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## Formulating American Operetta in 1924: Friml's *Rose-Marie* and Romberg's *The Student Prince*

Two definitive works, perhaps *the* two definitive works, that epitomized the American operetta of the 1920s, appeared three months apart in 1924: Rudolf Friml's *Rose-Marie* and Sigmund Romberg's *The Student Prince in Heidelberg*. Each show played for over 500 performances in its original New York run, placing them among the most viewed musical theater works of the decade. The operettas share several basic attributes, not surprisingly, perhaps, since they both possess musical scores by contemporaneous immigrant composers from Habsburg Europe. Yet the two shows, at least in theme and image, are quite distinct from each another: *Rose-Marie* is rooted in the Indianist art movement of the early twentieth century, while *The Student Prince* transports its audience to Ruritanian climes. *The Student Prince* is dubbed "A Spectacular Light Opera" on its title page, while *Rose-Marie* is labeled as a "Musical Play" with the parenthetical description, "A Romance of the Canadian Rockies." Yet in 1924 advertising and publicity materials, both works are called operettas. At least in their titles, both creators were evidently striving to give a novel twist to a generally familiar form.

So what exactly is an operetta? Simply put, it is a theatrical work that combines music in a light but somewhat florid melodic style with spoken dialogue. What distinguishes the operetta from other types of musical theater, such as the revue and the musical comedy, is its emphasis on the details in the score and an inherently escapist aesthetic with respect to plot and characterization. Language and national idiom create different variants, among these the French *opéra bouffe*, British comic opera (especially the Savoyard hits of Gilbert and Sullivan and their contemporaries), and Spanish *zarzuela*. For the sake of this essay, though, it is the Central European "Ruritanian" operetta that concerns us the most, for this type laid the foundation for the work of both Friml and Romberg.

Ruritanian operetta, the adjective alluding to the imaginary but viv-

idly conceived setting of Anthony Hope's novel *The Prisoner of Zenda* (musicalized not altogether successfully by Sigmund Romberg as *Princess Flavia* in 1925), refers to the typical *Mittel-Europäische* style of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in which royalty from some mythical, usually Balkan, kingdom humorously and amorously interact with commoners.<sup>1</sup> This interplay between classes forms a significant part of the dramatic action. Lehár's *The Merry Widow* (1905, Vienna; 1907, New York) and Kálmán's *Countess Maritza* (1924, Vienna; 1926, New York) are but two of the most famous of these works known to American audiences in English translation.

The dichotomy between escapist fantasy (related to fiction) and sentimental nostalgia (related to memory) existed in the best works of the genre, including *Rose-Marie* and *The Student Prince*. In *Rose-Marie*, urban audiences are transported to the exotic Canadian Rockies and witness a tale that includes Indians and other outdoorsy types in illusory show-stopping numbers. The hustle and bustle of city life are forgotten and audiences revel in the wilderness locale with its nobly savage inhabitants. In *The Student Prince*, Romantic nineteenth-century Germany provides the backdrop for a tale of first love during springtime—a love that ultimately would be lost. The Germany of Romberg's imagination was substantially different from the Weimar Republic reality in 1924, but still sufficiently regal and removed from the mundane for Americans to remain unbothered by its setting in the recently bellicose fatherland.

Friml and Romberg, though both native to Central Europe—Friml was born in Bohemia and Romberg in Hungary—grew up with contrasting experiences in music that inclined them to view the making of stage works from slightly different perspectives. Friml's more formal training and discipline as a keyboard performer contrasted strongly with Romberg's more practical training and his experience as a staff composer for the brothers J.J. and Lee Shubert.

Rudolf Friml (1879-1972), born in Prague, studied composition with Antonín Dvořák and piano with Josef Jiránek at the Prague Conservatory before embarking on a career as a concert pianist. He toured Europe and the U.S. with violinist Jan Kubelík, and ultimately settled in the U.S. in 1906 after their second American tour. Throughout his life, Friml was active as a composer of both concert music and musical theater works. He began his Broadway career as a replacement composer for Victor Herbert in *The Firefly* (1912, including "Giannina Mia" and "Sympathy"), and he wrote scores that were closer to musical comedy than operetta in subsequent shows such as *High Jinks* (1913, including "Something Seems Tingle-ingleing") and *Katinka* (1915, including "Allah's Holiday"). Friml remained active as a concert pianist for most of his life and was known for his imaginative improvisations.

Sigmund Romberg (1887-1951) was born in Nagykanizsa, Hungary and spent his youth in Belisce and Osijek, today in Croatia. It was there, while working at the local theater, that he established himself in the world of

opera and operetta, and though he eventually made his way to Vienna to study civil engineering, his musical pursuits continued to command his time and interest. Romberg befriended people such as Victor Heuberger and Franz Lehár while working at the Theater an der Wien, a house known for its operetta productions. Always on the lookout for opportunities in the music profession, Romberg arrived in New York City in 1909 and found work as a pianist in various restaurants. The brothers J.J. and Lee Shubert soon engaged Romberg to contribute to their revues, most notably *The Passing Show* series, and to adapt Central European operettas for American audiences.<sup>2</sup> These adaptations were central to Romberg's development as a composer, for it was in them that he refined his skills as a creator with one foot in the European operetta tradition and the other on Broadway.

The early careers of these creators of 1920s American operetta were similar in that both grew up amidst a flourishing tradition of popular musical theater in the greater Viennese sphere of influence. However, Friml's pianistic experience came from the concert stage, whereas Romberg developed his practical musicianship in restaurants. While Friml was trained to compose under Dvořák in a conservatory setting, Romberg's self-tuition came from imitating others who worked in and around theaters. Inevitably, the two composers would have pursued different approaches to the concept of operetta, a genre whose rising stature on the world scene and especially in New York City coincided with their maturity as creative artists.

