The Minor and the Marginalized? Recent Writing on Song and Speech in the Long Nineteenth Century

Des genres mineurs et marginalisés ? Écrits récents sur la chanson et la parole dans le long xixe siècle

Mark Everist

Electronic version
URL: https://journals.openedition.org/transposition/7369
DOI: 10.4000/transposition.7369
ISSN: 2110-6134

Publisher
CRAL - Centre de recherche sur les arts et le langage

Electronic reference
Mark Everist, "The Minor and the Marginalized? Recent Writing on Song and Speech in the Long Nineteenth Century", Transposition [Online], 10 | 2022, Online since 12 May 2022, connection on 02 July 2022. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/transposition/7369 ; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/transposition.7369

This text was automatically generated on 2 July 2022.

La revue Transposition est mise à disposition selon les termes de la Licence Creative Commons Attribution - Partage dans les Mêmes Conditions 4.0 International.
The Minor and the Marginalized? Recent Writing on Song and Speech in the Long Nineteenth Century

Des genres mineurs et marginalisés ? Écrits récents sur la chanson et la parole dans le long xixe siècle

Mark Everist

REFERENCES

María Encina Cortizo, Michela Niccolai (eds), Singing Speech and Speaking Melodies: Minor Forms of Musical Theatre in the 18th and 19th Century, Turnhout, Brepols, 2021, XIV+562 p.


1 As “opera studies” – with their connotations of narrow repertory, even closer reading and a reluctance to engage with the overwhelming tradition of works involving spoken dialogue – yield to a broader view of music in the nineteenth-century European theatre, it becomes more and more obvious just how tiny the segment of the repertory “opera studies” in fact constitute. Four recent books represent various types of shift away from a narrow canon of “opera” and towards a more comprehensive account of theatre and music in the long nineteenth century. Despite the pan-European flavour of much of writing reviewed here, the focus inevitably ends up on Paris, where genres were either invented – in the case of comédie-vaudeville, were developed from ideas adumbrated elsewhere in Europe, as in mélodrame/Melodram, or formed the basis of a foreign style, as in certain parts of the zarzuela repertory. Taken together, the four books under review here paint a very different picture of music and theatre in the long...
nineteenth century, one in which the narrow operatic repertory of the early twenty-first century plays little role, and where theatre and music sit alongside each other developing discursive and generic relationships that are still very little understood.

Trying to generalise about such genres – even trying to talk about them – is problematic. It ought to be possible to speak of three separate ways of combining words and notes in a nineteenth-century theatrical context: (1) Mélodrame encompasses stage works with (nearly) exclusively instrumental music that alternates with the dramatic discourse or that underscores speech and gesture; (2) comédie-vaudeville and related genres involve the use of borrowed musical material, and set up a range of memorial functions in the drama through the reuse and recall of music sometimes a hundred years old; (3) opérette points to newly-composed musical compositions in the context of spoken drama that requires careful disaggregation from opéra-comique.

Questions of terminology and generic description abound. The French generic terms used in the previous paragraph all have equivalents in other languages: Melodram or Melodrama; Posse mit Gesang; Operette, Operetta, opereta or operetta. It is hardly surprising then that the editors of The Melodramatic Moment sigh that “Anyone familiar with the topic will attest that early melodrama is a categorical nightmare” (p. 2), and they could be speaking for anyone trying, not even to categorise, but simply to speak about more than a single work at a time with regard to mélodrame/Melodram, comédie-vaudeville or any of their related genres. But the problem goes even further once one tries to find terms to describe the entire culture of the three groups of genres identified in the previous paragraph. The preferred term for the editors of The Melodramatic Moment seems to be “popular” (p. 5) whereas those who introduce Singing Speech cleverly avoid any adjectival descriptor and allude to genres that have “remained in [sic] the musicological and philological margins” (p. ix). The title of the volume, however, bluntly identifies “minor forms of musical theatre [emphasis added]”. “Marginal” seems however pejorative, but the concept of “marginalized forms” certainly characterises the lack of scholarly interest until very recently.

