

## TURKS, HUNGARIANS, AND GYPSIES ON STAGE: EXOTICISM AND AUTO-EXOTICISM IN OPERA AND OPERETTA

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The tradition of European “classical music” has long evoked the exotic, and two of the most prominent exotic referents in that tradition are the Middle East, first and foremost the Turk, and the Hungarian Gypsy, raising the questions of how these “exotic” traditions are related, and what their comparison might tell us about the idea of musical exoticism more broadly. In this essay, I briefly survey the “Turkish style” and its use in Classical-period opera; discuss its replacement by Hungarian-Gypsy style in the nineteenth century; and finally examine the interesting juxtaposition of Turkish and Hungarian-Gypsy topics in two fin-de-siècle Central European operettas, *Der Zigeunerbaron* by the Austrian Johann Strauss Jr. and *Gül baba* by the Hungarian Jenő Huszka. An examination of these works and their reception reveals fissures between the Viennese and Budapest versions of operettas featuring “exotic” topics and characters, and between the operetta industries in the two cities. These details offer a fascinating look at the dividing line between exoticism and auto-exoticism and at the significance of references to Turkish and Hungarian-Gypsy topics in the Central European cultural climate of this period – in short, a reconsideration of what it means to be Hungarian, and for whom.

**Keywords:** Hungarian music, exoticism, auto-exoticism, Hungarian-Gypsy style, Turkish style (*alla turca*), operetta, Johann Strauss Jr., Jenő Huszka

The tradition of European “classical music” has long evoked the exotic: “linking [works] to some especially fascinating, attractive, or fearsome place: to an Elsewhere and, usually, to its inhabitants and their supposed inclinations and ways” (Locke, 2009, 1). Two of the most prominent exotic referents in the European Classical tradition are the Middle East, first and foremost Ottoman Turkey, and the Hungarian Gypsy. So to a musicologist interested in Hungary, a conference on the historical legacy of Hungary’s Ottoman period invites the following question: how are these “exotic” traditions related, and what might their comparison tell us about the idea of musical exoticism more broadly? In this essay, I will briefly survey of the “Turkish style” and its use in Classical repertoire; discuss its replacement by Hungarian-Gypsy style in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; and finally examine the inter-

esting juxtaposition of Turkish and Hungarian-Gypsy topics in two *fin-de-siècle* Central European operettas, one by the Austrian Johann Strauss Jr. and one by the Hungarian Jenő Huszka. The comparison of these works also occasions questions about the dividing line between exoticism and auto-exoticism, about the significance of references to both Turkish and Hungarian-Gypsy topics in the Central European cultural climate of this period, and about the role of operetta and popular culture generally in exploring the questions of identity occasioned by such references.

Scholars have found powerful tools for the analysis of emerging modernity in the consideration of, in the words of Timothy Taylor,

[...] the various ways that “the West” [...] has confronted, represented, and appropriated those whom it has taken to be, or constructed as, its Others [...] western European modernity is predicated on a conception of selfhood that was made in large part in reaction to Europe’s Others [...] Others (gendered, racialized, and classed) were no longer construed as existing on some sort of continuum with western subjects, but were instead forced into the subordinate half of a binary opposition. [...] binary oppositions are by far the most salient means by which modern western bourgeois subjects made, and continue to make, conceptions of racial, ethnic, and cultural difference. Simply put, it is because of difference that modern western people can know who they are. (Taylor, 2007, 8–9)

### **Alla Turca as Dramatic and Musical Style Marker**

As with other forms of Orientalism, we find musical exoticism rising alongside colonial encounters and clashes with the rising Ottoman Empire. Beginning at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, court ballets in France featured “figures from the far reaches of the world – Turks, Persians, Ethiopians, Moors, (South) Americans, or ‘masques assez hideux et sauvages’ – [...] drawn by the fame of the *beautez* of the French court [and] recit[ing] verses in their praise” (Whaples, 1998, 6). All over Western Europe, exotic characters regularly peopled the stage throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. While many of these spectacles referred to no exotic individual in particular, the prominence of the Ottomans in the international politics of period gave Turkish references a charge that other “Oriental” character types lacked. For example, the performance of one particularly extravagant “Turkish spectacle” in 1670, the climax of Molière and Lully’s *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, followed the real-life spectacle of an extended confrontation between the Turkish sultan’s envoy and the French court the previous year (Whaples, 1998, 12–13).

“Turkish style” also became the first exotic sonic referent to appear in a broad range of Western European works, primarily because of the military success of the Ottoman Empire. Their armies were always accompanied by band music, featuring trumpets, shawms, and drums; when the music stopped, the soldiers stopped fighting. These *mehter* or Janissary bands also provided ceremonial music for certain occasions, notably including the entry of the Grand Envoy Mehmed Pasha into Vienna on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1665. Such bands made enough of an impression that certain European leaders began to feature Turkish sounds in their bands: the band of the Croatian regiment in Dresden featured “Turkish pipes and drums” by 1650; Polish kings Jan III Sobieski and Augustus II had Turkish bands in their own retinues in the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Russian Empress Maria Ivanova imported one from Constantinople in 1725, and Prussian forces were accompanied by Turkish bands when they entered Vienna in 1741 and Prague in 1744 (Pirker, 2001, 802).

We have little direct evidence of the sound of these bands, but their wide popularity is well documented, and went far beyond military contexts. A carousel at the Württemberg court in 1617 included “Turkish pipes and drums” (Pirker, 2001, 802); in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, “pianofortes began to appear with ‘Turkish’ stops that would [...] create maximum racket while playing”, and a festival celebrating the crown prince’s birthday in Hohenzirze in 1802 included Janissary band music for the peasants in the crowd (Bellman, 1993, 43; citing Spohr, 1961, 18–19, on Hohenzirze festival). “Turkishisms” cropped up frequently in European art music from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well, whether in works for solo keyboard (with or without “Turkish” stops), as in Mozart’s famous *Rondo alla turca*; symphony orchestra, as in the Symphony no. 100 of Haydn and the Overture to *Die Ruinen von Athen* and finale to Symphony no. 9 of Beethoven; or on the stage, from *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* through Jean-Philippe Rameau’s “Le turc généreux” (one of the scenes of his 1735 opera-ballet *Les indes galantes*) and Gluck’s *La rencontre imprévue* (1764), among many others.

