



# Contested entertainment: Discussions on operetta in Belgrade, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia

Tatjana Marković  
Avstrijska Akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Dunaj  
ACDH, Department of Musicology  
Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna

---

Art music of western/central European provenance was introduced in the Ottoman provinces in southeast Europe in the nineteenth century, with some earlier exceptions. The meta-national identities of these lands were based on the Orthodox Christianity and formed the Rumi millet of the Orthodox community, in accordance with the Ottoman system dividing its inhabitants by religion.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, some of these identities were connected via Pan-Slavism. The import of nationalism from western Europe marked a deep change of the meso-regional self-representation: due to the numerous migrations over centuries and significant diaspora, it was not unusual to find multiple national identities of the Balkan peoples. Serbia is one of the characteristic examples – national self-representation was understood significantly different in the Serbian Principality/Kingdom and in the Serbian community in the Habsburg Monarchy. It is noteworthy that the main signifiers of national identity, such as the vernacular language, first literary works in the vernacular, or first publications of national music (arrangements of folk songs) appeared in the diaspora, in Vienna. Serbian national theatres were founded in both communities: in 1834 in Kragujevac (Theatre of Serbian Principality [*Knjaževsko serbski teatar*]), 1861 in

1 “The word ‘millet’ is derived from the Arabic word ‘millah’ and means religious community or denomination. Under the Ottoman rule, there were several ‘millets’: The Orthodox Christian millet, the Armenian millet and the Jewish millet.” This term is introduced only in the nineteenth century. See Daniel Goffman, “Ottoman millets in the Early Seventeenth Century,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 11 (1994): 135–58.

Novi Sad, a south Hungarian town with a Serbian majority (Serbian National Theatre [*Srpsko narodno pozorište*]), 1868 in Belgrade (National Theatre [*Narodno pozorište*]), among others. Although these theatres promoted the Serbian culture and language, their strategies were not identical, which is related to their attitudes to operetta, among other factors.

The most popular nineteenth-century stage music forms of spoken theatre with musical numbers, performed prior to and parallel with opera, were known under the various names, such as theatre play with music, operetta, vaudeville, *varieté*, or *singspiel*. They contributed to the foundation of a Serbian national (music) theatre repertoire through translations and adaptations, that is, nationalisations (*posrbe*) of French, German, or Hungarian models (plays by Jean-François Marmontel, August von Kotzebue, Eduard Ede Szigligeti), transferred from Vienna and Pest since the end of the eighteenth century. The communicativeness of such works was provided by the vernacular language, topic, and folk(-like) or urban popular music, as well as recognisable iconography (national costumes).

This tradition was enriched until the end of the long nineteenth century, and was continued in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, i.e. the Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1918–1941. In contrast not only to the Yugoslav regions which were former Habsburg provinces (Slovenia, Croatia, Vojvodina), but also to certain former provinces of the Ottoman Empire (Bulgaria, Greece), where operettas were a regular part of performance practice, they only entered the repertoire of the National Theatre in Belgrade in 1882, when the first national operetta was staged – Davorin Jenko's *Baba Hrka* or *Vračara* (The Sorceress, based on a text by Moïse Millaud). It is noteworthy that the first Serbian operetta in Vojvodina, *Veseli mornari* (Merry Sailors) by the Czech composer Robert Tollinger was also performed in 1882 in Velika Kikinda (Hung. Nagykikinda, Germ. Großkikinda). This repertoire – spoken theatre with musical numbers under different names – was popular among Serbs divided between the Principality/later Kingdom of Serbia and Vojvodina in Transleithania. It was performed in the theatre department of one of the earliest national choral societies, the Serbian Church Choral Society in Pančevo (*Pančevačko srpsko crkveno pevačko društvo*), and also at the Princely Serbian Theatre (*Knjaževsko serbski teatar*), where it was the main part of the repertoire.<sup>2</sup>

2 Members of the theatre department in the framework of the Serbian Church Choral Society in Pančevo even performed operas as spoken dialogues with arias due to the lack of professional vocal ensemble in the period of Nikola Đurković (1812–1876).