These broader questions simply reflect greater terminological difficulty that bedevil the two collections of essays discussed in this article. The editors of The Melodramatic Moment choose to render all linguistic forms as “melodrama”, and while this has the advantage of consistency, it means that authors either have to explain which tradition they’re speaking about or to accept an essentialising quality to their discursive practice. Use of the French mélodrame and the German Melodram, while reserving “melodrama” for works in English, would be an elegant solution to the problem; while nothing like as complex as opera-comique, the term “melodrama” still occasionally leaves the reader in some doubt as to which traditions are under discussion. And opéra-comique raises even more issues in translation. When Trevor Penoyer-Kulin suggests (Singing Speech, p. 409) that “[opérette] theatres might be said to have approached the question from the opposite direction, bridging the ‘comique’ side of opéra-comique with popular genres of the time”, he fails to understand that the principal meaning of “comique”, “comédien”, and “comédie” relates to questions of drama tout court, and the sense of the terms as meaning something amusing, funny or provocative of laughter is merely a secondary definition (this explains why the Comédie Française is the home of such tragedians as Corneille and Racine). Thus, translating opéra-comique as “comic opera” – as is frequently found in Singing Speech – falls into exactly the same trap; this is especially vexing when non-English languages (Spanish and Portuguese most
pressingly in the case of Singing Speech) translate into English, when it is far from clear exactly what genre – opéra-comique, opera buffa or indeed “comic opera” – is under discussion. That is before anyone extends the discussion to Singspiel, singstykke or magyar nyelvű opera, for example. There will certainly be those who prefer English over any foreign language whatever the imprecision or confusion. There is however an unassailable case for the use of generic terms in their original language (which have to be separated from generic descriptors on the title page of score or libretto) in a world where the transnational is a central concern, and that colleagues whose native tongue is not English are writing both in their own language and in English.

Such questions of terminology however mask a much more important issue: whether or not mélodrame, comédie-vaudeville and opérette – and national equivalents – constitute part of a mass culture; the answer conditions the ways in which such genres are currently valued in both scholarly and non-academic contexts. The axiological position is pretty clear in both: there is a clear hierarchy of value which places the contemporary repertory of “opera” in the opera house at the top, with anything that requires spoken dialogue at least one level below it. Opérette resides even lower, and the genres under discussion in this essay even lower still. “Melodrama” – as a theatrical genre – rarely escapes the pejorative qualities that vulgar uses of the term imply; comédie-vaudeville in its use of borrowed material falls victim to late twentieth-century prejudices about “creativity” and “originality”, while opérette suffers from unnuanced distinctions between highbrow and lowbrow. All three groups of genres, furthermore, are at risk from conservative critiques of the canon that assume that canonical works enjoy that status because of immanent and self-evident qualities (even if these are never spelled out), and that the non-canonic is so defined because of a lack of those qualities. In short, works not “in the repertory” may be comfortably dismissed as not worthy of study and as the “meretricious” in an early draft of this essay’s title.

Singing Speech and Speaking Melodies is a promising title, but when its editors, María Encina Cortizo and Michela Niccolai, gloss this as “Singspiel, opéra-comique, zarzuela, opérette...” the ellipses at the end of the citation are deafening. Of the four essays in the opening section entitled “Vaudeville and Opéra-comique”, two – by Danielle L. Herrington and Roberto Scoccimarro (on Dalayrac’s Philipe et Georgette and on the question of multiple authorship in opéra comique) – do not engage with comédie-vaudeville at all. Bertrand Porot considers the vocal indication in sources preserving a 1773 revival of Favart’s Acajou to give further precision on how what he calls the “opéra-comique à vaudevilles” functions. William Osmond looks at the reception of Scribean comédie-vaudeville in Amsterdam in the 1830s and the ways in which the reception of French music in the theatre outside the country encompassed not only opéra-comique and – later – opérette but also critically the much less-understood comédie-vaudeville.

