FOUNDATIONS

EXPLORING VICTOR HERBERT AND THE AMERICAN WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT 1830 TO 1930

VHS NEWSLETTERS
(COVERS ALL VICTOR HERBERT OPERETTAS)

2009-2013 (Feb)
Dedicated to

Bruce Pomahac

who has always believed...
Copyright . . .

Published by:

Alyce Mott

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This book is a compilation of all published monthly newsletters of VHSource, LLC and the website www.vherbert.com from March 2009 through February 2013 to provide information helpful to an ever growing revival of the work of Victor Herbert and as a parallel, a fascinating look at the foundations of the American World of Entertainment. It is sold with the understanding that the author/publisher is not an attorney and therefore not engaged in rendering any legal opinions with respect to any copyright decisions encountered with the original or any subsequent versions of Herbert’s work. If copyright questions arise, or other legal assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

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Message from the author . . .

Welcome to an in-depth journey into America’s World of Entertainment from 1830 up to 1930, compiled during the creation of the VHSource, LLC monthly Newsletters. This book begins with March 2009 and ends with the February 2013 issue. Most importantly, it covers the entire Spotlight On . . . Series to date – launched in July of 2009. The purpose of that series has been to look at each and every Herbert operetta in order and in great detail as to the “whens, whys, where, whos and hows” as well as the fascinating cast of supporting creators. To that end we have included the two 2013 newsletters which complete the survey of all Herbert produced operettas from No. 1 Prince Ananias (1894) to No. 45 The Dream Girl (1924). You now hold in your computer the best searchable research tool ever created for the operetta output of American composer Victor Herbert.

To explore your book’s search ability, do not print it out. Open it into Acrobat Reader and look for the search window on your tool bar, type in the key word(s) you’re looking for, and Acrobat will find the first and keep picking up the words all through the book - a totally automated index. Of course, you also have a Table of Contents. Once you have your desired page number, type the number in the small Page Window and hit Enter to immediately move to that page. Lastly, open your bookmarks to the left of the main screen and you’ll find any operetta a click away.

This version will complete Foundations. Future newsletter year books will continue to cover years going forward. Eventually we hope to publish the entire Spotlight On . . . Series as a separate hard copy publication. However, from personal experience nothing beats the Acrobat search feature of this book.

The VHSource goal is first and foremost to get you thinking about Victor Herbert again and either programming this wonderful music yourself or urging your local performance ensembles to consider this major American composer.

As always, we welcome your thoughts. Please feel free to contact VHSource at vhsource@vherbert.com.
About Victor Herbert . . .

Composer Victor Herbert was a major music figure and household name 100 years ago and is probably one of the most ignored of the major American composers. Born in Ireland in 1859 and educated in Germany in the glory days of orchestras and waltzes, he arrived in America in 1886 and immediately began to make his presence felt. By 1900 he had composed 11 operettas, charmed audiences with his virtuosity on the cello, written symphonic and band music, played with both the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic Society (today’s New York Philharmonic Orchestra), conducted Gilmore’s Band (New York City’s 22nd Regiment Band), and served as Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra—truly one of America’s first musical superstars.

In the next 24 years, he would be a major player in the founding ASCAP (The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers), the fight for copyright laws for composers, conductor of his own Victor Herbert Orchestra, a composer of American Grand Opera, original film scores and an astonishing 34 more operettas. Even with all of the above, Herbert’s primary contribution to American musical heritage remains a wealth of the most glorious melodies ever created by one composer. Victor Herbert will always leave an audience humming!
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These newsletters cover the entire Victor Herbert operetta work

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VHSource LLC

2009

Newsletter Year Book
Let The Celebration Begin!

150th Anniversary Herbert Celebration Off to A Great Start!

The Victor Herbert Foundation (Herbert P. Jacoby, Esq., President) always celebrates Victor Herbert’s birthday by having the Central Park Conservancy place a wreath at the foot of Herbert’s statue in Central Park.

This year’s turnout was sparsely attended since the placing of the wreath fell on Monday, February 2 instead of Herbert’s actual birthday on Sunday, February 1. Alyce Mott and Dino Anagnost of the Victor Herbert Renaissance Project in New York City joined Steven Oppendal of the Central Park Conservancy in placing a wreath which matched the one on the statute perfectly.

The day was beautiful, as you can see from the photo to the right. The sun was shining and the sky rich in that wonderful New York sort of clear blue. The change of weather was much appreciated as last year’s outing attracted a drenching-cold rain under grey overcast skies.

ASCAP also released a great article celebrating both its own 95th anniversary and Herbert’s 150th Anniversary. You will find a link to that article at www.vhsource.com under the “In the News” white tab in the upper right hand corner of the Home page.

Grand Salon Orchestra Salutes Herbert In Toronto

VHSource welcomes Canadian orchestra, The Grand Salon of those professional orchestras celebrating Victor Herbert. Led by conductor Kerry Stratton, the orchestra performed a full concert, Tribute To Victor Herbert, on Saturday, February 7, 2009, at the Markham Theatre for the Performing Arts, Markham, Ontario. The big news is that VHSource provided 60% of the parts for this
concert — all in less than an hour! Observation -
to date, we know of only two union orchestras in
North American which have dedicated full concerts
to the music of Victor Herbert in recent memory —
The Little Orchestra Society of NYC (Dino
Anagnost, conductor) and The Grand Salon. If you
can add to that list, please let us know.

Two exciting voices, lyric tenor Stephen
Harland and soprano Iris Rodrigues, joined
Maestro Stratton for "Eileen," "Neapolitan Love
Song," "Romany Life," "Italian Street Song," "Ah,
Sweet Mystery of Life," and "Thine Alone."

Maestro Stratton also chose the rarely
performed "Royal Sec" (1885) and nostalgic
medleys from several operettas. It was as fine a
re-introduction to the Herbert body of work as
anyone in attendance could request. This is fine
orchestra which will get better and better as
Maestro Stratton and his musicians delve further
into their exploration of Herbert. Their next concert
is in Milton, Ontario on Friday, March 27, 2009.
Visit www.vhsource.com
for details.

You can visit The Grand Salon Orchestra at
www.grandsalonorchestra.com and Maestro

Last Concert of February Set in
Washington State

Port Townsend Community Orchestra
(Dewey Ehling, conductor) located in Port
Townsend, Washington, finished out the
month of February on the 28th with a full concert,
Victor Herbert's 150th Birthday featuring Jessica
Reid, Soprano and Paul Krabill, Tenor. Their
offering included a pre-concert lecture and was a
free gift to their community. VHSource was the
source of 5 or 6 sets of orchestra parts for this
concert also — again in less than one hour!

Visit http://www.porttownsendorchestra.org
to learn more about this organization.

Digital Music Files Are Finally
Ready for Purchase in Shop
VHSource

On February 18th, Shop VHSource began
selling digital music files on-line. Our
new vendor, The Comic Opera Guild of
Ann Arbor, Michigan, has supplied six Herbert
operetta recordings (Algeria, The Enchantress,
Little Nemo, The Princess Pat, The Only Girl
and Orange Blossoms) as well as two mixed
composer compilations (Vienna in America and
Offenbach in America) with English lyrics.

We’re also working on an Orpheus in the
Underworld with English lyrics which should be
up soon. In addition, they have another 55–60
additional cds (35+ Herbert operettas) which we
will be adding on a regular basis.

Here’s your opportunity to hear operettas
that have not been heard in many decades, many
of which have never been recorded in their full
original state. Congratulations to The Comic
Opera Guild’s president, Tom Petiet and their
music director, Adam Aceto for this magnificent
collection of Herbert recordings. A note to those

Tenor Stephen Harland, Soprano Iris Rodrigues
and Maestro Kerry Stratton
of you who are not comfortable loading and playing music on your computer. It’s a great time to learn and is a really marvelous experience. However, if you are not comfortable entering the digital music world, you will find a link to COG’s website in Shop VHSource where you can purchase the old-fashioned way — through the US Post Office. Most albums are $15 (an average of 30+ tracks per CD) and include dialogue that keeps the listener following the original plots. There are music only versions when available, which are discounted to $12 for those of you who just want the music.

The downloads are available just like the performance materials and will take between 2 and 45 minutes to download, depending upon your internet connection. His may prove to be the perfect reason to leave the dial-up connection behind.

The download file is zipped and when you open it, the process automatically opens into your default media player (Windows Media Player on PCs, Itunes on Mac, for those of you who’ve not entered the media world before). The download contains not only the music files (in WMA format) but also album cover artwork and Program notes in full color PDF format.

This is one of the most exciting new elements VHSource has offered because of the rarity of these recordings as well as the reality that a large number of us need to hear a work before making a decision on it. These are simple productions which allow the piece to come to the forefront. We are currently offering an entire song for free download at the end of the introductory information on the MP3s page so that you have an idea of what you are purchasing. The Herbert song is “Love Is Like A Cigarette” from Algeria. Enjoy!

**Upcoming Concerts in March**

**Light Opera of New York** (Stephen F. Vasta, Music Director) will present *Operetta’s Greatest Hits*, on Friday, March 6, 2009 at 7:30pm at the Players, 16 Gramercy Park South, 20th Street East of Park Avenue South, New York City. All tickets $35. For reservations call: 212-249-9470 or go to tickets@LightOperaOfNewYork.org

**The Grand Salon Orchestra**, Kerry Stratton, Conductor brings the concert mentioned above to St. Pauls United Church, 123 Main E, Milton, Ontario Canada, on Friday, March 27, 2009 at 8:00pm. Place a call to 1-905-878-8895 for tickets.

**Upcoming Concerts in April**

**Comic Opera Guild** of Ann Arbor also mentioned above, offers *150 CANDLES!* A celebration of Victor Herbert's birthday, featuring ORANGE BLOSSOMS on Friday, April 3 and Saturday, April 4, both concerts at 7:30pm at the Village Theater, Canton, MI. Tickets are available by credit card: 1-734-394-5460 or online: www.canton-mi.org/villagetheater

**What folks are saying . . .**

The following are some of the reactions of customers and inquirers have sent after utilizing a service of VHSource:

Thank you so much for your reply — your "instant" reply! Thank you so much for taking the time to send me so much information . . . truly appreciated! — AH

Thank you for the terrific p.r. on the VH website. That’s outstanding marketing for us and I really appreciate it. — KS

Wow! I’m thrilled that you can lead me so directly to Miss 1917. The VHSource is an incredible resource, not only for musicians and theater professionals, but for writers, cultural
historians, and anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the early 20th century.—EW

Thanks so much for the tip on ordering the Piano Conductor score from Luck’s . . . when I received your e-mail, I was thrilled to not spend money unnecessarily. — LG

Thank you very much Alyce for your quick answer. I have forwarded it to our customer so that he can order this material. Merci beaucoup! — Editions Mario BOIS (Paris)

Thanks for the prompt response. I downloaded this morning. The quality of the printing is superb - so easy to read. Thank you. You’re a pleasure to work with. I really appreciate your honesty and integrity. — DE

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Hope you’ve enjoyed this very first Newsletter from VHSOURCE, LLC. You can reach us at alyce.mott@vherbert.com or 917-815-8899 with questions and comments.

Also, please feel free to pass this newsletter on to any of your friends whom you think might be interested in helping to revive the beautiful music of the operetta era. It’s safest to save the PDF file to your hard drive; you can print it out as frequently as you like and/or send it by e-mail to your friends and colleagues.

Anyone can regularly receive this newsletter once they create a user name and password at www.vherbert.com. That’s all there is to it, and, of course, there are a couple of other benefits listed below to having that login name and password.

If you haven’t visited the web site in a while, come check us out. Trouble remembering your user log-in and password? Contact VHSOURCE and we’ll look you up and give you a new password so you can enter. Once you’re in, you can easily change the password yourself to something more user friendly.

Why do you need to log-in? You cannot see a sample or download that free song unless you are a registered user and logged in. You’ll know you’re not in when you click on a sample and you end up in a list of available downloads that aren’t available.

Upcoming Newsletters will introduce you to our vendors; typical Herbert instrumentations; arrangers you can trust; great songs for particular voices; what’s happening where; what organizations are choosing to program; and provide fuel to stoke the revival!

One last thought — we need your enthusiasm and energy to keep this Herbert and operetta revival rolling forward. It takes all hands on deck reminding not only yourselves but also like-minded people that there’s a whole world of gorgeous music just waiting to be rediscovered and shared once again with live audiences.

There are singers who don’t even realize these exciting, challenging songs exist.

There are conductors who haven’t discovered the joys of Herbert’s rubato.

There are audiences who have never heard hummable melodies.

There are audiences who have simply forgotten.

See you in April!
The Father of Times Square

Meet The First Oscar Hammerstein

You will often read about Oscar Hammerstein in these pages and its time we made certain we are all on the same page whenever you see that name in most articles herein. Oscar Hammerstein was born in 1847 in Sceczin (pronounced “Stettin”), Pommerania, Poland (at that time one of two urban cities in a region along the south shore of the Bay of Pommerania, in the Baltic Sea.) It was and remains an area constantly attracting tourists wishing to spend time on its lovely shores. Hammerstein was the eldest son of a middle-class, German-speaking Jewish family. He gained his love of opera from his mother, who made sure this eldest son studied music and was exposed to the very best European opera had to offer. Unfortunately, she passed away when he was 15, and the resulting relationship with his father caused the teen to run away at 17 and seek his fortune in the New World, arriving in 1864 in New York City during the Civil War.

