

## Hedvig Ujvári

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# Operetta premieres at the Royal Hungarian Opera House between 1888 and 1891

### Gustav Mahler's programme policy

#### Abstract

Gustav Mahler, the Austrian conductor and composer, was the artistic director of the Royal Hungarian Opera House from 1888 to 1891. In his programme policy he paid particular attention to the staging of song plays, especially those by Jacques Offenbach, in addition to opera and ballet. During his Budapest tenure, however, of the planned operettas, only *Eljegyzés lámpafénynél* (*Le mariage aux lanternes – The Wedding by Lantern-Light*) was performed, while *Sinan basa* (*Sinan Pasha*) and *A víg cimborák* (*The Merry Chums*) were only performed at charity nights. The aim of this paper is to explore the reception history of these three compositions and how they fit into Mahler's artistic vision and the repertoire of the Opera House.

**Keywords:** Hungarian Royal Opera House, Gustav Mahler, Jacques Offenbach, operetta, Géza Zichy, *Sinan basa* (*Sinan Pasha*), *Eljegyzés lámpafénynél* (*The Wedding by Lantern-Light*), *A víg cimborák* (*The Merry Chums*)

## Introduction

The two and a half years of the career of the Austrian conductor and composer Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) were intertwined with the history of the Royal Hungarian Opera House, as he was responsible for the musical direction of the house from October 1888 to mid-March 1891. Opera and stage dancing in Hungary were given their own theatre in 1884, until then they were part of the activities of the National Theatre. Mahler thus took on the artistic direction of a young institution, the second opera house of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but the task came with quite a few challenges. His predecessor, Sándor Erkel (1846–1900), had already found the task difficult, mainly because of the financial crisis, the personnel policy and the mediocrity of the available musician-artist qualities. Mahler also inherited these problems, and he also had to face criticism on several occasions because of his foreign origin. He was often accused of producing performances in foreign languages, i.e. that the theatre he ran did not (or not enough) carry a national character. The debates have sometimes reached even the Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

However, Mahler's programme policy was not only focused on opera and ballet performances; he had already indicated this in the first six months of his tenure, that, in addition to grand opera, the Opera House also wishes to give a place in its repertoire to the genre of the song play, which lies at the intersection of prose and music. He intended to do this primarily by staging the works of Jacques Offenbach. During his two and a half years in Budapest, however, he only premiered *Eljegyzés lámpafénynél* (*The Wedding by Lantern-Light*), an operetta (officially called a merry song play) that had already been performed in other theatres in the capital.<sup>2</sup> A detailed, monographic treatment of this is known.<sup>3</sup> Operetta was staged at the Opera House a week before the premiere of the work on 12 December 1890, and then again two months later, true enough, these were given only once in the context of charity nights, so they did not reflect Mahler's musical taste and choice. The following paper aims to explore the reception of the premieres of *Sinan basa* (Sinan Pasha), *Eljegyzés*

1 For details see Gedeon and Máthé 1965; La Grange 2020, 347–441; Roman 2010; Ujvári 2023b.

2 It was performed six times under Mahler's tenure until 6 January 1891; it was on the repertoire until 1893, and five more times after Mahler's leaving. See *Opera Digitár*, <https://digitar.opera.hu/alkotas/eljegyzes-lampafenynel/8920> (last visited: March 4, 2025).

3 See Bozó 2021, mainly 127–147.

*lámpafénynél* (*The Wedding by Lantern-Light*) and *A víg cimborák* (*The Merry Chums*) at the Opera House.

## The Royal Hungarian Opera House and Gustav Mahler's milieu in Budapest

Gustav Mahler's activities in Budapest can be examined both musically and in terms of institutional history; as to the latter, one can actually speak of the Mahler–Beniczky tandem. Ferenc Beniczky (1833–1905) was appointed Intendant of the Opera House to consolidate the financial situation, and he wanted to hire a conductor as artistic director,<sup>4</sup> preferably a foreign one. One of his candidates was Arthur Nikisch (1855–1922), who, however, turned down the offer when he became aware of the chaotic circumstances. For Beniczky, the professional approach, the art-political aspects and, not least, Nikisch's network of contacts were important. These criteria were basically met by Mahler, who was twenty-eight years old at the time, and who was recommended to the intendant by Ödön Mihalovich, Dávid Popper and Guido Adler.<sup>5</sup> The young conductor was delighted to accept the invitation, as he was aware of the career opportunities offered by the position in Budapest. However, Gustav Mahler's arrival proved problematic for several reasons: his German roots, his Jewish origins and his Wagnerian nature.

Prior to Mahler, during the time when Frigyes Podmaniczky (1924–1907) was the intendant, mainly French and Italian works were staged, and the most frequently performed composer was Giuseppe Verdi, followed by Ferenc Erkel. The main fear with regard to Mahler was an increase in the proportion of German operas, which was fuelled by the conductor's plans for the premiere of the *Ring*. Conscious of his commitment, Mahler wanted to meet the expectations from both outside and inside, but he could not solve or resolve the fundamental

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4 Ferenc Beniczky became the government commissioner of the state theatres on 5 January 1888, and then the intendant in 1889.

5 Ödön Mihalovich (1842–1929), composer, music teacher, director of the Royal National Hungarian Academy of Music and Drama (today: University of Theatre and Film Arts), and later of the Academy of Music. Dávid Popper (1843–1913), cellist, teacher at the Academy of Music, member of Hubay Jenő's String Quartet. Guido Adler (1855–1941), Austrian musicologist, founder of the Institute of Musicology at the University of Vienna.

dilemma: he was aware that only Erkel's operas had a real national character, but he could not and would not give up German operas.

The other aspect was Mahler's Jewish origin, which was not unusual in the fin de siècle: he represented an assimilated Central European Jewry from which Zionist ideas were completely alien, nor did he identify with other national ideas and movements. His later conversion to Catholicism (in 1897) was partly due to a consideration of career opportunities and a full assimilation into German culture. However, Hungarian Jewry wanted to identify with Hungarian culture, not German. For Mahler, this was a double problem, as he was of Jewish origin, but his intellectual, cultural and musical training was rooted in German culture, and he could not hide his Wagnerian identity. His job, however, was tied to a cultural institution in which national character had not yet been able to develop, unlike in Hungarian literature.