Operetta, including both original works (Jacques Offenbach, Franz von Suppé, Louis Auguste Florimond Ronger, alias Hervé, and Carl Joseph Millöcker, as well as by numerous minor composers) and nationalised adaptations (translations and nationalisations like *posrbe*), had a significant role on the stage of the Belgrade National Theatre prior to World War I. During the interwar period, however, it was almost completely excluded from the institution's repertoire. A quite different case was the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad: in 1920/1921 the Operetta was established, followed by the Opera, and while it was active,<sup>3</sup> there were numerous performances of operettas. During the season 1924/1925, for instance, there were 104 such performances, along with 48 opera performances. Among the former, the most popular were works by Emmerich Kálmán and Franz Lehár.<sup>4</sup>

Operetta was strongly criticized by Belgrade intellectuals, literary and theatre critics, numerous composers, music writers and the first professional musicologists (Milan Grol, Petar Konjović, Petar Krstić, Miloje Milojević, and others), who regularly wrote reviews of the performances in daily newspapers, journals, and other publications. The main discourses about operetta in the interwar period were related to institutionalisation as a form of so-called Europeanisation and strategies of its professionalisation. The first steps of national theatre activities were burdened by a lack of professionalism and technical difficulties,<sup>5</sup> which also impacted operetta. As Roksanda Pejović pointed out, the National Theatre started performing operas unprepared, resulting in problematic performances due to the incomplete and unprofessional ensemble.<sup>6</sup> For this reason, one of the discourses on operetta was related to the critique of the institutional obstacles to the development of a high-level artistic repertoire, ranging from amateur vocal soloists and conductors, to dilapidated scenery and impractical

3 The Opera and Operetta in Novi Sad stopped working in 1925 and the Opera fully revived only after World War II, in 1947, with a short period of activity prior to the war.

4 Luka Dotlić, *20 godina obnovljene Opere SNP-a* (Novi Sad: Srpsko narodno pozorište, 1968).

5 See Biljana Milanović, "Opera Productions of the Belgrade National Theatre at the Beginning of the 20th Century Between Political Rivalry and Contested Cultural Strategies," in *Vloga nacionalnih opernih gledališč v 20. in 21. stoletju/The Role of National Opera Houses in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries*, ed. Jernej Weiss (Koper, Ljubljana: Založba Univerze na Primorskem, Festival Ljubljana, 2019), 231–51, <https://doi.org/10.26493/978-961-7055-50-4>.

6 Roksanda Pejović, *Opera i Balet Narodnog pozorišta u Beogradu 1882–1941* (Belgrade: Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, 1996), 25.

costumes.<sup>7</sup> However, the educational role of theatre, seen as the most significant criterion of the repertoire policy, permeated almost all texts about (music) theatre both before and after World War I.

As the founder and the first director of the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad, Jovan Đorđević (1826–1900) claimed that it was

*the primary means of advancing education among the people; it awakened a sleepy nationality (narodnost), clarified and dignified the mother tongue and, best of all, the most glorious European nations became what they are today.*<sup>8</sup>

Understandably, in order to educate Belgrade audiences who were not familiar with operas and operettas, the performances were staged using Serbian translations of the works.

The main idea of cultural policy in the interwar period was thus to establish (music) theatre in an environment without a long tradition of it. Moreover, this policy was represented by the same music writers i.e. musicologists – often composers, too – who were active before and after World War I, as well as by younger professional music critics. As a matter of fact, two opposite attitudes to operetta were juxtaposed in this context: condemnation by reviewers versus popularity with wider audience, and sometimes awareness of the economic impact of this art form by theatre managers. The key discourses about operetta were formulated at this time. Thus, the interwar situation has to be considered along with that of the previous period. The prewar period can be explained with a well-known public discussion about operetta (1905) and Petar Konjović's (a highly influential composer and music writer in the musical life of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) thoughts on music focused on this art form.

