The Oyster Princess – Review in *Deutsche Lichtspiel-Zeitung*, No. 27/1919

Translated by Molly Harrabin

Premiere at the U.T. Kurfürstendamm. Elegant ladies. Pompous men. Down at the box office, people are jostling. The film itself is a blast. The success of this comedy is mainly attributable to the extravagant set design and brilliant acting. In terms of content, it tells the old story of a rich billionaire's daughter who marries a poor prince. The comedy is actually quite small in its basic concept. Hanns Kräly and Ernst Lubitsch are the two writers. But you have to give them credit, they got everything they could out of the poor subject matter through spicy situations, witty titles, and the sets. You'll be entertained for four acts and laugh a lot. That's the main thing. The plot centers on Ossi Oswalda, who is great, exuberant, and full of natural humor. The fact that she is in the public eye and never once appears “underdressed” is not so bad, because Ossi is a pretty guy. Viktor Janson, who wanted nothing more than to impress as the cozy and indiscrete, but actually very indiscrete, plays the Oyster King. He showed us his true colors. Harry Liedtke, the prince, was the hero in the final act. His pretty cinema face seemed almost irresistible. He was very comical in his role, and you had to laugh a lot at him. Falkenstein towered above all others with his facial expressions and his mere presence. Ernst Lubitsch, who was the responsible director, achieved a new triumph of his art with *The Oyster Princess*.

Advertisement for *Die Austernprinzessin*. *Stuttgarter neues Tagblatt*, August 28, 1919.

Available online via the deutsche digitale Bibliothek.

Advertisement for *Die Austernprinzessin*. *Westfälische Zeitung*, October 13,1919.

Tonbild.

Heute die letzten Aufführungen!

Das Tonbildtheater erdröhnt vor Lachen bei dem Lustspielschlager:

Die Austern-Prinzessin

4 unübertroffene Akte.

Ossi Oswalda, Harry Liedtke, Victor Janson, Jul. Falkenstein wetteifern in köstlichen Einfällen.

Der 3. Akt: Alles tanzt Fox-Trott.

Heute vorläufig die letzten Aufführungen großer Vorbereitungen für morgen wegen.

Ab morgen Dienstag bis einschl. Freitag:

Fortsetzung unseres beliebten Operetten-Zyklus. Die entzückende Operetten-Attraktion

Wenn Männer streiken

Filmoperette in 5 Akten.

Unter Mitwirkung erster Berliner Opernsänger u. Opernsängerinnen

Available online via zeit.punktNRW.

Illustrated sheet music with words by DaDa Beda and music by Ober-Dada Hajós, 'Dada: dadaistischer Fox-trot für Trottel und Solche – die es noch werden wollen' (Berlin: Berliner Bohème Verlag, 1920).

POPULÄRE SCHLAGER
aus unserem Verlage:

Bist du nicht aus Afrika der Bimbo? Twostep oder Onestep. Text von Siegwart Ehrlich. Musik von S. Ehrlich und L. Hené.

Refrain.

Bist du nicht aus Af-ri-ka der Bim - bo? Nimm mich bit-te mit zu dei-nem Chim - bo als Chim-bo-ras-so-fee zum

Mein kleines Sonnenkind. Lied. Worte von Bruno Hardt-Warden. Musik von Karl Hajós, Op. 167.

Frei im Vortrag. (*nicht zu schnell*)

Voll-mond streute aufs Pa-lais gold-nen Schnee, al-les schlief, schlummer-tief, nur das blond Kom-tes-se-lein schlief nicht ein,

Halloh! Du süße Klingelfee! Theleph-one-step. Text von Arthur Rebner. Musik von Robert Stolz, Op. 341.

One-step-Tempo. (*nicht zu rasch*)

Hal-loh! Du sü-ße Klin-gel-fee! Hal-loh! Wenn ich so lang hier steh, dann frißt mich schier der Kummer. Ich komm' zu keiner Nummer, wie

Märchen der Jugend, Märchen vom Glück... Verse von Bruno Hardt-Warden. Musik von Robert Stolz, Op. 353.

