison] began to threaten Jacques. (Faris 1980, p. 58, following Martinet 1877, pp. 44-45)

Johann Strauss II (1825–1899) and the Viennese Waltz

Johann Strauss II (son) didn't need to establish waltz as a popular, crazy fashion in Vienna and Europe. First Josef Lanner (1801–1843) and his father Johann Strauss (1804–1849) had done it. Both were violinists in the small string orchestra of Michael Pamer, and friends. Lanner decided to go on the music business, and in 1824 his orchestra was quite successful playing Viennese dance music. In 1832 he formed a small, second orchestra, conducted by Johann Strauss. Then Strauss formed his own band, and they were rivals, both raising popularity of Viennese waltz. There were *Lannerianer* and *Straussianer* in the city—not bad for business.

Strauss's performances were "an aural and visual spectacle" (Jones 2023, p. 29). This was first put in practice by Johann Strauss father:

Johann Strauss did not fit with existing practices. He was not a virtuoso violinist, and, though he was certainly a composer-performer, he did not have the musical self-sufficiency of the composer-pianist; he needed an orchestra, preferably one that was fashioned in his own image and which he also directed. It was this third element of his musical make-up that proved decisive—that is, his physical presence as a director, the Napoleon of the dance, as he was often called. The combination of composer,

violinist, director, and ensemble was a neat one, but it was largely untried as a touring enterprise (Jones 2023, p. 37).

The combination proved to be as successful with the public as demanding for the performer. Since his debut as conductor-showman in 1825, Strauss father run one or more ensembles, for a growing demand in Vienna:

Strauss leaped to the podium, signalled the downbeat and, with demonic intensity, fiddled along with his players while indicating rhythm and phrasing by the motion of his hips and shoulders. . . . On a typical evening he would race by fiacre from place to place, conduct the same meticulously rehearsed sequence of waltzes in each location, fight his way out through adoring crowds, and hurry on to the next assignment. By about three in the morning, he would arrive home, not exhausted, but tingling with the excitement of the hours just passed (Fantel 1971, pp. 40–41).

Lanner was appointed in 1829 Director of Music for the Imperial Court Ball, where he conducted concerts and composed new works for the Court orchestra. Strauss toured through Europe with part of his orchestra. Most famous, in Paris in 1837, with twenty-eight musicians, for five months. His concerts were attended, at some point, by Hector Berlioz, Meyerbeer, Cherubini, Auber, Adolphe Adam, Niccolò Paganini. While in Paris, got an invitation to travel with his orchestra and play in England in 1838, in the presence of young queen Victoria. It was a long, strenuous tour. On the 4th of October 1837, they boarded coaches for the overland journey to Paris. They arrived on the 27th of October, after an arduous journey with performances along the way. After the Paris concerts, on the 11th of April 1838, all but four boarded for England. They were back in Vienna by December 21st, more than fourteen months since their departure (Suchet 2015, Chapter 3). All this before the railway era, with the only exception of England.

So, both the light dance music specialization and the Strauss family business were well established in Vienna and Europe when Johann Strauss Jr. started his career. And his father's wife Anna Streim—whom he had married in 1825 and with whom he had six children—is said to have had an important role in running the family business.

Difficulties were of another kind. Since 1834 Johann father had a young mistress in Vienna, Emily Trampusch; they would have eight children, all in Vienna, known by everyone. Strauss father had forbidden their children to play music. Johann had secretly learned to play the violin, covered by his mother. Anna Streim requested divorce in 1844, at the same time as young Johann asked for legal permit for an orchestra in Vienna. In October, once the permit was arranged, he hired musicians from everywhere in the city, conformed an orchestra, and arranged a debut at a tavern in a suburb. And, frightened as he was, being nineteen, Johann was able to perform with the violin and the orchestra, with all the elegant movements to attract attention.