Approximately 25 years after the first operetta performance at the National Theatre in Belgrade, of Jenko's *Vračara* (1882), the management of the institution organised a public discussion about operetta. As happened many times in the history of Serbian musical culture, the leading composers – Josif Marinković, Stevan St. Mokranjac, Božidar Joksimović, Kosta Manojlović, Stanislav Binički, Petar Krstić – had a key role in the formulation of discourses on operetta, causing its relative neglect in Serbian thea-

7 Ibid., 28.

8 "Pozorište je najglavnije sredstvo kojim prosveta i izobraženije najlakše u narod proniknuti može; ono budi dremajuću narodnost, ono pročišćuje i oblagorođuje maternji jezik, s njim i najviše s njim, postali su najslavniji narodi evropski ono što su danas." Jovan Đorđević, "Narodno pozorište," *Srbski dnevnik*, February 12, 1861.

tres compared with Zagreb or Ljubljana. In other words, the director and drama director of the National Theatre in Belgrade in 1905 – Dragomir Janković (1867–1942) and Milan Grol (1876–1952),<sup>9</sup> two highly educated and experienced theatre critics, who had a profound insight into European cultural life – started the struggle against operetta at the repertoire of the National Theatre in Belgrade. The debate was concluded by the decision not to stage any new operettas at the National Theatre, and to phase out the existing ones. This aim was fulfilled only after World War I. Operetta was thus seen negatively, as commercial entertainment which was not appropriate for the Belgrade audiences that should be educated with valuable literary and musical forms.<sup>10</sup> The recommended repertoire included national Serbian and Slavic operas, as well as ones by Mozart, Lorzing, and Weber, among others.<sup>11</sup> This discussion deeply marked the attitude to operetta not only before World War I, but also the cultural policy of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The efforts of composers, musicians, theatre managers and musicians in this regard were reflected in the interwar period by the lack of operetta at the repertoire of the National Theatre in Belgrade.

9 Dragomir Janković was a well-known Belgrade literature and theatre critic, diplomat, author, and interpreter. He studied in Belgrade, Vienna, Berlin, London, and Paris. He was an attaché in the Serbian Embassy in London and Berlin, the secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Minister of the Court and the King's secretary. Janković was also a dramatist (1898–1900) and the director (1903–1906) of the National Theatre in Belgrade.

Milan Grol was a literature and theatre critic, author, politician and interpreter in Belgrade. He studied in Belgrade and Paris. He occupied different positions in the National Theatre in Belgrade, as a drama director's assistant (1898–1900), dramatist (1903–1906), and director (1909–1910; 1911–1914; 1919–1924). During World War I, Grol was working in the Serbian Press-Office (1916–1918), and during World War II he was a minister in the governments in exile (1943–1943), and a vice-president of the temporarily government of the Democratic Federative Yugoslavia (1945). See Borivoje S. Stojković, "Rukovodioci Narodnog pozorišta u toku jednog veka," *Godišnjak grada Beograda* 14 (1967): 291–5; L. D. [Luka Dotlić], "Janković Dragomir," *Enciklopedija Srpskog narodnog pozorišta*, <https://www.snp.org.rs/enciklopedija/?p=5031>; Ž. P. [Živojin Petrović], "Grol Milan," *Enciklopedija Srpskog narodnog pozorišta*, <https://www.snp.org.rs/enciklopedija/?p=4458>.

10 It is noteworthy that Janković regarded operetta as an unsuitable genre for the state national theatre, but not for private theatres. Indeed, the private Opera on Boulevard (*Opera na Bulevaru*, 1910–1911) in Belgrade owned by Žarko Savić, a singer celebrated around the world, staged both operas and operettas.

11 See Milan Grol, "Pitanje operete u Narodnom pozorištu," *Srpski književni glasnik* 11, no. 4 (1904): 302–10; Dušan Janković, "Opereta u Narodnom pozorištu," *Delo* 35, no. 1 (1905): 106–10; Petar Krstić, "Muzika i Opereta u Narodnom pozorištu," *Srpski književni glasnik* 15, no. 4 (1905): 274–5.