Langsam (*sehr innig.*)

Märchen der Ju - gend, Märchen vom Glück, regen sich zart und lei - se, sin-ken vom Her - zen Stück um Stück,

Diable-Fox. Musik von Kurt Lubbe, Op. 51.

Sehr rhythmisch.

L.H.

marcato

Luna-Foxtrot. Text von Artur Rebner. Musik von Sidney Ward. arr. von Kurt Lubbe.

Refrain.

p a tempo

Wenn Frau Lu-na beschwipst, dann nimm' das Mädel das du liebst und trink zu zwei'n ganz allein deinen Wein wo im Frein

---

„DADA."
Dadaistischer Foxtrot.

Aufführungsrecht vorbehalten.

Worte von Dada Beda. Musik von Ober-Dada Hajós.

Langsam.

Gesang.

1. Jo-ko-ha-ma Da-lai La-ma
2. Ga-li-po-li Mol-ly Dol-ly
3. So-zi-a-les Na-tio-na-les

Piano.

Ra-ma ta-ma Jong! Stern-him-mel Kno-ke-baut Amtsschim-mel
Ganz Ma-nc-li Bridge! Haar-na-del Ham and Eggs Pin-sel-strich
Gro-ßer Dal-les Bums! Staatsbund und Bun-des-staat A-rist und

E-sels-haut mit Kraut Bo-to-ku-den blau-e Bu-den al-te Ju-den Gong!
Far-ben-klex und Schmecks! Va-po-ret-to Ca-va-let-to Tin-to-ret-to Kitsch!
De-mo-krat Sa-lat! Pro-le-ta-risch deutsch und a-risch al-les narrisch Sums!

poco rit. a tempo

T 65

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Ver träum-ter See der Bauch tut weh es steigt ins Bad
Ein grü-ner Punkt: Der Forst-ad-junkt! Ge-mal-ter Schrei:
Ge-sinn-ungs-match dem Volk die Petsch oh Po-li-tik

das Welt qua-drat But-ter-brod zie-gel-rot Gold-wol-ke droht I-di-
Spi-nat mit Ei! Cre-o-sot, bis-sel Jod oh Morgen-rot! I-di-
oh Re-pu-blik Huh und Hott Go-lem Trotschwarzgelbes Brot I-di-

Refrain.