Hammerstein’s first job was sweeping a cigar factory at $3.00 per week. His boss would have laughed out loud if you had suggested to him this newest employee would become a true American Renaissance Man: inventor, writer, editor, publisher, composer, speculator, designer, builder, promoter, and showman, who’s biggest dreams centered around bringing good opera to America, and whose greatest legacy would be the building of a significant number of magnificent theatres in Manhattan and especially in an area named Longacre Square.

Hammerstein quickly learned the cigar business and turned that experience into (1) a tobacco trade publication, the U.S. Tobacco Journal, which he managed until 1888, and (2) the invention and patenting of cigar machines. His tobacco businesses “paid the bills” as those of us in the arts like to call that money which supports our artistic endeavors. All the while he was rising in the more legitimate business world, he was spending his evenings and other spare time managing several German theatres downtown and occasionally presenting his own original operas and dramas.

His first theatre building, the Harlem Opera House (1889) rose at 125th Street, Harlem in an area inhabited primarily by goat farms sprinkled amid shanty towns. Since a theatre needs an audience, he built an additional 50 residences and proceeded to bring stars such as Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson, Lillian Russell, Otis Skinner, Georgie Drew Barrymore and Helena Modjeska out to the goat farms.

Hammerstein added the Columbus Theatre (1890) also on 125th and used that one to present lighter programs featuring George M. Cohen, Chauncey Olcott and Walter Damrosch’s orchestra. He built his first true opera house, The Manhattan Opera House on 34th Street (today known as the Hammerstein Ballroom) in 1893. It was in this theatre that the young impresario began presenting popularly-priced opera.
Financial difficulties forced him into a partnership with **Koster & Bial**, producers of variety shows. This partnership soon dissolved into name calling, physical battles and court cases prompting Hammerstein to issue the following statement upon losing his theatre to his partners, “When I get through with you, everybody will forget there ever was a Koster & Bial’s. I will build a house the likes of which has never been seen in the whole world.” The result of that threat was the **Olympia Theatre** which opened on November 25, 1895 fronting on Longacre Square and filling the block between 44th and 45th street. Fittingly, tens of thousands of New Yorkers mobbed the opening of this enormous theatre causing a muddy riot.

Within the next ten years, Hammerstein opened the **Victoria Theatre** (1899 to present) at the corner of 42nd and 7th Avenue for stars such as Will Rogers, W.C.Fields and Charlie Chaplin and the **Republic Theatre** (1900 and next door to the Victoria), promptly leasing that one to producer David Belasco. Wily Hammerstein retained the roof rights to both theatres and soon opened **Hammerstein’s Roof Garden**, spanning both buildings and featuring lighter entertainment.

In 1904 he built the **Lew Fields Theatre** (his 7th, also on 42nd) and immediately filled it with Hamlin, Mitchell and Field’s production of Victor Herbert’s *It Happened in Nordland*. This same year Longacre Square morphed into Times Square, and the theatre building bonanza launched by Hammerstein in 1895 was really off and running.

In 1906, Hammerstein again tried his hand at opera production, opening his second **Manhattan Opera House**, and hiring Cleofonte Campanini (right in picture) as his Artistic Director for his new **Manhattan Opera Company**, a company of opera singers who could act. He was never quiet regarding his disdain for what he termed the Metropolitan Opera Company’s penchant for hiring great singers such as **Enrico Caruso** and **Geraldine Farrar** to hide the mediocrity of productions designed for audiences who were really far more concerned about being “seen” than they were about being discerning with regards to Grand Opera.

Hammerstein presented the American debuts of **Mary Garden** and **Louisa Tetrazzini** while his company included **Nellie Melba, Emma Trentini, Giovanni Zenatello, Allesandro Bonci, Maurice Renaud, Mario Sammarco** and **John McCormack**. He also emphasized contemporary works, offering American premieres of *Louise*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Elektra* and *Sapho*, to name but a few, as well as the controversial *Salome* and *Hérodiade*. Each season also included *Aida*, *Carmen*, *La Traviata*, *Otello*, *La Boheme*, *Tosca*, etc., etc., etc.! In short, the European boy spent his fortune trying to educate his new home to the joys of great opera on his terms – great singers who could also act bringing opera and drama together.

By early 1910, Hammerstein was proud of his productions, had forced the Metropolitan Opera Company into a spending war, was winning the audience war, and was bankrupt! His son, Arthur negotiated a deal with the Metropolitan to make his dad go away by giving him the flat sum of $1,200,000 in exchange for his written promise NOT to produce any grand opera in the United States for ten years. This piece of paper kept Victor Herbert’s *Natoma* from being the first true Grand Opera on an important American stage. (More to follow when the Spotlight On... Series looks at *Natoma*.)

In a retaliatory move also meant to appease what had to have been a very disappointed Herbert, Hammerstein convinced **Emma Trentini** to move from Grand Opera to operetta, and contracted Herbert to write *Naughty Marietta*. In fact he used his existing Manhattan Opera Company to cast the production with what must arguably have been the finest singing cast and pit orchestra Broadway had ever seen.

Hammerstein next moved to England and built the **London Opera House** which opened in November 1911. The feisty entrepreneur fell into another equally futile, again financially depleting battle this
time with the Royal Opera Company in Covent Gardens. When asked by a reporter if there was any money in opera, Hammerstein replied, “Yeah, mine.” It is fascinating to note that the London Opera House went up within a year’s time or less. Builders of the late 18th century and early 20th century were seemingly able to construct the most ornate, opulent edifices almost instantaneously.

Two years later, Hammerstein returned to New York and sold the Victoria’s vaudeville booking rights to B. F. Keith, in order to build his eleventh and last theatre, the Lexington Opera House at Lexington and 51st. The ten year ban was not over yet and trying to overturn that pesky agreement with the Met proved a total failure. The Lexington opened as a movie house instead and was soon sold to Marcus Lowe to finance life. Hammerstein died in financial ruin in 1919, one year short of the lifting of the infamous ban, and deep into negotiations for the singers he wished to hire for his triumphant 1920 return to opera in America.

According to great grandson Oscar Hammerstein III, the entrepreneur’s “development of Times Square, his acoustic and populist innovations in theatre design, his introduction of the new and controversial into the staid conventions of opera, his bankrolling of opera productions with the profits from vaudeville comedy and cigar machines, and above all else, his passion and resilience in the face of overwhelming odds, all combined to create the theatrical world within which his family, and so many others, would creatively thrive for generations to come. He was truly the ‘Father of Times Square’.”

Today, mention Oscar Hammerstein, and everyone thinks of Oscar Hammerstein II (1895–1960 and Oscar’s grandson). This Oscar is known for his astounding contributions to American musical librettos and his brilliant collaboration with Richard Rodgers. The Metropolitan Opera Company steams on having built two opera houses in Manhattan and remaining America’s premier opera company, but did they really silence the lover of Grand Opera, the theatre builder of Times Square (5 theatres), Harlem (3 theatres), Mid-town (2 theatres) and London (1 theatre). Amazing how true passion and talent always refuse to truly go away. (Resource, The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise.)

**Spotlight On . . .
It Happened In Nordland (1904)**

The year 1904 was another turning point in Herbert’s career as a conductor. On March 18, 1904 with the final concert of the Pittsburgh Orchestra under his baton, both audience and orchestra gave the man a sendoff he would long remember. It concluded with the presentation of a sterling silver loving cup simply engraved “To Victor Herbert, From His Many Pittsburgh Admirers, March 18, 1904.” It was the last time Herbert would serve as a full time employee of any organization. Hence forth, his baton would be raised only as a guest conductor, a contracted artist, the creator of the work being performed or on the podium of his own orchestra.

The Victor Herbert Orchestra was born on March 19, 1904 in New York City and began with roughly half of the Pittsburgh Orchestra. The brand new ensemble made its debut on September 19, 1904 at the Pittsburgh Exposition – possibly a bit of a statement regarding what the city would be missing. While universally considered a “hale fellow - well met” individual, Herbert was not above occasionally allowing his feelings to surface. The Orchestra’s New York City debut came on October 9 at the Majestic Theatre (1903) on the corner of W. 59th and Columbus Circle (a corner which has not existed since the NY Coliseum, also now gone, was built in 1956). The same theatre also was home to both The Wizard of Oz and Babes In Toyland. The
occasional was the first of a series of Sunday evening concerts that would become a New York City staple.

Fifty musicians took the stage that evening as the first members of an organization that would exist for the next 20 years until the passing of its only conductor. Interestingly enough, the Herbert who could not get enough of touring while at the helms of both Gilmore’s Band and the Pittsburgh Orchestra, rarely toured his own orchestra with the exception of the occasional exposition, occasional trips to the famous Saratoga Grand Union Hotel, and the ever constant Willow Grove (PA) bookings which continued unbroken right up until his death. Perhaps, the call of the brand new house (Camp Joyland) now complete in Lake Placid and beckoning the entire Herbert family for three months every year as well as constant stream of composing projects convinced the conductor it was time to hop off the train.

It Happened in Nordland (Herbert’s 13th Broadway operetta) came into being amidst a cloud of confusion and mystery. During the spring of 1904, rumors swirled regarding an operetta entitled The Enchanted Isle, set in a totally imaginary place. There were those Herbert friends who even swore they had heard the score by the summer, and the producing team of Hamlin, Mitchell and Fields were said to be signed onto the project. The producers went so far as to name Frank S. Pixley as librettist and set a September 1904 opening date. About the same time, mention of The American Ambassadress soon to be renamed It Happened In Nordland began surfacing. Quite possibly Nordland won the marathon because Lew Fields wanted to star in it. Whatever the reason, The Enchanted Isle never occurred and appears lost.

You may have recognized the Hamlin and Mitchell producing name from both Wizard and Babes, but it is worth while to take at look at that new name on the company’s letterhead. Lew Fields was one half of one of the most famous comedy teams to tread the American stage, Weber and Fields. Fields (1867-1941) and Joe Weber (1867-1942) came together at the tender age of 9 to form a vaudevillian comic team (1870s-80s), a producing team (1890s) and owners of the Weber and Fields Music Hall which first opened its doors in 1896. The comic team made its fame in a “Dutch act,” in which the men portrayed Mike and Meyer, immigrants whose comedy rose from situational sketches utilizing dialogue relying on mispronunciations and misunderstandings (malapropisms) of the English language with large doses of physical pratfalls and battles. [Neil Simon would base his Broadway play The Sunshine Boys (1972) on this dynamic pair.] Once Weber and Fields moved into producing entire productions, they loved to include spoofs of then current Broadway fare in the first half of their burlesques evenings (Cyrano de Bergerac became Cyranose de Bric-a-Brac) and then present individual acts in the second half, showcasing such major American talents as Lillian Russell, Fay Templeton and DeWolf Hopper. Their production format was the real beginning of what would evolve over the next twenty years into the more sophisticated Ziegfeld Follies.

The important fact for our purposes is that the team broke up in 1904, and Lew Fields joined the production team of Hamlin and Mitchell, and placed their first production together into his brand new theatre, the Lew Fields Theatre (built for him by Oscar Hammerstein). The new theatre was located on the 42nd Street block between 7th and 8th avenues and by the time Nordland opened, Longacre Square had officially become Times Square (April 1904). Between 1900 and 1920, the entire area saw bustling, constant theater construction as it rapidly became the Broadway theatre district we know today. Once It Happened In Nordland opened, the reviews rarely failed to mention the glorious new theatre itself, “… a vision of green and white and gold, with three tiers of boxes, well arranged, …,” -New York Times.

With Herbert’s work with Francis Wilson and Frank Daniels already well known, and his well publicized and imminent return to New York City from the provinces, Fields sought out the composer to furnish music for Fields’ personal new entity, the Lew
Fields Stock Company’s productions. *It Happened In Nordland* was the first collaboration. Fields was determined to not only give his brand of comedy more sophistication but, quite possibly, to prove to Weber that he didn’t need him anymore. Glen MacDonough was contracted for the book and Marie Cahill was signed as the female lead.

Let’s take a moment to acknowledge a very long standing truism of the theatrical world. “Never burn any bridge.” People have a strong tendency to form alliances with those with whom they enjoy working. Julian Mitchell and Fred R. Hamlin produced *Wizard of Oz* and *Babes In Toyland* – Glen McDonough worked on the lyrics and some of the libretto for the former and wrote the libretto and lyrics for the latter – hence he was hired by Hamlin, Mitchell and Fields to do the same for *It Happened in Nordland*. The fact that Herbert was the composer for *Babes*, had worked with Julian Mitchell on multiple occasions and Fred Hamlin on *Babes*, all contributed to the producers contracting him to compose more projects.

What was true at the turn of last century remains true today. As you collect your Broadway programs, look closely at the production staffing and you’ll see today’s partnerships and teams prominently displayed and yes, actors do figure into this equation. Just tuck this observation into the back of your mind, and always act accordingly. One just never knows ...

The first performance of *It Happened In Nordland* occurred at the New Lyceum Theatre, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on November 21, 1904. Herbert conducted, Mitchell directed, while Max Hirschfeld served as music director and conductor (note that “team” again). The production was launched with raves for everything except its female lead, Marie Cahill, who received rather mixed reviews with regard to her singing abilities. Nevertheless, the operetta was primarily well received and sailed off to New York City for its scheduled opening at the Lew Fields Theatre on November 29th. That opening was sadly delayed when Fred R. Hamlin suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, passed away on November 27th. The opening was rescheduled for December 5th. Thus 1904 proved to be a rare Herbert occurrence -- one opening for the entire year.