Petar Konjović expressed his attitude towards operetta on the basis of his experience as a composer (at the centre of his creative work are six operas), music pedagogue (as a music teacher in Zemun in Belgrade before World War I, and later professor of composition and rector of the Music Academy in Belgrade), theatre director (Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad, 1921; the Opera of the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, 1921–1926, and drama director of the theatre, 1933–1935; the Croatian National Theatre in Osijek and the Osijek-Novi Sad Theatre, 1927–1933), organiser, administrator (inspector of the Ministry of Education in Belgrade, 1919; founder of the Musicological Institute at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Belgrade), and music writer (as the author of books of essays, music critic in numerous Serbian, Croatian, and a few Slovenian periodicals). Moreover, he was one of the music writers who established a paradigm of discourse on operetta, as explicated in his critical view of the repertoire of the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad. In accordance with the task of developing a national (music) theatre, Konjović criticised the presence of stage works which he claimed had neither educational nor artistic quality – Viennese and Paris operettas. The national theatre must not be at the level of “tavern orchestras” (*kafanski orkestri*), as he concluded.<sup>12</sup>

With awareness that the low professional level of the theatre ensemble would be an obstacle for a repertoire at a “European level”, Konjović recommended avoiding too demanding stage works and a focus on those which would be accessible to the theatre’s players. These *komadi s pevanjem* (theatre play with music numbers) and operas should have replaced the popular operettas, such as *Walzertraum* by Oscar Strauss (translated as *Čar valcera*, 1907), *Dollarprinzessin* by Leopold Fall (*Dolarska princeza*, 1907), *Mam’zelle Nitousche* by Louis Ronger (*Mamzel Nituš*, 1883). It was a usual practice that actresses and actors without music education performed the roles in operettas and even operas. Additionally, the theatre’s incomplete orchestra was not suitable for opera performances, such as staging Wagner, among others. For that reason, Konjović suggested *komad s pevanjem* – arranged and nationalised French, German or Hungarian theatre plays, as well as national theatre plays with topics related to history or contemporary village life, often with folk melodies. These stage works should be then followed by operas, first of all by Slavic and national composers. As a matter of fact, Konjović’s credo of so-called music realism had an impact on this

12 Petar Konjović, “Zašto je potrebno povesti reč o našem Narodnom pozorištu?” *Pokret* 5 (1910): 8.

choice as a result of his deep insight into Slavic, especially Czech and Russian opera (Leoš Janáček, Modest Musorgski). Furthermore, he demanded precise pronunciation and emphasis on the text, musicality of the melodic line,<sup>13</sup> as well as considerable dedication by the musicians. Petar Konjović's opinions on such matters were also shared by music writers and critics in the interwar period.

Due to the uncompromised and continuous critique of operetta, it was "expelled" (*prognana*)<sup>14</sup> from the state theatre repertoire in the interwar period. Hence, the minor role of operetta in the National Theatre in Belgrade between the two World Wars was a result of a strong negative propaganda during the first decades of the twentieth century. While eighteen operettas were premiered on the stage of the National Theatre in Belgrade in the period between 1882, when Davorin Jenko's *Vračara* was staged, until World War I, in the interwar period only four new operettas were included in the repertoire, including the revival of Jenko's work. Negative discussions and numerous writings about operetta were still very much the order of the day to "guard" the National Theatre from the threat of commercial entertainment without any educational value.

Miloje Milojević, Stevan Hristić, Vojislav Vučković, and Milenko Živković, among others, all criticized operetta in strong terms, denying it had any aesthetic value. According to Milojević, it was aimed exclusively at satisfying the tastes of a wide audience with colourful costumes and scenery. Moreover, since it was seen as frivolous and even disgusting, it was called "cultural weeds".<sup>15</sup> Stevan Hristić shared Milojević's opinion about operettas transferred from Vienna and Budapest to Belgrade, and their negative influences on Yugoslav audiences. Similarly to Dragomir Janković before World War I, he stated that while private theatres could include operettas in their repertoires, the national theatre could not. Despite this, in 1925, when he was asked to give his opinion about a project of a private op-

13 Ibid., 38.

14 Nadežda Mosusova, "Srpska muzička scena (125 godina Naronog pozorišta)," in *Srpska muzička scena* [The Serbian Music Stage], ed. Ana Matović et al. (Belgrade: Muzikološki institute SANU, 1995), 15.