### *Rose-Marie*

When *Rose-Marie* opened at the Imperial Theatre in New York on September 2, 1924, it was hailed as a significant development in the American musical theater. Here was an operetta whose creative team included composers Rudolf Friml and Herbert Stothart (1885-1949) and librettist-lyricists Otto Harbach (1873-1963) and Oscar Hammerstein II (1895-1960). The show was realized under the careful eye of producer Arthur Hammerstein. Friml and Stothart each contributed several individual numbers to the operetta and co-wrote others,<sup>3</sup> while Robert Russell Bennett supplied the orchestrations. *Rose-Marie*'s Canadian wilderness setting provided the backdrop for a story that included elements of Ruritanian operetta, but did so in a radically transformed fashion through the addition of elements derived from the romanticized pseudo-Indian images popular in the world of decorative design and visual art, as well as music.<sup>4</sup>

In *Rose-Marie*, the title character, part Indian, and therefore possessing the mixed-blood mystique of many nineteenth-century mulatto stage characters, is a singer at Lady Jane's Hotel, a small lodge in the Canadian Rockies. She loves Jim Kenyon, who is charged with the murder of Black Eagle. Jim goes into hiding in the Canadian woods, while his accuser, Ed Hawley, falls in love with Rose-Marie. Wanda, Black Eagle's wife, is finally revealed as the killer, and Rose-Marie and Jim are reunited. The murder-

ous aspect of the plot was something new in operetta; putting the distant precedent of Bizet's *Carmen* (1875) aside, *Rose-Marie*'s audiences witnessed the first murder in Ruritania's American colonies.

*Rose-Marie* was also the first Broadway musical to be set in Canada, although the ill-fated *The Alaskan* (1907), which received only thirty-seven performances, took place in the territory cited in its title. As one story concerning *Rose-Marie* goes, impresario Arthur Hammerstein sent his nephew Oscar (II) and Otto Harbach to investigate the annual ice carnival in Quebec, in which reportedly a grand ice palace was melted down in a vast conflagration as the carnival's grand finale. Ignoring any technical challenges, Hammerstein thought this spectacle would make a memorable ending for his show. Hammerstein and Harbach, upon their arrival in Canada, discovered that the flaming palace was entirely fictitious—not that reality (or the lack thereof) ever gave the *raison d'être* for a Broadway musical—but the seed had been planted for an operetta with a Canadian locale.<sup>5</sup>

The operetta's mountain setting was not completely new for American audiences, who had not responded well to its two most important predecessors, both of which were European imports: Lehár's *Alone at Last*, an English-language version of *Endlich Allein* (1914), a Viennese operetta that took place on the Jungfrau and which was performed in New York in 1915, and the British success *The Maid of the Mountain* (1917), a runaway hit in London that received a mere thirty-seven performances in New York in 1918. More important than the stage precedents, however, were the more than forty feature films with Canadian Mountie plots that appeared between 1921 and 1923.<sup>6</sup> Even in these early years of Hollywood, the film medium's influence and impact on live theater were evident. Just as filmmakers would look to Broadway for subject matter, theatrical creators—including those who made musicals—watched Hollywood for possible source material.

*Rose-Marie*'s original New York production starred Mary Ellis and Dennis King and ran for a magnificent 557 performances. Four touring companies took the show throughout the U.S. In London, the show played 851 performances, and in Paris, 1,250. Because of its tremendous stage popularity and the plethora of movie precedents, it is no surprise that *Rose-Marie* transferred easily back to the silver screen. Three film versions of the operetta appeared: a "silent" version in 1928 with Joan Crawford and James Murray, the classic 1936 version with Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy, and the 1954 color version with Ann Blyth, Fernando Lamas, and Howard Keel.<sup>7</sup> All three were released by MGM.

The central musically defining element in *Rose-Marie* is its Indianist identity. As a student of Antonin Dvořák, Friml was certainly aware of his mentor's exhortation to American composers that they incorporate indigenous elements into their works. While it is not within the scope of this essay either to trace Dvořák's Indianist evocations or to make assertions about how they affected Friml, at least a superficial connection is evident

and deserves comment.<sup>8</sup> Friml could not have been oblivious to the popularity of Indian themes among art music composers in the generation preceding *Rose-Marie*.

At the turn of the century, a proliferation of publications dedicated to the music of Native Americans appeared. Alice Fletcher's *Indian Story and Song from North America* (1900) and Arthur Farwell's *American Indian Melodies* (1901), published by his own Wa-Wan Press, consisted of Native American melodies with simple harmonizations.<sup>9</sup> The October 1920 edition of *Etude* magazine was devoted to Indianist music and included articles by Charles Wakefield Cadman, among others.<sup>10</sup>

Many American composers were drawn to Native American music for source material, and subsequently a number of Indianist operas appeared in the early decades of the twentieth century. Among these were Frederick Shepherd Converse's *The Pipe of Desire* (1907), Victor Herbert's *The Sacrifice* (1910) and *Natoma* (1911), Mary Carr Moore's *Narcissa* (1912), and Charles Wakefield Cadman's *The Robin Woman (Shanewis)* (1918).<sup>11</sup> Precedents such as these, created in a general spirit of fascination with the construction and recovery of Native American cultures—the same combination of fantasy and nostalgia that defined operetta—paved the way for *Rose-Marie*'s arrival on Broadway in 1924.<sup>12</sup>