The production featured the following notables: Lew Fields as Hubert, the long lost brother of Katherine Peepfogle, Marie Cahill as Katherine Peepfogle, Joseph Herbert as the Duke of Toxen (1867-1923 - no relation to Victor, but had written for Weber & Fields), Bessie Clayton, as Parthenia Schmitt, a country girl, maid to the Princess Aline (also Mrs. Julian Mitchell) and in the dual minor roles as both Miss Hicks, first secretary to the American Embassy at Nordland and Countess Pokota, lady-in-waiting to Queen Elsa, one Pauline Frederick. I mention Ms. Frederick because not only would she become one of the leading actresses on the American stage and eventually movies, but she would also step into the role of Katherine Peepfogle towards the end of the run in true “star is born” fashion. The total cast consisted of 15 principals and a chorus of “sample girls,” detective girls, Nordland boys and girls, flower girls, water girls, matinee girls, masqueraders, and miscellaneous characters.

The first act took place on the promenade in Elsa Bad, a spa in Nordland, while the second act moved the next day to the terrace of Queen Elsa’s palace (a character we never meet) in Kronenberg, the Nordland capital. The plot is a loosely woven tale of Queen Elsa’s deliberate absence from court to avoid marrying Prince George of Nebula at the order of an unidentified and also never met “Czar,” and the replacement of her with a newly arrived American Ambassadress, Katherine Peepfogle who just happens to look exactly like her. Why must Ms. Peepfogle do this? Almost no reason is given but it does offer her an opportunity to (1) find her long lost brother Hubert, and (2) save him from execution for impersonating a peasant who’s been conscripted into the army. “Why” is the reigning question of the entire script.

Even though Mr. Fields as Hubert (the long lost brother) was no longer part of a comedy team, pages
and pages and pages were given over to at least three classic vaudeville sketches utilizing various minor characters to stand in for the missing Meyer (Weber). Act I has a dental sketch surrounding a quack doctor (Dr. Blotz) in need of a stodge (enter Hubert) to attract a crowd and sell his “cure-all.” This extended scene is followed quickly by another one adding Princess Aline (not the most attractive female on stage) who desperately wishes to be beautiful, and, of course, Dr. Blotz and his assistant Hubert are just the solution she needs. As these little plots progress or should we say diverge into the second act, one suspects that Mr. Fields had a strong hand in assisting Mr. McDonough in the writing of the entire work. Almost everything that happens has the feel of vaudevillian story sketches simply strung together but with much better music. Surprisingly, the production ran for 154 performances, two weeks in Boston, ten weeks in Chicago and then back to New York for another 100 performances beginning August 31, 1905. It was a sensation, proving that audiences wanted to be entertained with good music, silly laughter, and physical slapstick.

When compared to the later operetta The Red Mill also written for a vaudevillian pair, Montgomery and Stone, this book comes up far short, a contributing factor to yet another Herbert score lost to poor libretto writing. As Glen McDonough’s work is marching forward, one gets the feeling he was a far better lyricist than he was a librettist. This appears true of some of the other librettists of the day, including Harry B. Smith, arguably the King of Broadway librettists.

The score does contain some major well-known Herbert melodies: “Absinthe Frappe,” “Al Fresco,” “The Knot of Blue” (the show’s primary hit song) and “Beatrice Barefacts.” Yes, you read correctly, “Beatrice Barefacts” of Babes In Toyland fame. There are a several interesting aspects to this score.

First, “Knot of Blue” shares an interesting quirk with another famous Herbert melody, “Art Is Calling For Me” (The Enchantress). Both songs fall in exactly the same place in Act II (right after opening choruses), both were sung by very minor characters and both became major hits, once again proving the strength of a song performed by the right singer can carry it to great heights.

There are two additional score aspects: the value of the composer’s name on a piece of music and interpolation of songs into a composed score. The song “Al Fresco” is one of two songs which Herbert wrote and interpolated into the operetta himself. The creation of “Al Fresco” was a simple experiment conducted by Isidore Witmark and Herbert a few years before to ascertain which was more important from a marketing point of view, the song or the composer of the song. Herbert published “Al Fresco” as a sheet of salon music under the pseudonym Frank Roland. The two men were totally satisfied by the sales, proving that the strength of the song itself was more than enough to stimulate profits. In November of 1904, they re-issued the music under Herbert’s name. As he finished up Nordland’s Act II, he found himself in need of music to unscore and highlight the carnival scene at the beginning of the act. Remembering “Al Fresco”, he reworked the melody into a chorus and orchestra piece. Since the sheet music was already in the stores, the profits for the published sheet music soared.

You may be surprised to note that “Beatrice Barefacts” in not in the published piano/vocal score. However, it is clearly in the libretto towards the end of Act I (marked 6 ½) during a scene in which Katherine gives advice to brother Hubert. Those of you who know the song from Babes In Toyland would probably agree that “Beatrice” feels dropped into that production, being a contemporary commentary on newspaper columnists. It’s surprising that the song was again “dropped” into this score so soon after Babes, but given some of the reviews of Ms. Cahill, along with her own penchant for interpolation, it is not difficult to surmise that Herbert chose to add one of his own songs before Ms. Cahill could add another of hers.

As far back as The Serenade (1897), Herbert had such strong anti-interpolation feelings that he inserted a clause into his contraction addressing the issue of performers adding their own favorites,
based possibly on his experiences with the London production of *Wizard of the Nile* (noted in *VHS Newsletter Vol 8 October 2009*). Interestingly, *Wizard* also starred a vaudevillian, Frank Daniels. Perhaps Herbert had simply relaxed his guard, or just forgot to include it in the *Nordland* contract. Cahill proved a most adept interpolator, adding both “Kitty” and “Any Old Tree” to Herbert’s score. His contract did not cover the activity this time, and he was powerless to stop the process. The practice appears to be a bit more of common amongst vaudevillians, most likely because over the years they performed songs which the audience began to associate with their name. Another possible reason for her actions were the pages and pages devoted to Lew Fields; Ms. Cahill possibly figured that the leading lady needed to balance him with her vocal power (something with which neither the critics or Herbert agreed). Her interpolations had to have started in rehearsal since mention of “Any Old Tree” actually made it into the libretto, although not the piano/vocal.

Herbert chose to ignore the situation until music director Max Hirschfield fell ill during April of 1905, and Herbert had to step in temporarily as an every performance conductor. Seeing and hearing Ms. Cahill every day and twice on matinee days proved so irritating that he took to not conducting during her interpolations and giving the baton to concert master, Henry Burck, clearly in the sight of Ms. Cahill.

On the final performance of the first New York run, Ms. Cahill, who had retaliated by finding and adding more and more verses to “This Old Tree,” suddenly burst into tears and ran off the stage. She did return and finish the song, but she refused to go on a tour with the company set to leave within two days. She accused Herbert of deliberately stopping the orchestra, and he accused her of singing off key and getting ridiculous about inserting her own material. Unexpectedly, Ms. Cahill found herself replaced and the tenure of Marie Cahill as Katherine Peepfogel was over.

Many ladies filled in during the course of the tour with *Blanche Ring* winning the role for the second NYC run of 100 performances. This time *Pauline Frederick*, still loyally filling her two minor roles was named understudy for insurance purposes, and when temperamental Blanch imitated Marie during the second half of the run and interpolated her own favorite non-Herbert, Lew Fields got angry. A huge quarrel developed with many back and forths resulting in Ms. Ring suddenly exiting the theatre with all her costumes. Tired of difficulties with divas, Fields turned to Ms. Frederick who knew the role, had a three octave range, but no costumes. Great hysterical activity during the day solved the latter difficulty, and the evening of October 16, 1905, Ms. Frederick stepped into the role and won herself 5 weeks of unexpected Broadway prominence. Unfortunately she developed a throat problem after the close of *It Happened In Nordland* and never graced an operetta stage again, but her unaffected speaking voice and dramatic skills carried her to a memorable stage and screen career.

You can obtain both the libretto and the piano/vocal for *It Happened In Nordland* in *Shop VHSource*. Next month we turn the Spotlight ... On the year 1905 with a look at *Miss Dolly Dollars*, followed by two more Herbert operettas in the same year. Stay tuned!

**Madeleine Orchestra Parts**

Full orchestral parts for Victor Herbert’s one act opera *Madeleine* are now available in *Shop VHSource* along with a new piano/vocal with numbered measures and rehearsal numbers which match the parts. It’s taken a bit of doing but these are very usable photocopies of the original parts. Please note that the choral portion (roughly 16-20 measures and a bit of an after thought) has been cut, most likely for touring purposes as it would make no economic sense to bring along 6-8 singers for such a small segment. These same parts are being computerized by Jonathan Brennand which will result in the creation of a full score, but until that project is completed (aiming for 2011), there is only the piano vocal score available. In case, you’re new to Herbert’s works, this little gem is an experimental black box work featuring an opera diva, three gentlemen...
callers, and a maid. Premiered in 1914 by New York’s Metropolitan Opera Company on a double bill with Caruso singing *Pagliacci*, the 55 minute work was well ahead of its time. It’s perfect for study in an opera workshop.

**JULY CONCERTS**

**Saturday, July 3, 5:00pm,** [The Westchester Chamber Symphony](#) will perform a free Independence Day concert, featuring works by American composers Leroy Anderson, Aaron Copland, [Victor Herbert](#), and others at the New Rochelle Public Library, 1 Library Plaza, between Hugenot and Main Sts, New Rochelle, New York.

**Sunday, July 4 evening,** [Longwood Gardens](#) Delaware County, PA, presents “Founder’s Favorites.” A salute to Longwood founder Pierre S. DuPont, it begins with Victor Herbert’s patriotic “American Fantasia,” one of duPont’s all-time favorites. Longwood Gardens, Baltimore Pike (Route 1), just before Kennett Square, Delaware County, PA. Admissions to Fireworks is by advance-sale ticket only, although tickets can be purchased on the day of the show if still available. All prices include admission to the Gardens. Adults are $38; $22 ages 15 and younger; Garden Passholder adult $31 and child $18. Tickets can be purchased on line at [www.longwoodgardens.org](http://www.longwoodgardens.org) or by calling (610) 388-5200. Special group rates for 15 or more people are available.

**Saturday, July 10, 7:00pm,** [The Canton Comic Opera Company](#), Joseph N. Rubin, executive director, presents a fully staged production of the 1902 *Wizard of Oz* with full orchestra in the [Canton Palace Theatre](#), 605 Market Avenue North, Canton, Ohio 44702. If you are going, try to arrive on [Friday, July 9](#) so that you can catch an additional concert of extra music from the *Wizard* beginning at 8:00 p.m. in the same location. Tickets are now on sale both over the phone and on-line. Visit the [Canton Comic Opera Company Site](#) or call (330) 470-0835.

**Tuesday, July 27 through Saturday, July 31, the College Light Opera Company** presents its 100th Anniversary production of Herbert’s *Naughty Marietta* at [Highfield Theatre](#) in Falmouth, MA. Plan on attending the Friday or Saturday evening performances, and you might just catch [Alyce Mott](#) discussing Victor Herbert at a gathering at 3pm Saturday afternoon. Visit the [CLOC web site](#) or call (508) 548-0668 after June 14 for more information.

### August Concerts

**Saturday, August 14th at 8 pm and Sunday, August 15th, 2:00pm,** [The Canton Comic Opera Company](#), Joseph N. Rubin, executive director, presents a concert production of Victor Herbert’s 1909 *Rose of Algeria* with full orchestra in the [Masonic Temple Auditorium](#), 836 Market Avenue North, Canton, Ohio 44702. Tickets are now on sale both over the phone and on-line. Visit the [Canton Comic Opera Company Site](#) or call (330) 470-0835.

**Alyce’s Musings . . .**

I often seem to find myself asking questions which no one seems to have really explored in depth before. Between my Herbert work, my salon orchestra work and all the questions you all are frequently asking, I became intrigued with the issue of full orchestral scores - where can you expect them, where you won’t find them, and why. I have started working on the issue and have a couple of more sources to explore before I share my thoughts with you in the August issue. It’s definitely a fascinating topic, and one which you may not have thought very much about either, until you desperately wanted that full score!

Google seems to be doing a great job of offering free Herbert piano/vocals that are in very good shape. When you begin to look for materials, do go for the best materials you can find - just remember to come see [Shop VHSource](#) if you have trouble finding what you need. Not only will you find materials that you won’t find anywhere else, but you also can get answers to your questions, usually within a few hours, something Google can’t do for you.

If you received this newsletter from a friend or colleague, you may subscribe at no cost by simply registering at [www.vhsource.com](http://www.vhsource.com) for a username and password.

See you all next month!
Welcome to a brand new year! We’d like to begin our 2012 discussions by thinking through terms that have been and continue to be misused on a fairly regular basis. In keeping up with what is being advertised on the web, VHSource makes daily use of Google searches for key words, utilizing both “Victor Herbert” and the very generic “operetta.” Google sends “operetta” alerts two and three times a day and we find it absolutely amazing what folks label operetta. If it’s performed in any sort of school situation, it is often labeled “operetta.” Camelot, My Fair Lady, The Sound of Music – all operettas according to many local newspaper reports.

What follows is not meant to be a history of any of these genres, although we may mention some roots, countries of origins, centuries, and composers. What it does mean to accomplish is the search for some sort of a standard set of defining elements which allows one to properly classify a particular work. While we will look at five different terms, we will eventually distill them down to opera, operetta and musicals. Every work ever created falls into those three categories, even if the exact definitions and terminologies constantly morph in and out of favor and style over the years.