Perhaps one of the most ambitious chapters in Singing Speech is Trevor Penoyer-Kulin’s attempt to replace what he calls “older systems of genre analysis” (p. 424) with a view of genre informed by Bourdieu’s field of cultural production mapped out as early as the 1970s. Penoyer-Kulin reproduces Bourdieu’s map of mid-nineteenth-century French literature that will be known to most, presumably as a model for understanding “genre” as he conceives it. But the weakness here – and in Bourdieu – is the care taken with authors, texts and genres, but the much more slender interest in questions of institution, without which genre cannot be understood. Bourdieu reduces institution – if he treats it at all – to those that support “poetry”, “novel” and “drama” with little
interest in – for example – the periodical publication of the novel or the physical nature of drama. There is the beginning of an interesting argument here, but Penoyer-Kulin’s straw-persons and misunderstanding of key genres – opéra comique most obviously – means that we are still a long distance from a coherent alignment of Bourdieu with the reality of mid-nineteenth-century theatrical culture.

8 Despite the allusion to “minor forms” in the title of Singing Speech, Singspiel and opéra-comique find their way into the discussion. Andrea Horz considers Johann Adam Hiller’s works from the late 1760s in the light of the composer’s contemporary writing, drawing the conclusion that he depended on French influences that went beyond the reappropriation of libretti and more on Italian bravura singing than has been hitherto recognised. In a similar vein, Jana Franková traces the operatic history of Colman and Garrick’s The Clandestine Marriage of 1766 into Kohaut’s Sophie, ou Le mariage caché two years later, Ségur’s Le mariage clandestin from 1790 and – undoubtedly the best known – Cimarosa’s Il matrimonio segreto of 1792.

9 Operetta, in its myriad forms, only occupies two chapters in this collection, and even here the heavy-hitters – Offenbach, Hervé, Lecocq, von Suppé, Strauss and Sullivan – play no part. Marijana Kodanović Marković and Lada Duraković tell the remarkable story of Lehár’s Kukuška – originally composed in 1896 – whose composition was embedded in the composer’s naval career and premiered at the Naval Casino before its first public performance in Leipzig. Angelika Kordellou devotes a chapter to the later career of Spiridon-Filiskos Samaras, who – well known in Italian verismo circles – returned to Greece in 1911 and in the last six years of his life wrote three operettas that played into issues around Greek nationalism during the Balkan wars in the years before 1914.

10 Much of Singing Speech is devoted to the zarzuela and other issues related to the music of the Iberian peninsula. Several contributions are the result of work funded by the research project “Microhistoria de la Música Española Contemporánea: periferias internacionales en diálogo”, and together the eleven chapters on Spain and Portugal are an important contribution to scholarship in the field. Luis Antonio González Marín gives an account of the vocal contexts that supported the works of José de Nebra, subtly distinguishing between the various type of singer and theatre between the 1720s and 1750s. David Cranmer’s contribution on eighteenth-century Portugal and Brazil is broader, and seeks to distinguish between the various types of music for the stage: “Portuguese” operas, works that set modified translations of Metastasio, and the later translations of French, Spanish and French plays that were supplied with music.

11 It is appropriate that one of the most ambitious chapters in the sequence on zarzuela is authored by one of the two editors of the collection, María Encina Cortizo. Her chapter, simply titled “The Spanish zarzuela in the 19th Century” is a broadly conceived tour de force that contextualises the remaining contributions with real authority. The author explains the broad historical framework, and shows how zarzuelas were incorporated into musical programmes; she then outlines the basic generic patterns of works at Madrid’s Teatro Cruz, Teatro Príncipe, Teatro Circo and Teatro Instituto. Cortizo also presents fascinating evidence for the French modelling of the zarzuela, mostly based on opéra comique and subsequently opérette. There is obviously scope for a lot of further work here: to what extent were the zarzuela translations of opéra-comique libretto, for example, and to what extent were they just adaptations?
Two chapters in *Singing Speech* bring new light to bear on the **género chico**, the shorter and lighter form of the **zarzuela** which took Madrid by storm after the 1868 revolution. Andrea García Torres interrogates the aesthetics of the style, and describes its reception in Latin America, while Ramón Sobrino explains the system of the **Teatro per horas** in Madrid – pay-per-hour opera – and the genres it supported: the **revista de actualidades** and the **sainete**. These genres played off domestic and familiar situations that aligned perfectly with the interests of the pay-per-hour audience, perhaps the first instance of the alliance of music with genuinely mass theatre. Adela Presas teases out the subtle distinctions between **opereta** in Spain – the equivalent of one-act **opéra comique** in the early nineteenth century – and one-act **zarzuela**. The argument here is finely textured and replete with terminological ambiguities, and the same could be said for Víctor Sánchez Sánchez’ chapter on the reception of **zarzuela**, French **opérette** and Viennese **Operette** in Italy; this explains, among many other things, how Friedrich Nietzsche came across Chueca y Valverde’s **La gran via** in Turin in 1888.