Johann raised the violin and settled it comfortably under his chin. The whole top part of his body bent into the opening triplet of chords, played fortissimo. The audience could not but pay attention. . . . Turning at the crescendo to face the audience, forcing them to sway with him, he looked back to the orchestra, before turning again and playing a beautiful, melodious solo passage on the violin, gazing out at the audience and smiling as he did so. (Suchet 2015, Chapter 6).

And played a composition of his own, a waltz, with great success. The concert ended with a popular composition by Strauss father, who had opposed his son's musical career and this event in particular. As a conductor, composer, and showman, young Johann definitively was something. Critics praised him. One of them, Franz Wiest, finished his piece "Good Night *Lanner!* Good Evening *Strauss Father!* Good Morning *Strauss Son!*" (Suchet 2015).

For some time, the two orchestras competed in Vienna, until Johann father died young in 1849. Then Johann II grouped the two orchestras in one; his brothers Josef and Eduard would be soon also involved in the family business. Later on, Johann III (son of Eduard), would also be a musician.

It is important to notice that managing their own orchestra, for light dance music in Vienna and Europe, was not a strange business dedication for a musician and composer, but the normal course of things. Music publishers were important for a composer's career, as Tobias Haslinger was for Strauss father (Jones p. 20); but royalties for compositions were a mean part of a musician income, compared with income from performances. The model may have been Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840), the Italian violinist, great composer, and virtuoso, who, besides his incredible quality, cultivated legends, dynamism, and little tricks to get a spectacular performance, relevant for the high fee. In a similar way, Johann Strauss son, as was his father, was not demanded for his compositions, important as they were. Public and managers wanted the full pack: the orchestra; the compositions, preferably new; and the real person to see, admire, and if possible, touch. As a conductor, young Johann was a showman: violin in hand, played some parts and directed the orchestra with his bow, violin, feet, head, and body, making a spectacle for the audience. This was his father's style, carefully perfectionated, as we have mentioned before. Young Johann wanted to follow exactly his career, and so was secretly taught, with his mother's help, by Franz Amon, the man conducting and managing the Strauss orchestra in Vienna when the leader was on tour—a lot of time indeed. So young Johann had the talent, the musical lessons on piano and violin, the training as a conductor and showman, the will to become an important musician, the need to bring money to the household, and something more, following his father and Joseph Lanner: a brand name for dance music linked with Vienna. Until now, he is considered the image of Vienna and Austria, and so it was in the second part of nineteenth century.

He criticized with terrible words his experience in the Boston mammoth concert in 1872, which maybe the top historical experience of the triumph of the pop star culture over the music. But that was related to the whole business in which he was involved. The business was also linked to the active presence of the showman, and both Strauss, father and son, were exhausted from his work. The father suffered from exhaustion in London, in 1838, after a year touring. As a musical critic wrote: "Strauss, who is on his hotel bed, finds himself successful, much applauded, very rich—and dying",

The Strauss dynasty didn't face the harsh criticism Offenbach did. Theirs was light dance music, but Strauss father talent was acknowledged. In Paris, his concerts were attended, at some point, by Hector Berlioz, Meyerbeer, Cherubini, Auber, Adolphe Adam and Niccolò Paganini. Strauss son was even more praised, having even Wagner

in his favour (see Finck, 1897). Waltz was criticized as an immoral and low-class dance at the end of the eighteenth century. But by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, it was well established in Viennese culture, and when in 1837 Strauss father toured in Paris, it was fashionable all over Europe. There were no clash of cultures and nationalities in Strauss' dynasty.

The only political stress came during the 1848 revolution. Strauss father, who was Court Ball Music Director since 1835, was loyal to the monarchy, and composed the "Radetzky March", dedicated to the Habsburg field marshal, winner at the Battle of Custoza against the Italians. His son was openly sympathetic to the revolutionaries, composed songs for them, and his orchestra played "La Marseillaise", the song of the revolutionaries, in Paris. All this made difficult for him to get appointed as Court Ball Music Director after the death of his father. He finally got it in 1863. And at the 1867 World Exhibition in Paris, his "Blue Danube Waltz" was a sensational success, with over a million scores sold worldwide, and he was considered Vienna musical ambassador (Crittenden 2006).