Mahler's work in Budapest was closely linked to Ferenc Beniczky's work as a government commissioner and intendant. This successful collaboration came to an end, however, as the politician responsible for the administration of the house was appointed chief bailiff of Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County at the end of 1890. From 1 February 1891, his duties were taken over by Count Géza Zichy, who, however, as a talented pianist, also wished to decide on music-related matters himself. Mahler left for Hamburg in mid-March.

## Briefly about the operetta

Operetta appeared in Vienna with the works of Jacques Offenbach, whose plays were successfully performed in the imperial city for decades after 1850. The genre of Viennese operetta is characterised by the presence of elements of *opera buffa*, the song play, and elements of folk theatre can also be found in it. There were significant differences within the genre, and it is to be considered to identify operetta simplistically with popular music, with artistic works considered inferior. It is not negligible that these were in great demand among certain social groups and were more popular than opera.<sup>6</sup>

Dance music was a synonym for popular music, which was treated with reservations, as its main attributes were its success orientation and marketability. Accordingly, it was intended to meet specific requirements, i.e. the current

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed account of this, see Csáky 2021; Ujvári 2022a.

entertainment needs of the audience, and to meet the tastes and expectations of its audiences. Its musical language was also adapted to this, very different from classical music, reflecting the banality of everyday life. The commercial aspect, the financial interest of the production, overrode everything, as a whole operetta industry (composers, librettists, theatres, etc.) was built on it and lived from operetta production, so entertainment and economic interests were significantly intertwined. As operetta was one of the most important forms of entertainment of the time, its producers were primarily concerned with the economic benefits of their productions and the money they made, and the primacy of artistic considerations was forgotten. The commercial aspect and the audience's demand for entertainment were also linked to the rapid growth in operetta production, which also came at the expense of quality. In the cities of the Monarchy, including Budapest, this trend prevailed, and 70-80 per cent of the plays performed were entertainments.

The emergence of the operetta and its noisy success can be explained by social and cultural reasons alike. The composer and librettist used contemporary linguistic and musical codes and content that were familiar to the public, so the resulting cultural product was a faithful reflection of the socio-cultural consciousness of the time. In other words, operetta was a product of both its creators and its audience, and its acceptance and success were the result of mental harmony.

Alongside the middle classes, the genre has always had its well-known supporters and detractors. Although operetta was the preferred form of entertainment for urban audiences, the educated bourgeoisie did not publicly embrace it as a form of entertainment, as it was at odds with the bourgeois musical canon. In the private sphere, however, there was a devotion to the light muse, with even Gustav and Alma Mahler enthusiastic about *A víg özvegy* (*Die lustige Witwe – The Merry Widow*). Karl Kraus, however, identified operetta at the turn of the century with cultural decline, and vehemently attacked it in literature and journalism as well as in politics and the visual arts. While in Offenbach's work he found French music with a 'Voltairean spirit', with a certain amount of wit and mischievousness, but without a sickly sensuality, in the Viennese operetta he did not feel the atmosphere and denounced the loss of world view.

For Friedell, Kracauer, Broch and Adorno, Offenbach proved to be the benchmark for operetta and light music. According to the latter, while French operetta was a combination of originality, imagination and adequate texts, Johann

Strauss showed signs of decline, as his excellent music was accompanied by inadequate libretti.

Hermann Broch, a cultural pessimist, perceived a provincial vs. cosmopolitan opposition between Vienna and Paris, with a vacuum of values vs. a movement of values, which was also echoed in the arts. He described Johann Strauss's operettas as a vacuum product, in which immorality and sheer cynical amusement were well combined. The best traditions of Viennese folk theatre, studded with musical numbers, and the satirical touches still present in Raimund and Nestroy's commitment to French vaudeville, have disappeared, as has the irony, and what remains is the mockery of language.

At the beginning of the Monarchy's operetta history, Offenbach's metropolitan, internationally atmospheric works (e.g. *The Wedding by Lantern-Light*) were performed simultaneously and enthusiastically in Vienna, Budapest and the larger cities. Seeing its success, operetta became an attraction for more and more theatres in the city, and the genre's openness in terms of content, theme and music proved to be suitable for a wider audience.

### The *Sinan basa* (*Sinan Pasha*)

During Gustav Mahler's tenure, the play *Sinan basa*<sup>7</sup> was first performed at the Royal Hungarian Opera House on 5 December 1890, as part of a gala performance. Countess Manóné Andrássy<sup>8</sup> organised a charity night for the National Theatre Pension Fund, the Pension Fund for Newspaper Writers and the first children's shelter in Budapest. The first half of the programme was a short philharmonic concert: Weber's *Oberon Overture*, Mozart's *Symphony in G minor*, Wagner's prelude to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (*The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*) and an aria from Thomas' *Mignon*. Mahler conducted the orchestra. The music reviewers in the newspapers invariably praised Mahler's conducting achievements, often with special musical solutions. In the second part of the programme, the one-act comic operetta *Sinan basa* was presented, which has

<sup>7</sup> Most of the newspapers refer to the work under the title *Sinan pasa* (Sinan Pasha).

<sup>8</sup> Countess Manó Andrássy Gabriella Pálffy (1833–1914) was the wife of Count Manó Andrássy (1821–1891), who played a significant role in the development of the Hungarian iron industry, iron ore mining and metallurgy and was the sister-in-law of Gyula Andrássy Sr.

so far only been staged by the Tata Theatre.<sup>9</sup> The libretto was written by Ernő Zöldy, the music by Rezső Raimann, the conductor of the Tata Theatre.<sup>10</sup>

The plot centres on Sinan Pasha, lord of Tata Castle, during the Turkish rule. He has tender feelings for his foster daughter Bella, who in turn is attracted to the nobleman Kálmán Pálffy, and they become close. Pálffy's comrade, Tamás sets his eyes on Aina, the daughter of the castle warden Ali Hadji. In the wake of this slim plot, the music critic of *Fővárosi Lapok* notes that "the lyricist did not push his wit too far, and the composer his ingenuity."<sup>11</sup> In the play, the castle warden has "a wine elated scene,"<sup>12</sup> which is full of expressions that are not worthy for the stage.<sup>13</sup> The music of the play is adequate, but the reviewer suggests that several of the melodies seem to be not original compositions. The singers also included students from the opera school, of whom Szirovatka<sup>14</sup> skilfully played the role of Pálffy, "with a remarkable, complete vocal range," and a promising career as a lyric tenor.<sup>15</sup> The female protagonist, Margit Kaczér, also did a good job as Bella. The title role was played by Lajos Szendrői, the orchestra was conducted by the composer.<sup>16</sup>

The reviewer of the *Budapesti Hirlap* also considered the libretto a waste of words, and although the originality of the play is questionable, the music

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9 Theatre life in Tata has a long tradition from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to the theatre-loving, theatre-steaming Esterházy counts. In the 1880s, Count Miklós Esterházy had a theatre designed by the architects Fellner and Hellmer built in the Tata Castle, decorated with works by Hungarian painters and sculptors. The building was inaugurated on 16 March 1889. The art-loving count also maintained a permanent orchestra. The premiere of *Sinan basa* was also there.