Michael Pisani has identified several musical devices associated with Indianist composers around the turn of the century: (1) sustained fifths (drones); (2) "pastoral" or "rude peasant" rhythms (long-short-short); (3) "Gypsy-Turkish" devices, including driving 2/4 meter, harmonic stasis, exaggerated dynamics, and repeated drone fourths or fifths; (4) a melodic folk idiom, including gapped scales, pentatonic suggestion accompanied by minor-key or modal harmonies; (5) "lurid ornamentation," i.e., chromatic motion in accompaniment, profuse grace notes, percussion, woodwind tremolos, and repetitious musical gestures; (6) "Oriental" devices—melodic doubling at the fourth, fifth, or octave, usually with pedal points; and (7) patterns with three-note descending adjacent pitches, usually in a short-short-long rhythm.<sup>13</sup>

To this list should be added the appearance of 6-5-6-5 (la-sol) above a repeated root (do). Ethnological authenticity was not paramount in these devices; their evocative power and associations for urban (presumably non-folk) listeners were.

Pisani continues:

These characteristics seemed to serve as a ready-made toolbox of exotica whenever nineteenth-century European or European-trained American composers undertook Indian topics. American musicians, especially those working between 1890 and the 1920s, could hardly remain oblivious to Indian culture which, along with other "exotic" cultures, began to emerge into the American mainstream during those years. These exotic devices took root and for decades constituted the standard language for the musical depiction of Indians.<sup>14</sup>

a. *poco espress*

That means I offer my love to you ——— to be your

b. *poco espress*

you — oo oo on - oo - oo!

*molto espressivo*

*pp*

Example 1. "Indian Love Call" from *Rose-Marie*.

a. Refrain, mm. 9-11. b. Refrain, mm. 1-4.

Several of these identifiers are readily apparent in the "Indian Love Call," *Rose-Marie*'s most famous theme.<sup>15</sup> Drone fifths appear throughout the number at key points, most notably during the B section of the refrain ("That means I offer my love to you to be your own") (see Example 1a). The long-short-short rhythm appears on the famous double-o's, and driving duple meter and harmonic stasis occur in various parts of the refrain. Slithering chromaticism in the melodic line is achieved principally through passing tones (m. 2), melodic doubling occurs at the third, rather than the fourth or fifth (mm. 1-3), and a 6-5-6-5 alternation takes place in the accompaniment under sustained melodic notes (mm. 3-4) (see Example 1b).

Problematic in light of today's political sensitivities about the portrayal of ethnic custom is the lavish production number "Totem Tom Tom" near the end of the first act, co-written by Friml and Stothart. Sung by a 100-member chorus dressed as totem poles and led by the murderous Wanda, Harbach and Hammerstein's nonsensical lyrics suggest absurd and insulting stereotypes of Native Canadians as dancers and drunkards run amok. Musically the number incorporates many of Pisani's Indianist identifiers, including drone fifths (mm. 5-8), repetition, strong rhythmic propulsion, and chromatically inflected accompaniment parts (see Example 2).

These Indianist identifiers appear throughout *Rose-Marie*, and to a certain extent, throughout Friml's entire output. In the minor-mode section of "The Mounties," for example, the bass reiterates 1-6-1-6 rather than the typical 1-5-1-5. This replacement of 6 for 5 accentuates the relationship between 6 and 5 in the Indianist numbers. As in "Indian Love Call," chromatic and diatonic passing tones appear in the melodic line (see Example 3).

Not fast.  
WANDA. *mf*

Long a go, there used to be A tribe of

*poco misterioso*

In-di-an-smart-ies throw-ing their part-ies here.

Example 2. "Totem Tom Tom" from *Rose-Marie*, verse, mm. 1-8.

MALONE.  
*mf* *bravado*

Far o-ver the snow what are those voi ces?

(Mounties off stage in distance) (O-ver the snow?)

*mf* *molto deciso*

Example 3. "The Mounties" from *Rose-Marie*, B section, mm. 1-4.

It is not only the created Indianist world of turn-of-the-century America but also the nostalgic Ruritania of Central European operetta that appears in *Rose-Marie*. The operetta includes examples of the obligatory musical forms from the genre: waltzes and marches. "The Door of My Dreams," the number that accompanies the bridal scene near the end of the show, is a concerted waltz for Rose-Marie and the full chorus. The nostalgic lyrics and lilting musical lines pass seamlessly between Rose-Marie and her entourage in a manner derivative of Viennese models and which foreshadows "One Kiss" in Romberg's *The New Moon* (1928). Whereas ladies waltz in operetta, men march.<sup>16</sup> "The Mounties," co-written by Friml and Stothart, is the rugged masculine march in *Rose-Marie*, a song type whose progeny includes "Song of the Vagabonds" in *The Vagabond King* and "Stouthearted Men" in *The New Moon*.

The world of musical comedy and Tin Pan Alley also finds its way into *Rose-Marie*, especially in its title song. With its 24-bar verse and 32-bar refrain, typical Tin Pan Alley structures, Friml made his “popular” style contribution to *Rose-Marie*. Duple meter and shifting off-beat accents in the legato melodic line characterize the number. Even “Totem Tom Tom” suggests Indians touched by ragtime (see Example 2, mm. 5–6).

The operetta excelled on several important fronts. First, its setting revealed the possibilities for retooling exotic locales to be used in Ruritanian-derived operetta. Here was a North American setting, with Native Canadians replacing Austrians, Hungarians, or what have you as the place-specific ethnic group. Native ceremonials spilling forth in “Totem Tom Tom” could replace rousing beerhall or ballroom numbers of an earlier day. Romantic love songs such as “Indian Love Call” and the more generic “Rose-Marie” could combine technical devices of the erotic and the exotic (i.e., chromatic, legato melodies and open chord harmonies). Friml’s classical training insured a well-wrought and consistent product.