Beyond the **zarzuela**, Zoila Martínez Beltrán gives a close reading of Carl van Vechten’s 1918 *The Music of Spain* which, coupled to an analysis of the New York careers of María Barrientos and Elivira de Hidalgo gives a compelling glimpse of the reception of Spanish culture in New York just after the First World War; there is surely more to emerge here. In a chapter on amateur music societies in Portugal that is a tidy complement to Sobrino’s chapter on the **Teatro per horas** in Madrid, Catarina Ribiero Braga shows how institutional structures – here amateur societies – could contribute to the dissemination of what she calls “**operetta**” and other literary genres in a burgeoning mass-market environment. Francesc Cortès talks us through a Catalan translation of *La dot mal placée* by Georges Mancel with music by Paul Lacôme as **La fantasma groga** with new music by Felip Pedrell. This is a classic case of terminological ambiguity being echoed through translation. To what extent does the process discussed here belong to the domain of parody, as Cortès seems to suggest. And how important is it (very important is the answer) to distinguish between **opéra bouffe** (how Mancel and Lacôme title their work), **opéra-bufa**, which is how Cortès translates it; and the tradition of **opéra-comique**, as Cortès has it (p. 442)? It is much to the author’s credit that he manages to give us a coherent account of the process of adaptation while stepping around these terminological land-mines.

Parody is the subject of Clair Rowden’s new monograph, *Opera and Parody in Paris, 1860-1900*. Here, Rowden takes us through a range of types of parody of music on the stage, ranging from straightforward staged parodies of Wagner’s **Tannhäuser** in the early 1860s, through staged parodies of various aspects of the **Faust** legend (Gounod and Hervé most obviously) at the end of the same decade, to what she calls “**cariculture**” of the 1890s: the use of the cartoon as a tool in the parody of music in the theatre. These serve as the basis for a final chapter that reads parodies of a number of well-known
works: Bizet’s Carmen, Wagner’s Lohengrin and Reyer’s Salambô, as well as the Bayreuth festival. It seems likely that the limited number of parodies of Carmen was less to do with its generic breadth, but more simply that it was not terribly successful during its first very short run, and its real success came only with its 1883 revival. That said, its limited success at its premiere was in line with a good deal of the work at the Opéra-Comique at the beginning of the Third Republic; Delibes 1873 Le roi l’a dit and Guiraud’s 1876 Dimitri are clear analogies in terms of performance histories.

Opera and Parody in Paris is full of sophisticated readings that are prefaced by a thoughtful chapter on the position of parody in theories of reading. Central here is the concept of the duality of the péritexte and the hypotext, and the link between the two. “Object” and “parody” do not exist in an immutable relationship but rather constitute examples of a complex series of networks that the terms péritexte and hypotext capture perfectly. Rowden stops short of suggesting that – for works whose success on the stage is confirmed by the composition of one or more parodies – that these works, together with the wide range of musical and theatrical paratexts (arrangements, variation-sets, assorted forms of potpourris), constitute a parallel existence for the work in question; and perhaps the idea of a textual and a parallel existence is less persuasive than, say, the concept of a web in which the “work”, its parodies and its paratexts are enmeshed equally. Rowden is very careful to point out the generic allegiances – to comédie-vaudeville or to opérette – of the works she examines. Good examples are two Tannhäuser parodies: Clairville’s Panne-aux-airs and Lambert-Thiboust’s Ya-mein-Herr are both effectively comédies-vaudevilles in their use of borrowed musical material; these contrast with two parodies for which Hervé wrote new music – Le petit Faust and Les Troyens en Champagne – which in generic terms are opérettes. And the practice of parodying works at the Opéra or the Opéra-Comique in the way that she analyses certainly predates Meyerbeer, which seems to be her starting point. Nothing except a manuscript aria and a quartet from the parody La dame jaune of March 1826 now remains, but this was certainly a parody of Boieldieu’s runaway success La Dame blanche from ten weeks previously; the surviving aria and quartet, and perhaps the whole score, was by Adolphe Adam.