The vivid sonic markers of the “Turkish style” made it immediately comprehensible to the ear: simple harmonies (sometimes colored by “wrong notes”), square march rhythms, and harsh sounds dominated by brass, double reeds, and plentiful percussion—bass drum, tambourines, cymbals, triangles. These harsh sounds and rhythms are likely the key to the popularity of this style, as they are what made it so different from the prevailing musical aesthetic of the period: “it produced a kind of stylized noisemaking that was in direct opposition to everything a[n] [...] elegant piece of European music was supposed to be” (Bellman, 1993, 42). They were also particularly suited to the stage, where stereotypical “Turkish” characters – “cruel barbarians, magnanimous tyrants, keepers of harems, clowns” (Whaples, 1998, 6) – were frequent sources of entertainment

throughout this period. While these characters often were from Turkey, composers and librettists came to use these musical and dramatic characteristics not only for Turks, but also for other non-Europeans: “‘Turkish’ music was the all-purpose ‘exotic’ music, and Turks the default foreign Others” (Taylor, 2007, 50).

One of the most enduring “Turkish operas”, using all of Whaples’ character types, with colorful “Turkish-style” music, and actually set in Turkey, is Mozart’s 1782 singspiel *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* [The Abduction from the Seraglio]. Turkish topics in general were in the air in Vienna in the early 1780s, a time when the Habsburg forces were in preparation for conflict – a conflict that finally arrived in the form of the Austro–Turkish War of 1787. Mozart indicated the centrality of Turkishness to *Entführung* in a letter to his father almost a year before its premiere, when he wrote “I intend to write the overture, the chorus in Act I, and the final chorus in the style of Turkish music” (Anderson, 1985, 755, cited by Taylor, 2007, 58). The first two and another Turkish number, a drinking duet for the second act between one of the European captives, Pedrillo, and the cruel but clownish harem guard, Osmin, were also among the first numbers he completed. Turkish style is also used at other strategic points throughout Mozart’s opera, both to define conflicts between the European protagonists and their “Oriental” captors and to provide humor. In correspondence with his father about his “Turkish” numbers, Mozart “invariably ma[de] mention of Viennese partiality for this style, a partiality that had received recent gratification at the Burgtheater with a revival of Gluck’s *Die unvermuthete Zusammenkunft, oder Die Pilgrime von Mekka* (originally *La rencontre imprévue*)” (Bauman, 1990, 69). *Entführung* turned out to be Mozart’s first great operatic success, performed all over Europe within Mozart’s short lifetime.

But as delightful as Mozart’s work was, emphatically including his ingenious use of “Turkish style” to comment on the characters, it also illustrates the limitations of that style. Defined by its “pounding” and “jangling” (Bellman, 1993, 42), *Alla turca* was inflexible in tempo and had no lyric mode. Its limitation is implied by the way it is distributed almost exclusively to “lower-class” characters. In *Entführung* the character Pasha Selim is an archetypical “magnanimous tyrant”; after trying unsuccessfully to convince the prima donna, Konstanze, to accept his advances, he beneficently allows her and her companions go. If he were a European character, he would have at least one if not two arias to express his emotions over this difficult decision, but here he does not even sing. His Turkishness bars him from the style of serious opera, but his elevated rank makes Turkish style inappropriate for him—it is only for the chorus and the comically barbaric Osmin.

### Hungarian-Gypsy Style as the New Favored Exotic

Given the limitations of *Alla turca*, then, musical Europe was ripe for an alternative exotic topos, and in Central Europe, a musically potent internal European Other – the Hungarian Gypsy – was on the rise. The term “Hungarian-Gypsy music” encompasses two main genres of Hungarian entertainment music that became known as Hungary’s national music: *verbunkos* (from the German *Werbung*, or “recruiting”) and *magyar nóták* (Hungarian songs). *Verbunkos*, which several scholars have termed “the core of 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian national art music” (Pethő, 2000, 199), refers primarily to the Hungarian recruiting and social dance repertoire of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and it includes not only music for *verbunkos* dances taken from military recruiting practices from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries but also music for national couples’ dances that developed out of them. When these dances were first introduced to ballrooms they were known simply as “Magyar”, but a distinction soon developed between the *palotás* [palace-style] and *csárdás* [country inn-style]. David Schneider summarizes the military policies that led to the development of *verbunkos* to recruit Hungarian peasants into the Habsburg army, from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century to the institution of universal conscription in 1849 (after the fall of Hungary’s revolutionary government), and describes its musical characteristics in his *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition* (Schneider, 2006, 17–25).

This Hungarian dance repertoire began to emerge from oral practice in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, with its first publications appearing in the 1780s. The style occurred in a range of tempi, most simply reduced to two distinct modes, *lassú* [slow] and *friss* [fast], with different characteristics. Slow pieces might fluctuate in tempo so much that they were less intended to be danced than to be listened to, thus in Hungarian they became known as *hallgató*; quick dances were much more regular in tempo. Contemporary sources describe a performance practice that progressed from slow to fast or alternated. The tempo variations of Hungarian-Gypsy style are all the more striking in comparison to Turkish style. Early manuscripts of Hungarian dance music indicate that other key stylistic features – unconventional chromaticism, in the form of the augmented second (an interval that, to Western ears, has come to be marked as “exotic” in numerous contexts) and a profusion of instrumental ornamentation – were already in place by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and associated with Gypsy musicians almost immediately.