Most everyone thinks of Victor Herbert as a composer of “operetta,” and yet many of his works are definitely more in the “musical comedy” range and he himself loves to label a work “comic opera.” Is a work opera, comic opera, opera comique, operetta, musical comedy or just plain musical? Is there a way of really defining and applying the terms intelligently? Do we even need all those different terms?

Let’s begin with what are considered the basic definitions and see what works today and what does not. We have chosen to discuss these words according to their age and their original definitions.

**OPERA**

Opera is a through composed theatrical work requiring highly trained voices in all roles as well as the chorus. Traditionally, it combines music and sung dialogue and utilizes creation of character, dance, scenery, costumes, lighting, and props. It is usually accompanied by an orchestra and normally produced in an opera house - a theatrical building built for and dedicated to performing the theatrical/musical form known as opera. Any spoken dialogue is exceedingly brief or almost non-existent. For the most part, the story or plot is serious, dramatic and often tragic in nature. The genre’s major composers come primarily from Italy, France and Germany.

The real key are the words “through composed.” However, many of you might not be familiar with that term. While it has had several meanings over the years, one of its meanings is “non-stop” music. Opera scores begin when the opera commences and end when the final curtain of each act comes down. There is no end of a particular song (aria),
followed by pages of dialogue before another aria starts. Opera normally commences with either an overture or a mood setting prelude, and steadily moves through choral numbers, arias, plot forwarding recitatives, and huge finales involving the entire chorus and most principals – all singing at full throttle at the end of each act. There was another pesky little word in that description which might bear some additional definition for some of you.

Recitatives are simply sung plot, action, scenic or sometimes emotional descriptions and/or commentary, sometimes as a musical dialogue between two or more characters, but more often simply solo vocal lines accompanied by supporting chords (in early operas such chords were for one instrument and termed “continuos” while more modern recitatives are usually scored for full orchestra). The entire opera can be two to five acts, easily lasting between three and five hours. The bottom line is that the music NEVER stops – hesitates perhaps momentarily, but never really ceases – and is written for highly trained operatic voices.

The primary component of opera is in fact the music – all else is dressing – ergo the primary creator is the composer. Revivals of any opera should not tamper with the music. There is a very real and technical reason for this. The composer is often long gone from this earth, and if in fact one were to choose to rearrange or remove some numbers, there is no composer alive who is truly capable of writing the transitions that would match the style, tonality and voice of the original composer in order to put the segments back together again in through composed fashion. In addition, such a choice would basically trample on the composer’s original musical intention. In the case of modern opera, as long as Glass or Sondheim or any other composer is alive and well, he may, of course, do anything he would like to his scores. That composer may or may not be open to changing a finished score, but at least that individual wrote it originally and is fully capable of moving things around or omitting an aria here or there.

Stage directors on the other hand often re-conceive the time period of an operatic story, the location of the story or simply the design of the scenery and costumes. It is not at all unusual for an opera to live unchanged for 30 - 50 years only to be re-conceived in the more modern era – often to both applause and howls from the audiences. However, removing characters is risky solely because their sung parts are so completely woven into the score. Who will sing those lines? Does it make sense? Can you create a reason for a new character to sing that aria or recitative? What happens if you simply remove it? How does the music before melt into the music following without that intervening aria or recitative? Lots of questions – usually with no real answers that serve the piece appropriately. Better never to tinker with the score – lyrics possibly – music never!

That being said it is not at all uncommon for a modern lyricist/librettist to develop a new translation of the original language of an opera into English. NOTE: Opera actually composed in English began in the early 17th century with a piece by Ben Johnson entitled Lovers Made Men (1617), moving through the centuries in the works of such composers as Henry Purcell (1659 –1695), George Frederic Handel (1685 – 1732), John Gay (1685– 1732), Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900), Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 –1958), and Benjamin Britten (1913–1976 ). Some of the most well known American opera composers in English were George Gershwin (1898 –1937), Gian Carlo Menotti (1911 – 2007) and Philip Glass (1937– ). Victor Herbert’s grand opera, Natoma (1911) was a relatively early major American excursion into English, even launching an extended very public argument between sopranos Mary Garden and Christie McDonald as to the value of writing opera in English. See, VHSource Newsletter Vol 7 July 2011 for more information.

No matter what its language or age, the most defining aspects of any opera are:

1. Through composed;
2. Little or no spoken dialogue; and
3. Music written for highly trained operatic voices.”
It is quite easy to argue that Stephen Sondheim (1930–, *Sweeney Todd, Pacific Overtures*) and Andrew Lloyd Weber (1948–, *Jesus Christ Superstar, Evita*) – compose opera no matter what style you wish to assign to the music itself. A rock opera is still an opera as long as it contains those three aspects. These works are through composed and are quite difficult to sing.

**Comic Opera**

The term *Comic Opera* was first applied to a through composed work which was light and/or comic throughout, usually with a happy ending. These works come initially out of late 17th century Italy when composers began reacting to the need for more “lighter, faster, funnier” than opera was able to deliver. The first term assigned to such works was “opera buffa.” The genre quickly made its way to France where its name was modified to “opéra bouffon.” These works often had farcical plots and began as works placed between the standard operatic acts – presumably to lighten the mood periodically. These little “fillers” eventually became independent of their more serious predecessor, utilizing standard Italian and French (not dialect), a real story, strong melodies and “stand-alone overtures” (those which could be played and enjoyed without the entire comic opera being presented). The composers of comic opera included Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725), *Il trionfo dell’onore* (1718), Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710 – 1736), *La serva padrona* (1733), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 –1791), *The Magic Flute* (1791), and Gioachino Antonio Rossini (1792 –1868), *The Barber of Seville* (1816). Through composed? Absolutely, as nowhere were we able to find any mention of dialogue, but they were light in content and did have happy endings. Still, they must remain operas.

**Opera Comique**

This leads almost seamlessly into the next term that pops up with regards to lighter works – *Opéra Comique*. The name implies comic opera, however, you will not find a more difficult label to truly pin down and understand. Nowhere is this more obvious than when you find sources listing Georges Bizet’s *Carmen* (1875) as the most famous Opéra Comique. Anyone who knows *Carmen* knows it is not terribly light and comic in nature. How can such a tragic opera which ends in several deaths be labeled opera *comique*? *Carmen* actually transformed the definition of Opéra Comique into an entirely new definition—that of “real life,” “down to earth” characters in real situations, all still through composed, utilizing arias, recitatives, choruses and instrumental music to tell its story. However, we are ahead of ourselves.

The term first surfaces in the early 18th century as *opéra comiques en vaudevilles* which first contained spoken dialogue and combined new lyrics with existing songs (hence the term “vaudeville” or satirical cabaret song). By the 19th century, composers had begun to write original music and create their own original works. **NOTE:** Let’s stop for a minute and examine that wonderful term “vaudevilles” – it does sound familiar. How does that French word find its way into a genre that became known as the core of the American entertainment world for several decades. The French version indicated the use of various pre-existing songs and incorporating them into a “new” work with new satirical lyrics. As the American term evolved, the word came to mean a series of unrelated pre-existing acts, scenes, musical numbers which were combined into a whole to entertain an audience for a couple of hours. Nothing was “through composed nor were segments even related. They did have spoken dialogue and often they also utilized new lyrics for existing popular tunes of the day.

Opéra Comique remained in France and their librettists had a tendency to be more pure playwrights who kept up with real life trends in the culture of the day and crafted their story lines accordingly, mixing comedy with serious social and political elements. The single most important composer of Opéra Comique was André Ernest Modeste Grétry.
(1741–1813) who blended the musicality of Italy with the French language. His most famous work was Richard Coeur-de-lion (1784).

With the French Revolution, opéra comique generally became more dramatic and less comic, thus morphing almost back toward opera. Such composers as Etienne Méhul (1763–1817), Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766–1831), Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842), and Jean-François Le Sueur (1760–1837) began tackling long taboo subject matter such as incest and infanticide. Orchestrations grew more and more complex. Spoken dialogue was reduced, and the idea of recurring musical themes representing either characters or ideas found its way into scores.

However, as life in France under Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) became more stable, comedy once again crept into opéra Comique. Throughout the history of this genre the works were also tied to very specific theatres – either the Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique or the Feydeau. During the early 19th century, composers such as Daniel François Esprit Auber (1782–1871), Louis-Joseph-Ferdinand Hérold (1791–1833, and Adolphe Adam (1803–1856) continued the genre until we come finally to Alexandre César Léopold (Georges) Bizet (1838–1875) and his quintessential masterpiece Carmen (1875). The only possible aspect of Carmen which would even begin to tie it to Opéra Comique is its totally real life story and characters, otherwise it is opera through and through. The original chorus members actually complained because they could not simply stand and sing – they had to “be someone - smoke - talk to each other - act.” Sadly, Bizet did not live to see his creation become one of the most performed and favorite operas of all time.

America never had anything that even began to parallel Opéra Comique, and the constantly changing aspects of this genre make it a label of little use, even in its heyday, beyond tying it to those works performed primarily at the Théâtre de l’Opéra-Comique in Paris.

**OPERETTA**

This brings us to the term operetta. What had begun in early Opéra-Comique – the lighter story lines, the large portions of spoken dialogue arose once more in the late 19th century again in France. Louis Auguste Florimond Ronger known primarily as Hervé (1825–1892) is credited with inventing operetta, however, its true foundation was Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880, seen left), a German born French composer, who wrote both one acts and full works in this new genre. Scandalously, it was characterized by a highly erotic frivolity which bordered upon pornography in its early days. One leading lady was described as “covered in diamonds and very little else.” The wealthy male audiences loved it – the wealthy ladies were horrified. Yes, it is true that all those wonderful Offenbach masterpieces everyone worships today as the very height of high class European operetta began life in private theatres with courtesans in the roles long before they were cleaned up into the “classical” versions known today and performed most often today in opera houses with opera singers.

The most significant Austrian composer of operetta was Johann Strauss, II (1825–1899 seen right), whose Die Fledermaus (1874) would become the most performed classic operetta in the world. Strauss’ peers in Vienna, the primary center of Austrian operetta, included primarily Franz von Suppé (1819–1895), Franz Lehár (1870 –1948), Oscar Nathan Strauss (1870–1954), Carl Zeller (1842–1898) and Leo Fall (1873–1925) among others. Notice we have constantly been discussing France and Italy. Here appears to be the first time that Vienna has apparently truly usurped Paris in creative theatrical output.

Germany’s center for operetta could be found in Berlin which really did not begin to develop its own style until the end of the 1899s with composer Carl Emile Paul Lincke (1866–1946), who is considered the equivalent of Offenbach (Paris) and Strauss.
Berlin operetta began to hit a more distinct stride after World War I with the introduction of jazz elements, burlesque, revue, and cabaret. By the 1930s the composer Kurt Weill (1900–1950) would take Berlin operetta, operas and musicals into a more extreme distinct style.

Let’s not forget the huge influence of Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan (1842–1900) with his famous librettist partner Sir William Schwenck Gilbert (1836–1911) who defined the British operetta with their productions of such universality that they are the most often produced operettas in English today. They more than anyone else added the satirical/political aspect to operetta as they commented regularly on the state of the British peerage and culture in general throughout the 1870s -1890s.

The Viennese composers were the primary influence on a young Victor Herbert (1859-1924) who in the 1870s and 80s was deeply engaged in both the educational and orchestral worlds of Vienna. Part of that education was a year long membership in the Eduard Strauss Orchestra (circa 1878-79). While Herbert would have been very aware of Sullivan’s work, it was the Viennese composers who would wield the biggest influence on the young man. Herbert would come to America in 1886, bringing his own distinct brand of Viennese composing which he began utilizing with Prince Ananias (1894). He would later be followed by Hungarian born Sigmund Romberg (1887–1951) and Austro-Hungarian Rudolf Friml (1879–1972) during the early 1920s. Please note that almost none of the primary composers of American operetta were American born and educated. The sole exception would be Henry Louis Reginald DeKoven (1859–1920) who preceded Herbert’s work with his huge hit Robin Hood (1890). However when one looks closely, although DeKoven was indeed American born, he was educated in England and Germany.

The composing world of America of 1890s to 1930s simply did not have a major American born and educated representative until Jerome Kern (1885–1945, seen left) and to be fair, Mr. Kern was much more a writer of wonderful melodies and musical comedy than true operetta. It is probably that fact alone which causes most scholars to say that American Musical Theatre begins with Kern. Such an assumption is shortsighted regarding the huge contributions of Victor Herbert, Romberg and Friml, but one can see how such a distinction could be made.

If three aspects of opera can be applied to a work to identify it as part of opera, what aspects can distinguish an operetta from an opera:

1. Operettas are not “through composed.” They have large amounts of spoken dialogue interspersed between “numbers.” The music starts and stops.

2. There is rarely “underscoring” (musical accompaniment) during spoken dialogue. Such instrumental interludes are used more to cover the movement of scenery than dialogue, thus, few recitatives in operetta (with the exception of G&S), although towards the 1920s the use of underscoring would grow and begin to underlie spoken dialogue as a tool.

3. Operettas have a tendency to be much shorter than opera with a tendency towards lighter, comic story lines often set in exotic or fanciful locations. Characters are rather shallow, almost two dimensional and frivolous.