15 See Miloje Milojević, "'Hofmanove priče' od Žaka Ofenbaha," *Srpski književni glasnik* 4, no. 8 (1921): 625–6; Miloje Milojević, "'U dolini', muzička drama Eugena D'Albera," *Srpski književni glasnik* 18, no. 7 (1926): 542–5; Miloje Milojević, "Povodom gostovanja Osečke Operete u Beogradu," *Srpski književni glasnik* 20, no. 3 (1927): 289.

eretta theatre in Belgrade, as proposed by Greta Kraus-Aranicki from Zagreb, Hristić wrote a negative review.<sup>16</sup>

Certain music critics and writers made a distinction between so-called “classical” and commercial operetta. Thus, Stevan Hristić and Vojislav Vučković considered Jacques Offenbach’s works as acceptable because they were almost “good and real” music. As the program booklets and posters show, Offenbach’s operettas, among others, were promoted as “operas”, and regarded as “almost art music.” Additionally, even one of the biggest critics of operetta, Miloje Milojević, praised *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss as well as its performance at the National Theatre in Belgrade in 1932.

*Die Fledermaus, interwoven with waltzes and dance rhythms but also with scenes of pure eighteenth-century buffo-style, deserves the efforts of high-ranked singers for entertainment. For, finally, why should we don't laugh a little bit in our difficult life. [...] If the dialogues were shorter and maybe also the very nicely stylised and well-coordinated ballet divertissement led by excellent Mrs. Kirsanova and with soloists Mrs. Vasiljeva and Mr. Žukovski, Belgrade creation of Die Fledermaus would gain a livelier flow of action. Miss Nuri-Hadžić revealed to us one more side of her golden talent: the ability to present successfully in piquant roles, as is the role of Adela.*<sup>17</sup>

16 More about Hristić’s letter to the Ministry of Education see Ivana Vesić, *Konstruisanje srpske muzičke tradicije između dva svetska rata* (Beograd: Muzikološki institut SANU, 2018). Croatian Jewish Greta Kraus-Aranicki was a popular operetta and opera singer, as well as actress and the first female theatre director in the Croatian National Theatre (HNK) in Zagreb. She gave numerous operetta performances in the theatre in Osijek. Cf. Snježana Banović, “Prva redateljica u zagrebačkome Hrvatskome Narodnome kazalištu – glumica Greta Kraus Aranicki,” in *Krležini dani u Osijeku 2018: Redatelji i glumci hrvatskoga kazališta*, vol. 2, ed. Ana Lederer (Zagreb: HAZU, Osijek: HNK, Filozofski fakultet, 2019), 7–18.

17 “‘Slepi miš’, protkan valcerima i ritmovima igre, ali i scenama čistoga bufo-stila osamnaestog veka, zaslužuje da se za njega radi rasonode, založe i pevači od ranga. Jer, najzad, zašto se ne bismo malo i smejali u ovom našem teškom životu. [...] Da jedialog krači, pa možda i vrlo lepo stilizovan i uigran baletski divertisman sa izvrsnom gđom Kirsanovom n čelu i odličnim solistima gđom Vasiljevom i g. Žukovskim beogradska kreacija ‘Slepog miša’ bi dobila. Jer bi tok radnje bio življi. G-ca Nuri-Hadžić nam je otkrila još jednu stranu svoga zltnog dara: sposobnost da se sa uspehom snađe I u pikantnim ulogama kao što je uloga Adele.” Miloje Milojević, “Johan Štraus i njegova opereta ‘Slepi miš,’” *Politika*, December 9, 1932, <https://digitalna.nb.rs/wb/NBS/novine/politika/1932/12/09>.