For Hungarian listeners, Hungarian-Gypsy music was a homogenous symbol of the nation; in fact, by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many believed that “the Hungarian soul [...] express[ed] itself in gypsy music” (Frigyesi, 1998, 55). The rhythms of this music emerged from both specific Hungarian dances and the Hungarian language (see Hooker, 2013, ch. 4); those composers who can be identified

were mainly (though not exclusively) ethnic Hungarians or assimilated, and the songs used Hungarian texts, usually with folklike style and nostalgic lyrics evoking a Hungarian past. For these reasons, most Hungarians understood the label “Gypsy music” as applying only to the race of the performers, not the origins or essence of the music. The performers of this music existed mainly to serve the Hungarian audience, and were to be judged on how well they did so. Already in 1791, a Hungarian musician criticized the Hungarian Gypsies’ musical excesses in print (Sarosi, 1978, 107).

But from the non-Hungarian perspective, there was little to no difference between “all’ongherese” and “alla zingarese”, to use the Italian tempo markings found in so many musical works from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Few outside Hungary felt a burning need to make a distinction between the two. Mixed references to Hungarian literature and Gypsy stereotypes in an 1873 Milanese review of a performance of Liszt’s *Hungarian Fantasia* appeared to suggest that these labels became masculine and feminine versions of the same phenomenon:

This fantasia is certainly one of the most forceful compositions of the Gypsy-Abbé [zingaro-abate], and so is almost worthy of a place alongside the symphonic ode entitled *Hungaria*. It is as if it were a canto of the *Zrinyiad*, [or] a hymn by Timódi [*sic*]; Hungarian solemnity and Gypsy fire alternate in a fantastic way. In places it is as if we heard in the quiet that ensues after the cracking rhythms the languishing voice of a despondent Gypsy woman. (cited by Szerző, 1987, 249)

At least in Central Europe, the Hungarian-Gypsy now took up the role of all-purpose exotic that the Turkish style had played earlier. Carl Maria von Weber’s incidental music for the play *Preciosa* (1820), based on Cervantes’ *La gitanilla* [The Gypsy Girl], illustrates this principle dramatically, as the Spanish-Gypsy title character (though she was a non-Gypsy adoptee, the audience is not told this until well into the play) and her companions perform largely in Hungarian-Gypsy, not Spanish, style (see Bellman, 1993, 142–144). Bence Szabolcsi went so far as to claim that “it is increasingly obvious that for Haydn and his contemporaries Slavonic, Gypsy, Rumanian and Turkish music formed one single – mixed but scarcely divisible – complex” (quoted by Sárosi, 1978, 112). While Bellman argues that “the Turkish style and the *style hongrois* were understood as separate entities and could be used as such”, he also gives examples of several works from around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in which these styles were “combined in an undifferentiated mix” (1993, 60), as in the Rondo all’Ongarese finale (also known as the “Gypsy Rondo”) from Haydn’s Piano Trio in G major and the “Turkish” episode from the finale of Mozart’s Violin Concerto no. 5 in A Major (see Bellman, 1993, 49–60).

From the point of view of “authenticity”, such indiscriminate mixture is easy to criticize, and Hungarian critics past and present have done so (see e.g. Pethő 2000). But for participants in the elite musical culture of Western and Central Europe, at least in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, authenticity was not the main concern; they usually sought only an attractive strangeness. In that regard the Hungarian-Gypsy style was more than a match for the Turkish style. Where the Turkish style was likely to be described as “noisy” or “jangling”, the Hungarian-Gypsy style allowed for virtuosic expression that was more lyrical. Beyond the musical attractiveness of Hungarian-Gypsy style, its extramusical associations – “freedom with all its positive and negative implications” and “extremes of emotion inaccessible to normal people” – perfectly fit the ethos of the incipient Romantic era (Bellman, 1993, 92).

#### **Stage Gypsies and the Continuation of Turkish Connections: Strauss and Huszka**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century provides many wonderful examples of compositions using Hungarian-Gypsy style, both by such canonical non-Hungarian composers as Haydn, Beethoven, Weber, and Brahms and by Hungarian ones, from the all-but forgotten to Hungary’s best-known national composers of the period, Liszt and Erkel. We also find many Gypsies on the 19<sup>th</sup>-century lyric stage, led by Carmen, the title character of Bizet’s 1875 opéra-comique. Most of those stage Gypsies, including Carmen, are not from Central Europe but from Southern Europe: Carmen is a Spanish Gypsy in a work by a French composer, and the Italian Verdi uses two characters generally identified as Gypsies, Azucena and her band in *Il trovatore* (1853) and Ulrica in *Un ballo in maschera* (1859) (the ethnicity of Ulrica, based on a minor figure in Swedish history, is not as clear as the others, but her profession, fortune-telling, marks her as Gypsy on the stage). Given these characters’ geographic origin, though, they are not marked with Hungarian-Gypsy style. The genre that brought that style into full flower on the stage was Central European operetta.

Compared to more “serious” genres in both the concert hall and the opera house, operetta has often been dismissed as kitsch, and has drawn relatively little scholarly attention until recently. Many musicians and critics working at the height of its popularity, however, embraced the genre. This is clearest in the case of Johann Strauss Jr. and his works: he counted many luminaries of the Viennese musical establishment, including composer Johannes Brahms, conductor Hans Richter, and critic Eduard Hanslick, as friends and supporters; Mahler conducted the first evening performance of *Die Fledermaus* at Vienna’s Court Opera; Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern arranged his waltzes for their Society for Private

Musical Performances; and Richard Strauss paid homage to his predecessor with the use of the waltz in his 1911 opera *Der Rosenkavalier*. As a “cultural practice popular at a time when musical and social issues were hotly debated”, operetta serves as a cultural document, revealing its public’s “concerns, prejudices, goals, and fears” (Crittenden, 2000, 2).

Strauss’s 1885 *Der Zigeunerbaron* is an outstanding example of such a document. On the one hand, its appealing “fairy-tale story of romance and adventure”, which made liberal use of Hungarian-Gypsy musical elements and gave producers broad scope for use of such additional audience-pleasing elements such as Hungarian national costume and dance, led to a great success in Vienna, Budapest, and beyond. On the other hand, despite the fact that it was set in Hungary, based on a story by Hungarian writer Mór Jókai, its perspective is “exclusively Austrian” (Crittenden, 2000, 170). Created almost two decades after the 1867 Compromise, at a time of urban expansion in both Vienna and Budapest and of escalating political and economic tensions, it “reveals long-standing national tensions within the divided empire” (idem).