4. Operetta often involves royalty and/or class misidentification. The prince may fall for a lady who appears to be a serving girl but is, in actuality, an unknown or lost princess. Such misidentification is always resolved by the grand finale and the lovers live happily ever after. Operettas usually have happy endings, even if they have to resort to an old Greek trick, “deus ex machina” – machinery from the gods (e.g., the messenger who arrives at the last moment from the king or general with orders to stop or leave or pardon, making everything happy again.)

5. Operetta does require excellent trained voices, simply not quite as demanding as operatic works.
These are real concrete aspects that when applied will easily identify an operetta. This now gives us two genres that are fairly easy to assign a label – opera and operetta. The preceding fancy French labels do not really add much value and were primarily limited in use to Europe or more specifically France and Italy. Finally, the composer remains the star of the show in operetta.

**Musical Theatre/Comedy**

This brings us finally to our last category – **Musical Theatre** or even more simply **Musicals**. The term actually dates all the way back to the Greeks who always included music and dance in their famous plays. Usually the playwright wrote the music. The Chorus’ primary purpose was to assist the audience in understanding what just happened between characters or to suggest to the audience how they should feel about what just happened. This process often utilized music and dance. However, the playwright was the star of the show. Music was rarely if ever written down and does not really remain for recreation. Modern composers will often add music to Greek plays, but it will all be new work written in the “style of” format. The same would be true of choreographers adding elements of dance.

Musical theatre came up through the centuries all over the world in its various forms and variations as performed by traveling troupes of actors. This was true of Italy’s **Commedia dell’arte** with its stock characters who improvised story lines anew each performance, English “**mystery plays**” which helped the populace understand religion and the bible, or the **pageant wagons** which traveled around to various locations telling different pieces of a full work, often of a religious nature. The bottom line in early musical theatre was the equality of the songs, dance, story, characters, and spoken dialogue, and often the lack of formal training of all performers.

There were no true composers. If one had a natural talent for singing, dancing, playing a lute, a drum or story telling, one could join a group of actors and live the life, so to speak. One did not need to go off for any sort of formal training. The audiences were of a similar educational background - common folk, working folk, peasants, etc.. If a troupe became famous, they might be invited to court to amuse the royalty, but for the most part they rose from the common ranks and entertained the common ranks.

In America, the first real “book” musical comedy was **The Black Crook** (1866 - book by Charles M. Barras [1826-1873] and music by various composers, including Operti and Bickwell) which had its first production in New York. Thereafter followed the “musicals” of the first real comedy team, **Edward Harrigan** (1844–1911) and **Tony Hart** (1855–1891) between 1878 and 1885. America loved to spend several hours on a show boat, in a local theatre or hall watching “acts” which might be a singer, a comedy team, animal trainers, elocutionists, jugglers, eccentric dancers, etc. Hannigan and Hart were one of the first teams to produce their own shows with music by Harrigan’s father-in-law, **David Braham**. While they told many different little stories, they did take their characters from everyday American working class life, placing them in situations that were recognizable to their audience. Such entertainments gave each audience a moment’s laughter and enjoyment free from the everyday toil that occupied most of their life. It was never considered refined or high class.

**George M. Cohen** (1878–1942) would learn his trade during much the same period and begin making a more complete whole from the various
parts. Cohen was one of the earliest famous “born in a trunk” performers who was trained on stage from a babe in arms by parents also in the “business” – vaudeville to be exact. As he grew into a young man, so did his career mature as he began starring, composing, writing, directing, and producing his own theatrical works, ultimately being called the “Prince of Broadway.” One of his earliest musicals was Little Johnny Jones (1904.)

Music was primarily provided by that vast collection of “tune smiths” (writers of individuals songs) who would eventually become known as Tin Pan Alley. The three Witmark brothers (Isidore, Julius, and Jay) were engaged in the creation, printing and selling of such songs in the early 1880s, eventually becoming M.Witmark & Sons (1886). It was not composers who put together early musicals, it was Cohen or Harrigan and Hart who created the work, inserting music and skits and entertainments into story lines which were only loosely drawn. It was not at all uncommon for songs to have nothing to do with what immediately preceded them or with what followed. In other words, songs stopped the action rather than carried the story forward. Cohen was one of the first performers to actually begin to write real story plots.

Musical theatre/comedy in America from 1860s forward was big business. It found its form in vaudeville, minstrel shows, show boats, music halls and theatres. Performers numbered in the thousands, tune smiths numbered in the thousands, and publishers of songs numbered in the hundreds. Every little town had its designated building to be used as a theatre whenever traveling companies or local talents needed a space to perform in. Larger cities had hundreds of theatres constantly being filled and refilled. However, all this creativity was driven by famous performers and by producers – not by the composer. Musical comedy would not be composer driven until those famous performers and producers began hiring Victor Herbert to give them a classier style of music.

Kirke LaShelle (1862-1905) had been manager of the Bostonians, the operetta company who had commissioned Victor Herbert to write them a new operetta, Prince Ananais (1894). When LaShelle teamed with Arthur F. Clarke (1866-1911) to produce a musical comedy for the famous vaudevillian comedian Frank Daniels (1856–1935), he hired Herbert to give him a full original score with respectability. They titled the work The Wizard of the Nile (1895) and Herbert suddenly found himself a composer of both operetta and musical comedy with his first two works for the American theatre within a year’s time. The rest is history, and covered in 32 back issues of this newsletter.

Victor Herbert stood his entire career with one foot in operetta, one foot in musical comedy, and in true “twister” fashion, a hand in opera and a hand in major symphonic composing. Again to be fair, the first team devoted solely to musical comedy and thus the beginning foundation of what we today call musical comedy was P. G. Wodehouse (1881–1975, writer), Guy Bolton (1884–1979, writer) and Jerome Kern (1885 –1945, composer) who teamed to create the Princess Theatre Shows between 1915–1918 (including Very Good Eddie (1915 – just Bolton and Kern), O, Boy! (1917), Have a Heart (1917), Leave It to Jane (1917) and Oh, Lady! Lady!! (1918). The interesting aspect is that they were equal – no one individual was the star.

There are aspects of musical comedy that can be gleaned from this discussion and allow you to begin to identify this genre.

1. The music of most musical comedy falls into the realm of highly entertaining and accessible songs appealing to a huge range of audiences. The genre grew from a hodge podge mixture of such songs written by many until it eventually became more composer driven (e.g., Jerome Kern, Richard Rodgers (1902–1979), Alan Jay Lerner (1918–1986) and Frederick Lowe
However, the score itself is much more “hit tune” driven. In its golden era (1940s-1960s), musical comedy generated thousands of stand-alone song hits which made their composer, lyricist and publishers very big money. Composers of musical comedy also have a tendency to be “tune smiths” and, ever since the death of Victor Herbert, are almost always in need of an orchestrator to translate their songs into a score with instrumental parts for the pit orchestra to play.

2. The greatest emphasis in a musical comedy is on acting, although singing and dancing today hold only slightly less emphasis. In many cases the librettist is almost equal with the composer (e.g., Rodgers and Hart, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lerner and Lowe). While one may well argue that singing has supplanted acting as the primary skill needed by the performer, it is a far different style of singing than that found in either operetta or opera. Any performer who can do all three (act, sing, dance), quickly becomes known as a triple threat and is in high demand. However, Rex Harrison (1908–1990) was a huge musical comedy star who basically could not sing a note. He “talked” all his songs and danced hardly at all and yet was the star of both My Fair Lady (1956) and Camelot (1960).

3. The subject matter of musical comedy runs a far wider range than opera or operetta encompassing just about any subject matter but leaning towards more real life with comedic overtones than either of the other genres.

Someone once asked Stephen Sondheim (at left) what was the difference between opera and musicals. He replied, “I really think that when something plays Broadway, it’s a musical, and when it plays in an opera house it’s opera, that’s it.” The problem with that view is that it ties everything up in a neat bow to a building. What about that production that happens in a school auditorium, or an Off Broadway theatre or church auditorium. Does an opera cease to be an opera outside of an opera house?

Let’s see if we can’t be fairer to the material itself and its creators. It appears clear that there are only three genres to begin with: opera, operetta and musicals. Times change, musical styles change, subject matter changes, but these three forms have always been with us. Almost anyone can apply the following tests, just by listening to any recorded work or sitting in the audience.

**First and foremost:** Is the work through composed or does it start and stop?

- If the answer is yes, it is through composed – it is an opera.
- If the answer is, it starts and stops – it is either an operetta or a musical.

**Second:** If the score starts and stops, does the work require major well trained singing voices?

- If the answer is yes – it is an operetta
- If the answer is no – it is a musical

We actually tried to formulate more questions but found that those two questions pretty much sum up all you need. Does one ever call opera old fashioned? Or Musicals? Then why should anyone call operetta old fashioned? Mr. Sondheim was right, it is fairly simple. However, it has nothing to do with buildings or locations. It simply has to do with the above two questions. Feel free to go back and review the basic aspects of each genre, but we think these questions sum it up very well.

Try these two tests yourself – we’ll get you started: **Bells Are Ringing** – musical; **Little Night Music** – operetta; **Nixon In China** – opera; **Camelot** – musical; **Tommy** – opera; **Music Man** - musical; **Most Happy Fella** - operetta. And there you go - have fun!

**Spotlight On . . .
**

**The Mad Cap Duchess (1913)**

Last month we looked at Herbert’s *Sweethearts* which opened on September 8, 1913. This month we move on to No. 32, *The Madcap*
Duchess, which opened first in Rochester, New York at the Lyceum Theatre on October 13th with Herbert conducting its premiere. The work had its debut on the Broadway stage on November 11th in the Globe Theatre (today the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre at 205 W. 46th Street) with Herbert once again conducting opening night.

The work was labeled a “comic opera” which prompted the discussion which leads off this month’s newsletter. We would call it an operetta. While the libretto was subjected to the now almost perfunctory disdain, the score contains some highly unusual numbers which bear much closer scrutiny than has occurred during the past 90 years.

Before we talk directly about The Madcap Duchess, there was an interesting movement afoot during the spring of 1913 as Frederick G. Latham, a frequent director of Herbert’s work, began pushing for the establishment of a “Victor Herbert Opera House.” Given the penchant in the last 50 years of naming theatres after famous composers (e.g., The Gershwin Theatre and The Richard Rodgers Theatre), it is surprising that such a proposal wasn’t made before. Mr. Latham claimed to have a site on Broadway near the Metropolitan Opera House at 39th and Broadway, a set of plans, two Herbert offerings ready to go as well as a $5,000 commitment from Herbert himself. The building never happened, but it certainly evoked lively public discussions during the summer of 1913.

During the same spring, The Madcap Duchess was being mentioned under the title The Coquette with book and lyrics by Harry B. Smith and starring an upcoming young American considered to be a fine singer named Ann Swinburne (at left). This actress was fresh from a successful run as a replacement lead in the New York City 1911 production of The Count of Luxembourg (1909 – Lehár). Herbert had once again found a talent for whom he would enjoy writing new music. NOTE: Here again is another soprano who went on record in print defending musicals this time, instead of the use of English. The only facts remaining from the “leaked” information regarding the new show in early 1913 was the participation of Ms. Swinburne. What was to become The Madcap Duchess was actually based on a novel by Irishman Justin Huntly McCarthy (1859 –1936) entitled Seraphica (1908). McCarthy had had a huge success with his previous novel – the 1901 If I Were King which would eventually become Friml’s operetta The Vagabond King (1925). David Stevens would assist McCarthy in creating The Madcap Duchess libretto and lyrics.

The producer was Harry H. Frazee (1880-1929). H. H. Frazee built the Longacre Theatre (1913, 220 West 48th Street, between Broadway and 8th Avenue), owned the Lyric and Harris theatres (all in NYC) as well as others in Chicago and Boston. During his career, he produced and/or directed 28 Broadway productions with the most famous being No, No, Nanette in 1925. The Madcap Duchess was actually his 11th Broadway production, making Frazee a veteran of both musicals and plays, often original productions. NOTE: The most fascinating item about H. H. Frazee is that three years after he produced The Madcap Duchess, he bought the Boston Red Sox (1916) for $500,000, and then in 1920, sold his star player Babe Ruth in a straight sale (no other players involved) to the Yankees for $125,000 cash plus three $25,000 notes due one a year apart at 6% interest, plus an additional loan from the Yankees for $300,000, using Fenway Park (which Frazee did not own) as collateral. Legend has always suggested that Frazee sold Ruth to finance the beginnings of No, No, Nanette (1925). George Herman Ruth, Jr. was a handful in many ways and had just demanded that Frazee double his salary, and announced that he wouldn’t play until he got the raise. The huge deal bankrolled the Red Sox team as well as My Lady Friends (1919), rather than No, No, Nanette.

As for the rest of the artistic staff, it would seem that it paid to champion a theatre for your favorite composer, as Fred G. Latham was named stage director of The Madcap Duchess. There was again a bit of waltzing around with the music director, as Max Hirschfeld began in the position and Robert Hood Bowers ended up with the job by the Broadway opening.
The Madcap Duchess libretto is set in the Autumn of 1720. It’s Act I takes place in the garden of the Windmill Inn in the early morning, while Act II moves to Watteau’s (1684–1721, French painter) theatre in the garden of Versailles during the evening.