After mentioning the successful performances of individual vocal soloists, the choir and orchestra, Milojević praised the conductor Ivan Brezovšek, too, as well as the director Josip Kulundžić, the scenery designer Vladimir Žedrinški, the costume designer Milica Babić and others. He concluded that the audience accepted the performance “with joy” because it is “*a music work of light music (laka muzika), but not frivolous, superficially sentimental and tensely witty, but vivid, honest and expressive in its kind.*”<sup>18</sup>

One of the reasons for this very positive review is the fact that

*in a persistent resistance to operetta [...] the team of the Belgrade Opera who staged Die Fledermaus in 1932, wittingly tried to free this work from the operettic impurities, forgetting that in this way they deprived it of its original characteristics. For this reason, Brezovšek tried to set this operetta by Johann Strauss like a comic opera and he achieved ‘an enviable level of music performance and the necessary connection between stage and orchestra’.*<sup>19</sup>

During its guest performances in Serbia, the National Theatre performed Strauss’s operetta in Subotica in May 1933, along with the operas *Carmen*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Il trovatore*, and *Faust*.

However, this performance of Strauss’s operetta was evaluated very differently to Milojević’s positive review by the composer Milenko Živković (1901–1964), who wrote that Viennese operetta embodies

*empty waffling of the degenerated high class, careless boozing of the furious Habsburg aristocracy gathered around a spoiled and snobbish (blaziranog) prince who should be placed in the institution for mentally undeveloped youth.*

18 “Naša publika je taj trenutak prhvatilasa radošću, jer je dobila muzičko delo koje je ‘laka muzika’ ali nije frivolna, površno sentimentalna I nategnuto duhovita, već živa, iskrena I u svojoj vrsti nesumnjivo izrazita.” Ibid.

19 “u upornom suprotstavljanju opereti [...] ekipa iz Beogradske opere koja je postavljala Slepog miša 1932. svesno se trudila da ga oslobodi operetskih primesa, zaboravljajući da mu na taj način oduzima izvorne osobine. To je razlog što je Brezovšek pokušao da ovu operetu Johana Štrausa približi komičnoj operi, postigavši ‘zavidan muzički nivo i potrebnu vezu između scene i orkestra’.” Pejović, *Opera i Balet Narodnog pozorišta u Beogradu*, 190.

Operetta music is thus, in other words, an empty entertainment “*typical for idlers and social parasites.*”<sup>20</sup> This (leftist) point of view was aimed against the “enemy” in the upper classes.

Another leftist, Vojislav Vučković (1910–1942), wrote a similar review of a concert broadcast on Radio Belgrade including numbers from popular operettas, held in October 1936. Among them were works by Emmerich Kálmán, Émile Waldteufel alias Charles Émile Lévy, Richard Eilenberg, and Jules August Demersseman, along with those of other composers. Vučković claimed that such a program was disastrous:

*It is a profane ‘light music’. Instead to educate, trains and nurtures through enjoyment in the spirit of social ethics – it confounds (zaglupljuje), debauches, and demoralises. As an enemy of progress and culture [...] it has to be condemned.*<sup>21</sup>

The works by the mentioned composers were thus “attack on art” because of their amateur harmonies, almost “pornographic” melodic lines, simplest forms and “farcical dynamics”, resulting in pure sensual entertainment.<sup>22</sup> Vučković concluded his review with several pieces of advice to Radio Belgrade, such as to leave the light music (*laka muzika*) to the bars and cabarets and omit it from their own program.

All the mentioned composers and critics agreed that operetta must not be performed in the main national theatre house, and instead they recommended Slavic, including national, operas, or those by Wagner and Massenets. Due to such a persistent, intense, and uncompromising campaign against operetta, led by leading intellectuals of the time, the repertoire of the National Theatre in Belgrade almost completely lacked such works. Certain composers, like Petar Krstić or Stevan Hristić, even suggested imposing state control over the repertoire of the state and private institutions,

20 “šuplja blebetanja jedne degenerisane gomile iz viših krugova, bezbrižne pijanke besne habzburške aristokratije okupljene oko jednog razmaženog i blaziranog princa koga bi pre trebalo strpati u zavod za umno nedovoljno razvijenu mladež, nego napraviti od njega tipičnog predstavnika kulturne sredine jedne epohe [...]. Muzika plitka po sadržajnosti, u stereotipnom obliku i sa monotonim ritmovima (3/4 i 2/4 dominiraju i prosto dave slušaoce) – sve je to sračunato za kafanu i besposlen svet koji, uz šolju kafe, prevrće ilustrovane žurnale i domine, koji niti u muzici niti ma u kojoj umetnosti traži dobra duhovna doživljavanja, nego samo razonodu. To je tipična muzika za dokoličare i socijalne parasite.” Milenko Živković, “Premijera operete ‘Slepi miš,’” *Muzički glasnik* 10 (1933): 283–4.