The work narrates a supposed historical encounter between Hungarians, Gypsies, Austrians, and Turks in the Banát region around 1740. The title character of *Die Zigeunerbaron*, Sándor Barinkay, is the son of a Hungarian nobleman who had fought alongside Rákóczi in the kuruc rebellion. (Jókai originally dubbed the character Jonás Botsinkay, but that name was changed since it was judged “scarcely pronounceable by foreign tongues” (editor’s notes to Jókai, 1971, 152).) When the Ottomans were expelled and the kuruc rebellion had been put down by the Habsburgs, the Barinkay family went into exile in Turkey. As the operetta opens, Sándor Barinkay returns to his ancestral lands, encountering Zsupán, a Hungarian pig farmer who has taken over the property, as well as a band of Gypsies who are camped there, led by an attractive and mysterious young woman, Saffi, and her mother, Czipra. Barinkay is escorted by an Austrian official, Carnero, who informs those living there that Barinkay has been “reinstated to the land and rights of his father by a decree of Her Majesty the Empress”, that is Maria Theresa (Strauss, 1951, 6).

In order to smooth over conflict with Zsupán, Barinkay proposes to marry his daughter, Arsena; but Arsena states that she will not accept Barinkay unless he can provide proof of his nobility. Her reason is that she is secretly in love with Ottokar, her governess’s son – whose long-lost father, it turns out, is Carnero, separated from his wife and infant son during the 1717 Battle of Belgrade. But Barinkay is furious at the demand from a pig farmer’s daughter that he justify himself. Meanwhile, the Gypsies pledge their loyalty to Barinkay as their hereditary lord and declare him their own “Gypsy baron.” This does not satisfy Arsena’s demand, so Barinkay declares he prefers the Gypsy girl Saffi, and they spend the night together, “married” by forest birds, to the shock of Carnero as Commis-



sioner of Morals. A bit later, Czipra reveals that Saffi is not actually her child, but rather was entrusted to her secretly. A document reveals that Saffi is actually the true daughter of the last Pasha of Temesvár – that is, a real Ottoman princess. Barinkay, who thought he was ennobling a humble Gypsy girl, suddenly feels unworthy of his bride; he thus feels he must leave until he proves himself her equal through military service. He joins the Hussars in a grand recruiting scene. (In Jókai’s original, the hero joins up out of sheer patriotism, and does not break with Saffi; this break over class difference was introduced by Strauss’ librettist to increase dramatic tension (Crittenden, 2000, 201).) When Barinkay returns as a decorated hero, he and Saffi are reunited and plan a legitimate marriage, to follow up on the earlier, less formal one.

“National” style of every sort is key both to *Der Zigeunerbaron*’s theatrical impact and to its view of the relative position of different nationalities. The presentation of Arsena as Barinkay’s potential bride in Act I, the military recruiting scene in the finale to Act II, and the victorious entrance march at the beginning of Act III provide opportunities for production numbers with attractive national costumes, dancing, and scenery. In a letter to his librettist, Ignaz Schnitzer, Strauss described his vision of the Act III introduction thus:

Around 80 to 100 soldiers (on foot and horseback). Market women in Spanish, Hungarian, and Viennese costume, *Volk*, children with bushes and flowers – which they strew before the soldiers returning home, etc. etc. [...] it must be an impressive scene, since this time we want to imagine an *Austrian* military and *Volk* in a *joyful* mood about a victorious conquest! (quoted by Crittenden, 2000, 174; emphasis in original)

Strauss’s notes on this scene demonstrate how *Zigeunerbaron* was to present “a seductive argument for Austrian hegemony [of the various nationalities] under the Habsburg crown”; a re-creation of history acts as entertaining pageant, serving to “rouse enthusiasm among performers and audience for the existing empire and its elegant capital” (Crittenden, 2000, 170, 175). The happy ending confirms the political status quo.

Though contrasts between West and East are central to these effects, the “authenticity”, musical or otherwise, of depictions of various nationalities is beside the point. Rather, ethnic characterization is one instrument in Strauss and Schnitzer’s depiction of the power structure. András Batta has written how

[t]he csárdás represents the alignment to the East, the waltz to the West, one is national, the other internationally oriented. [...] The csárdás represents the village, [...] feudalistic, dominated by the long-established nobility and peasantry. The waltz is a domain of the city, the cosmopolitan and industrial center [...] (1992, 152–3)

While I agree overall with Batta's assessment of the contrast between the roles of the Hungarian csárdás and the Viennese waltz in operetta, the opposition he depicts this does not quite capture the power imbalance between the two. *Der Zigeunerbaron* illustrates this imbalance in the distinctly Austrian vantage point Strauss and Schnitzer use throughout, and in the way they blurred the line between their various Others, be they Hungarian, Gypsy, or Turkish. Right from the beginning of the show, Barinkay's costume is described in the original libretto as "half oriental, half Hungarian"; though he is linked by birthright to the old Hungarian aristocracy, a group who were so often decidedly Western in their outlook, Barinkay, as he relates in his entrance aria (the first aria in the show), has been traveling around making his living in professions that "contemporary urban audiences would readily have ascribed [...] to Gypsies" – entertaining as an acrobat, sword-swallower, animal-tamer, magician, and fortune-teller (Crittenden, 2000, 181). Another alteration from Jókai's original story shows Strauss and Schnitzer's Austrian point of view: Jókai sends Botsinkay back to his estate to reunite with Saffi; Strauss and Schnitzer's version sets that reunion in Vienna, where both can also join the celebration of the Austrians' military victory.

Strauss' score is also predominantly Austrian in its musical language. The overall aesthetic of the work, its "neutral" mode, is the common-practice tonal language of the "panromanogermanic mainstream" (Taruskin, 1997, 48); the Viennese waltz is used for a number of non-Austrian characters, including for Hungarian Barinkay, in his entrance aria just described, and for Barinkay along with Gypsies Saffi and Czipra, in the "Treasure Waltz" from Act II that became one of the show's biggest hits.