10 Ernő Zöldy (1827–1904) was the librarian of Count Ferenc Esterházy in Tata. Rezső Raimann (1861–1913) studied in Vienna. Of his operas, *Arden Énok* (1894) and *Sinan basa* (1890) were staged at the Opera House. See <https://digitar.opera.hu/szemely/zoldy-erno/16422> and <https://digitar.opera.hu/szemely/raimann-rezso/16418> (last visited: March 4, 2025).

11 "Diszelőadás az operaházban." *Fővárosi Lapok*, December 6, 1890, 2485–2486.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 "But turn your name Hungarian, for God's sake! With such a name even Petőfi could not have prospered." (*Budapesti Hirlap*, December 6, 1890, 3.)

Károly Balta (Szirovatka) (1867–?) private singer (tenor); member of the Opera House first between 1891–1894, then between 1909–1913. According to newspaper reports, Count Miklós Esterházy "trained the young tenor Szirovátka, who had been selected by Mahler for the Opera House, at his own expense by the Viennese singing teacher Macció." (*Pesti Hirlap*, December 3, 1890, 5.) The same published in *Pesti Napló*, December 3, 1890, 3.

15 *Fővárosi Lapok*, December 6, 1890, 2486.

16 Margit Kaczér (1870–1951), private singer (soprano); member of the Opera House between 1891 and 1910. Lajos Szendrői (1850–1919), private singer (bass), member of the Opera House between 1881–1912.

is melodious, “very pleasant, tasteful, delicate.”<sup>17</sup> Its arias, couplets and waltzes are based on light, catchy melodies, and the composer showed restraint in the orchestration. The *Pesti Hirlap* was similar in content, but it was much more forceful in its wording: since “the performance was for charity, we want to exercise charity towards this performance by not engaging in criticism. All the more so because it was not only its first performance at the Opera House, but also, hopefully, its last.”<sup>18</sup> However, it was average compared to modern operettas. The singers deserve high praise for their artistic performance, as they did their best to present the novelty in an enjoyable performance.<sup>19</sup>

The *Pesti Napló* praised the composer and conductor Raimann, who did well in both capacities. He describes the operetta’s text and music as ordinary, with no new ideas and “no need to look for a tighter musical logic (as far as the mixing of arias, duets, choruses, waltzes, polkas and mazurkas is concerned).”<sup>20</sup> After the first half of the programme, the audience “might have expected something even more muscular and in tune with the atmosphere.”<sup>21</sup>

According to *Zenelap*’s critic, Raimann’s “work can only be praised.”<sup>22</sup> Although originality cannot be claimed for his work, “at least there was an effort to provide something that entertained. His song waltzes and couplets are all light, catchy melodies with simple instrumentation for a natural effect.”<sup>23</sup> He could only praise the performers and the audience appreciated their performance.

Ágost (August) Beer, the reviewer of *Pester Lloyd* also referred to the contrast gaping between the two parts of the evening. Raimann’s music, although initially shows signs of originality, then increasingly recalls the melodies of Strauss and Millöcker. The castle warden Ali Hajji is the only *buffo* character, but due to his forced humour, he can’t really be entertaining. Margit Kaczér performed as a graduating student of the opera school, and although she has a pleasant voice, she could not hide her inexperience on stage. Bárdossy’s production as Aina was much more relaxed, and the male singers also tried to make the most of their

17 *Budapesti Hirlap*, December 6, 1890, 3. For contemporary music critics, see Ujvári 2023a.

18 “Diszelőadás.” *Pesti Hirlap*, December 6, 1890, 5–6, here 5.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 i. l. 1890. “Szinház és művészet.” *Pesti Napló*, December 6, 1890, [3].

22 “Andrássy Manóné pártfogása mellett...” *Zenelap*, December 23, 1890, 6.

23 Ibid.

**SINAN BASA.**

Eredeti vig operette 1 felv. Irta Zöldi Ernő. Zenéjét szerzette Raimann R.

**S z e m é l y e k :**

Sinan basa . . . . .	Szendrői L.
Bella . . . . .	Kaczér M.
Ali Hadzsi . . . . .	Hegedüs F.
Aina . . . . .	Bárdosy J.
Pálffy Kálmán . . . . .	Szirovatka
Péchy . . . . .	Kiss B.
Benke . . . . .	Juhász
Szilágyi . . . . .	Krétschy
Tamás . . . . .	Takáts M.
Jussuf . . . . .	Gonda

**Kezdeté 7 óraker.**

Figure 1. Cast of *Sinan basa* (Source: Pester Lloyd, December 5, 1890, Attachment)

Figure 2. The programme of the charity night with the cast of *Sinan basa* (Source: Pesti Napló, December 5, 1890, [3].)

roles. There was also a solo dance in the play, performed by Katinka Müller: it started as an Oriental-style ballad dance and then it drifted into a waltz. The initial enthusiasm of the audience for the production gradually waned as the plot and music grew more and more subdued.<sup>24</sup>

In its own way, the charity event was also reflected on by *Bolond Istók*, known for its antisemitic slurs. He wrote of Miss Bárdosy that "she sounds like a Welsh bard. The Prince of Wales can listen to her at the theatre in Tata."<sup>25</sup> As to Mahler, the focus was on his impulsive conducting style, which was often evident through-

**Fővárosi színházak.**

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**Nemzeti színház.**

Évi bérlet 239 sz. Havi bérlet 5. sz.  
December 5-én:  
E l ő s z ő r :

**ELINTÉZETLEN ÜGY.**

Színmű 4 felv. Irta: Almási Tihamér.