Later, in order to marry his third wife Adele, he would formally renounce his Austrian citizenship and eventually asked for German citizen of the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, and also become a Lutheran Protestant. They lived in Coburg until granted, and finally married on August 15, 1887, in Coburg. The couple left the duchy the day after, and always lived in Vienna, and Johann had a happy family life, including his beloved stepdaughter, Alice.⁵

So, when Strauss turned to operetta about 1864, he was in no desperate need of musical and political praise. His "light" music was not well considered by the "serious" musical establishment (Jones 2023, pp. 5–6), but this condescendence came softly, and many times together with a lot of praise. Offenbach, for comparison, was fiercely criticized, for his immoral music for being a traitor to France. This must have been important in his turn to compose a serious, full sang, respected opera. In the case of Strauss, the market demanded operettas. Vienna's stage impresarios were willing to include such a musical talent. Composing operettas was not only profitable, but also provided recognition among serious critics, especially if the risqué elements were downgraded. We can consider operetta, about 1860s, one step above waltz and dance music in the consideration of serious music critics.

By 1870, Offenbach operettas were successful all over the world, and several of them were performed at Vienna and received enthusiastically. In England, the

⁵ Jones claim that it was not a problem for Viennese establishment: "Johann and Adele were just one more strand in this web of Austro-German, Catholic-Protestant interrelationships". (2023, p. 181). But Pastene says different: "Frank-Josef found it hard indeed to forgive one of his foremost subjects this traitorous transgression. Devout Catholic that he was, he found it even harder to forgive Strauss his conversion to Protestantism" (1951, p. 180). Crittenden says that "Adele was not well liked by Viennese public. It was for her that Strauss abandoned his two most overt links to Vienna: his Austrian citizenship and his Catholicism. The Viennese feared, not unreasonably, that Strauss would leave Vienna altogether on her account" (2006, p. 231). They lived in Coburg for their purpose, but left Coburg after the wedding. Once back in Vienna, the fact is thar Strauss was appreciated and honoured the same by Viennese people and establishment.

“indecent” French operettas were dominating the stage; the theatre and music impresario Richard D’Oyly Carte convinced musician Arthur Sullivan and dramatist W. S. Gilbert to produce something similar, but more family-friendly, and were quite successful. For Viennese impresarios, the best choice was Johann Strauss. But, contrary to Offenbach, composing for the theatre was not Strauss strength, in the same way that Offenbach had a terrific creative facility for operettas and had to struggle to compose serious opera. Johann had just married singer Jetty Treffz in 1862, seven years his senior and with seven children as a single woman, prior to her marriage to Strauss. Overcoming family opposition, Jetty became a suitable wife for Johann, and also a private secretary, artistic adviser, and a good manager for the Strauss industry. She convinced Josef and Eduard to take on most of the conducting work, and so Johann would recover and compose. Great pieces followed. And, together with theatre impresarios, Jetty was persistent trying to get Strauss into the operetta business. He finally put to work on it, struggling with effort, with two tries unfinished. There were differences between composing waltz and composing music for operettas, and Strauss’ waltzes were less suitable than Offenbach gallops and his versatility (Dahlhaus 1989, “Opera bouffe, Operetta, Savoy Opera,” pp. 226–236).