"Exotic" sounds are interspersed in various places, certainly more than in most of Strauss' operettas, but more to add color than to give an accurate depiction of a given character's sound based on ethnicity. The most prominent such "exotic" style in the show is the Hungarian-Gypsy style, illustrating both Hungarian and Gypsy character types. The recruiting scene that ends Act II is meant to be stereotypically Hungarian, with its rousing militarism and call to fight for the honor of the Fatherland. Saffi's entrance aria, labeled "Zigeunerlied" [Gypsy song], includes a short list of Gypsy stereotypes in its text, led by stealing of horses and children, and a longer list of musical traits of the Hungarian-Gypsy style: use of "Hungarian rhythms" and the minor mode with that "exotic" augmented second, a slow and flexible opening followed by a quick dance-like second part, and a profusion of instrumental ornamentation, particularly in the violins.

But the Hungarian-Gypsy style is not the only "exotic" mode used in *Der Zigeunerbaron*: the Turkish style also plays an important part. The first appearance of this style is in the form of simple tone-painting, when Mirabella, Arsena's governess and Carnero's long-lost wife, relates the dramatic story of how she and

the infant Ottokar were swept up in the Battle of Belgrade, with comically noisy Turkish-style percussion in the accompaniment to depict the conflict between Habsburgs and Ottomans. More significantly, the Gypsy characters are at times marked by Turkish rather than Hungarian-Gypsy style. The fast section of Saffi's "Zigeunerlied" uses not only numerous Hungarian-Gypsy markers but also triangles and cymbals, which may be heard as "Turkish percussion". We might interpret this sonic reference as a hint of Saffi's true identity, which is not revealed until much later; but another number, for the entire Gypsy chorus, makes an even stronger connection between stage Gypsies and Turkish musical elements. In the "Anvil chorus" in Act II scene 2, the chorus sings about the Gypsies' blacksmithing work. This number bears a strong resemblance in form, harmonic design, and instrumentation to Verdi's "Chi del gitano i giorni abbella" from the 1853 *Il trovatore* – a number also known as the "Anvil Chorus". In both choruses the Gypsies celebrate their carefree life in the out-of-doors; only Strauss' Gypsies are more patriotic, as they shift from forging items of daily use (keys, nails, knives) to making swords for the defense of the homeland. The straightforward duple meter and heavy percussion evoke the Turkish style so popular in the previous century. It appears that like Verdi, Mozart, Haydn, and other "mainstream" composers before him, Strauss found it less important to make a distinction between varieties of Oriental than to create an entertaining variety of sounds.

Where Hungarians, Gypsies, and Turks were all merely variations on the Other to Strauss and his audience, the distinctions between them could be much more important for a Hungarian composer. Operetta composer Jenő Huszka (1875–1960) is little remembered outside Hungary; his operettas appear to have been translated seldom if at all, and to have attracted only scanty commentary, and only in Hungarian. I would argue that it warrants more attention, though, not only because of its charm but also because of the interesting ways he deals musically with competing identities in at least two works on opposite ends of his career. *Mária főhadnagy* [Lieutenant Mária], from 1942, tells a lighthearted version of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 from the point of view of a Hungarian girl who leaves Vienna, where she has been raised, to join Kossuth's army; the contrast between Hungarian and Austrian identities, in both high- and low-class versions and in rich musical variety, is central to the tale. *Gül baba*, from 1905, is even more complex, and offers an interesting comparison to *Zigeunerbaron*, as like that work it introduces Turkish and Gypsy elements in addition to Hungarian and Austrian ones. The significance of this mixture was recognized by a critic writing about a Szeged production in 1906: "in its music, it is always something in common [közös] from the Hungarian and the Oriental" (Sándor, 1995, 35). While not enjoying the international success of *Zigeunerbaron*, *Gül baba* has been revived repeatedly in Hungary, has been made into at least three different film versions, and spawned a few different hit songs that are still regularly performed.

The historical Gül baba, as many Hungarianists know, was an Ottoman Bektashi dervish poet and companion of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent who took part in a number of Ottoman military campaigns in Europe. He arrived in Buda in 1541 and died there in August of that year, either in the fighting below the city walls right before the Ottoman victory or in the first Muslim ceremony held after the victory. Suleiman, as not only Sultan but Caliph (temporal and spiritual head of Islam), declared Gül baba the patron saint of Buda and reportedly served as one of his coffin bearers. The Ottoman authorities in Buda erected a monumental tomb for him between 1543 and 1548 in what is now known as Rózsadomb – Rose Hill – because of the reputation of the Turks for planting roses, a practice linked to Gül baba himself: his name is often translated as “Father of Roses” (probably not accurately). The tomb then became a pilgrimage site. After serving as a Jesuit chapel after the expulsion of the Ottomans from Hungary, it again became a site of Muslim pilgrimage; the Turkish government funded restorations of the site around 1882, around World War I, and in the 1990s (see Gül Baba Türbe és rózsakert). Gül baba thus continued to hold affection or at least respect in Hungary long after the end of Ottoman rule there, despite the devastating effects of the occupation overall. As Iván Bertenyi writes in his contribution to this volume, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century also saw an improved regard for Ottoman Turkey among the Hungarian public, in part because the Ottomans had offered refuge to Kossuth.

Hungarians’ improved opinion of the Ottomans is reflected in Huszka’s operetta and in its variety of musical depictions. The curtain opens on a chorus of “Orientals”, but it is not a raucous military chorus but a chorus of pilgrims, singing pianissimo, bringing roses to the Father of the Roses, followed by (a simplistic rendition of) the Muslim call to prayer. We then meet in short succession Gül baba’s daughter Leila, singing a Viennese waltz; the suitor she is expected to marry, the tyrannical Ali Pasha, who wants her to be his 137<sup>th</sup> wife; and the Hungarian student-minstrel Gábor, seeking to present a rose to Leila (whom he had glimpsed briefly), accompanied by Mujkó, a Gypsy violinist. Gábor and Mujkó are shortly arrested by a clanging chorus of Turks for plucking Allah’s holy roses. In the extended confrontation that follows, the loud Turkish style (with the expected percussion) of the captors alternates with two different musical markers for Gábor: Hungarian-Gypsy style (*verbunkos* and *hallgató*), accompanied by Mujkó, as he introduces himself to his captors, and Viennese waltz as he offers the stolen rose to Leila, even while in chains. Ali Pasha sentences Gábor and Mujkó to death for this offense, but Gül baba offers to grant them one final wish. Gábor asks to be dressed in fine clothing and allowed to see his beloved again in the “heaven beyond the railing” – that is, in the harem, where men are forbidden to go. Mujkó asks to accompany him (with violin). Gül baba mercifully, improbably, and over Ali Pasha’s objections, grants their wish.