21 Vojislav Vučković, “Profana i umetnička ‘laka muzika,’” *Politika*, October 12, 1936.

22 Ibid.

in order to exclude operetta completely from the stage and so protect the musical tastes of Serbian and Yugoslav audiences. It was thus concluded that the state should by no means finance operetta, in spite of the interest shown in such works by “*ministers, musicians, priests, members of Parliament, and professors.*”<sup>23</sup> In this way it can be seen that with their strong denial of any worth of operetta, except – in some cases – the works of Jacques Offenbach or Johann Strauss, whose operettas were regarded as “classical” – the discussions of the most prominent representatives of Serbian music writers, musicologists, composers, musicians (*muzikanti*), constructed the discourses on operetta in Belgrade. Their very negative attitudes to operetta results in the lack of such works on the stage of the National Theatre in the capital of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a unique case in the region.

## Appendix

Table 1: Premieres of operettas at the National Theatre (*Narodno pozorište*) in Belgrade before World War I and in the interwar period.<sup>24</sup>

Premiere before World War I	Composer, operetta
21 April 1882	Davorin Jenko: <i>Vračara</i>
31 October 1884	Jacque Offenbach: <i>Die Verlobung bei der Lanterne</i> (performed as <i>Ženidba pri fenjerima</i> )
30 April 1885	Franz Suppè: <i>Die flotten Burschen (Veseli djaci)</i>
25 November 1886	Jacque Offenbach: <i>Un mari à la porte (Muž pred vratima)</i>
17 April 1897	Franz Suppè: <i>Die Schöne Galathée (Lepa Galateja)</i>
21 April 1898	Arthur Sullivan and William Gilbert: <i>Der Mikado oder Die Stadt Titipu (Mikado ili Jedan dan u Titipu)</i>
25 February 1895	Hugo Doubek: <i>Jabuka</i>
18 March 1899	Carl Zeller: <i>Der Vogelhändler (Ptičar)</i>
29 January 1900	Edmond Audran: <i>La Mascotte</i> or <i>Der Glückselig (Maskota</i> or <i>Batlija devojka)</i> , also called ‘ <i>Komische Oper</i> ’
13 June 1900	Jacque Offenbach: <i>Die schöne Helena (Lepa Jelena)</i>
7 June 1901	Sidney Jones: <i>Die Geisha (Gejša)</i>
30 January 1902	Edmond Audran: <i>La poupée (Lutka)</i>
8 June 1902	Jacque Offenbach: <i>Orpheus in der Unterwelt (Orfej u paklu)</i>
23 April 1903	Carl Millöcker: <i>Der Bettelstudent (Djak prosjak)</i>
26 May 1907	Johann Strauss: <i>Die Fledermaus (Slepi miš)</i>

- 23 “*ministri, muzikanti, popovi, poslanici i profesori*”. See Petar Krstić, “‘Slepi miš’, op-ereta u tri čina,” *Pravda*, December 9, 1932.
- 24 See Sava V. Cvetković, *Repertoar Narodnog pozorišta u Beogradu 1868–1965. Hronološki pregled premijera i obnova* (Belgrade: Muzej pozorišne umetnosti Srbije, 1966).