1.-3. Dada o du hei-li-ger Dada o großmäu-li-ger

Dada er-hör' mein Ge-bet Dada

an-ge-be-te-ter Dada ganz ver-blö-de-ter Dada Da-da

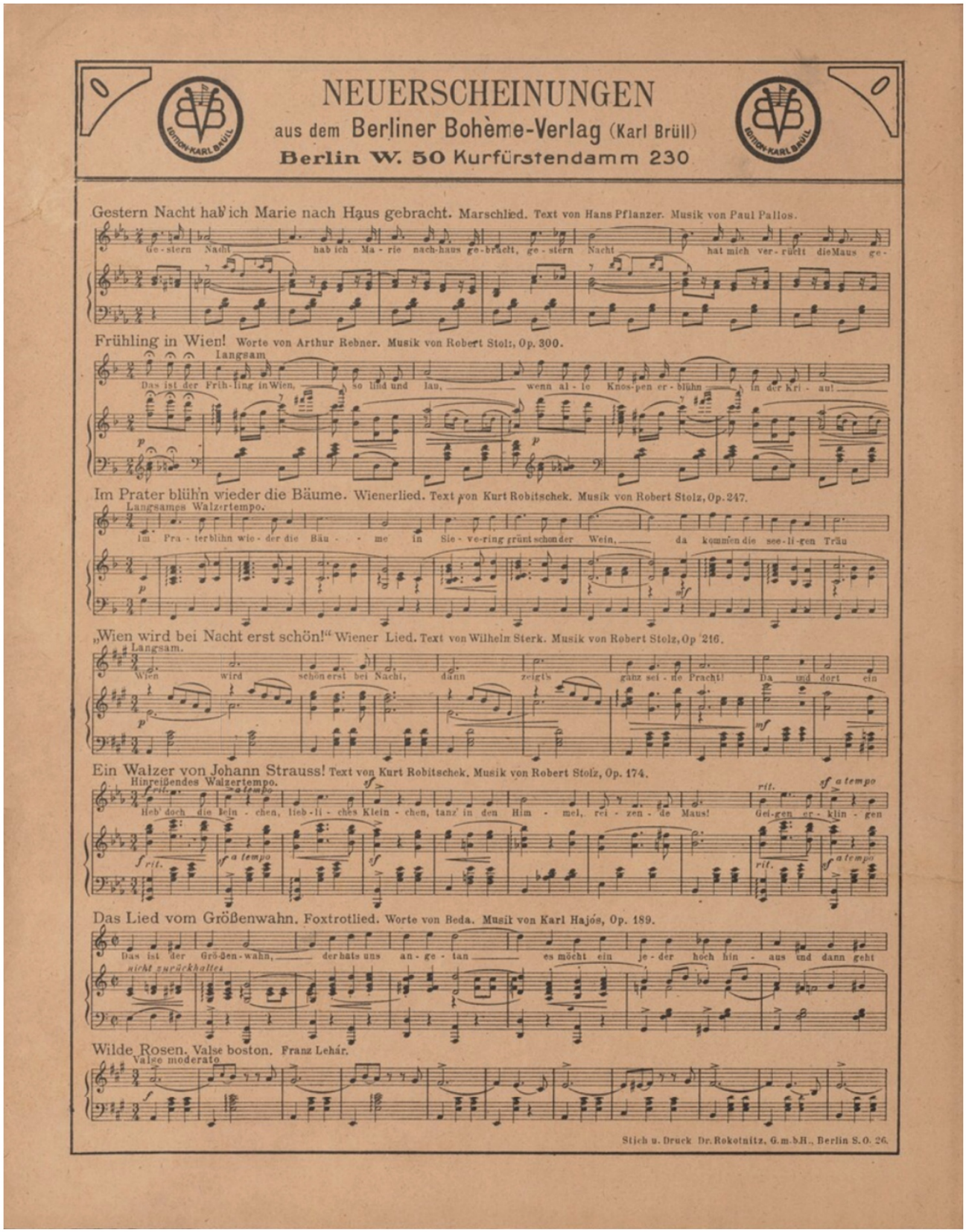
Dada gieß uns oh Mam-mut-ge-stirn

Sül-ze in's Ge-hirn Dada o me-phi-ti-scher

molto cresc.

Dada pa-ra-ly-ti-scher Dada Dada Dada.

Stich u. Druck Dr. Rokotnitz, G.m.b.H Berlin S.O. 16.



NEUERSCHEINUNGEN
aus dem Berliner Bohème-Verlag (Karl Brüll)
Berlin W. 50 Kurfürstendamm 230

Gestern Nacht hab' ich Marie nach Haus gebracht. Marschlied. Text von Hans Pflanzer. Musik von Paul Pallos.

Frühling in Wien! Worte von Arthur Rebner. Musik von Robert Stolz, Op. 300.

Im Prater blüh'n wieder die Bäume. Wienerlied. Text von Kurt Robitschek. Musik von Robert Stolz, Op. 247.

„Wien wird bei Nacht erst schön!" Wiener Lied. Text von Wilhelm Sterk. Musik von Robert Stolz, Op. 216.

Ein Walzer von Johann Strauss! Text von Kurt Robitschek. Musik von Robert Stolz, Op. 174.

Das Lied vom Größenwahn. Foxtrotlied. Worte von Beda. Musik von Karl Hajós, Op. 189.

Wilde Rosen. Valse boston. Franz Lehár.

Stich u. Druck Dr. Roketnitz, G.m.b.H., Berlin S.O. 26.

Available online via NGA Library Catalogue

Béla Balázs, 'The Self-irony of Film', *Der Tag*, August 10, 1923.
Translated by Molly Harrabin

The critic has little to say about these old films of the summer season. Some of them are too well-known to be discovered, while others are already rising like ghosts from their well-deserved graves. And ghosts, as we all know, cannot be killed. Where the critic has no business, the theorist sometimes still finds an opportunity there for his vain speculations.