**S z e m é l y e k :**

Récey báró	Ujházi
Toroczkay	Gyenes
Iren	P. Márkus E.
Forray Aurél	Mihályi
Dóra	G. Cs. Ilag T.
Kelemen	Mátrai
Gyula	Benedek
Özv. Lengyelné	Szathmáryné
Lili	J. Gáál I.
Török Muki	Nádai
Kovács dr.	Császár
Galsai	Horváth
Petróczy	Latabár
Debrőy	Hetényi
Ócsay	Gabányi

**Kezdeté 7 óraker.**

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Műsor: Szombaton: Elintézetlen ügy. Vasárnap: Elintézetlen ügy.

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**M. kir. operaház.**

Rendkívüli előadás.  
December 5-én:

Gróf Andrásy Manó né ő s nagyméltósága által, a budapesti nemzeti színházi nyújtintézet, a magyarországi hírlapírók nyugdíjintézete s a budapesti első gyermekmenhely-egylet javára rendezv,

K a l i s c h - L e h m a n n  
Lili asszony és a m. kir. operaház tagjainak közreműködésével.

**D i s z e l ő a d á s .**

Műsor:

1. Nyitány Weber K. M. »Oberon« cz. operájából.
2. Simfonia (G-mol) Mozarttól.
3. Polonaise Thomas A. »Mignon« cz. operájából. Zenekíséret mellett éneklí Kalisch-Lehman L. asszony.
4. Előjáték Wagner R. »A nürnbergi mesterdalnokok« cz. operájából.

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**Diszertációk.**

Burghardt B.  
Ujvári

**Kezdeté 7 óraker.**

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Műsor: Szombaton: Blaha Luiza asszony mint vendég: Szegény Jonathan.

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**Várszínház.**

December 5-én:  
**Zárva.**

**Műsor: Vasárnap: Fedora.**

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**Felölös szerkesztő: Ifj. ÁBRÁNYI KORNÉL.**

<sup>24</sup> A. B. 1890. "Im königlichen Opernhause." Pester Lloyd, December 6, 1890, Attachment.

<sup>25</sup> "Bolond Istók a színházban." *Bolond Istók*, December 14, 1890. Ilona Sz. Bárdosy Ilona (1870–1933) was a private singer at the Opera House (soprano), between 1890–1896, and then 1899–1913.

out his career: “They had a green cage made for Malér at the concert of Count Manóné Andrassy; he conducted from there, like some pious beast, so as not to jump off or push any of the orchestra members into retirement.”<sup>26</sup> In line with the orientation of the paper, the Jewishness could not be missed either, and the controversy over Hungarian vs. foreign works was again brought up, because of the programming policy of the song theatre: “‘Szinán basa.’ Operetta of Tata in the Jewpera. Sinan e Verdi, e ben Trovatore. And at least the Eszterházy stage produces original music, unless the ‘Hungarianing’ Jewpera does not.”<sup>27</sup>

## In and beyond the paradigm shift in the genre: *Eljegyzés lámpafénynél* (*The Wedding by Lantern-Light*)

In addition to his duties as conductor, Mahler was also artistic director, and in this capacity he had extensive powers alongside Intendant Beniczky. As a result of its programme policy, it soon became clear that the Opera House would also offer a place in its repertoire for the genre of song, which combines prose and music, alongside grand opera. He made this clear in March 1889 with the production of Aimé Maillart’s comic opera *Les dragons de Villars* (*The Dragons of Villars*),<sup>28</sup> and then the following season, announced in October, included Nicolai’s *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor* (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*) and Auber’s *Le part du diable* (*The Devil’s Share*) among the scheduled shows. Mahler went further, however, and also targeted Offenbach’s works, especially the “melodious, noble song-plays” of his first, “virtuous” period, in which the composer “was still moving entirely along the pure artistic path of the vocal performance.”<sup>29</sup> This included *Eljegyzés lámpafénynél* (*The Wedding by Lantern-Light*) and the fantastic operetta *Hoffmann meséi* (*The Tales of Hoffmann*); the latter, although ready to be performed, was cancelled due to the illness of the lead (and non-replaceable) Bianca Bianchi. During Mahler’s years in Budapest, only

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26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 The play was known to the audience in the capital, the Népszínház had already presented it in January 1881 (translated by Lajos Evva and Jenő Rákosi), as was the case also with the operetta *The Tales of Hoffmann*.

29 *Fővárosi Lapok*, 4 October 1889, 2017–2018.

Offenbach's first staging of the latter was finally completed on 12 December 1890, after *Csárdás*, the ballet premiere of Sztojanovits. As planned the two plays were produced together, as the "national ballet"<sup>30</sup> was intended to provide a balance for the staging of Hungarian works.<sup>31</sup>

Mahler's programming policy towards Offenbach was certainly shaped by the needs of the audience, as well as by his personal preferences, the company-building aspects and the qualities of the singers available to him. On the one hand, works by the more popular composers provided an excellent counterpoint to the more specific Wagner repertoire, and on the other, Mahler had conducted several works by the French composer in his earlier stints. Offenbach's works demanded prose, singing and acting skills, so in addition to balancing the repertoire of the Opera House, they were also a good stage for preparing for Wagner's music dramas, as well as for the intention of building a company.<sup>32</sup>

The review in *Pester Lloyd* did not share Mahler's sympathy for Offenbach. According to its reviewer, "the former king of the Parisian suburban stage" might himself be surprised that his "witty trinkets and their solemn resurrection on one of the serious stages" are predicted to live such a long life. In his opinion, although Offenbach is 'a genius of his own kind', apart from a few of his compositions—such as *The Tales of Hoffmann* with its 'sparkling, exquisite melodies'—he is not a man for the stage with Wagner, Verdi and Auber. The "pious" *The Wedding by Lantern-Light*, presented in Budapest, is barely recognisable by lamplight, if one is familiar with its Paris or even Vienna productions. It is not good for the play to be treated in a "discreet and subtle" way, as it loses its character, just as the way it is performed by actresses from other Pest-Buda theatres would not be good for the Opera House's "subtle" audience. The audience of the Opera, however, did not seem to take this "strict position" and agreed with the artistic management, who believed that Offenbach—despite some of his operatic texts—deserved to be praised within the walls of this house. Both the orchestra

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30 Ibid.

31 *Csárdás* was premiered on 7 December 1890. For the first ballet with a Hungarian theme by a Hungarian composer, see Ujvári 2022b.