The final chapter in Singing Speech is the only one to address the phenomenon of mélodrame. Sylvie Douche stresses the ambivalence between technique and genre, and focusses broadly on the French nineteenth century. In doing so, she is able to interrogate questions of gesture by reference to Julien Duquesnois’ 1845 Manuel de l’orateur et de lecteur, which takes the discussion well beyond the nature of words and notes (she provides a useful list of nineteenth-century treatises stressing reading, recitation, diction and declamation; p. 535-536). The Melodramatic Moment, edited by Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks continues with this concern, and re-examines mélodrame, Melodram and melodrama in the period from 1790 to 1820 which constitutes, presumably, the “moment” of the title. This usage echoes works in other fields: The Anti-Semitic Moment, Our Decolonial Moment, The Machiavellian Moment, and in our own field The Hermeneutics of the Moment, The Enlightenment Moment and The Don Giovanni Moment. For the present collection, its seems a strange title since everything in the book, and everything stressed superbly in the introductory first chapter seems to point to multiplicities of practice that shift over time, when phenomena could change, coalesce or be subverted. And it is this multiplicity, which is pointed to over and over
again in the essays in *The Melodramatic Moment*, which constitutes one of the book’s greatest strengths.

17 Central to the book are three essays that give key texts in the repertory the sort of treatment only usually reserved for canonic works in the field of “opera studies”. Thomas Betzwieser gives a typically accomplished account of Joseph Franz von Goet’s *Lenardo und Blandine* with music by Peter von Winter, premiered in Munich in 1779, and readers are treated to two separate chapters on Pixérécourt’s *La cité*, with music by Louis-Alexandre Piccini (1809). Sarah Hibberd and Jens Hesselager cleverly give us two complementary accounts with Hibberd considering questions of scenography and spectacular stagecraft and Hesselager taking a harder look at Piccini’s score for the work and the function of the subterranean both in *La cité* and in works that clearly depend on the same trope. Matthew Head and Nicolas Matthew give us readings of Maria Magadalena Kauth’s *Das Gemälde der Natur* (1789; she wrote both words and music) – a charity work for the victims of the floods in Linz that serves as the basis for a range of discussions around music and benevolence – and of a group of occasional works around the 1814 Congress of Vienna. Barbara Babić spins the question of the transnational with an account of French biblical *mélodrames* in Vienna around 1800, to add to the range of subject matter to which *mélodrame* could be adapted.

18 Although the ten chapters in *The Melodramatic Moment* include two welcome contributions on melodrama in London – one on the cosmopolitan mix from Diego Saglia and one on Holcroft’s translation of Pixérécourt from George Taylor – the book is largely concerned with the opposition between *Melodram* in the German language and French *mélodrame*. The various traditions that seek to reinforce this opposition are cleverly dissected in Hambridge’s and Hicks’ opening chapter; in the section entitled “Crossings” (p. 11-18), they examine the transnational function of *mélodrame* and the seemingly all-pervasive influence of French models on everywhere in the *deutsche Sprachgebiet* which unsurprisingly caused a degree of consternation in idealist German historiography that saw the chronological origins of *Melodram* east of the Rhine in the work of Benda. In their section on “Origins”, the editors spend a welcome amount of time pointing to Peter Brooks’ “emphasis on the political and interpersonal conditions of post-Revolutionary Paris” (p. 5) as a reason for the continued division of scholarly attention between the “French” and “German” forms of *mélodrame/Melodram*.