Within the harem, the women dance and then Leila leads a chorus of her father's wives and female slaves in a waltz inflected with "Oriental" intervals; the wives then debate the relative merits of being a Turkish woman or a Hungarian woman. Shortly after the entrance of the "Hungarian heroes", Gábor and Leila exchange songs: he sings of the magical atmosphere of the harem, then she sings a plaintive song about the "fate of the Turkish woman", who may live a luxurious life but may not hope for true love (Huszka and Martos, 1906, 74–7). Then Gábor introduces the residents to wine with a rousing drinking song and sings a passionate duet with Leila, while Mujkó fends off the advances of one of Gül baba's older, uglier wives. Mujkó's wife and children are admitted to take leave from him, a meeting that is both heartfelt and full of comic references to "Gypsy" stereotypes – from work-shyness, fortune-telling, and theft of livestock to musicality and love of nature; Mujkó offers as his only legacy to his family a silver button and the *hallgató nóta* "Darumadár fenn az égen" [Crane up in the sky] (Huszka and Martos, 1906, 89–90). They all go back to Ali Pasha to plead for the prisoners' release; in exchange for Leila agreeing to marry him, he appears to grant this request, but then reaffirms the execution order. Leila pleads with her father again to save the prisoners from their fate, and is joined by the both the women of the harem and their guards. As part of his effort to do that, Gül baba destroys the entire rose garden, weeping. When this destruction is discovered a loud chorus laments it "Turkish-style" (complete with clanging percussion); but Gül baba declares that for Allah, human life is more important than flowers, even holy flowers. The destruction of the garden is his final, successful argument to release Gábor and Mujkó. He bids Gábor and Leila to live happily together, and he envisions a future when "the roses will bloom again above [his] crumbling bones" (Martos, 1921, 24). His voice fades away, perhaps suggesting his impending death, and the setting shifts to a brief pantomimed epilogue in "present-day" Buda, showing a young Hungarian couple placing roses on the site of Gül baba's tomb, with a Gypsy violinist (Mujkó in modern dress) sitting and playing next to the grave.

This lengthy summary gives a sense of the interplay between both character types and musical topics in this operetta. The plot, of course, is packed with Orientalisms, and the music also owes much to the conventions of "exotic" music and characters, but with some key differences. Like Mozart's *Entführung*, *Gül baba* features a savage Turk, Ali Pasha, who along with certain choruses uses the Turkish style; also like *Entführung*, it includes a "generous Turk", the title character, who like Mozart's Pasha Selim does not sing much. Despite the fact that he has few solos, though, Gül baba has his own musical marker independent of the Turkish style: the Pilgrims' Chorus, which occurs not only at the opening of the entire work but also during the climactic destruction of the rose garden. An opera fan's first association with this name is the Pilgrims' Chorus from *Tannhäuser* by

Richard Wagner, one of the most prominent and prestigious composers in the panromanogermanic mainstream. Musically Huszka's Pilgrim's Chorus differs substantially from Wagner's: it is in duple rather than triple meter, and its harmony is not as complex. Still its weighty tone endows both the believers who sing it and Gül baba himself, the character for whom they have embarked on their pilgrimage in the first place, with a sense of pious dignity that is certainly far closer to the aesthetic of Wagner's chorus than to that of Mozart's Chorus of the Janissaries and that, furthermore, has been granted to few Muslim characters in all of opera.

Not surprisingly in the work of a Hungarian composer, it is in the role of Hungarian music that we find the clearest departure from the place traditionally allotted that music in Western European repertoire. Hungarian-Gypsy style is the "native language" of the Hungarian male protagonist, Gábor the student, and his musically potent Gypsy companion. Gábor, as a romantic protagonist, is fluent not only in Hungarian-Gypsy style but in the waltz, the first "language of love" in Central European operetta; this is also one of the main musical topics used by his Turkish love interest, Leila, even if she and her female companions sometimes speak it with a "foreign accent" ("Oriental" chromaticism). Unlike in Strauss's *Zigeunerbaron*, there is no confusion in Huszka's work in the relative roles of Hungarians and Gypsies: where Sándor Barinkay (whose own identity is a bit muddled) appears to cross racial and class lines to marry Saffi, Gábor the Hungarian student is the romantic lead, pursuing the daughter of a saint, while Mujkó the Gypsy violinist serves as musical support – he is told "Play, Gypsy!" [Húzd rá, cigány!] several times in the 1921 libretto – and as comic relief. His love interests in the show – both the older, uglier wife of Gül baba who pursues him in the harem or his (Gypsy) wife who appears with their children to plead for his life – are appropriately "low-class" and played comically rather than romantically.

The comparison between *Gypsy Baron* and *Gül baba* brings forth interesting issues in the division between the use of Hungarian-Gypsy style as exoticism versus its use as national style. Where composers like Strauss, working at the center of the Western art music tradition, could lump various Others together, composers from the periphery struggled with how both to participate in the musical life of the center and to differentiate themselves – to define their musical "native costume", without which "a 'peripheral' composer would never achieve even secondary canonical rank", but with which "he could never achieve more" (Taruskin, 2001, 700). Other scholars have argued that artists from the "belated national schools of poorer and/or more subjugated countries" are particularly susceptible to auto-exoticism – in the words of James Parakilas, "as a political plight, as a psychological condition, as an artistic dilemma" (1998, 189) – and, I might add, for the highly commercial genre of operetta, as marketing strategy. In *Gül baba*, Huszka depicts the external Other, the Turk; the internal Other, the Gypsy; and the self-as-other,

the Hungarian. Huszka's basic vocabulary of music-stylistic referents is at root very similar to Strauss', but the fact that the Hungarian is the protagonist raises the political, psychological, and artistic stakes of the nuances Huszka offers his different character types.