32 See Bozó 2021, 132–133. For Mahler, the lack of a suitable dramatic soprano and tenor was a constant, unresolved problem, which he could only remedy by regularly inviting guest artists, to the constant disapproval of the press, audiences and critics. For the permanent members see Bozó 2021, 133–136. In the context of the reception, I will only comment on aspects not covered there, because of the excellent elaboration.

and the singers performed superbly, bringing the sparkling humour of the play to life with musical instruments.<sup>33</sup>

This short article was presumably written by Albert Sturm, but the paper's regular music editor, Ágost Beer, published a longer article after the premiere of *The Dragoons of Villars*, about what he saw as an unfavourable change in the direction of opera.<sup>34</sup> In his opinion, the comic opera genre is in decline, its century-long success story is now a thing of the past, and the present can only go back to the works of Boieldieu, Auber, Hérold, Adam and other less notable authors. The motto of the opéra comique, "*Ridendo castigat mores*,"<sup>35</sup> had passed, the hearty laugh, the charming smile had been replaced by "the insolent grimace," the musical farce had been replaced by the musical folk play, Jacques Offenbach's "flood of appearances had swept away good taste" and the emerging vocal talents. The roaring successes of the last two decades, Ambroise Thomas's Mignon and Bizet's Carmen, can no longer be classed among comic operas. After Bizet's death, the author of *Le roi l'a dit*, Léo Delibes, was a great hope, seen as a mixture of Auber and Adam. The follow-up, however, took a heroic-pathetic and then lyrical-tragic direction with Jean de Nivelle and *Lakmé*. The Italians consume the works by Rossini and Donizetti, the Germans Lortzing and Nikolai, and the latter even Wagner's *Meistersingers* (*Mastersingers*), which is far from comedy.

Beer also strongly criticised the operetta genre, which dominates public taste with its loud authoritarianism," catering only to the shallow entertainment desires of the masses. It also has a devastating effect on real art and the shaping of taste, as well as on quality song-playing (*Singspiel*). In the latter, he does not dispute its wholesome, folksy features, but these are replaced by pointless mockery, characters replaced by caricature, grace replaced by coquetry, and simple, good music replaced by "repulsive gibberish in which two- and three-quarter beats are mixed with dramaturgical turgidity."<sup>36</sup> In modern operetta, there is no need to ask for a rational, logically structured plot based on simple and easily understandable motifs, nor for natural, melodic, non-popular, yet

33 a. s. [Albert Sturm?] 1890. "Im königlichen Opernhause." *Pester Lloyd*, December 13, 1890, Attachment 1.

34 Beer, August. 1889. "'Das Glöckchen des Eremiten.'" (Les dragons de Villars.) Komische Oper in 3 Akten in Aimé Maillard. (Première der königlichen Oper am 31. März 1889)." *Pester Lloyd*, April 1, 1889, [2–3].

35 *Castigat ridendo mores*: 'purifies morals laughing' (Jean-Baptiste de Santeuil).

36 Beer, August: "'Das Glöckchen des Eremiten'..." op. cit., [2–3].

expressive music that knows its genre limits. The libretto factories of Paris, Vienna and Germany think in terms of exotic locations, unlikely characters, impossible situations, elaborate adventures and intrigues, and sharp jokes that can only lead to villainy. This is coupled with a simple score that can be played by less skilled musicians in the last suburban theatre, or can be played to the audience's level of demand; the music is reminiscent of Verdi's arias, Strauss's waltzes, Meyerbeer's finales and Offenbach's couplets.

Beer believes that at times like these, it is a double pleasure to premiere Maillard's work, but his music is almost too subtle and timid to penetrate the great noise that characterises the genre. He praises the libretto and the pleasing, fresh music. The background to the plot is a simple village scene, which has both lively, naïve and charming features and serious historical aspects, but these do not overshadow the opera's cheerful atmosphere.<sup>37</sup>

## Premiere of *A víg cimborák* (The Merry Chums) at the Royal Hungarian Opera House

Two months after the premiere of the song play *The Wedding by Lantern-Light*, an operetta was staged again at the national song theatre. The occasion was a benefit for the White Cross Society and the National Theatre Pension Fund on 13 February 1891. The Society was founded to save "infants to be lost" with Archduchess Stefania as its patron.<sup>38</sup> The evening was met with keen interest, as Franz Joseph also honoured it with his presence. The choice of programme, however, proved unfortunate: after *A víg cimborák*, which was noisy with anti-semitic slurs, the monarch left in a hurry.

The events, especially the individual programmes, were also reported in the press of the time, although most of the papers did not mention the political overtones. The *Pesti Napló*, however, did not leave it at that, looking for someone responsible, and thought it would find him in the person of the music director Gustav Mahler, who had only limited powers. On the other hand, *Egyenlőség* pointed out that, on the one hand, Géza Zichy had already taken over the artistic and artistic responsibilities of the song theatre, so Mahler could not be held

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> S. 1891. "A 'Fehér Kereszt' operaházi estéje." *Fővárosi Lapok*, February 14, 1891, 316–317.

responsible for the incident, and on the other hand, the choice of the play was in bad taste towards the White Cross Society, as the founders of the charity organisation included a good number of Jewish citizens.<sup>39</sup>

The evening got off to a great start, the auditorium was a “magnificent sight”—boxes were filled with distinguished families, the ladies appeared in “full regalia.”<sup>40</sup> At about seven o’clock a curious crowd gathered in front of the Opera House, awaiting the arrival of His Majesty, who soon appeared. The emperor and his entourage were received by Intendant Zichy, who then led the king to the box reserved for him during the *Hunyadi* overture, where Franz Joseph sat alone. His entourage followed the performance from the box opposite the stage.

The full programme of the evening was covered in detail by several newspapers. The programme began with the opening of Erkel’s *Hunyadi László*, followed by Andor Kozma’s poem *Fehér kereszt* (White Cross), written especially for the occasion, recited by<sup>41</sup> Mari Jászai,<sup>42</sup> who was applauded eight<sup>43</sup> times by the audience. The poem describes the plight of children born to fallen girls, only a few of whom are saved by human mercy, a cause the White Cross Society is working to achieve. The play, after depicting the happy fate of children, tells of the nightly calvary of a poor mother with her small child in her arms. In her desperate situation she heads for the Danube, but is stopped there by the angel of mercy and they are saved by the White Cross.