Renaud, the Prince of St. Pol in Artois has been banished from Paris because he incurs the jealousy of Philip of Orleans (Regent to the child Louis XV) with regards to Stephanie, the Marquise de Phalaris. Seraphina, the Duchess of Bapaume in Artois has at the same time decided to avoid a marriage of state. Seraphina and Renaud meet accidentally at the Windmill Inn and are immediately attracted to each other. Neither one knows the other’s ties to royalty. That romantic pull coupled with their young ages generates lots of troubles and adventures with the end result that they join a troupe of players on their way to Paris to appear at Watteau’s theatre at the palace of Versailles. Seraphina has convinced Renaud she is nothing more than a simple servant girl. When he learns that the love of his life Stephanie hasn’t even attempted to be faithful to him, he vows to marry the servant girl who was so loyal throughout his adventures with the acting troupe. When Seraphina reveals who she really is, all’s well that ends well as royalty wins out once again. One of the most interesting facts is that both of these royal characters “in disguise” are from Artois, and one wonders exactly how they could have managed NOT to know each other previously.

The rest of cast is filled with Kings’ Musketeers, the painter Watteau whose canvases come to life in one production number, Louis the XV as a boy, as well as the forementioned troupe of actors and of course, lots and lots of courtiers – clearly a quaint blast from the Victorian past into a New York in love with ragtime.

Let’s take a moment to really examine the America of 1913 - the clouds of war were beginning to gather on the horizon in Europe, and the new century had moved determinedly into its second decade embracing such talents as: ragtime black composer Scott Joplin, fresh from composing his own opera Treemonisha (1910); tiny actress Maude Adams still portraying “Peter Pan” on the stage; the Barrymores – America’s royal theatrical family – with members Maurice, Lionel, Ethel, and John Drew; David Belasco, actor, manager, playwright, and New York producer; Irving Berlin, the young composer of “Alexander's Ragtime Band” (1911); George M. Cohen still active as an actor, playwright, director and producer; Charles Frohman, theatrical agent and manager, controller of 6 New York theatres, 200+ in the rest of the country, and 5 abroad while he personally managed 28 stars and paid more than $35,000,000 a year in both salaries to 10,000 people on his payroll and maintenance on all his theatres; Eugene O'Neill, creator of nine plays just in the 1913-1914 season; and, of course, Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., already well known for his Follies and newly married to stage actress Billie Burke in 1913. Let’s not forget Herbert’s own Sweethearts which was still going strong having opened September 8, 1913. This was not an environment in which huge numbers of audiences would pay the going rate to crowd into a theatre to see their parents’ and grandparents’ favorite entertainment.

Given the above, it was not surprising that reviewer after reviewer labeled the work “… old-fashioned,” “… a bunch of garden pinks …,” and “… far and away the most pretentious musical offering of many seasons…” The story was one Broadway had seen on a fairly regular basis since before the turn of the century – a Victorian sort of romance whose subject matter had come and gone.

Yet, almost to a man, critics spoke from both sides of their pen – the fellow above who wrote about “garden pinks” went on to say that the music “… was tuneful and musicianly and more than delighted the big audience.” The reviewer who called the whole work “pretentious,” ended with “…and unquestionably one of the greatest hits in a year when successes are much sought after.” Another reviewer called the music “… beautiful, of delicate texture and
the very opposite of banal...” and then went on to say later in the review that Herbert offered the wittiest remark of the entire libretto during his curtain speech when he stated “We hoped to have Mr. Justin Huntly McCarthy with us this evening, but he is the only Irishman I know who is happy in London.”

One reviewer concluded that “If there is a public, therefore, which cares for a romantic love story, placed in a romantic period, with capable singers to interpret an admirable score, then they will find what they want at the Globe theatre. For the music which runs through “The Madcap Duchess” is, in his light vein, Victor Herbert at his best.” He even insinuated that this really was opera comique. Comments such as this led to arguments among reviewers as to whether this was comic opera, opera comique or operetta.

Yet they did love the music and the creator of that music. The Evening Post sallied forth with:

Under Mr. Herbert’s baton everything went with a swing. He radiates energy like a pound of radium and how he must have enjoyed composing that music! ...in the delicacy, richness, and variety of his orchestral coloring and harmonization he has perhaps never done anything quite so good. Much of this refinement is, to be sure, wasted on an ordinary audience at a first hearing, but it makes connoisseurs feel like shouting bravo!

What exactly was it about this score that caused such almost rhapsodic comments on Herbert’s work? There are four interesting songs that bear special attention. First and foremost this operetta opens with men’s chorus instead of the more traditional women’s chorus such as “Iron, Iron, Iron,” in the immediately preceding Sweethearts. In “Aurora Blushing Rosily,” a group of musketeers have a wonderful time flirting with the young serving maid of the Windmill Inn.

The second is actually a coupling of two separate works, “That Is Art” and “Companions, I Have Summoned You” which not only follow each other almost immediately but also come full circle and end with a reprise of “That Is Art.” The first song is sung by the acting troupe to Renaud and Seraphina as an explanation as why they are actors! Then they proceed to “audition” Seraphina in the second piece as she “tries out” with a mock lament to show her “sad” skills and a mock dramatic scene to show her “emoting” ability before the whole group reverts back to another rendering of “That Is Art.”

A third song began under one title and then morphed after the Broadway opening into an entirely different title while maintaining the same verse. Fairly soon into Act II, Renaud sings a lovely song entitled “Goddess of Mine,” filled with highly romantic yearnings. A few weeks after the opening, Herbert substituted a totally new refrain (chorus) and changed the name of the song to “Star of Love.” The number quickly became the hit of the operetta.

The last number that bears mention is entitled “Far Up the Hill” and is sung by Seraphina and Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684–1721) the painter. It is during this number that shepherds and shepherdesses from a Watteau painting (perhaps the above) come to life and dance. Edward Waters describes it thus:

The musical conversation in gavottelike phrases gives way to a strict two-part canon in the octave (eight measures) which in turn yields to eight more measures of part singing, four independent parts over an ostinato [continuously repeated] bass. So much musical science in such a short piece was probably lost on the audience – as it should be, for skill which obtrudes is not skill at all; but there it stands, delightful in its effect and successfully simulating the period of Louis XV.

Unfortunately, Shop VHSource has neither this fascinating piano/vocal score or the libretto ready for
purchase, but rest assured we will have everything that’s available after our next trip to the Library of Congress.

Expert orchestrations aside, the reality was the public did not flock to *The Madcap Duchess*. The Victorian roses, vagrancies of royalty and touring troupes of actors simply didn’t interest an audience suddenly into ragtime and dance – new rhythms and beats. The run lasted only 71 performances and received a very lukewarm welcome on the road. This is most likely a score which bears serious examination with an eye towards crafting a new vessel to allow the score to ring forth once again.

**You Will Want To Own This New Recording**

The year 2011 brought new recordings of both the amazing Victor Herbert as well as at least one of his peers. We say amazing because Herbert wrote far more than simply “March of the Toys” and “Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life.” There are literally hundreds of songs for voice, piano and cello which have never been recorded or made their way off the scratchy sounding cylinders of the mid to late second decade of the twentieth century. Until now – that is!

The recording we shall highlight this month is **VICTOR HERBERT, Works for Cello and Piano, Solo Piano Works**, performed by pianist **William Hicks** and cellist **Jerry Grossman**, produced and engineered by **Judith Sherman** and released by **New World Records**. The project was supervised by **Larry Moore** and made possible by a grant from the **JMV Art Preservation Foundation**. This two-disc CD was released in late 2011 as the first in a series to be known as “The Foundations of the American Musical Theater.” It is a bit surprising that they have chosen to release Herbert compositions for cello and piano and solo piano as the first offering for this project. While listening to this cd will delight and captivate you, such compositions are not really proof of a composer being the primary foundation of American Musical Theatre. You may read in more detail about this recording project in *Vol 11 November 10* now located in the **VHSource LLC 2010 Newsletter Year Book**.

That being said, it is both refreshing and exciting to find a recording publisher and historic preservation organization actually referring to Herbert with the terms which have always been rightly his – “the Father of the American Musical Theatre” – and releasing materials that will amaze primarily because they are wonderful compositions and secondarily because you most likely have never heard the majority of these works before.

You also have not often heard such well done recordings. Unfortunately, recordings released over the past ten to twenty years have been a bit disappointing stylistically as the artists involved were not as well schooled in Herbert’s characteristic “rubato” style as one would like. The composer is the champion at utilizing built in fermatas, amazing changes of tempo (sometimes multiple changes within 3-4 measures) and wonderful hesitation rhythms in his compositions to control the ebb and flow of a performance and thus, constantly surprise both his audiences and even his musicians. To hear this style first hand, you would need to listen to the Syracuse University Records release: **Victor Herbert: The Collection** featuring Herbert conducting the Victor Herbert Orchestra.

This newest recording is one you will find yourself listening to over and over again. It is perfect background listening, driving listening, put one’s headphones on and relax listening. Let’s begin with what you can expect on Disc 1: **Works for Cello and Piano**.

Here we find eight offerings created by cellist **Jerry Grossman** and pianist **William Hicks**. Two of the eight are untitled and unpublished. You will find new recordings of “Legende,” “Pensée Amoureuse,” “Berceuse,” “Petite Valse,” “Liebes-Scene,” “Canzonetta,” “The Little Red Lark,” and “Romance.” Herbert seems incapable of writing a melody which does not remain firmly planted in your mind and hauntingly beautiful.
While Disc 1 is absolutely lovely, it is Disc 2 which will truly enthral. William Hicks becomes the solo piano artist on these 16 offerings, and we have not heard a more delicate and sensitive rendering of Herbert works on the piano. Be prepared to enjoy: “Under the Elms,” “Indian Summer,” “Scherzo,” “Estrellita (Valse Pathetique),” “Devotion (a Love Sonnet),” Six Piano Pieces: “I - Yesterthoughts,” “II-Punchinello,” “III-Ghazel,” “IV-La Coquette,” “V-On the Promenade,” “VI-The Mountain Brook;” “The American Rose,” “Fleurette,” “Al Fresco (Intermezzo),” “Ocean Breezes,” and “Pan-Americana (Morceau Characterishque).”

The liner notes are excellent and will give you great insight into Herbert’s education and early years as well as a fairly good look at the where, when and why of each composition. This is definitely an investment that will return many hours of lovely listening. Follow any of the links on the previous page to make either a cd purchase or an mp3 downloadable version.

Next month we’ll take a look a very important new release also by New World Records of Scott Joplin’s Treemonisha, another very neglected, but very important entry in the American opera repertoire. The recording artist is Rick Benjamin and his wonderful Paragon Ragtime Orchestra.

Upcoming 2012 Concerts

Thursday, March 1, 2012, 8:00 pm, the Worcester Music Festival will present the Nordwest German Staatskapelle, Eugene Tzigane, Conductor, with Amit Peled, Cello. The orchestra will feature Victor Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2. Hebert served as associate conductor of the Festival from 1889-1892. The performance will be at Mechanics Hall, 321 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01608. There will also be a Pre-concert Talk at 7 PM. Tickets: $46, $43, students $20 advance/$15 at door. Call for discounts, groups - Order Tickets

Alyce's Musings . . .

I will certainly not be shocked if the lead article of this month’s newsletter raises lots of controversy. But the categorizing of musical theatre works has always bothered me a bit. Gerald Bordman (1932-2011) in his book American Operetta (1981) began my thought processes that resulted in what you read at the front of this newsletter. As I was writing these thoughts, I really tried to make it more complex, but it kept simplifying itself, if that makes any sense. I also saw all the tremendous possibilities for future articles, so it was as beneficial for me to write as I hope it was for you to read.

There was an amazing outpouring of new Herbert recordings released in 2011. We will give a listen to all the new ones and give you our thoughts as this year progresses. Hopefully, New World will bring out at least one cd of the vocal recordings made during 2010-2011 in New York City. Having heard some of those early on in the process, I am really looking forward to that release.

So we begin 2012 with a bit of controversy - hope you will at least give my labeling theory a try, before you decide how off base I am. We also marvel at the fact that twelve months from now – January 2013 – we will still not have finished going through the complete list of Herbert operettas.

Attention – all the 2011 newsletters are still accessible in the Archived Newsletter section of www.vhsourc.com until January 31st. On February 1st the VHSOURCE, LLC 2011 Newsletter Year Book will be added to the E-Book division of the Shop VHSource and the Archived Newsletters will begin filling with 2012 editions.

See you all next month.
THE ANNUAL STEP BACK, PART THREE

It’s time for our annual “Step Back” to look solely at the creative teams formed around composer Victor Herbert for the twelve operetta productions we’ve covered in 2012. January began with The Madcap Duchess (1913) and ended this month with The Girl In The Spotlight (1920), moving from Nos. 32 to 43 in the process. Our two previous December reviews can be found in the e-book: Exploring the American World of Entertainment Foundations 1880 to 1930. This book can be either downloaded directly to your computer or purchased on a thumb drive for easy access on multiple computers. For those who have already purchased the book, you will be receiving a free of charge 2012 update around the end of January 2013.

Once again this examination deals only with producers, librettist/lyricists, publishers, stage directors, music directors and theatres in New York. As all of these works are tending more and more towards being true dance shows, we will also add that relatively new category – choreographer to the mix. In short we examine those men and women who were responsible for getting each production “on its feet.” Instead of concentrating on the folks in front of the stage lights, these are the folks who work from day one to bring the whole production together. You might want to take the time to really read these listings before you begin the rest of this article as we will constantly be referring back to this list.