Through sheet music publications, recordings, arrangements, and live performances by numerous types of ensembles, songs from *Rose-Marie*, particularly “Indian Love Call,” became synonymous with American operetta, a work whose musical-dramatic style was unashamedly sentimental in nature yet contained just enough exoticism to transport its audience to a different time and place. Through its contrasting Tin Pan Alley numbers (a variety rarely achieved in the best shows of Victor Herbert, master of the previous generation) the operetta’s musical style reminded its audience that this was a contemporary work cognizant of the popular idioms in 1920s New York. It was precisely this combination of escapism and modernity that made *Rose-Marie* such an appealing work. Hammerstein’s involvement with the operetta was of singular importance in this regard, for the same pairing of fantasy and reality—operatic schmaltz and syncopated song—would reappear, albeit in a different guise, in *Show Boat* (1927), where Hammerstein’s lyrics were sung to Jerome Kern’s music.

So, what can we make of *Rose-Marie*? Its amalgamation of musical styles from Indianist identifiers, classic operetta, and Tin Pan Alley coexisted comfortably, allowing its creators to put the famous disclaimer in the printed program, “The musical numbers of this play are such an integral part of the action that we do not think we should list them as separate episodes.” (That they were listed individually for the London production and in the published vocal score, however, suggests that old habits die hard, and that integration to some extent was in the eye—or ear—of the beholder.) The creators of *Rose-Marie* strove to create a unified musical product, one in which the music was evocative of the dramatic action. Friml, Harbach, and Hammerstein were aiming for a new directness in the musical theater—an idealized and integrated approach that would combine the best of escapism, exoticism, lushness, popular styles, and romance in a product that would simultaneously demonstrate high levels of musical construction and commercial appeal. But it was the setting that





Courtesy of the American Music Research Center

*Left: Rose-Marie's popularity was further enhanced by the production of song sheet covers created to capitalize on the motion picture version of 1936.*

*Right: Already having made a career as an opera singer, Nelson Eddy achieved matinee idol status following his appearance in movie versions of shows such as Rose-Marie. Eddy and his longtime partner Jeanette MacDonald appear here in profile against a bit of made-for-Hollywood Canadian wilderness.*



Courtesy of the American Music Research Center

made *Rose-Marie* different from other operettas of the era; not only did the action take place in the Canadian Rockies but the music could be and often was intentionally regional in its appropriation of Indianist identifiers.

### ***The Student Prince***

On December 2, 1924, exactly three months after the premiere of *Rose-Marie*, Sigmund Romberg's first original operetta, *The Student Prince*, opened at the Jolson Theatre.<sup>17</sup> Like *Rose-Marie*, *The Student Prince* became tremendously popular, running for 608 performances in its initial run, the longest for any musical of the decade. All the thematic elements of operetta were present in Dorothy Donnelly's book and lyrics, save the happy ending. This was Ruritanian operetta at its finest, but not in a purely orthodox incarnation.

Although *The Student Prince* was the longest-running musical in New York during the 1920s, it fared less well in London. A musical which romanticized and even celebrated Germanness was not going to succeed there in the decade immediately following the first World War. Besides the basic setting, the concept of college and university fraternities, epitomized in the significant role of the male chorus, was alien to the London public. Although glee clubs and German singing societies were certainly known to British audiences, it was the dramatic context in which the male chorus appeared—as a college fraternity—that must have seemed especially foreign.

It would require three more decades and a successful film version to establish *The Student Prince* as an international favorite. MGM released its version in 1954 with Ann Blyth appearing as a romantic Kathie, and a spirited Edmund Purdom provided the face and figure for Karl Franz while Mario Lanza sang.<sup>18</sup> (An earlier film entitled *The Student Prince in Heidelberg* had been released in 1927, three years after the stage operetta, but this silent film was an adaptation of *Alt-Heidelberg* rather than the operetta. The title character of both the film and the play share the name Karl Heinrich.)

*The Student Prince* captured the essence of nevermore and nostalgia, which defined the best works of the genre, as well as several atypical elements. First and foremost among the latter was the unhappy ending—the romantic leads do not end up together at the final curtain. Nor was true Ruritania present—the Prince hailed from the mythical *German* principality of Karlsberg rather than from a Balkan domain. Finally, the chorus, specifically the *male* chorus, figured centrally to the operetta's dramatic action, especially in the first act. The spirit of fraternity that the community shows toward the Prince is accentuated in numbers such as "Drinking Song," "Students March Song," and "Serenade." In some respects the spirit of German Romantic opera—with a tragic, or at least serious, tone reminiscent of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*—was being superimposed on operetta music.



Courtesy of The Silents Majority

*Ramon Navarro as the Prince and Norma Shearer as the object of his affections appear in the 1927 MGM production of The Student Prince in Old Heidelberg.*

Dorothy Donnelly's libretto faithfully followed the action of the German stage play on which the operetta was based, Wilhelm Meyer-Foerster's *Alt-Heidelberg* (1902), in which Prince Karl Franz of Karlsberg journeys to study in Heidelberg, accompanied by his tutor Engel. He falls in love with Kathie, waitress at the Inn of the Golden Apples. He is supported in his efforts by the fraternal Saxon Corps, a.k.a. the male chorus. He is called back to Karlsberg at the death of his grandfather, the king, and must enter into an arranged marriage with the Princess Margaret. He returns to Heidelberg in the final scene to bid farewell to Kathie. They realize, as the curtain falls, that all they can have is the memory of their youthful romance. In true Victorian fashion, they accept that duty must come before personal happiness.