Gábor the Hungarian student is the character with whom the audience is most encouraged to identify, not just through the plot but also through his music, as he moves easily from *verbunkos* to waltz. It was likely Gábor's character of whom a Szeged critic was thinking when he wrote in a review of *Gül baba* that "its romantic music is ever Hungarian. It has in it vigor and, if you please, manly strength [virtus]. Because this is the characteristic feature of the Hungarian: manly strength" (cited by Sándor 1995, 35). But Huszka's score also makes a musical case for the universality of the title Turkish character, a dervish who is accompanied not by an anvil chorus but by a quasi-Wagnerian one, and the Gypsy musician character, Mujkó, who not only plays the violin but sings a plaintive farewell song in the musical dialect of his audience. (This song was seen as important enough that the 1940 film version of *Gül baba* took it away from Mujkó and gave it to the romantic lead, played by Hungarian film idol Pál Jávör.)

### **Kálmán versus Huszka: Exoticism and Auto-exoticism and Translatability in Silver Age Operetta**

In the decades leading up to the time of Huszka, many in the Hungarian art music world were frustrated at the lack of success, both domestically and internationally, of Hungarian composers, and they struggled with problems of auto-exoticism as they debated the state of Hungarian art music, the place of Hungarian-Gypsy musical motifs, and the role of Gypsiness in Hungarian music (Hooker, 2013, ch. 3–4). Whereas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century most Hungarian musicians saw those Hungarian-Gypsy motifs as defining Hungarian folk style and as the only available basis for national composition, beginning right around the time of *Gül baba*, Bartók and Kodály (who, like Huszka, studied composition with Hans/János Koessler at the Academy of Music), along with other members of their circle, branded Hungarian-Gypsy music as "inauthentic"; they promoted new sources for national style, primarily the more archaic music of the rural peasantry. Bartók and Kodály were quite successful in the world of "serious" music, both nationally and internationally, although their audience in their time was a fraction of that for the commercial theater, and the force of their rhetoric combined with their critical success eventually broke the symbolic legitimacy of Hungarian-Gypsy music, relegating it forever after to the "merely" popular realm.

In that realm, where broad immediate appeal trumped questions of "authenticity", Hungarian-Gypsy style continued to reign well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, along-

side other international popular styles—not only the waltz but also styles derived from ragtime and early jazz, such as the cakewalk. The division of popular music along national, racial, and ethnic lines meant that there, too, concerns about identity and dilemmas posed by issues of exoticism and auto-exoticism were inescapable. A brief comparison between the careers of Huszka and his slightly younger contemporary, Imre Kálmán (1882–1953), illustrates how these two Hungarian composers had to deal with the “exotic” expectations of their foreign, particularly Viennese, audience and patrons. Both Huszka and Kálmán were born in the provinces (Huszka in Szeged, Kálmán in Siófok) and moved as young men to Budapest, where they both studied composition with Koessler at the Academy of Music. Both had early theatrical successes in Budapest big enough to bring their works not only to the other capital of the Dual Monarchy, Vienna, but also elsewhere in Europe. Though Kálmán and Huszka were both “authentic representative[s] of Hungarian operetta,” however, their first works—Kálmán’s *Tatárjárás* [Tatar Action, known in English as Autumn Maneuvers or The Gay Hussars] (1908), a military-themed comedy with thoroughly civilized characters, and Huszka’s *Bob herceg* [Prince Bob], featuring a prince romancing a commoner in England—were “inadequate exemplar[s] of what the Viennese” and other non-Hungarians “believed to be the Hungarian spirit” (Baranello, 2013), and neither remained in the repertoire outside Hungary. Kálmán relocated to Vienna in 1910 and premiered most of his subsequent operettas there in German, with a Hungarian version following in Budapest a few months later. According to Micaela Baranello,

[i]t was in *Der Zigeunerprimás*, composed three years [after *Tatárjárás* – that is in 1911], that Kálmán found his stride in Vienna. If audiences wanted Hungarian fire, he seemed to decide, that was what he would provide, and as a true Hungarian he could do it better than a mere Austrian. (2013, 4)

In *Zigeunerprimás*, Kálmán and his librettist created an interesting amalgam: he used the now “outdated character types” of “Gypsy operetta”, in a modern, realistic-feeling setting that poked fun at those types. Musically this strategy allowed him to “have his cake and eat it too” – there were ample opportunities to use the Hungarian-Gypsy style the Viennese audience appeared to expect as the style of the title character, an aging *primás* (Gypsy violinist and bandleader) played by the legendary Viennese comic actor Alexander Girardi, “the living symbol of nineteenth-century operetta” (Baranello, 2013, 5), while using more modern styles, from quasi-operatic lyricism to modern ragtime-y dance numbers, for younger characters, including Gypsies. The cosmopolitanism (both dramatic and music-stylistic) found in Kálmán’s *Zigeunerprimás* score continues to be a feature of Kálmán’s later shows, as titles like *Das Hollandweibchen* (1920), *Die Herzogin*



*von Chicago* (1928), *Das Veilchen von Montmartre* (1930), and *Arizona Lady* (1954) suggest. His most popular works, *Die Csárdásfürstin*, AKA *A csárdáskirálynő* [in English, *The Csárdás Princess*, *The Gypsy Princess*, or *The Riviera Girl*] (1915) and *Gräfin Mariza* (1924), are marked by an almost jazzy use of the Hungarian-Gypsy style alongside tuneful waltzes and cakewalks.