But both Jetty and impresarios pressed on: He finally signed an exclusive contract with the *Theater an der Wien*, run by Maximilian Steiner, for the seasons 1870–1 and 1871–2, which granted him, among other benefits, a 10 per cent share in the profits on the gross receipts of each performance. Finally, in February 1871 premiered *Indigo und die vierzig Räuber* (*Indigo and the Forty Thieves*) with a libretto by Steiner himself. It had 46 performances, critics considered that it was not at Strauss level, and it wasn’t successful. The operetta business was put on hold with the offer by Gilmore to tour in America next year. But both Jetty and Steiner perseverated, and by 1873 Johann began to work in an operetta or “opera comique”, that would be a sensation: *Die Fledermaus* (‘The Bat’), about a disguise party with a lawyer trying to take revenge for having been humiliated in a former party, when his costume was a bat. Strauss composed the melodies, librettists being Karl Haffner and Richard Genée, after a French vaudeville comedy by Meilhac and Halévy. After several delays, it was staged in April 1874, with Strauss conducting. It was a great triumph, with 200 performances, and then staged all over Europa, United States, and Australia. It was fun and good music, praised even by Gustav Mahler, which was no fan of *operetta*, and till today is well considered and represented.

Strauss would compose another thirteen operettas. Only two of them *Eine Nacht in Venedig* (‘One Night in Venice’), 1883, and *Der Zigeunerbaron* (‘The Gypsy Baron’), 1885, were truly successful. Viennese operetta would have its most successful work twenty years later, with Franz Lehar’s *Die lustige Witwe* (*The Merry Widow*) in 1905. Then, the operetta connected with the age of popular musical theatre, and musical films, as much as with comic opera (Lamb 2000, pp. ix–x).

Russian Tour Every Summer, and America

Let us go back to Strauss's tours, which made his world fame. In 1855 the management of the Russian first railway, from Saint Petersburg to the Imperial Palaces of Tsarskoye Selo and nearby Pavlovsk, contacted Johann Strauss, then 30-year-old but exhausted from work, in their intention to boost the traffic and build a cultural and entertainment centre at Pavlovsk. Johann Strauss was hired to organize concerts in Pavlovsk, every summer from May to the end of September, together with a new orchestra. And there he went, introducing his reluctant brother Josef in the family business, as a conductor of the Johann Strauss Orchestra in Vienna.

At Pavlovsk, Johann stood violin in hand, played some parts, and directed the orchestra with his bow, violin, feet, head, and body. This unconventional method, that the audience loved, was learned from his father, and practised with this purpose: "playing the violin in front of a mirror in his room, swaying as he played, ascertaining which particular bodily movements were more elegant than others" (Suchet 2015, Chapter 5). It was truly successful; the figure of the Austrian musician and composer, who used to conduct, violin in hand, using the bow or playing along his violin, and, as a newspaper wrote, "violin, bow, feet, head, and body". For the audience, this was superb. It was a "clear artistic, commercial and diplomatic success" (Jones 2023, pp. 100–102).

In 1872, Johann received an offer to tour in the United States. Strauss, fearful of travel, was convinced by a formidable offer: 100,000 \$ deposited in advance, plus travel expenses for him, for Jetty, his valet, his maid, and his dog (Fantel 1971, p. 192). This tour was a different one, since by then, Johann was composing operettas, the Strauss orchestra in the hands of his brother Eduard, after the death of Joseph in 1870. But, as Russia in 1855, it was well paid; in this case, impossible to refuse for Joahn and Jetty. And it was a big step in global fame.

Musical Merits: Recognition Among Serious Musicians and Critics

Johann Straus was recognized by most "art" musicians and critics of his time, especially in Vienna. This gave his operetta an added prestige, not available to other composers (Crittenden 2006). And certainly not to Offenbach, who had political recognition at the time of the Empire, until 1870; but never was accepted by the "art" establishment. Strauss is unique in this; and, forgetting his revolutionary sympathies in 1848, and even after his German nationality in 1887, he was considered an ambassador of Austro-Hungarian empire, especially after his Waltz "The Blue Danube" became a great success, in its orchestral version, in the 1867 Paris World's Fair. Viennese operetta is related to Strauss, and Crittenden considers that an important part of his success relies on the "institutional endorsement" that his operettas received

from high art establishment, unavailable to other composers of popular music (2006, pp. 2–3).

Wealth, Family, and Business

Later on Johann married twice, but with a quite different kind of women, not involved in the business family. By Johann death, in 1899, Eduard was conducting the orchestra almost every time. Harmony didn't work well in the family in those last years, and there was no next generation of gifted musicians either. But both the music and the business of light dance music were carried to the pinnacle by Johann Strauss II (Scherer, 2004, p. 47).