*The Student Prince* was not the first American operetta to include a Teutonic beer-drinking royal. *The Prince of Pilsen* (1903) by Gustav Luders and Frank Pixley told a tale of mistaken identity, including a score with the "Heidelberg Stein Song," a vehicle made to order for unaccompanied (and presumably inebriated) chorus. Aristocrats with vaguely European accents became relatively common inhabitants of Broadway in the early years of

the century, largely through the influence of Lehár's *Die lustige Witwe* (*The Merry Widow*). Nothing could match its success as it waltzed onto Broadway in 1907.<sup>19</sup> Other royal operettas followed, including Reginald de Koven's *The Student King* (1906) and Paul Rubens's *The Balkan Princess* (1911). This string of Central European evocations would end with the first World War. Not surprisingly, audiences did not want to travel in their theatrical escapements to a region whose recent reality had so strongly and directly affected their lives.

The United States had not been so traumatized when Romberg and Donnelly created *The Student Prince* in 1923-24. The show almost failed to gain the stage, however, for other reasons. Numerous legal issues plagued the production, with the Shuberts not formally acquiring the rights to produce a musical adaptation of *Alt-Heidelberg* until November 26, 1924, just days before the show opened on Broadway.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, artistic differences between the creators (Romberg and Donnelly) and the producers (the Shuberts) hampered progress. Romberg himself described the situation:

You might be surprised to know that *The Student Prince*, which has proven one of the biggest financial hits, was damned by the producers before it opened here. They objected to the large male chorus, and were certain that the public would take exception to the German tale. But when we opened in Philadelphia the audience applauded so enthusiastically that the producers realized they had a success.<sup>21</sup>

The male chorus eventually became a Shubert trademark, and the German tale did not deter the operetta's success in America. The bittersweet ending also concerned the Shuberts,<sup>22</sup> but again their fears proved to be unfounded. Audiences were deeply moved by the overtly nostalgic tale of the passing of youth and young love.

Romberg's score is replete with waltzes (10) and marches (6), characteristic of its Viennese roots. Other types of musical numbers are in the decided minority (see Table 1).

The waltz form dominates the operetta.<sup>23</sup> Most of the waltzes have sentimental lyrics that extol traditions, memories, and days gone by. Titles such as "Golden Days" and "Farewell to Youth" capture a sense of loss that can never be regained. By contrast, "Drinking Song" is a fast-paced celebratory number that lauds camaraderie and solidarity and, not surprisingly, slips into a more bellicose march. Typical for Romberg, the operetta's principal love song, in this case "Deep in My Heart, Dear," is a sumptuous and gracious waltz. "Just We Two," the waltz for the secondary romantic leads, Princess Margaret and her beau Tarnitz, includes a self-reference to the dance form and its romantic connotations in the lyric:

Just we two, if they knew  
How in the waltz we woo

**Table 1: Song Types in *The Student Prince***

(Numbers refer to the numbering in the published vocal score.)

**Waltz**

- “Golden Days” (no. 2)
- “Drinking Song” (no. 5)
- “Here is the Maid; I’m Coming at Your Call” (no. 5)
- “Deep in My Heart, Dear” (no. 7)
- “When the Spring Wakens Everything” (no. 8)
- “Thoughts Will Come to Me” (no. 12)
- “We’re Off to Paris” (no. 12)
- “Ballet” (no. 13)
- “Just We Two” (no. 14)
- “Farewell to Youth” (no. 16)

**March**

- “Prologue” (no. 1)
- “Students March Song” (no. 4)
- “Drinking Song” (no. 5)
- “Come, Boys, Let’s All Be Gay, Boys” (no. 5)
- “Saxon Corps” (no. 8)
- “The Flag that Flies above Us” (no. 12)