32. The Madcap Duchess (1913)
   - Harry H. Frazee - producer
   - David Stevens and Justin Huntly McCarthy - librettists/lyricists
   - G. Schirmer & Co. - publishers
   - Fred G. Latham - stage director
   - Max Hirschfeld, replaced before NYC opening by Robert Hood Bowers - music director
   - Gilbert Clayton - choreographer
   - The Globe Theatre

33. The Only Girl (1914)
   - Joe Weber - producer
   - Henry Blossom - librettist/lyricist
   - M. Witmark & Sons - publisher
   - Fred G. Latham - stage director
   - Joseph C. Smith - choreographer
   - Robert Hood Bowers - music director
   - The Knickerbocker Theatre

34. The Debutante (1914)
   - John C. Fisher - producer
   - Harry B. Smith - librettist
   - Robert B. Smith - lyricist
   - George Marion - director
   - Carlo Edward - music director
   - Allen K. Foster - choreographer
   - The Knickerbocker Theatre

35. The Princess Pat (1915)
   - John Cort - producer
   - Henry Blossom - librettist/lyricist
   - M. Witmark & Sons - publishers
   - Fred G. Latham - stage director
   - Bena Hoffman - choreographer
   - Gustave Salzer - music director
   - The Cort Theatre

-426-
   - Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.
   - Charles B. Dillingham - producers
   - Irving Berlin - Additional Composer/lyricist
   - Henry Blossom - lyricist
   - T.B. Harms & Francis Day & Hunter - publishers
   - Ned Wayburn - director/choreographer
   - Edward Royce - director/choreographer
   - Louis F. Gotschalk - music director
   - The Century Theatre

37. *Eileen* (1917)
   - Joe Weber - producer
   - Henry Blossom - librettist/lyricist
   - M. Witmark & Sons - publishers
   - Fred G. Latham - stage director
   - George Marion - choreographer
   - Arthur Kautzenbach - music director
   - The Shubert Theatre

38. *Her Regiment* (1917)
   - Joseph Weber - producer
   - William Le Baron - librettist/lyricist
   - Harms - publishers
   - Fred G. Latham - stage director (manager)
   - Adolph Bolm - choreographer
   - Fritz Stahlberg - music director
   - The Broadhurst Theatre

39. *The Velvet Lady* (1919)
   - Klaw and Erlacher - producers
   - Henry Blossom - librettist/lyricist
   - M. Witmark & Sons - publishers
   - Edgar MacGregor - stage director
   - Julian Mitchell - choreographer
   - Fredric Stahlberg - music director
   - The New Amsterdam Theatre

40. *Angel Face* (1919)
   - T.B. Harms & Francis Day & Hunger - producers
   - George W. Lederer - final producer
   - Harry B. Smith - librettist
   - Robert B. Smith - lyricist
   - Harms - publishers
   - George W. Lederer - stage director
   - Harold Vicars - music director
   - Julian Alfred - choreographer
   - The Knickerbocker Theatre

41. *My Golden Girl* (1920)
   - Harry Wardell - producer
   - Frederick A. Kummer - librettist/lyricist
   - Harms - publishers - never published
   - J. Clifford Brooke - stage director
   - Julian Alfred - choreographer
   - Philip James - music director
   - The Nora Bayes Theatre/The Casino Theatre

42. *Oui Madam* (1920)
   - Alfred E. Aarons - producer
   - G. M. Wright (Mrs. Robert B. Smith) - librettist
   - Robert B. Smith - lyricist
   - Harms - publishers - never published
   - Herbert Gresham - stage director
   - Julian Alfred - choreographer
   - Max Steiner - music director
   - The Philadelphia Theatre (Never prod in NYC)

43. *The Girl In The Spotlight* (1920)
   - George W. Lederer - producer
   - Richard Bruce (aka Harry B. Smith) - librettist/lyricist
   - Harms - publishers - never published
   - George W. Lederer - stage director
   - Julian Alfred - choreographer
   - The Knickerbocker Theatre

This “Step Back” is a glimpse into Herbert’s career as it shifted into its later years at the same time he also began moving away from his primary composing focus – operetta. You will not find a plethora of famous Herbert milestones within this list. In fact, you most likely have never heard of the majority of these titles except as you encountered them each month in these pages. There also are not a huge number of famous Herbert tunes springing forth. The three most important operettas are *The Only Girl* (1914), *The Princess Pat* (1915) and *Eileen* (1917). Each contributed at least one famous Herbert melody: “Neapolitan Love Song” from *Princess Pat.*
“When You’re Away” from *The Only Girl*; and “Thine Alone” from *Eileen*. Even if you might not be familiar with the titles, you would definitely know the tune of each of these songs. If you are reading this on your computer, go back to the titles and click on each to hear a YouTube rendition. Given the huge and constant number of famous melodies regularly flowing from Herbert’s pen over the prior decades, this group would easily qualify as a bit skimpy.

While Herbert continued composing his annual one or two operetta scores a year, given the weakness of many of these works, it would be easy to assume that his talent might well be waning. That would truly be a wrong assumption. It was far more a case of the composer being pulled in many brand new ways at the same time his tried and true producers were themselves moving in new directions.

A primary factor in the quality of any stage production is the quality of the librettist/lyricist. While the composer could make recommendations, he was never solely responsible for choosing his librettists and lyricists. That task fell primarily to the Producer. Herbert had a winning collaboration with Henry Blossom, but unfortunately, he would lose Blossom to pneumonia in March of 1919, throwing his own creative flow into significant disarray. There was a steady flow of new producers hoping to pin their own careers onto the next big Herbert operetta. This latest crop of producers on the whole were not that hugely successful in putting together strong experienced creative teams.

One of the few exceptions to this observation was Florenz Ziegfeld (1867-1932) in partnership surprisingly with Charles B. Dillingham (1868-1934). This was a unique joint venture between two huge Broadway rivals which produced a major revue, *The Century Girl* (1916) and also allowed Ziegfeld to work directly with Herbert for the first time. Ziegfeld, Dillingham and Herbert would continue working together for the very successful revue, *Miss 1917*. More importantly, from 1916 on, Herbert would work on an annual basis for Ziegfeld. One might even say that Ziegfeld became not only Herbert’s primary producer, but also one of those strong pulls away from operetta. Herbert would contribute to every Ziegfeld Follies from 1917 to 1924, the year of his passing. Ziegfeld loved the way Herbert wrote pictorially and hired him primarily to paint gorgeous production scenes for his “Ziegfeld girls” in orchestral music – again and again and again. During this time period in New York City, when Flo Ziegfeld wanted your talents, he got your talents. The producer even went so far as to hire Herbert as an additional composer on the Jerome Kern operetta, *Sally* (starring Marilyn Miller) to get the “right” feel for the grand finale which recreated a “Ziegfeld moment.” The Herbert work “Butterfly Ballet” was thus the center piece of the grand finale to *Sally*. There are sadly few if any recordings of Herbert’s work for Ziegfeld. Fortunately, most of those scores created by the composer still exist and would make a wonderful project for restoration to allow those very visual musical compositions to stir the imagination once again. This was clearly the most significant new pull for Herbert’s attention.

Looking at the rest of the creative team members, we find almost constant turnover in personnel when compared to previous decades. There are no less than 9 different producers, 7 stage directors, 10 music directors, 8 choreographers and 10 theatres. With such a large number of non-repeating staff members, it is interesting that there are only 5 librettists/lyricists. Normally that would indicate stability, however, in this case that small number would become a primary contributing factor in the weaker quality of this group of Herbert operettas.

As far as Producers go, we are far removed from those early years of *The Bostonians* and Charles B. Dillingham serving as the regular producers. However, while the middle years that we surveyed last year had very recognizable names such as Klau and Erlacher, Joe Webber, Lew Fields and the Shuberts, the producers amassed in the years 1913
through 1920 are of much lesser known name recognition. Only Joe Webber (1867-1942) remains a frequent player with three productions, his last one being Her Regiment in 1917. George W. Lederer (1862-1938), both a producer and his own stage director, was the only other producer to have more than one go with Herbert, and those two fall near the end of the list in 1919 and 1920. The remainder of these one-and-done producers were primarily a group of men who either went on to completely different careers as in Harry H. Frazee (1880-1929), who bought the Boston Red Sox and promptly sold star player Babe Ruth to the Yankees, or those for whom Broadway credits would be fairly few and relatively weak. The lone recognizable exception to the one-and-done group was the old team of Klaw and Erlacher with The Velvet Lady in 1919. A conclusion one might draw from looking at all these new Herbert producers is that for the most part, they were not seasoned savvy veterans.

With regards to stage directors, Herbert champion and veteran Fred G. Latham (1853-1943) again led the way with five productions while Lederer, serving as his own stage director, had the next highest number with his two productions. The remaining five were one-and-done directors with only Ned Wayburn (1874-1942) being a truly experienced professional at the time. Wayburn was known primarily as a Ziegfeld choreographer and thus his sole directing stint came in the Ziegfeld-Dillingham production of The Century Girl (1916).

The musical direction position was a truly round robin situation with major names participating but not more than once with the exception of Robert Hood Bowers (1877-1941), Fritz Stahlberg (1877-1937), and Harold Vicars, who each worked twice. Bowers wielded the baton in The Madcap Duchess and The Only Girl; while Stahlberg worked in both Her Regiment and The Velvet Lady. Vicars worked both Angel Face and The Girl In The Spotlight. Even this early in the life of Hollywood, several of the music directors on the list would be lured west and make major names for themselves in film. Max Steiner and Fritz Stahlberg would both become major film composers.

Theatres also did not factor into the equation with any regularity with the exception of one of Herbert’s regular homes over the years - The Knickerbocker Theatre, located at 1396 Broadway (West 38th Street). Four Herbert productions landed in the Knickerbocker while 9 other theatres saw Herbert works. If the math doesn’t quite add up, it’s because My Golden Girl ended up in two different theatres. The other interesting twist regarding theatres is the fact that one theatre is out-of-town – The Philadelphia Theatre in Philadelphia. We count that theatre since Oui Madam was a major Herbert production which simply never made it into New York City.

The major sign of the times was the number of choreographers hired by the producers. For the first time each and every operetta surveyed had a choreographer as part of its creative team. The Century Girl actually utilized two director/choreographers. The Ziegfeld connection lent at least three choreographers, including Ned Wayburn, Edward Royce, and Julian Mitchell. Julian Alfred, another major operetta and musical comedy choreographer, would do work on each of the last four productions. A rather exotic lure for ticket sales purposes could be found with the hiring of the Russian ballet defector Adolph Bolm who contributed and danced the choreography for Her Regiment.

That brings us to the most important overall factor in this year’s survey – the librettist/lyricist position. Here is probably the real key to the lessening of quality in these twelve Herbert works. The year 1913 began well with Henry Blossom (1866-1919) and Herbert working together to produce The Only Girl, The Princess Pat, The Century Girl, Miss 1917 (revue) and The Velvet Lady. The first two are major plot moves by Herbert and Blossom into the modern everyday world of America after 1910 and had
excellent success. The revue *The Century Girl* attracted Ziegfeld to Herbert’s composing skills and changed everything in many ways. The two shows immediately before each of the aforementioned two are *The Madcap Duchess* and *The Debutante*. Both of these operettas were less than successful returns to an older operetta style and written by Harry B. Smith. The turning point and the downward slippage really began in early 1919 with the already mentioned unexpected passing of Henry Blossom. The relatively inexperienced group of producers promptly hired the entire Smith family in one way or another to guide their books. The only exception was the work *My Golden Girl*. Thus, one finds Harry B. Smith, his wife G. M. Wright and his brother Robert B. Smith figuring in four of the most poorly reviewed Herbert works on this list. Reputation should have boded well – no single writer was responsible for more produced Broadway librettos and lyrics than Harry B. Smith. He was such a huge figure in Broadway history that we will be taking a much closer look at him in 2013, although he was never a “game changer.” However, for the purposes of this examination, given reviewers’ comments, it becomes very clear that Harry B. and his family were not coming gracefully into the modern era of story telling. Reviewers constantly mentioned “old fashioned plots” and/or such thin plots as to be non-contributing to any success of the work. We return again to the old lament – “if only Herbert had found a Gilbert.” Unfortunately, Smith and his relatives were never a Gilbert.

There is also a major shift in the publishing world with *T.B. Harms & Francis Day & Hunter* (Harms) suddenly becoming a major player, listed as the publisher of five Herbert scores (three of which were never actually released). This phenomenon can most likely be tied directly to the producers. It is safe to assume that while Herbert had a long standing personal contract with *M. Witmark & Sons*, the actual producer of a production had the final say in who published the scores. Thus, we find *G. Schirmer & Co.* as well as Harms publishing 8 of the 12 scores. It is also fascinating that four of the productions under the jurisdiction of Harms – *The Century Girl, My Golden Girl, Oui Madam* and *The Girl In The Spotlight* were never published. One doubts if M. Witmark & Sons would have ever allowed such a thing to occur.

This year’s list contains twelve different Herbert works with a carousel of creative teams and relatively bad reviews far too often. It is hardly surprising that other interests began demanding more and more of Herbert’s time. We’ve already mentioned the constant Ziegfeld contracts, but there was also the lure of the recording industry once the US Copyright Law of 1909 passed. Both Herbert personally and his *Victor Herbert Orchestra* (“VHO”) were highly in demand in this emerging industry. Herbert also found himself a great favorite as a guest conductor all over the country as big movie theatres in major cities hired their own orchestras to play before and during the ever increasing numbers of films.