The wealth Johann II got from his business was huge. How rich musicians could be depended on two factors: how much did they earn, and how did they spend their money. We have seen that Offenbach had financial problems with the theatre at capacity. The Strauss family, apart from the father, were not known for extravagant expenses. Johann Strauss invested in real estate. By 1875 he owned two properties in the Viennese suburbs and part of another one, forty-nine apartments that produced an annual rental income of 9,000 florins. Apart from the villas in which he lived with Jetty (Jones 2023 p. 180), and the grand villa in Schönau, 10 km away from Baden, the famous spa near Vienna, that he bought in 1880 and kept until 1894. Johann Strauss II, talented and hard worker, became wealthy man. Scherer considers him: “the pinnacle of large-scale popular music performance during the ninetieth century” (Scherer 2004, p. 47). During his last years, Strauss wanted to compose new successful operettas. It is doubtful that he did it for money; more likely, for the want of public success and recognition (Jones 2023, p. 234).

Conclusion

During the nineteenth century there were social and technological changes, together with an important growth of urban middle classes. Music and entertainment changed, too. In the first half of the century, the “promenade” or popular concerts, with a medley of serious and popular pieces, organized and conducted by some popular and flashy conductors, entrepreneurs in a commercial way, contributed to provide entertainment for the new urban middle classes that were not connoisseur. This led to a differentiation between “serious” or high art music, and light, commercial, or entertainment music. The acceleration of technological changes—railways, lithography, photography, steam press—helped this process.

After 1830 opera, especially in France, underwent changes which made it more commercial in its organization and more appealing to a wider bourgeoisie audience. The French *grand* opera introduced spectacular decors, ballets, chorus, special

effects, and became more attractive to the public. Meyerbeer, its main composer, was criticized as superficial and commercial.

Then, in Paris, the favourite composer of musical theatre for the masses appeared. Jacques Offenbach, besides cello virtuoso and conductor became composer and entrepreneur of musical theatre in 1855. His operettas, with part sang and par spoken, making fun of the serious opera and politics, being frivolous or risqué, managed to be the preferred entertainment for both the bourgeoisie and the ruling classes. With the social and technological advances of that time, operetta became a global product, adapted in language and topic to every city. By 1867, Offenbach's works were performed all over the world. But he was fiercely criticized as superficial, commercial, and immoral. After the defeat of France in 1870 and the coming of the Republic, he was not politically well considered, although he had important successful new pieces on stage in those years. He looked for the recognition of the serious musicians and critics, and composed two full sang operas. His *Contes de Hoffman* was performed posthumously and is the one most recognized and represented today.

In Vienna, Johann Strauss II, following in the steps of his father, was the most successful representative of showmanship as conductor, but was also recognized for quality in composing popular dance music. He managed to be well considered by the serious musicians of his time. By 1860s, Offenbach's operettas dominated the stage in Europe, and theatre entrepreneurs wanted this product. In England the entrepreneur D'Oyly-Carte made a team with dramatist Gilbert and musician Sullivan, and produced comic operas, similar to Offenbach's, without the risqué element, and were very successful in England and the United States. In Vienna, the obvious choice of the managers was Johann Strauss II. He considered himself not gifted for this task, but the pressure of theatre manager Maximilian Steiner and his wife Jetty, and generous commercial profits to be made, convinced him. After several failures, he produced three great comic operettas: *Die Fledermaus* ('The Bat', 1873), *Eine Nacht in Venedig* ('One Night in Venice'), 1883 and *Der Zigeunerbaron* ('The Gypsy Baron'). They are lighter than Offenbach's, with flirtation and romantic love but less controversial. The Viennese operetta would be important in Europe and keeps the closest connection to the similar products of the twentieth century: the popular musical theatre, and the musical film, which would be audience's favourite show in 1930s.

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