The recitation was followed by a song play by Károly Huber and György Némethy entitled *A víg cimborák* (The Merry Chums),<sup>44</sup> and then by Géza Zichy’s “poem” entitled *Zene* (Music),<sup>45</sup> performed by the Opera House’s choir and orchestra. The latter opened the second half of the evening, which was written for

39 For details see Ujvári, in press.

40 S.: “A ‘Fehér Kereszt’ operaházi estéje”, op. cit., 316–317.

41 Kozma 1900. Andor Kozma (1861–1933), poet and literary translator, published in numerous metropolitan newspapers (*Pesti Hírlap*, *Budapesti Hírlap*, *Ország-Világ*, *A Hét*, *Az Ujság*, *Nemzet*, *Borsszem Jankó*), see Merényi 1941.

42 Mari Jászai (1850–1926) was an actress, one of the greatest Hungarian tragic actresses, and a member of the National Theatre.

43 “Az operaházban.” *Ország-Világ*, February 21, 1891, 131.

44 According to the playbills, it was a one-act comic opera, according to musicological sources it was an operetta. See Bozó, s. a.

Károly Huber (Hungarianised name: Károly Hubay (1828–1885) was a conductor, composer, violinist, and music teacher, father of violinist Jenő Hubay; György Némethy (1826–1901) was a theatre singer, and author of the text of *A víg cimborák*.

45 Zichy 1895. The poem on which the music is based is also by Zichy.

**Magy.kir. operaház**  
1-ső rendkívüli bérletszűnet.  
Február 13-án ;  
Jótekonycélú előadás a fehérkereszt egyesület és a nemzeti színház nyugdíjintézete javára.  
A nemzeti színház tagjainak közreműködésével :

I. rész:  
**N y i t á n y**  
a »Hunyadi László« című operából. Szerzette Erkel Ferenc. Előadja az opera zenekara.

—  
**»Fehér kereszt.«**  
Prológ ; ez alkalomra írta Kozma Andor. Szavalja Jászai Mari asszony.

—  
**A víg cimborák.**  
Víg opera 1 felv. Zenéjét szerző Huber Károly. Szövegét írta Némethy György.

S z e m é l y e k :

Pulykási	Szendrői
Vidor Laci	Szirovatka
Szomoru Pista	Takáts
Karcsu Flóra	Bárdossy I.

Nyájas Regina	Fleiszig M.
Rosenkranz	Hegedüs
Atillási, szabó	Dalnoki
Szalonnási	Veres
Kengyelí	Kőrösi
Girgucza	Zolnai
Miska, szolga	Vincze

II. rész:  
**»Z E N E.«**  
Zeneköltemény zenekarra magánszólamokkal és vegyes karral. Zenéjét és szövegét írta gróf Z i c h y Géza. Előadja az opera zene- és énekkara. A magánszólamokat: Ábrányiné assz., Odry és Broulik.

—  
**Fekete frakban.**  
Magánjelenet 1 felvonásban. Írta Dreyfus A.  
Egy ur Nádaj

—  
**»A vár története«**  
című s gróf Zichy Géza által irt ciklusból a következő képek:  
1. »A fehér asszony.« — 2. »A szürke manó.« — 3. »A dalnok.« — 4. »A sellő.« — 5. »Az utolsó várur.«

—  
**P R O L Ó G.**  
Ezt, valamint a képekre vonatkozó költeményeket szavalja N a g y I m r e .  
Kezdeté 7 órakor.

—  
**M ű s o r :**  
Szombat : Parasztszűnet. — Nap és föld.  
Vasárnap : Lucia ; Bianchi B. k. a. vendég. — Bécsi keringő.

Figure 3. The programme of the charity night (Source: Fővárosi Lapok, February 13, 1891, 311)

orchestra and mixed choir, and in which Margit Ábrányiné Wein, František Broulik és Odry Lehel.<sup>46</sup> The work proclaims the glory of music, “which carries our lives from the cradle to the grave, interpreting our joys and sorrows.” Accordingly, it includes a lullaby, a joyful serenade, a serenade, a Hungarian folk song, a funeral dirge and a royal anthem.<sup>47</sup> The greatest success was achieved by Ábrányiné for her performance of the cradle song. The author was applauded along with the cast, but Zichy did not appear before the audience.<sup>48</sup>

The rest of the evening featured a performance of Abraham Dreyfus’s one-act private scene *Fekete frakkban* (*Un monsieur en habit noir* – A Gentleman in Black Tailcoat),<sup>49</sup> in which Ferenc Náday<sup>50</sup> played the bachelor who goes to a family to propose, but finds no one at home, waits, ponders his future, and then is so frightened that he runs away before the family returns home, preferring to remain a bachelor. With his performance and humour, Náday managed to “put a smile on the faces of those in consternation.”<sup>51</sup>

The programme closed with excerpts from another work by Zichy, with both text and music by the intendant: *A vár története* (The History of the Castle), a twelve-picture play,<sup>52</sup> was performed five times with Margit Ábrányiné Wein and Dávid Ney.<sup>53</sup> Imre Nagy<sup>54</sup> recited the poems after the prologue, *A dalnok* (The Singer), the *Fehér asszony* (White Woman), the *Sellő* (Mermaid), the *Szürke manó* (Grey Goblin), and finally the *Utolsó várúr* (Last Castle Lord); after each scene, typical musical passages followed. Less the Dreyfus scene,

46 Margit Ábrányiné Wein (1861–1948), opera singer (soprano); František (Franz) Broulik (1854–1931), opera singer (tenor) and voice teacher; Odry Lehel (1837–1920), opera singer (baritone) and opera arranger.

47 S.: “A ‘Fehér Kereszt’ operaházi estéje”, op. cit., 316–317.

48 “Magyar kir. opera.” *Pesti Hirlap*, February 14, 1891, 5.

49 Abraham Dreyfuss (1847–1926) was a French journalist and writer, noted primarily as a comedy writer. According to the playbill of *Fekete frakkban* ([https://www.europeana.eu/sv/item/9200448/BibliographicResource\\_3000134130048](https://www.europeana.eu/sv/item/9200448/BibliographicResource_3000134130048); last visited: March 4, 2025), the play was translated by Ödön Vezéry (1841–1937). The *Fekete frakkban* (1872) was also published in book form as part 18 of the “Monológok: Víg és komoly magánjelenetek” (Monologues: funny and serious private scenes series; Budapest, Singer és Wolfner, 1888), translated by Ede Kuliffay (1839–1881).

