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978-1-107-05100-3 - Popular Musical Theatre in London and Berlin: 1890–1939

Edited by Len Platt, Tobias Becker and David Linton

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## POPULAR MUSICAL THEATRE IN LONDON AND BERLIN

In the decades before the Second World War, popular musical theatre was one of the most influential forms of entertainment. This is the first book to reconstruct early popular musical theatre as a transnational and highly cosmopolitan industry that included everything from revues and operettas to dance halls and cabaret. Bringing together contributors from Britain and Germany, this collection moves beyond national theatre histories to study Anglo-German relations at a period of intense hostility and rivalry. Chapters frame the entertainment zones of London and Berlin against the wider trading routes of cultural transfer, where empire and transatlantic song and dance produced, perhaps for the first time, a genuinely international culture. Exploring adaptations and translations of works under the influence of political propaganda, this collection will be of interest both to musical theatre enthusiasts and to those interested in the wider history of modernism.

LEN PLATT is Professor of Modern Literature at Goldsmiths College, University of London. His research interests are modern literature, James Joyce and popular musical theatre, and his publications include *James Joyce: Texts and Contexts* (2011), *Modernism and Race* (ed. 2011), *Joyce, Race and 'Finnegans Wake'* (2006), *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage, 1890–1939* (2004) and *Aristocracies of Fiction* (2001).

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*1890–1939*

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biographies of Emmerich Kálmán (2003) (English translation in preparation) and Leo Fall (2010).

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We did not know it at the time, but this collection of essays began with a conference – ‘West End Musical Theatre, 1880–1930’ – hosted by Goldsmiths College, University of London in 2008. That event triggered a particularly lively discussion on the issue of cultural transfer and exchange between London and Berlin at the end of the last century. Six years on, the debate continues across a range of cultural forms and practices often associated with a last-century ‘modernity’ that still has much in common with contemporary worlds.

The public grant we subsequently obtained to study musical theatre in London/Berlin enabled us to pursue our research in more formal ways and with specific aims in mind. The next step was to create the opportunity for a number of seasoned academics to join forces with early-career researchers working on historical approaches to popular musical theatre, which we did through a second and much more focused conference, ‘West End and Friedrichstrasse: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Popular Musical Theatre’, hosted by the Freie Universität Berlin in March 2012. The present collection of essays is the outcome of that collaboration.

Particular thanks are owed to the Art and Humanities Research Council and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft who jointly funded the project for three years, making it possible for us to work on a genuinely international basis. Thanks, too, to Paul Nolte from the Friedrich Meinecke Institute, Department of History and Cultural Studies at the Freie Universität, Berlin. Nolte supported the work from its beginning and acted as joint investigator. Our thanks are extended to other colleagues – to our assistant Laura Ameln, who worked with us for two years and authored the proceedings of the Berlin conference, and Alissa Rubinstein, who helped at later stages of the editorial process. We would also like to thank the information technology service staff at Goldsmiths College, especially Sarah Gibbon and Dan Watson, who helped us construct web pages and blogging sites for the project.

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TOBIAS BECKER,  
DAVID LINTON AND LEN PLATT  
*Minsmere*

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### *Note on the text*

Musical plays in this book are alluded to by titles in English or German, depending on which productions are being referred to. Dates figure in parentheses where such mapping is helpful to a wider historical understanding. Similarly, titles of plays in German are translated where they help more general understanding.