

## January 2019 operettas

### 12 January 2019: 3 p.m.

**Lehár, F.** The merry widow. Operetta in three acts. Libretto by Viktor Léon and Leo Stein. First performed Vienna, 1905.

Eager that the vast fortune of the widow, Hanna Glawari, should not be lost to poverty-stricken Principality of Pontevedra, Baron Zeta, the Ambassador to Paris, is anxious to marry her to Count Danilo. Hanna and Danilo were once in love but were prevented from marrying because she was poor. Danilo objects to the scheme because she is now rich and also it is rumoured that she is about to marry the French Comte Camille de Rosillon (who is in fact involved in a flirtation with the Baron's wife, Valencienne). All ends happily, after enormous complications, with Hanna and Danilo confessing their love and agreeing to marry.

**Der Graf von Luxemburg.** Operetta in three acts. Libretto by Alfred Willner, Robert Bodanzky and Leo Stein. First performed Vienna, 1909.

The Russian Prince Basil arranges a marriage between Angèle, an opera singer, and the penniless Bohemian spendthrift, Count René of Luxembourg. In exchange for 500,000 francs, René is to marry a mysterious bride and divorce her within three months. The Prince would then be able to marry Angèle as she will have attained a title through this marriage. During the wedding ceremony in the studio of René's friend, the artist Armand Brissard, bride and groom are separated by a screen so that they may not see each other but when they touch hands in the exchange of rings, they fall in love.

Months later, Angèle gives a party which Count René attends. Without knowing that they are already husband and wife, they are immediately attracted to each other but believe that their romance is hopeless. The Prince announces his engagement to Angèle but Brissard reveals to René that his mysterious bride is Angèle and reminds him that he has not yet divorced her. Unfortunately René has already spent the 500,000 francs and cannot buy his way out of the contract.

Although she is secretly delighted, Angèle denounces the Count's act in marrying for money and he storms off angrily. Meanwhile, the Prince decides to marry a Russian countess instead. The Count, whose properties had previously been confiscated, is able to pay back the money when his properties are restored to him. He tells Angèle that he loves her and all ends happily.

### 26 January 2019: 3 p.m.

**German, E.** Merrie England. Operetta in two acts. Libretto by Basil Hood. First performed London, 1902.

A lady-in-waiting of Queen Elizabeth I, Bessie Throckmorton, has lost a love letter from Sir Walter Raleigh and is worried that the letter may have fallen into the Queen's hands as the Queen also loves Raleigh. Jill-All-Alone finds the letter and gives it to the Earl of Essex, a rival for the Queen's affections. He plans to use it to dispose of Raleigh. When the Queen attends the May Day festivities, she questions Jill who has been accused of being a witch. Angered by Jill's statement that the Queen will never find love, Elizabeth orders her to be imprisoned in Windsor Castle before being burned for witchcraft.

Essex hands Raleigh's love letter to the Queen who thinks it is meant for her. Raleigh gallantly admits that the letter is in fact meant for Bessie Throckmorton. Incensed, the Queen banishes Raleigh from Court and imprisons Bessie in Windsor Castle. Jill and Bessie escape from the castle through a secret passage. Eventually the Queen is persuaded to allow Raleigh and Bessie to love each other freely, choosing Essex instead for herself.