For example, *The Oyster Princess* was shown in five or more Viennese cinemas. It is a Lubitsch film, recognizable as such by a series of witty details. But it is also an Ossi Oswalda film, and can be recognized as such by a series of crude, Bochesque tastelessness. The fable is too primitive and maudling for four acts and has the particular flaw that the hero does not play the leading role. His friend fights the battle for him, and the hero appears only at the end to take the spoils. This is all the more regrettable because it is Harry Liedtke, who lost his role in this way.

The mansard bohemian lifestyle of the impoverished prince is above all a great opportunity for Lubitsch's subtle humor to unfold. The billion-dollar interior of the American dollar princess is the perfect opportunity for Ossi Oswalda. For example, suddenly undressing for no reason, getting into the bath, having a massage, and doing so in such a way that you are always on the verge of seeing her completely naked. And the funny pictures you see through the keyhole are all too suggestive.

Yet it wasn't the critic who wanted to speak, but the theorist. The film gave him food for thought because of the director's obvious, deliberate self-irony. For the source of comedy here lies in the director's style, which consists of self-

mockery. Film fashions, film mannerisms, and film effects are exposed simply by being exaggerated a little. Above all it was the "grand presentation," the "splendor and elegance" that Lubitsch was after. For its splendor and elegance without which a film seems to have no right to exist. The simple folk (the majority of cinema audiences) are particularly interested in the high society world. This is what the film companies claim. And their competition in elegance increased the number of liveried lackeys and pompous figures to the utmost limits of the imagination of "little Moritz," who was appointed the patron saint of elegant films.

Well, in this comedy, Lubitsch shows us a billionaire who surpasses everyone in extravagance. Fifty lackeys stand ready to take a man's hat. A hundred stenographers sit like schoolgirls in long rows whilst the powerful man dictates a letter. One hundred mains flutter around their young mistress when she wants to get dressed. And behold Twenty servants seem magnificent. Fifty servants already seem comical. But where is the limit, gentlemen? Perhaps thirty servants are already comical? Perhaps twenty-five? Perhaps…?

This ironic film is already quite old, but that has not prevented directors from continuing to work on "how little Moritz imagines nobility." And perhaps there are still such "simple" people in the provinces who marvel at this unheard-of splendor, but surely no rich and distinguished person who would not laugh at it.

Oswalda. Ossi, "Ossi Oswalda," in *Filmkünstler; wir über uns selbst*, ed. (Berlin:
Sibyllen-Verlag, 1928), ed. Hermann Treuner, p. 368

I was born in Berlin and was initially called Oswalda Sperling. But I always called myself Ossi, and this name has stuck with me to this day. After finishing school, I was then active at the Berlin operetta theatre. From here, Ernst Lubitsch brought me into film, and my film debut was the Lubitsch-film "*Schusalon-Pinkus,*" in which Ernst Lubitsch himself played the main roll and I played a little shoemaker's daughter amongst many other female roles. But Lubitsch recognised my talent and gave me bigger roles until the film "The Oyster Princess," also directed by Ernst Lubitsch, became my first international success. From then on, I made many great German comedies, and I am happy to have been the one who refuted the theory that there are no German film comedies and no German comedy actresses. I worked for many years at Union and later Ufa, until I founded my own production company. The days of the comedy teenager may be over, but there are still countless comedy roles that offer me great challenges.

Available online at Media History Digital Library.

Lüthge, B. E. Review of *Die Austernprinzessin*. *Film-Kurier* 15, June 22 1919

It was absolutely delightful. It was a real “Lubitsch.” And Ossi was more charming than ever before in any film, mercurial, daring, full of surprising playfulness. When she sits on the bed with Liedtke, smiles at him and then throws her arms around his neck in idiosyncratic exuberance; when she, the spoiled billionaire's daughter, climbs into the dogcart (*dogcart = open, two-wheeled single-horse carriage, editor's note*) with 15 horses in front, and instructs her newly purchased prince consort to take the back seat – I don't know who else could imitate her like that ...