Premieres between World War I and World War II	Composer, operetta
2 December 1921	Jacque Offenbach: <i>Hoffmanns Erzählungen (Hofmanove priče)</i>
19 May 1923	Jacques Fromental Halévy: <i>Die Jüdin (Jevrejka)</i>
10 November 1935	Davorin Jenko: <i>Vračara</i> (revival)
31 December 1935	Alfred Pordes: <i>Bosanska ljubav</i>

### Bibliography

- Banović, Snježana. "Prva redateljica u zagrebačkome Hrvatskome Narodnome kazalištu – glumica Greta Kraus Aranicki." In *Krležini dani u Osijeku 2018: Redatelji i glumci hrvatskoga kazališta*, vol. 2, edited by Ana Lederer, 7–18. Zagreb: HAZU, Osijek: HNK, Filozofski fakultet, 2019.
- Cvetković, Sava V. *Repertoar Narodnog pozorišta u Beogradu 1868–1965. Hronološki pregled premijera i obnova*. Belgrade: Muzej pozorišne umetnosti Srbije, 1966.
- Dotlić, Luka. *20 godina obnovljene Opere SNP-a*. Novi Sad: Srpsko narodno pozorište, 1968.
- Dorđević, Jovan. "Narodno pozorište." *Srbski dnevnik*, February 12, 1861.
- Goffman, Daniel. "Ottoman millets in the Early Seventeenth Century." *New Perspectives on Turkey* 11 (1994): 135–58.
- Grol, Milan. "Pitanje operete u Narodnom pozorištu." *Srpski književni glasnik* 11, no. 4 (1904): 302–10.
- Janković, Dušan. "Opereta u Narodnom pozorištu." *Delo* 35, no. 1 (1905): 106–10.
- Konjović, Petar. "Zašto je potrebno povesti reč o našem Narodnom pozorištu?" *Pokret* 5 (1910): 5–10.
- Krstić, Petar. "Muzika i Opereta u Narodnom pozorištu." *Srpski književni glasnik* 15, no. 4 (1905): 273–91.
- Krstić, Petar. "Slepi miš', opereta u tri čina." *Pravda*, December 9, 1932.
- L. D. [Luka Dotlić]. "Janković Dragomir." *Enciklopedija Srpskog narodnog pozorišta*. <https://www.snp.org.rs/enciklopedija/?p=5031>.
- Milanović, Biljana. "Opera Productions of the Belgrade National Theatre at the Beginning of the 20th Century Between Political Rivalry and Contested Cultural Strategies." In *Vloga nacionalnih opernih gledališč v 20. in 21. stoletju/The Role of National Opera Houses in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, edited by Jernej Weiss, 231–51. Koper, Ljubljana: Založba Univerze na Primorskem, Festival Ljubljana, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.26493/978-961-7055-50-4>.

- Milojević, Miloje. "‘U dolini’, muzička drama Eugena D’Albera." *Srpski književni glasnik* 18, no. 7 (1926): 542–5.
- Milojević, Miloje. "‘Hofmanove priče’ od Žaka Ofenbaha." *Srpski književni glasnik* 4, no. 8 (1921): 625–9.
- Milojević, Miloje. "Povodom gostovanja Osečke Operete u Beogradu." *Srpski književni glasnik* 20, no. 3 (1927): 287–90.
- Milojević, Miloje. "Johan Štraus i njegova opereta ‘Slepi miš’." *Politika*, December 9, 1932. <https://digitalna.nb.rs/wb/NBS/novine/politika/1932/12/09>.
- Mosusova, Nadežda. "Srpska muzička scena (125 godina Naronog pozorišta)." In *Srpska muzička scena* [The Serbian Music Stage], edited by Ana Matović et al., 5–38. Belgrade: Muzikološki institute SANU, 1995.
- Pejović, Roksanda. *Opera i Balet Narodnog pozorišta u Beogradu 1882–1941*. Belgrade: Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, 1996.
- Stojković, Borivoje S. "Rukovodioci Narodnog pozorišta u toku jednog veka." *Godišnjak grada Beograda* 14 (1967): 291–5.
- Vesić, Ivana. *Konstruisanje srpske muzičke tradicije između dva svetska rata*. Beograd: Muzikološki institute SANU, 2018.
- Vučković, Vojislav. "Profana i umetnička ‘laka muzika’." *Politika*, October 12, 1936.
- Ž. P. [Živojin Petrović]. "Grol Milan." *Enciklopedija Srpskog narodnog pozorišta*. <https://www.snp.org.rs/enciklopedija/?p=4458>.
- Živković, Milenko. "Premijera operete ‘Slepi miš’." *Muzički glasnik* 10 (1933): 282–4.