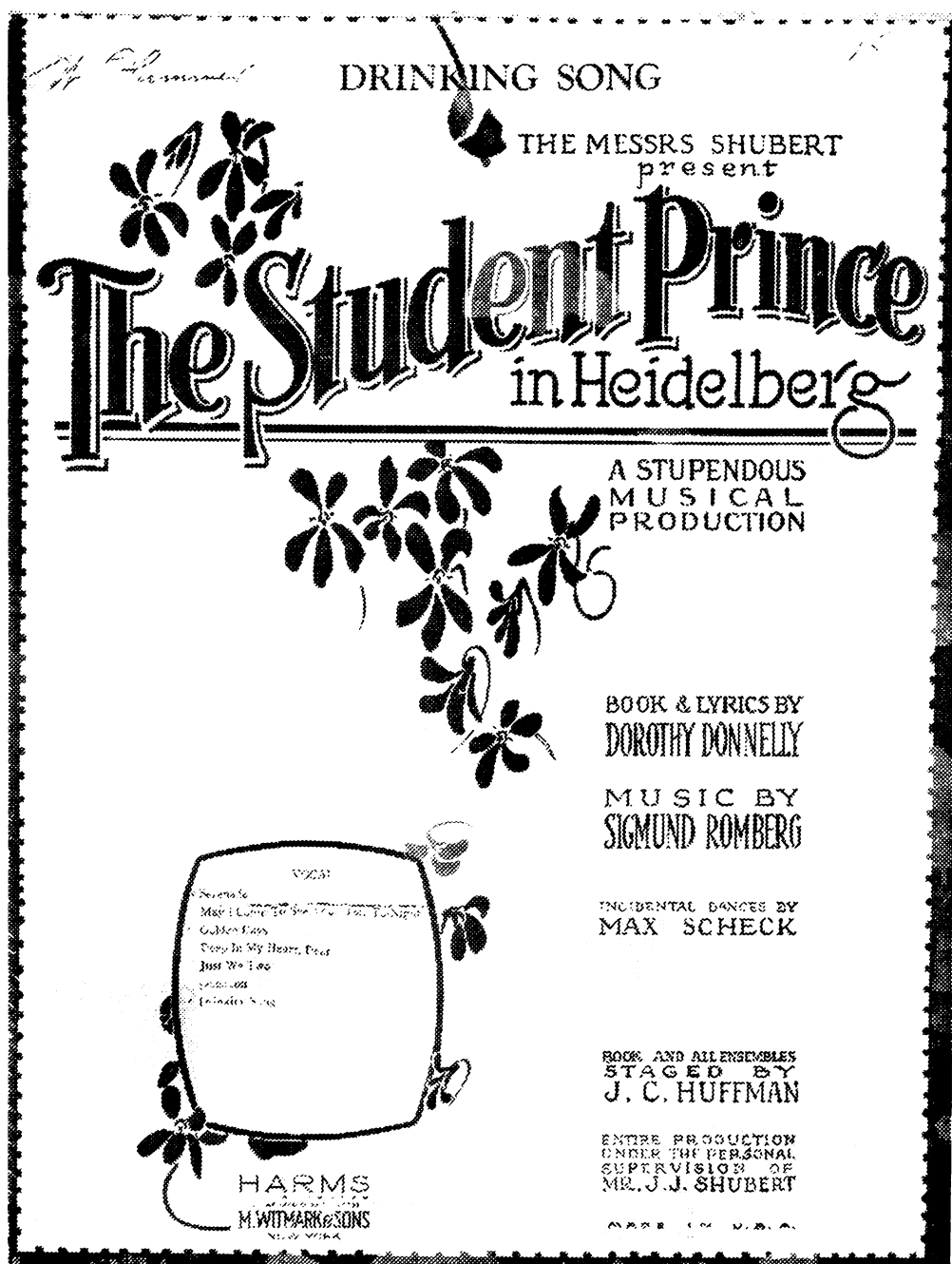
**Other representative types**

- Slow love song—“Serenade” (no. 8)
- Specialty comic number—“Farmer Jacob” (no. 9a)
- Foxtrot—“Student Life” (no. 10)
- Borrowed song—“Gaudeamus igitur” (no. 6a)

Likewise, marches constitute a significant part of the music in *The Student Prince*. “Students March Song” and “Come, Boys, Let’s All Be Gay, Boys” exude the boisterousness of the Heidelberg male student chorus. “The Flag that Flies above Us,” by contrast, displays the solemn style of a national anthem.

The waltzes and marches that fill the pages of *The Student Prince* have immediate appeal. They are even more direct than those in their Viennese sister shows such as *The Merry Widow*. This instantly agreeable character so pervades the show that other types of songs, including the rhythmically contrasting comic number “Farmer Jacob” and the foxtrot “Student Life,” fit comfortably into the score without seeming out of place.

Romberg added a bit of authenticity to the mix by inserting the famous German student song “Gaudeamus igitur,” perhaps best known to non-Germans from its quotation by Brahms in his *Academic Festival Overture*. Here was an opportunity for Romberg to include a number familiar to his audience, and in so doing make a winning theatrical gesture. The song is performed unaccompanied in the operetta, harkening back to the style



Courtesy of the American Music Research Center

Generic cover page used for songs from *The Student Prince*, “a stupendous musical production,” published by Harms and Witmark.

of the “Heidelberg Stein Song” in *The Prince of Pilsen* as well as the characteristic non-Elizabethan madrigal style of Arthur Sullivan. It also roots the operetta in an Old World university environment.

As in *Rose-Marie*, the score for *The Student Prince* contains a variety of musical styles. But whereas the former was dominated by Indianist exotism, it is the traditional Austro-German emphasis on waltzes and marches that pervades the latter. In *The Student Prince* comic numbers and foxtrots reflect Tin Pan Alley and a then-current “Broadway sound.” As with *Rose-Marie*, it was this combination of specific musical idioms associated with

a particular time or place (frontier Canada or pre-war Central Europe) plus familiar and easily apprehended American song forms that made *The Student Prince* the landmark that it was. Romberg's accomplishment in the show both linked and distinguished it from the musically challenging operettas of Victor Herbert, whose death in 1924 cleared the field for Friml and Romberg's updated approach.

Audiences reveled in the sense of bittersweet nostalgia that permeated *The Student Prince*. Its tale of youthful love conveyed a timeless intimacy enhanced through the inclusion of waltzes and other musical forms in a decidedly European style. The vaulting lyricism that permeates the score heightens—and in many way creates—the overt sentimentalism that defines at least in part the operetta genre. This operetta transported its audience to a nostalgic world that existed long ago and far away, but which suspiciously resembled Vienna before the Great War. Images of Germany itself were limited, restricted to the numbers for male chorus. Besides the aforementioned “Gaudeamus igitur,” the famous “Drinking Song” was the only other number in which Romberg created an identifiably German musical sound, a fast waltz with a heavy downbeat, suggestive of a traditional Teutonic drinking song. Its diatonic melody with prominent triadic outline contrasts strongly with Friml's chromatic depiction of Native Canadians described above (see Example 4).

Because waltzes and marches are so universally known and loved, at least within the universe of Western-influenced classical, popular, and folk musics, and far beyond Vienna, *The Student Prince* was able to free itself from more limited expectations of purely Ruritanian operetta.