19 The question of the cosmopolitan is paramount in understanding the European dimension of *mélodrame*, and seemingly endless in scope. The restriction of the volume to Paris, Vienna, London and Berlin is practical in that it limits the range of material but leaves open a series of questions about other locations around Europe. These range from the extensive – to what extent did Parisian *mélodrame* make an impact on the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen (to take a random example)? – to the small but significant: did German *Melodram* find its way to Paris? Ellen Lockhart’s chapter gives a superb account of Parisian *mélodrame* before Pixérécourt (correcting a residual sense in the introduction that there was no Parisian tradition before his *Victor, ou L’enfant de la forêt* of 1798). But even in Lockhart’s account, such works as Charles-Jacob Guillemain’s *Annette et Basile* and *Alexis et Rosette* (both 1786) are described as “difficult to consider... in any familiar sense” (p. 40). But there are other Parisian *mélodrames* from the 1780s that complicate a tradition that runs unproblematically from Rousseau to Pixérécourt; this other tradition runs from the mysterious *L’assemblée des ombres aux Champs-Elysées* (1780), through Nicolas-Toussaint Des Essarts’ *Émile et Sophie*, or *Les époux désunis*
(1784) up to Jean-Louis Gabiot’s *Estelle et Némorin* of 1788. But perhaps more interestingly are the French translations of the Brandes/Benda *Ariane* and Gotter/Benda *Médée* – translated by Joseph Cuinet-Dorbeil and Arnaud Bequin respectively; this first of these was performed in 1781 at the Comédie-Italienne. None of these works is easy “to consider [...] in any familiar sense”, but the apparent “heard-it-before tunefulness” of the interpolations in Guillemain are completely explicable in the context of *comédie-vaudeville*. Lockhart’s brilliant essay thus inadvertently points to two intriguing questions that lie beyond the scope of *The Melodramatic Moment*: the history of *mélodrame/Melodram* after the book’s terminal point of 1820 and its relationship with other underrepresented or marginalized genres: *comédie-vaudeville* and *Posse mit Gesang*, just to limit the discussion to Francophone and Germanophone practices.

The *Melodramatic Moment* stops at 1820 with a strong sense that this is the end of the story. But, for example, Pixérécourt’s last *mélodrame* – *Latude, ou 35 ans de captivité* – was premiered in 1834, and the end-point of the tradition is far from clear. A further question is whether or not later works preserve and develop the same dynamic between words, drama, music and gesture that is found in the classic works of Pixérécourt. *Les nuits de la Seine*, by Marc Fournier, for example, was premiered as late as June 1852 at Paris’ Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin. This *mélodrame à grand spectacle* in five acts had music by Adolphe de Groot – the music director at the Porte Saint-Martin throughout the 1850s – for which the performing material survives; this means that, together with the published text, a viable version of the work is available for comparison and analysis. To what extent is *Les nuits de la Seine* typical of Second Empire *mélodrame*, and how extensive is the repertory of *mélodrame* going into the Third Republic? Looking east of the Rhine, it seems clear that – at least in the case of Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer’s *Der Glöckner von Notre-Dame* of 1831 – that *Melodramen* could have their music rewritten at least once, in this instance in both 1835 and 1849. This not only prompts the same question of how long *Melodram* survived, but also raises the question of how wide a tradition rewriting the music was, and whether or not it extended to practices west of the Rhine as well.

The “heard-it-before tunefulness” in Guillemain’s *Annette et Basile* and *Alexis et Rosette* have little to do with Rousseau’s *Le devin du village*, but – as Emilio Sala correctly suggests – the tradition of *comédie-vaudeville*. While many might object to his neologism, “*mélodrame-vaudeville*”, Sala’s analysis points to an entirely different tradition of the popular or the marginalized that the *comédie-vaudeville* represents. Originating – and that’s a dangerous thing to say – in the eighteenth century, this form of play depended almost exclusively on borrowed music (from songs indexed in *Le clé du caveau*, from *opéra comique*, romance and pretty well any musical source), and was a key driver of musical memory. *Comédie-vaudeville* functioned in two ways: (1) as a genre in its own right – especially after the impetus given by Eugène Scribe in the early years of the nineteenth century; and (2) as a supra-generic model for *féerie, revue de fin d’année* and even perhaps for Sala’s “*mélodrame-vaudeville*”.