Whether an idea is strong or weak is irrelevant in a Lubitsch comedy. Here it is the “how,” not the “what.” He executes an idea in such a way that it becomes good. The entire comedy […] is elegant and presented in a way never before seen in a German comedy. There is an elegant style throughout that has momentum. Lubitsch chooses the people he needs. And one has to admit that he could not have found anyone better in Germany than Viktor Janson, Ossi Osswalda, and Harry Liedtke to embody the billionaire, the daughter, and the prince. (It's hard to talk about a Lubitsch comedy without constantly mentioning his name.) No one else in Germany can match his technique of cutting between images, close-ups, and pop songs that really arise from the situation.

The comedy is witty, amusing, perhaps funny. Is it silly? Is it comical? You laugh. But you don't laugh spontaneously and from the heart. Just when it seems like you're about to laugh, there's another scene where you say: fabulous! What an idea! What an outrageous presentation! But then you don't laugh anymore, you just marvel. Comedy is something that is tied to the person. Ossi is funny, but not comical (perhaps only here). The film actor Lubitsch is comical. “Die

Firma heiratet” and “Mayer aus Berlin” are still our best films. “Die Austernprinzessin” is our greatest and most elegant. (You don't need 100 servants for comedy. One can be funnier in some circumstances. Elegance is not funny, while comedy can also be elegant.)

“250,000 marks! Unheard-of extravagance! 300 servants.” Why is that? Just because America blows the horn of superlatives?

Have you read about the film cities in America, where 70,000 people worked on the film “Intolerance”? Assessing the magnitude of numbers is subjective. We will never be able to compete in that area. Our strength lies in a completely different field. Trying to compete here is futile.

Three years ago, it would have been superfluous to say all this. But it is now becoming relevant, as our films are to become export goods (perhaps the only ones). Do we want to impress them over there with this? We can impress them. Still. You could do it with the “how.” And with this film, you can do it with the elegance, style, and tempo of our film drama with its often cited “logical play” and the unheardof liveliness and verve of Pola Negri in “Carmen.” (Hardly with “Veritasvincit”). Just as an aside. The “Oyster Princess” was a success and will fill the seats of a number of cinemas for many weeks to come. Satis est.

Available online at Filmportal.de.

‘“Incomparably More Difficult” – Ernst Lubitsch on the Misery of Film Comedy’ in *Lichtbild-Bühne*, No. 28, July 12, 1919

Translated by Molly Harrabin

Why are there so few film comedies? This question could be answered in the same way as the other one: Why are there so few good stage comedies? Because we have so few good comedy writers. However, this is not the only reason.

The opinion of a renowned figure in German film comedy, Mr. Ernst Lubitsch, on this matter is undoubtedly of interest. He expressed himself as follows:

“The main blame for the misery of film comedies lies with the indifference with which they are treated in German film studios. In those circles, there is an almost barbaric view that comedy is inferior to drama. As a result, drama sells for a higher price than comedy. Therefore, comedy should not cost much.

This completely misjudges the audience’s psyche. As theater has amply demonstrated, a comedies, farces, or operettas, bring in significantly more than serious plays. Our filmmakers should keep this in mind and dare to produce film comedies with greater effort and care.

It’s no surprise that our comedies are less popular than other plays these days, considering the current low level of comedy production; on the other hand, really well-made comedies are just as successful as dramas.

However, the goodwill of the producers alone is not enough – film comedies require a special kind of talent. In fact, I would almost go so far as to say that it is more difficult to produce a comedy than a drama.

Scriptwriting for a comedy is incomparably more difficult. A comedy's script must not be perceived as unnecessary ballast, but reinforce the humor of the situation being portrayed. Writing these scripts requires a unique skill set. I have often found that witty stage writers can't even come up with a single witty film title.

Our film producers should take all these considerations to heart and treat comedy production as seriously as drama. Above all, in the payment of comedy scripts."

Available online at filmportal.de.