50 Náday Ferenc (1840–1909) was an actor, conductor, and teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts, member of the National Theatre.

51 “Jótékonyczzélu botrány az operaházban.” *Pesti Napló*, February 14, 1891, [2].

52 The premiere was on 16 May 1888, it was played only once.

53 Dávid Ney (1842–1905) was an opera singer (bass baritone).

54 Imre Nagy (1849–1893) was an actor, conductor, and teacher of the Theatre Academy.

the programme was composed of the works of Hungarian authors. The orchestra was conducted by Sándor Erkel.

“This is how the programme for the extraordinary show was put together, making a Friday evening at the opera house, which is usually a day off, a very attractive interest. The cash statement will show in eloquent figures how this was also a night of philanthropy and a charitable celebration.”<sup>55</sup>

Another part of the charity evening was the “tasteless and boring” comic opera, *A víg cimborák*, which followed the Jászai recital. The press reactions all point in one direction: while the music is considered adequate, the text is not suitable for the stage, it is downright offensive:

“We are used to seeing operettas and monologues that are unaccepted and unperformable at charity performances, being foisted on audiences who pay three times the price of a seat; but we never thought that such a piece of junk would be dug out of its well-deserved grave. Károly Huber’s music even deserved to have its coffin lid removed,<sup>56</sup> but the text is so crude, and in some parts downright offensive, that it literally crushed the good mood of the distinguished audience,” wrote *Budapesti Hirlap*.<sup>57</sup>

The choice of the play was not well thought out, as “the music is pretty, but the lyrics are very banal,” noted the *Vasárnapi Ujság* too.<sup>58</sup> Károly Huber’s music is “fresh, melodic,” showing the influence of Offenbach in places, but it is essentially original, and its main merit is that it is “distinctly of Hungarian character.”<sup>59</sup> This is precisely why it could be a permanent part of the operatic repertoire, if the text of the piece were different, and not a “dish of unpaid

55 S.: “A ‘Fehér Kereszt’ operaházi estéje”, op. cit., 316–317.

56 *A víg cimborák: Dalmű 1 felvonásban* (The Merry Chums: Song play in 1 act). It was staged four times at the National Theatre: 3, 8, 31 December 1863 and 3 January 1864. See *A Nemzeti Színház műsorlexikona 1837-től 1941-ig*, 137. The main roles were played by Ilka Pauliné Markovics and Vilma Balázsné Bognár, as well as Kőszeghy, Pauli and György Némethy—the latter of whom wrote the text of the play presented as part of the charity night. See “Magyar kir. opera”, op. cit., 5.

57 “Opera.” *Budapesti Hirlap*, February 14, 1891, 4.

58 “Az operaszínházban.” *Vasárnapi Ujság*, February 22, 1891, 128–129.

59 “Magyar kir. opera”, op. cit., 5.

dumplings from Kotzebue’s kitchen, dressed in a heavily peppered goulash,” as *Pesti Hírlap* assessed it. However, the singers did their job, and the contributors were praised.<sup>60</sup>

The *Fővárosi Lapok* also refers to the basic problem, does not dispute that there is a big gap between the music and the text of the piece, its music is “worth much more than the text,” but in its criticism it nevertheless formulates a different idea from its colleagues: its “overture is lively, light,” the Hungarian-style songs have feeling and cheerfulness, so the “carefully crafted piece of music” was worth putting on the programme again. Two other comic operas, *A székely leány* (The Szekler Maiden) and *A király csókja* (The King’s Kiss), were already known to Budapest audiences from Huber, and the premiere of *Udvari bál* (Ball at the Court) was also under consideration.<sup>61</sup> The paper did not detail the libretto, and on the leaving of the king wrote only that “the king viewed ‘A víg cimborák’ right to its end and then left.”<sup>62</sup>

The problem of the play, the “scandalous attack,” was highlighted in the *Pesti Napló*.<sup>63</sup> The music of this “long forgotten and now revisited piece” cannot be criticised, but the libretto can be criticised all the more, since the depiction of Hungarian figures and customs in the presence of a select audience and the King is done in a distinctly “simple and crude” manner, full of bad taste and indelicacy throughout the whole hour-long performance.

At the beginning of the play, two lazy mates yawn loudly, squirm on the couch, whine, and tilt armchairs—in the other part of the split stage, one of the sewing girls mourns the heroic deaths of her mother and an ancestor, while they fret about how disturbing the noise is. The two young men finally apologise and fall in love with the girls. The booing, the hugging, the vulgar banter, is present throughout the performance. But the most embarrassing part of the play is the appearance of antisemitism on stage. A gang of loan sharks gives Hungarian youths change, and one of the boys calls the Jew at the head of the

60 Ibid. For the detailed cast, see *Opera Digitár*, <https://digitar.opera.hu/www/c16operadigitar:01.01.php?as=16349&bm=1&mt=1> (last visited: September 17, 2024).

61 The romantic comic opera *A székely leány* (The Szekler Maiden; text: Gyula Bulyovszky), directed by Ede Szigligeti, was on stage nine times between 18 and 1960 in the National Theatre. See *A Nemzeti Színház műsorlexikona...*, op. cit., 120. *A király csókja* (The King’s Kiss; text: Árpád Herczík) was first performed at the Népszínház, at the opening ceremony of the institution in 1875. *Udvari bál* (The Ball at the Court) was written in 1882 (text by Géza Kacziány), orchestrated by Rezső Raimann, and premiered in the Esterházy Palace in Tata in 1889.