Detlef

1. Drink! Drink! Drink! to eyes that are Bright as stars when they're  
2. Drink! Drink! Drink! to arms that are White and warm as a

Piano

DET.

shin - ing on me!  
rose in the sun!  
STUDENTS  
Drink to them!

Example 4. “Drinking Song” from  
*The Student Prince*, mm. 1-8.

## Concept, Influence, and Parody

Whereas *Rose-Marie* focused on the Indianist movement and its identifiers for much of its musical score, *The Student Prince* was rooted in Ruritania through its preference for waltzes and marches. Song types, rather than specific musical devices, defined *The Student Prince*. Neither score included only these elements, however; both embraced other musical styles reflective of 1920s Broadway, such as the foxtrot. Additionally, neither operetta fit exclusively into a single musical aesthetic: cross-fertilization, as it were, was apparent. *Rose-Marie* included waltzes and marches, and *The Student Prince* had elements of local color in “Gaudeamus igitur” and “Drinking Song.” Both works are American in origin and concept, characterized by a juxtaposition of styles, yet unified in sound and written for an American audience.

After the immense success of these two operettas, Friml and Romberg each adopted the geographical aesthetic of the other. Friml’s two most important shows after *Rose-Marie* were set in Europe, specifically in France: *The Vagabond King* (1925) and *The Three Musketeers* (1927). Romberg’s two biggest commercial successes adopted non-European settings, first French Morocco and then French Louisiana: *The Desert Song* (1926) and *The New Moon* (1928). The common element in these shows was, of course, France, whether the nation itself or parts of its colonial empire, a far safer source of exoticism in a world still in turmoil following the collapse of empires in Austria-Hungary, Russia, Turkey, and Germany. The Francophilia of 1920s American culture is clearly evident in the atmosphere surrounding these post-1924 operettas. The United States, or at least New York, had begun to take up the modernism embodied before the war by the likes of Stravinsky and Picasso, foreigners lionized by the City of Lights. By the mid-twenties, Paris for Americans had come to represent the height of novelty and chic. In retrospect, nothing seems more likely than that French settings should pervade operetta, long a favored genre for the expression of middle-class cultural values.

Although the physical settings changed, aspects of the fundamental musical approach taken by Friml and Romberg continued in their subsequent operettas. The chromaticism that functioned as an Indianist identifier in *Rose-Marie* remained a constituent part of Friml’s musical style. “Love Me Tonight,” the central waltz in *The Vagabond King*, is filled with the slithering chromaticisms of “Indian Love Call.” Likewise, waltzes and marches fill *The Desert Song* and *The New Moon*. “The Desert Song” from the show of the same name and “One Kiss” and “Wanting You” from *The New Moon* are among Romberg’s most famous waltzes. The overtly masculine marches “The Riff Song” from *The Desert Song* and “Stouthearted Men” from *The New Moon* both have their roots in the male-chorus numbers in *The Student Prince*. The sequels to *Rose-Marie* and *The Student Prince* served to fix their principal musical and plot markers that much more firmly in public consciousness. Americans who had been served a steady diet of Viennese



operetta since *The Merry Widow* of 1907 were being given yet more of the same. It was inevitable that familiarity would eventually lead to parody.

The old-fashioned flavor of both operettas for later generations of theatergoers made them ripe for comic travesty. *Rose-Marie* provided the fundamental source material for *Little Mary Sunshine* (1959; music, lyrics and book by Rick Besoyan). Set in the Colorado Rockies, the plot concerns Mary Potts and Captain “Big Jim” Warrington of the Forest Rangers. Their rapturous love duet is entitled “Colorado Love Call,” a clear reference to “Indian Love Call.” Besoyan created another operetta spoof, *The Student Gypsy* (1963), set in Ruritanian climes with allusions to *The Student Prince*. Song titles included “Drinking Song” and “Grenadiers Marching Song.”

In addition to its overall concept, *Rose-Marie* contained two numbers, “Indian Love Call” and “The Mounties,” that have attracted an unusually large number of parodies. One of the most humorous recent uses of “Indian Love Call” occurs in the Tim Burton film *Mars Attacks!* (1996), where Slim Whitman’s rendition causes the Martians’ heads to explode (literally). The overt masculinity of Canadian Mounties promoted in “The Mounties” is lampooned in Monty Python’s “The Lumberjack Song”—complete with the physical separation of the soloist and the chorus, as in the original. But many other examples could be cited.

On a more serious note, and at a time well before rock and roll made all Broadway operettas seem archaic, the work of Friml and Romberg directly shaped the products to appear after World War II. Irving Berlin’s *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946) was produced by Rodgers and Hammerstein, the same Hammerstein of *Rose-Marie* fame, so it is not surprising to find in it “I’m an Indian, Too,” a direct theatrical descendent of “Totem Tom Tom.” In its arbitrarily constructed view of Native Americans, which uses Indianist but ethnically ludicrous musical identifiers, “I’m an Indian, Too” represents little progress over its predecessor. Of course ersatz Indians are legion in American culture, but Friml’s fascination with the topic, an echo perhaps of his teacher Dvořák’s Indianist tendencies, suggests complex webs of influence yet to be explored.<sup>24</sup>

*The Student Prince* also found its way into other aspects of American culture. Heidelberg College in Tiffin, Ohio, claims “The Student Princes” as a sports moniker. Stephen Banfield interprets “Gaston” in the Disney animated feature (and subsequent stage musical) *Beauty and the Beast* (1991; music by Alan Menken, lyrics by Howard Ashman) as an homage to “Drinking Song.”<sup>25</sup>