One of the principal sub-genres of *comédie-vaudeville* was the *revue de fin d’année*: an extensive theatre-piece produced at the end of the calendar year that reviewed and parodied events in and out of the theatre that had taken place during the previous twelve months. The music was almost exclusively – as was the case with the *comédie-vaudeville* – based on *airs connus*: melodies taken from the sources listed in the previous paragraph. Richard Sherr’s critical edition of one of the four *revues de fin d’année* of 1857
is a tour de force of detailed contextualization coupled with the diligent editorial skills witnessed in his edition of the masses in Cappella Sistina 14, work for the Josquin critical edition and a whole host of other editorial projects. The levels of contextual detail in Sherr’s review of Ohé ! les p’tits agneaux is formidable, and essential if one is to understand the extensive frame of reference that the work entails, to say nothing of its humour. Not only do we get explanations of the damage to the trees on the Champs-Elysées and the – apparently risible – attempts to repair them (stripping the bark and bandaging them [Christo avant la lettre]), but the edition includes engravings of the attempts from the contemporary press and an explanation of how this is ridiculed in Ohé ! Les p’tits agneaux. My particular favourite is the account of the scenes in the work based on the displays of the vaches landaises at the Hippodrome, which had taken place during the year. Sherr gives the complete spoken and sung text and translation and a complete score of the work. All the material excised by the censor (mostly relating to passages that parodied a work whose performance was delayed so that it had not in fact appeared at the time of the premiere of Ohé ! les p’tits agneaux) is also included, and the critical commentary details the levels of textual complexity among the surviving sources, as well as identifying the sources for all the airs connus used in the piece. In terms of the borrowing witnessed not only in the revue de fin d’année but in the comédie-vaudeville in general, Ohé ! les p’tits agneaux is a case-study in the types of sources used.

Ohé ! les p’tits agneaux is a relatively rare example of a revue de fin d’année – or of any comédie-vaudeville – that survives with enough of its music for an edition to be made. As Sherr points out, however, there are not inconsiderable repositories of material for the comédie-vaudeville, and it seems that there is the real possibility of more editions of the same sort. This is important both for the repertory of comédie-vaudeville and mélodrame/ Melodram since the levels of reconstruction required far outstrip those required for a rapid glimpse of opéra-comique, Singspiel or zarzuela. Gaining even the most slender view of such a work as Pixérécourt’s and Piccini’s La citerne, for example, already engages a significant amount of preliminary research. In large numbers of genres in registers below that of, or analogous to, opérette, even gaining access to a meaningful version of the piece is a challenge.

The four works under review here take the lid off repertories that are challenging for all sorts of reasons. To a certain type of scholar, the genres discussed here are largely unworthy of attention or worthy merely of the attention of perhaps doctoral candidates looking for a dissertation topic. To others, the range of surviving material is not only vast but also difficult of access: inventories of the repertory are unhelpful in many respects, and – with the exception of opérette and its national equivalents – it is hard even to assemble a coherent text of the work as the basis for analysis or comparison. But if the overall aim is to understand the music and theatre of the nineteenth century, and not just read and reread the members of an uninterrogated canon, then the genres discussed in the four works reviewed here and the questions that they pose and answer, need to move closer to the centre of the stage. The current volumes represent a major step in that direction.
NOTES

1. Such claims are not hard to substantiate. Leaving aside journals whose purpose is the documentation and discussion of contemporary events at opera houses around the world (Opera News; Opera Magazine and so on), Opera Quarterly similarly occupies itself mostly with current events with occasional research articles. But even here, the journal declared a need to take opérette/Operette/operette “seriously”. See ABBATE Caroline and Flora WILLSON, “Operetta: A Note from the Guest Editors”, Opera Quarterly, n°33, 2017 [special issue: Operetta]. But a journal that occupies itself mostly with scholarship on “opera” gives a clear sense of its repertorial scope in a special issue entitiled “Remaking the Aria” with 30 tiny “readings” of arias. Of these, at least two dozen reflect the concerns of early twenty-first century repertory of the opera house while only two address subjects whose genre is not “opera”. Less than half a dozen of the selected works make use of spoken dialogue, a feature that is not unrelated to the fact that over half the examples are from Italian traditions (traditions outside Italy rely to an overwhelming extent on genres including spoken dialogue). See Cambridge Opera Journal, n°28, 2016, passim.