The newspaper publisher *William Randolph Hearst* (1863-1951) would soon hire Herbert and the VHO to be resident in Hearst’s new Cosmopolitan Movie Theatre, Columbus Circle, New York, primarily a showcase for his girl friend, actress *Marion Davies* (1897-1961). This contract would lead to several Herbert-composed overtures for major new film releases. Finally, there was the constant waging of war against the latest encroachments by the recording industry into the rights of composers regarding their compositions. Herbert remained a terrifically busy composer, and the primary spokesman of musical America.

It is always amazing what insight one can glean simply by looking at the juxtapositioning of all these creative teams in a common listing. Indeed, there are many observations that would simply not have been possible without this year end review. We now find ourselves at 1920 with only four more years to survey before our composer passes away. It is beginning to feel more bitter sweet with each passing work, but there are still monumental things to be done by America’s musical champion. See you in 2013.

**Spotlight On . . .**

**The Girl In The Spotlight** *(1920)*

This month we examine No. 43 *The Girl In The Spotlight*, which has the not-so-admirable
distinction of being one of the very few big name Broadway productions to open in the month of July up to 1920. Many months ago we discussed the fact that it was normally very hot in New York City during the summer months, and air conditioning was nonexistent. The first true air-conditioning system would not be installed into a New York theatre until 1925, when the Rivoli movie theatre was the fortunate recipient. Thus, no producer ever opened live theatre during the summer months. A production might open out of town from June to August, but the usual Broadway opening months were September through December with an occasional February or March. From its first beginnings, major Broadway theatre productions simply closed for the summer with casts dispersing for vacations, summer jobs and/or trips overseas to foreign homes. If the first season was financially important, a company might reopen for a second season, but most often the production would reassemble in the fall and go on the road for one or more seasons. It was a very rare production that actually ran more than one season.

Now comes The Girl In The Spotlight, initially entitled Molly Darling – the title which appears at the top of each Herbert score. The Composer was writing a new Irish operetta. By the time the first performance was booked in Chicago, the title had change to The Miracle Maid. Disaster struck almost immediately when Chicago was hit by a major musicians’ strike. Having no idea how long such an event might last, producer/director George W. Lederer chose to rush the show eastward to Stamford, Connecticut for a July 7th opening performance. All was still relatively normal until, suddenly just five days later, the work, now entitled The Girl In The Spotlight, opened on Broadway July 12th at the Knickerbocker Theatre. This was an almost singular occurrence for a Herbert work to rush so quickly from first performance to opening on Broadway. In looking back over the years, it appears to have never happened before and certainly not in the summer. There were many Herbert works which “opened on Broadway” almost on top of each other but never with such an insanely short time following a first performance. Add a July opening, and this becomes one of the more bizarre journeys to Broadway. To his credit Herbert did come to conduct the opening, giving up his normal time in Lake Placid where the temperature was much more enjoyable. It would seem doubtful if the composer stuck around very many days after opening night.

The producer making these rather unbelievable choices was George W. Lederer, an individual who had at least 24 prior Broadway openings under his belt – not exactly an amateur. It would be fascinating to be able to ask exactly what went into those decisions. Perhaps the weather was mild that summer. Perhaps the theatres were completely booked for the fall season. Perhaps the producer had decided he really did not have much of a show and took the attitude, “let’s get this over with.”

Because it’s not a major work, no one appears to have actually ferreted out the reasons. Neil Gould in his book, Victor Herbert, A Theatrical Life, seems to feel the production was very successful. Edward Waters in his book, Victor Herbert, A Life In Music, doesn’t appear to agree, and, quite honestly, neither do we. The Girl In The Spotlight ran for a total 56 performances before closing on August 28th, not even making it into the official opening month of the 1920-1921 season. This is hardly the definition of a successful work. Also, we have no published piano vocal to explore, suggesting that Harms simply did not feel the score worth publishing. There does appear to be a handwritten piano vocal score for this work in the original Herbert collection at the Library of Congress, as well as Herbert’s original scores. We will try to take a look at these materials when next we return to the Library of Congress. The operetta actually went on the road that season and would have at least one later attempt at a revival – neither of which achieved even a ripple of notice.

Getting back to the actual production, Lederer continued to hire himself as his stage director and signed Harold Vicars, with whom he had worked on Angel Face, as the musical director. Vicars’ career had begun in 1911 and would end fairly abruptly
after *The Girl In The Spotlight* with a work entitled *The Half Moon* which opened in December of 1920. To go along with the rather bizarre quick Broadway opening, we find an even more bizarre librettist/lyricist – Richard Bruce. This is the first time we’ve seen this name, but amazingly it is simply Robert B. Smith, brother of Harry B. Smith, writing for some strange reason under a pseudonym. Robert was certainly not new to the business with more than 30 Broadway credits to his name by 1920. True, there were far more lyricist credits working with his brother Harry, but he was certainly no stranger to writing librettos. It should be noted, however, that most likely you have never heard of the librettos he had written.

For this opportunity, Robert chose the old tried and true Cinderella story with a thin plot centering around Molly, a nondescript Irish servant who can sing. In an emergency Molly is called upon to replace the star Nina in Max Preiss’ Frivolity Theatre’s new operetta. Does this sound like “Cinderella” mixed in with a bit of “A Star Is Born?” Of course, she saves the day and wins the heart of the composer Tom Fielding. Unfortunately, this overly simple plot garnered such review comments as “the book mattered not at all...” and “it was incoherent, naive, seldom bright, and laboriously contrived.” A final telling comment was “a framework for a series of pleasant Herbert airs.”

The libretto has five scenes in a two Act structure: “Act I, Scene 1 was in the sky-parlor of Mrs. Todgers’ lodging house near Washington Square; Scene 2 was in the rehearsal hall of Preiss’ Frivolity Theatre, across the court from Mrs. Todgers’; Act II, Scene 1 moved to the Green Room of the Frivolity Theatre, converted into a chorus dressing room for the first night of a new operetta; Scene 2 moved to a corridor in the theatre; Scene 3 was in a garden of orchids, the last scene of Preiss’ opera, set for an impromptu supper after the performance.” One might be thinking how overly descriptive the above listing is. However, the following cast list will prove even more interesting reading:

**Tom Fielding**, a young musician whose great future always keeps just ahead of him, and who shares a Greenwich Village garret with John Reinhard

**Bill Weed**, a poet, misfortune’s favorite son and Johnny Dooley

**Ned Brandon**, an artist. To their humble abode comes Richard Pyle

**Max Preiss**, who has made in the fur business a fortune, which he has invested in the Frivolity Theatre. Now looking for a popular song which is sung by

**Molly Shannon**, house-maid at Mrs. Todgers’ lodging house, where the smallest hall-room is occupied by

**Frank Marvin**, formerly of the A.E.F., but just a man out of a job

**Ben Forbes**

Across the court from the garret is Max Preiss’ rehearsal hall. His company includes

**Bess** Minerva Grey

**Clare** Jessie Lewis

**June** Agnes Patterson
each of whom hopes to make a conquest of

**Watchem Tripp**, stage manager, who is putting on the dances in the new opera

In which is

**Hal Skelley**

**Nina Romaine**, a leading lady of the Frivolity Theatre, whose most constant Admirer is

**June Elvidge**

**John Rawlins**, a western mine owner

**John Hendricks**
Of the personnel of Preiss’ Company, the principal dancers are etc., etc., etc.

We take no credit for any of the foregoing mistakes, awkward sentence or strange formatting – that falls on Robert B. Smith. While reviewers had no negative feelings regarding the above company of relatively unknown actors, none of the individuals appear to have gone on to meaningful careers. Suffice it to say that there was simply not enough real or new substance on stage to entice an audience into sitting through the heat of a New York summer evening. They as well as Herbert preferred to be out of town.

Thus, the year 1919 saw two relatively weak Herbert operettas which were not very well received followed immediately in 1920 with two more of the same ilk, one of which, Oui Madam, never even made it into New York. All but one involved the Smith family and none of them produced any positive reaction from reviewers. Herbert was now 61, and no one would fault him for perhaps being a bit tired of pumping out multiple operettas per year, especially without his good friend Henry Blossom. While he probably never actually said as much, he was also most likely becoming a bit tired of having Harry B. Smith et al constantly presenting him with old fashioned librettos that even Herbert had to have been fully aware would prove less than satisfying. It was time to take a step back, and that’s just what Herbert did for two full years.

There would be no new Herbert operettas until No. 44 Orange Blossoms opened its first performance on September 4, 1922. Join us in the new year as we turn to a woman! Music. When in doubt, turn to a woman!

**December Concerts**


Monday, December 3, 8 pm, the Library of Congress will feature an all Herbert concert in Coolidge Auditorium - Jefferson Building, The Music of Victor Herbert, as part of their LOC Monday Night Series. William Hicks will be the music director and pianist. The concert will feature sopranos Rebecca Luker and Corliss Uecker, tenor Aaron Lazar, baritone Ron Raines and cellist Jerry Grossman. The evening will also feature Loras Schissel who curated the Herbert Exhibit mentioned above and Alyce Mott, owner and editor of this VHS Newsletter in a pre-concert discussion (6:15pm to 7:15pm in the Whittall Pavilion, Jefferson Building, Library of Congress) of the importance of Victor Herbert in American music and how the Herbert revival is taking place and progressing. No tickets are needed for the discussion and tickets are free for the concert, but do need to be reserved on-line.

Friday, December 7, 7:30 pm, the Playhouse in the Park will present Herbert’s Babes In Toyland at the Saenger Theatre, 6 S. Joachim Street, Mobile, Alabama. For tickets and additional information, call 251-602-0630 for reservations.

Friday, December 7, Saturday, December 8, 7:30 pm, the Atlanta Dance Theatre will present Herbert’s Babes In Toyland at the Roswell Cultural Arts Center, 950 Forrest St., Roswell, Georgia 30075. For tickets and additional information visit their website.

**2013 Schedule Performances**

April 6 (mat/eve), 13 (mat/eve), 14 (lat mat), 2013, the Troupers Light Opera of Norwalk, Connecticut will perform Victor Herbert’s The Red Mill with full orchestra. All performances will be in Norwalk Concert Hall, 125 East Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06851-5125. Visit their web site for more information.

May, 2013, the Light Opera of New York will present the 100th Anniversary Production of Victor Herbert’s Sweethearts in a venue to be announced in New York City. The production will be the Victor Herbert Renaissance Project’s version with a salon orchestra. Alyce Mott will direct and Michael Thomas will serve as music director. Visit the LOONY website for updates on information.
Saturday, July 27, 2013 at 8pm and Sunday, July 28th at 2pm, the Lyric Theatre of San Jose (CA) will present rare performances of Herbert’s 1899 *Cyrano de Bergerac* utilizing the Victor Herbert Renaissance Project’s libretto. Venue and cast are to be announced. This VHRP production will be ready for rental after this performance.

**Alyce’s Musings . . .**

We have had a most interesting year in 2012. I certainly hope that you the reader have enjoyed our historic explorations regarding the world of publishing and the rise of musical theatre elements in America as much as I have. It’s amazing how much there is to remember.

I am most excited about beginning an exploration next year of those forgotten “game-changers” in America. A game-changer is a person who makes choices or follows a path that leads everyone else working in the same business into totally new areas or ways of doing things. The immediate folks who come to mind and will definitely be on the list to examine more closely include: Theodore Thomas, Oscar Hammerstein I and II, Victor Herbert, George M. Cohen, D. W. Griffith, and Charlie Chaplin. How much do you really know about each of these gentlemen other than Herbert? There may be one or two more added to the list, but surprisingly not that many. Why? These individuals changed everything as opposed to simply being the best at what they did. That definition puts a most interesting limit on exactly whom we shall examine.

We remain touched particularly by the loss of dear friend Lois Schwartz in September. Schwartz served long and well as a trustee for the Victor Herbert Foundation and was always a great champion and friend to the Victor Herbert Renaissance Project. More importantly she was the “great connector” – Schwartz was constantly looking for ways to get people together. She will be greatly missed here in New York City. She was also as sturdy a University of Michigan champion as there ever was, serving as surrogate mother over the past couple of decades to all new UM grads dipping their toes into the NYC world of entertainment for the first time. She was proud of her school, proud of its grads and best of all, she also championed Victor Herbert – no connection to UM but certainly a huge connection for this UM grad. Lois was a true character, short in stature, talkative by nature. The woman knew everyone – a true hidden gem! Lucky was the person who looked beyond the quirkiness, and blessed was the person who called Lois “friend.”

Hurricane Sandy left her mark on everything on the East Coast in October, not the least of which was a really exciting little production of Herbert’s *Cyrano de Bergerac* which was readying itself for a launch in Princeton on November 10th. Ah, well, Mother Nature doesn’t stop to ask your plans – she just packs a wallop and moves on! There were far more important problems to deal with than the cancellation of a beautiful piece of history and music. Funny thing about Herbert revivalists and hurricane survivors – we always rise again even bigger and better.

Since we have reached No. 43 of the Herbert operetta achievements this month, we should finish that exploration during 2013. However, there are still plenty of Herbert compositions – orchestral, film, opera, etc. still to be explored, so the **Spotlight On ... Series** should remain alive and viable well into 2014.

Now as we rush toward the new year, as always enjoy your holiday season, no matter what your definition of such may be. It is truly a mark of respect to use the phrase “Happy Holidays” around this joyous time as so many cultures have their own unique celebrations occurring almost simultaneously. May the love of great music continue to foster a bond between us all, and may this world grow in peace and prosperity for all its peoples.