62 See the detailed description of the programme in “A ‘Fehér Kereszt’ operaházi estéje”, op. cit., 316–317.

63 “Jótékonyczélú botrány az operaházban”, op. cit., [2].

gang an “honest Jew,” who—in German—is jubilant. At the end of the play, the two ladies, now brides, drink red wine and toast with the two grooms, with the uncle and the loan shark wedding guests:

“Finally, after a great deal of booing, hugging, trivial revelry without any excitement or wit, it even happens that a noisy crowd of figures picked up from the gutter enters the stage, bringing antisemitism in its most destructive form, in the face of an audience that has laid down its entrance fee on the altar of a good cause [...]. A gang of loan-sharks of the most ugly appearance enters and presents a bunch of loan sharks bills of exchange to the Hungarian youths, headed by a Jew, whom one of the gentlemen, calls ‘an honest Jew’, bursts out in ecstasy in German, but in his own jargon, that he had never been told such a thing before; and adds that in his joy he is as if his breast were being greased with lard, and goose-fat!”<sup>64</sup>

According to the reviewer, the play was an affront to public taste, it gave no intellectual pleasure to the public who gave their money to charity, and it was a disrespect to the monarch, who preferred to leave the theatre, which he had built at his own expense, at the end of the comic opera. The production damaged our whole “national genius,” as it presented “Hungarian character and social relations in a quite absurd bigotry, in a porous coarseness.” At the end of the play, the monarch left his box. “The audience felt that the king would not return; and indeed it happened so. It is natural, therefore, that this queer feeling pressed the audience to the end of the performance, and they could never again be wholeheartedly enthusiastic.”<sup>65</sup>

Of course, the question of responsibility also arose. The answer seemed clear: Géza Zichy was not held responsible for the staging of the programme, as the charity event was scheduled for January, thus the programme of the concert was finalised in December 1890. The *Pesti Napló* notes that Zichy was aware of this when he contributed to the performance of his own works, i.e. he had in mind that they should be staged before his appointment as Intendant. However, the concert slipped from January to 13 February.<sup>66</sup> According to the

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64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 This is also referenced elsewhere: “Diszelóadás az Operában.” *Pesti Hírlap*, February 4, 1891, 3.

press report, Zichy was “horrified” by the play at the dress rehearsal and tried to arrange the programme so that the comic opera would be performed before the arrival of the king, but Franz Joseph appeared at the opening. In the article of the *Pesti Napló*—although Mahler’s name is not mentioned—“we must hold responsible the system which, with the intervention of uninitiated factors, uses the charitable aims to colportate unprofitable things, and discredit not only the charitable aims but also the artistic forces which are put in such a precarious position, as well as the deserving characters of today’s performance.”<sup>67</sup> Zichy had got into this situation “through no fault of his own,” and his work as artistic director would be a guarantee and a hope “that not only the public would be spared from such things in the future, but also the reputation of the opera house and of our art and artists.”<sup>68</sup> Finally, one more kick was thrown at Mahler: “And if we do not then seek to find out who were the planners and compilers of today’s programme, we do so because if they did not do charity by performing, we want to do it to them, even though they are undeserving.”<sup>69</sup>

However, the *Egyenlőség* saw the issue of responsibility in a very different light.<sup>70</sup> When Zichy took office, he considered it important, above all, to receive a (mocking) welcome from the Jews: “Ave Zichy, judei te salutant,”<sup>71</sup> and also thanked the White Cross Society, whose founders are Jews (Dr. Bánóczi, Dr. Szalárdi, Dr. Balog)<sup>72</sup> for the opportunity to hold its charity evening at the Opera House. At the same time, he strongly condemned the choice of the programme for the comic opera, saying that it “cannot be brought to the first stage of the capital without blushing,” and that the whole thing is nothing but “nonsense put on for a charitable purpose,” full of “stupid antisemitic slurs.”<sup>73</sup> He also strove to find answers to the core question: “And who is responsible for staging the opera entitled ‘The Merry Chums’?” Who is responsible for rewarding the Jewish public

67 “Jótékonyczélu botrány az operaházban”, op. cit., [2].

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 A. 1891. “Vig opera.” *Egyenlőség*, February 20, 1891, 8.

71 “Ave, Caesar, morituri te salutant!” (“Hail, Caesar, the death marchers greet you!” – Suetonius.)

72 Ármin Balog (born Blum, 1859–1937) was a literary historian, literary translator, and teacher at the National Rabbinical Institute. Mór Szalárdy (born Spitzer, his name is often spelled Szalárdi, 1851–1914) was a paediatrician, patron of Hungarian infant care and infant nursing. József Bánóczi (born József Weisz, 1849–1926), philosopher, literary historian, critic, teacher of Jewish origin at the Rabbinical School.

73 A.: “Vig opera”, op. cit. 8.

who donate for charity with blatant mockery of their denomination? None other than the Opera's petty intendant: Count Géza Zichy." The article takes a clear position, i.e. that Zichy's arrival has resulted in a reduction of Mahler's scope of activities:

"If Director Mahler's powers were not restricted, it is surely impossible that this tragically merry song play will ever see the light of day. His critique would have mercilessly cancelled this edition of the programme, the most gentle rudeness of which is this:

'You are honest!', says a merry chum.

'Well, it was never said to me. Ah, well—honest and Jew!'"

Like the rest of the papers, it found no fault with the music of the play, but its text "should be covered again with the deserved blindfold, which Count Géza Zichy has lifted to bear witness to his noble way of thinking and a testament to the fact that he is now ripe for a well-deserved retirement."<sup>74</sup>

Also *Pester Lloyd* reported on the event in a longer article. Because of the presence of the monarch, it gave a detailed account of his arrival, reception, entourage and the introduction of each person. The reviewer of the Hungarian-language newspaper, who was of the same opinion as the Hungarian-language papers, did not consider the comic opera appropriate, mainly because of its plot and the endless dialogue, but did not mention the antisemitic character of the play.<sup>75</sup> The night was nevertheless a success, he thought, and he was sure of it financially.

Vienna's leading daily newspaper offered a temporary narrative: the Budapest correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse* described the embarrassing evening as a repeated attack on the monarch. It came to Zichy's full defence, and called for the extension of the intendant's powers to review the programme policy of charity events not organised by the Opera House but held in the House. It also rejected the view of some in the press that the music director, Gustav Mahler, was responsible for the neglect of the Hungarian work and its rejection as a repertoire play. It traced the source of the problem back to

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> S.-y. 1891. "Königliches Opernhaus." *Pester Lloyd*, February 14, 1891, Attachment.

a clique that has long been present in the capital's music scene and will stop at nothing. It wished Zichy luck in keeping away from these people.<sup>76</sup>

A few days later, the news reported that Franz Joseph had sent Géza Zichy three hundred forints for charity on the occasion of the performance.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> "Pester Oper." *Neue Freie Presse*, February 15, 1891, 5.

<sup>77</sup> "Személyi hírek." *Fővárosi Lapok*, February 22, 1891, 377.

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