Meanwhile, international performances of Huszka's *Bob herceg* did not translate into an international career for its composer. One reason may be simply that he did not want one. After a spell making a living as a violinist in France, Huszka's main occupation at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was as an advisor in the Vallás- és Közoktatásügyi Minisztérium (Ministry of Religion and Public Education); his compositional activities took second place to that. He was also a leader in the struggle for composers' intellectual property rights in Hungary, in his service as president both of the Magyar Zeneszerzők, Szövegírók és Zeneműkiadók Szövetkezete (Association of Hungarian Composers, Lyricists, and Music Publishers) and Szerzők Mechanikai Jogait Védő Rt. (Protector of Authors' Mechanical Rights Inc.) (Gál, 2010, 74). He did not move to Vienna as Kálmán did but instead continued to live in Budapest; he did not even attend the German-language premiere of *Bob*, even though the producer at Theater an der Wien, Vilmos/Wilhelm Karczag, sent him a train ticket and reserved him an "outstanding" hotel room (Gál, 2010, 92). Huszka's snub of one of the most prominent theater producers in Vienna, and a fellow Hungarian at that, could not have helped his prospects beyond Hungary.

Huszka's choice of plots also appeared to be difficult to translate for non-Hungarian audiences. *Gül baba* is a good example: I have located no published translation of the show, even into German. The greatest barrier, I believe, is not the language but the plot, as this operetta depends on at least a cursory knowledge of Hungary's Ottoman period to be fully appreciated. *Mária főhadnagy* similarly relies at least in part on both the historical knowledge and the patriotic sentiment that a Hungarian audience brings to the story of the 1848 Revolution. A non-Hungarian audience could be entertained by these shows' tunefulness and emotional and musical catholicity, but understanding the specific contexts of shows like these may require too much "work" for light entertainment. Where Kálmán managed to appeal to his non-Hungarian audience with a deft combination of exotic stereotype and genuine-feeling and contemporary characters (for the frivolous and not-very-realistic world of operetta, anyway), Huszka, from the evidence available at this time, did not try to do so. He chose rather to compose national entertainment music almost exclusively in Hungarian for a Hungarian audience. Further research will surely reveal more.

Exoticism, and auto-exoticism, continued to act as stock-in-trade for popular musical theater not only in Central Europe but in the United States, from the first flowering of Broadway to the present day. In his *The Fortune Teller* (1898),

Irish-American composer Victor Herbert transferred the Hungarian-Gypsy style to Broadway in such unsubtle “Gypsy-Hungarian” numbers as a hussar chorus, and “Gypsy Love Song” (“Slumber On, My Little Gypsy Sweetheart”), and “Romany Life” (Traubner, 2003, 369). Herbert took the confusion between Hungarian and Gypsy to absurd lengths, as this excerpt from the text of “Romany Life” illustrates:

Dance, ye Magyars, dance away!  
Sing, Zigeuner, while ye may!  
Through the forests wild and free  
Sounds our Magyar melody. [...]  
None so gay as we! Éljen!  
(Herbert, 2011, CD booklet, 11)

Herbert’s work illustrates how “the once-powerful Gypsy stereotype [had been] sanitized [into] a bland and largely unthreatening Other, a thoroughly prescribed kind of freedom, to produce a wholly prescribed and inoffensive exoticism” (Bellman, 1993, 217). Not only had this type been overused and sanitized, it also referred to a people who were largely unknown to the New World audience. After the turn of the century, Broadway composers largely turned elsewhere for their exoticisms. To mention just a few examples, Hungarian-Jewish-American Sigmund Romberg placed his 1926 *The Desert Song* in French-colonial Algeria, drawing not only on the news from that region but also the craze for Rudolph Valentino’s film *The Sheik* (1921) and its sequel; this setting allowed for an exploitation of the sexual allure of the harem that Huszka had also used in *Gül baba*. Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *South Pacific* (1949) combined the allure of exotic Polynesian décor and women with a mild exploration of the racial problems that romancing such women might create. African-American vernacular music had the greatest impact in 20<sup>th</sup>-century American popular music and culture, from ragtime and blues through rock and roll to hip-hop. Nowhere near all of that impact has been due to the Otherness of that music—in fact, many Americans, both with and without African ancestry, think of the legacy of these genres simply as American. Yet historically the reception of these genres is frequently colored by racial difference.

### Conclusions

The word “kitsch” sums up much of the sentiment that has allowed for the dismissal of operetta as a genre. In fact Central Europe’s Silver Age operetta is an ideal exemplar of that almost-indefinable term: we might see it as

a decadent form of romantic music [...] musical kitsch has pretensions to big emotions, to “significance” [...] [there is a] sense that

[works labeled as kitsch] are somehow mechanical, calculated, “manufactured”. (Dahlhaus, 1980, 12)

On the one hand, operetta is “trivial music”, a “mass product”, and “in order not to disturb comfortable pleasure, it must not transcend the limits of the familiar. Yet at the same time it needs to be conspicuous in order to stand out and stick in memory” (Dahlhaus, 2004, 355). The growth of ambition among the Silver Age’s formally trained composers, like Huszka and Kálmán, were key to the revival of the genre of operetta, which had found itself in a lull after the passing of Strauss and Offenbach; yet their works were often subjected to intense criticism as they searched for both hit songs and a “rousing and high-flown” (Dahlhaus, 1980, 12) profundity that might compete with the works of some of their conservatory classmates. In its own time, influential Viennese critic Karl Kraus derided the first great success of Silver Age operetta, Franz/Ferenc Lehár’s *Die lustige Witwe* (1905), for “open[ing] the floodgates for a succession of sentimental, materialist works that neglected the social satire he considered the essential function of true operetta” (Baranello, n. d., 37). Twentieth-century musicology followed Kraus’ critique and generally dismissed the genre as mass-produced kitsch.

Such preconceptions, held by many music scholars and critics, are hard to refute entirely given the heavy use of convention in operetta, from the recurrence of dance genres like the waltz to formulaic plots to the reliance on exotic settings and musical styles. Yet when we look at these works and their reception in detail, it is clear that they are more than mere commodities, and they are a particularly rich field for the Hungarianist. The fissures between the Viennese and the Budapest versions of operettas, and operetta industries offer a fascinating look at Hungarian composers considering what it means to be Hungarian, and for whom.

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