2. The genre has received endless discussion and analysis from theatre and literary historians, but has largely eluded the attention of musicology. For important exceptions, see WAEBER Jacqueline, En musique dans le texte : le mélodrame, de Rousseau à Schoenberg, Paris, Van Dieren, 2005; SALA Emilio, L’opera senza canto: il melo romantico e l’invenzione della colonna sonora, Venice, Marsilio, 1995; HIBBERD Sarah (ed.), Melodramatic Voices: Understanding Music Drama, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2011; PISANI Michael, Music for the Melodramatic Theatre in Nineteenth-Century London and New York, Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 2014.


4. The study of opérette has been bedevilled by a narrow focus on Offenbach and – to a lesser extent – Hervé (Florimond Ronger). See EVERIST Mark, “‘Der mächtigste Tanzmeister des Kaiserreiches’? Offenbach at 200’”, Journal of the Royal Musical Association, n° 145, 2020, p. 485-494.

5. A case in point – where an English scholar allows error to overcome judgement in the selection of non-English terms – is the moment where a reviewer ridicules the use of the French term “rôle”, thinking that it is synonymous with the English “role”. The two terms have entirely different meanings in the two languages: the English term means simply an actor’s or a singer’s part in a stage work: the role of Hamlet or the role of Scarpia for example; the French rôle describes a physical document: the manuscript book that contains the words and music for a soloist with occasional cues for


8. The text of the parody was by Pierre-François-Adolphe Carmouche, Édouard-Joseph-Ennemond Mazères and Jean-Henri Dupin, and was premiered at the Théâtre du Vaudeville on 7 March 1826. The two surviving musical settings survive as Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter F-Pn) MS-2681 (A-B).


12. Sala, “Mélodrame: Définitions”, 239. There are in fact three examples of works who use “mélodrame-vaudeville” as a generic descriptor: Caroline de Litchfield; La jardinière de Vincennes and Le Marquis de Carabas. Now, the first two of these were authored by Antoine-Jean-Baptiste Simonnin and Nicolas Brazier, and premiered at the Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes during the 1806-1807 season, and it seems reasonable to assume that the music for the two works was supplied by the theatre’s music director, Antoine-François Heudier. Le Marquis de Carabas was the work of the same authorial team, but was premiered at the Théâtre de la Gaîté in May 1811. Two things seem clear: that the use of the term “mélodrame-vaudeville” was only used by a single pair of authors (no other examples survive), and – to judge from a reading of La jardinière de Vincennes (La / jardinière / de / Vincennes, / mélodrame-vaudeville, / en trois actes, / imité du Roman de ce nom; / Par MM. Simonnin et Brazier, ils. / Représenté, pour la première fois, à Paris, sur le théâtre / des Jeunes-Artistes, le Samedi 14 Mars 1807… / à Paris , / Chez Barba, Libraire, palais du Tribunat, galerie du / théâtre Français, n° 51; et galerie neuve, n° 14) – the “mélodrame” element in the generic descriptor carries no force: the work is effectively a comédie-vaudeville. Le Marquis de Carabas is only described as a mélodrame-vaudeville in
the manuscript copy of its musical score (F-Pn MAT TH-910); in the published text (Le / Marquis de Carabas, / ou / Le chat botté, / folie féerie en deux actes, a spectacle, mêlée de couplets, / par / MM. Brazier et Simonnin; / Représentée pour la première fois, à Paris, sur le théâtre de la Gaîté, / le 9 mai 1811... Paris. -Imprimerie normale de Jules Didot Ainé), the generic descriptor is “folie féerie”.


AUTHORS

MARK EVERIST