While specific references to *Rose-Marie* and *The Student Prince* continue to crop up in both serious and comic veins, aspects of the overall dramatic concepts in both shows permanently influenced the twentieth-century American musical theater. Somber themes such as lost love and murder could and would be addressed in successor shows. The pensiveness of musicals such as *Show Boat* (1927), *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Carousel* (1945), and countless others was certainly anticipated in these operettas

from 1924. If for no other reason than their long runs, the two works proved that stories with sobering or negative elements could attract large musical theater audiences. Creating local color through musical means would be further developed in *The King and I* and *Flower Drum Song*, and more recently in *Miss Saigon*. Finally, the artistic quality of *Rose-Marie* and *The Student Prince* matched their commercial success. The relationship between music and drama that was so central to both works would grow in complexity and sophistication throughout the century. The original claims of integration made for *Rose-Marie* were realized again and again from *Oklahoma!* onward—and to such an extent that at least the appearance of continuity remains a virtual requirement for any Broadway show wanting to be taken seriously.

### Notes

1. For more on the creation of Ruritania, see Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998) and Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

2. Among the most important of these adaptations were *The Blue Paradise* (1915; an adaptation of Edmund Eysler's *Ein Tag im Paradies* and the show that introduced Romberg's first hit waltz, "Auf Wiedersehn"), *Maytime* (1917; based on Walter Kollo's *Wie Einst im Mai* and containing the waltz "Will You Remember?"), and *Blossom Time* (1921; a fictionalized account of the life of Franz Schubert with the waltz "Song of Love").

3. A detailed investigation of Friml's collaboration with the musical comedy veteran composer Stothart is beyond the scope of this study. However, a cursory examination reveals that Stothart's contributions are more diatonic and in the style of musical comedy. The composers of each song appear on the first page of the individual numbers in the published vocal score. Stothart would eventually move to Hollywood, where he was actively involved in the film music industry.

4. See Michael V. Pisani, "'I'm an Indian Too': Creating Native American Identities in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Music," in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 218-57.

5. Stephen Citron, *The Wordsmiths: Oscar Hammerstein II and Alan Jay Lerner* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 43.

6. Richard Traubner, *Operetta* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 379.

7. The same four numbers from the stage version used in the 1936 film surfaced again in 1954. Friml and Paul Francis Webster wrote four new songs, "The Right Place," "Free to be Free," "Love and Kisses," and "I Have the Love," and George Stoll and Herbert Baker contributed an additional song, "The Mountie that Never Got His Man."

8. For more on Dvořák's Indian connections and their progeny, see *Dvořák in America, 1892-1895*, ed. John C. Tibbetts (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1993), especially "Dvořák and the American Indian" by John Clapham, "Dvořák's Long American Reach" by Adrienne Fried Block, and chapters on selected musical works.

9. Adrienne Fried Block, "Dvořák's Long American Reach," in Tibbetts, 163.

10. *Ibid.*, 164.

11. *Ibid.*

12. For more on the construction and recovery of Native American cultures and traditions, see Margaret D. Jacobs, *Engendered Encounters: Feminism and Pueblo Cultures 1879-1934* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), especially chapter 5, "The 1920s Controversy over Indian Dances" or Philip DeLoria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

13. Paraphrased from Pisani, 229-30.
14. Pisani, 230.
15. This number was the basis for one of the most memorable scenes from the Jeanette MacDonald-Nelson Eddy version of *Rose-Marie*. Set against a lake (Nevada's Lake Tahoe, actually), Nelson, in his characteristic military garb, serenades the opera singer who is ill at ease in the wilderness as he tells her the story of two Indian lovers. This is quite the opposite from what transpires in the original stage version, where Rose-Marie tells Jim the story. Being half Native Canadian herself, she is more at home in the wilderness than her suitor.
16. This generalization is based on the gendered nature of the waltz and march in operetta. Female-dominated numbers are frequently in 3/4 while male-controlled ones are often in 4/4. This is not to say that men do not sing in 3/4 or women in 4/4, only that gender associations exist for the two meters.
17. For a more detailed discussion of *The Student Prince*, see William A. Everett, "Golden Days in Old Heidelberg: The First-act Finale of Romberg's *The Student Prince*," *American Music* 12, no. 3 (fall 1994): 255-82.
18. Much of Romberg's music was jettisoned. The numbers that appeared in the film were "Students March Song," "Drinking Song," "Serenade," "Deep in My Heart, Dear," and "Golden Days." Three songs by Nicholas Brodsky and Paul Francis Webster were added to the score: "Summertime in Heidelberg," "Beloved," and "I'll Walk with God."
19. For more on *The Merry Widow* and its New York reception, see Orly Leah Krasner, "Wien, Women and Song: *The Merry Widow* in New York," *Sonneck Society Bulletin* 22, vol. 1 (spring 1996): 1, 8-11.
20. William Klein, New York, to J.J. Shubert, New York, 26 November 1924, Shubert Archive (New York).
21. Sigmund Romberg, "A Peep into the Workshop of a Composer," *Theatre Magazine*, vol. 48, no. 6 (December 1928): 72.
22. David Ewen, *New Complete Book of the American Musical Theater* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 513.
23. For more on Romberg's waltzes, including those in *The Student Prince*, see William A. Everett, "Sigmund Romberg and the Waltz," in *S'Marvelous! S'Wonderful! Essays in American Popular Song*, ed. Ann Sears (Greenwood Press, forthcoming).
24. Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
25. Stephen Banfield, "Popular Song and Popular Music on Stage and Film," in *The Cambridge History of American Music*, ed. David Nicholls (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 333.

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