

OPERAS FOR DECEMBER 2021

1 December	Meyerbeer	Semiramide
8	Korngold	The Ring of Polykrates Violanta
15	Offenbach	Le Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein
22	Smetana	The Bartered Bride
29	Kálmán	The Duchess of Chicago

Stories of the operas

Semiramide riconosciuta (Semiramis recognised) is an opera in two acts by Giacomo Meyerbeer. It is the composer's fifth opera and the second that he composed for a theatre in Italy. The text is an adaptation of a pre-existing libretto by Pietro Metastasio that had already been set to music by numerous other composers. The opera had its premiere at the Teatro Regio in Turin on 3 February 1819.

The libretti of Metastasio followed the form of opera seria, with passages of secco recitative followed by solo arias for the singers and contain little or no ensembles (duets, trios, etc.) or choruses. The 1729 libretto for Semiramide riconosciuta by Metastasio had some thirty arias, and had already been set to music by numerous composers including Gluck, Salieri, Porpora, and others. Josef Mysliveček's version, titled simply Semiramide, was performed in 1766. By 1819, musical and theatrical taste had changed and audiences wanted more from opera than one solo aria after the other, so the libretto was adapted by Lodovico Piossasco Feys to include duets and ensembles, a lengthy finale to the first act with ensembles and chorus, as demanded by the taste of the time, and the many passages of dialogue in recitative were shortened. Although a success at its first performance in Turin, the opera was only given there three times. In 1820 the libretto was further revised by Gaetano Rossi, with musical revisions by the composer, and was given under the title Semiramide riconosciuta in Bologna, with the same star, Carolina Bassi, in the title role, with great success. The story of this opera is not the same as the story of Rossini's 1823 opera Semiramide with a libretto by Rossi based on a play by Voltaire, but shows the Babylonian queen (known in English as 'Semiramis') at an early part of her life, rather than at the end of it, as in the Rossini opera. Neither storyline is based on historical fact.

Roles

Semiramide, a Babylonian princess	alto
Ircano, a Scythian prince	tenor
Scitalce, an Indian prince, former lover of Semiramide	mezzo-soprano
Mirteo, brother of Semiramide	bass
Tamiri, princess of Bactria	soprano
Sibari, also formerly in love with Semiramide	tenor

Synopsis: In disguise as a man, the Babylonian princess Semiramide rules Assyria. When Princess Tamiri is faced with a choice of husband from three candidates, this sets off a chain of events that eventually leads to Semiramide being reunited with her lover Scitalce, and his rival Sibari being exposed as a villain.

Act 1: Princes and ambitious suitors have gathered in Babylon from far and wide for on this day the Princess Tamiri is to choose a husband. Among those present is Semiramide, who rules Assyria in disguise as her own son. When Semiramide's husband the King died, rather than allow her weak son Nino to assume the throne, she kept him hidden in the palace and assumed his identity. Among the suitors for Tamiri's hand is Semiramide's brother Mirteo and a previous lover of Semiramide's, Scitalce. Years before, Scitalce, deceived by Sibari, had believed Semiramide unfaithful to him and had her thrown into the river. However, unknown to Scitalce, Semiramide survived. Sibari is also present as a suitor for Tamiri and recognises Semiramide, despite her disguise.

Act 2: Tamiri is inclined to choose Scitalce as her husband, but Semiramide still loves him despite his earlier attempt to have her killed. She reveals her identity, explaining she assumed her disguise for the good of the country, rather than allow her inept son to rule. Semiramide pardons Scitalce and denounces Sibari's villainy. Semiramide will marry Scitalce and Tamiri will wed Semiramide's brother Mirteo.

There is further information to be found here:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semiramide_riconosciuta_\(Meyerbeer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semiramide_riconosciuta_(Meyerbeer))

Der Ring des Polykrates

Korngold composed the opera (his first) in 1914, when he was only seventeen years old. The one-act domestic comedy was contrasted by his second opera *Violanta*, a one-act tragedy. Both were premiered together on 28 March 1916 at the National Theatre Munich. Bruno Walter conducted.

The librettist Leo Feld placed the story in the 18th century, when Friedrich Schiller's ballade of the same title was new.

Synopsis: The musician Wilhelm Arndt seems to have everything going for him: he is happily married to Laura, he has been appointed Hoffkapellmeister and he has just inherited a small fortune. Only the return of his long-lost friend Peter Vogel could make him even more happy. When Vogel actually returns, he is jealous of Wilhelm's happiness, and convinces him that in order not to challenge fate, he should sacrifice something (after the example set in Schiller's ballade *Der Ring des Polykrates*). Wilhelm starts an argument with his wife about her former life, but the couple's love is strong enough to overcome all difficulties. In the end, all agree that the sacrifice that has to be offered is the intriguer that tried to ruin their happiness: Peter Vogel has to leave again.

Violanta is a one-act opera by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. The libretto is by the Austrian playwright Hans Müller-Einigen. It is Korngold's second opera, written when he was only seventeen years old.

Synopsis

The opera is set in 15th-century Venice, at the house of Simone Trovai, military commander of the Venetian republic.

On the night of the great Carnival, Simone in vain searches his house for his wife *Violanta*. Ever since her sister Nerina committed suicide (after having been seduced by Alfonso, the Prince of Naples), she has been bent on vengeance. Simone is about to leave for the Carnival with the painter Giovanni Bracca, when *Violanta* appears. After dismissing Bracca, she reveals to Simone that she has (anonymously) arranged a meeting with Alfonso in their

house, where she wants her husband to murder him. Initially Simone is horrified at this plan, but he finally succumbs to Violanta's promises and threats. The plan is that Violanta will receive Alfonso in her room, and once he is disarmed she will sing the Carnival song as a signal that Simone should enter and murder him.

Alfonso arrives. During their meeting Violanta reveals her true identity and her intention to avenge her sister. However, when Alfonso explains to her the course of his life and talks about his longing for death, Violanta realises that she really loves him and refuses to give the signal. Violanta bemoans her fate, but Alfonso implores her to think only of the present moment: they embrace and sing of the sublimity of pure love.

Their ecstatic bliss is interrupted by Simone who calls out to his wife. The lovers realise that their dream is over, and spurred on by Alfonso Violanta sings the fateful song with hysterical abandon. Simone enters and tries to stab Alfonso, but Violanta interposes herself and is mortally wounded. She dies in Simone's arms.

Jacques OFFENBACH La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein

Europe, 1867: Bismarck was in the process of amalgamating all of the small Duchies and princely states into a modern Germany led by Prussia. In France, Napoleon III was nearing half way in his modernisation of the railways and industry of France, the rebuilding of Paris with Baron Haussmann and the construction of the Suez Canal. To promote all this, he decided to hold a Universal Exhibition. Offenbach had one show [La vie parisienne] already running and wanted another one to catch the increase in tourists expected during the Exhibition. The Grand Duchess opened in April 1867 and was a spoof on the young Catherine the Great of Russia and on the ease with which the leaders of the countries of Europe could be sent off to a war. It was an immediate hit, seen by all the crowned heads and major political players of Europe and has been running on and off ever since. Ironically, it was banned from performance in France just 3 years later during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 which saw the end of Napoleon III and the commencement of the Third Republic.

LA GRANDE DUCHESS DE GEROLSTEIN

Opera-bouffe in 3 acts and 4 tableaux by Offenbach [12 April 1867, Paris]

Act I - The military encampment

In 1720, or thereabouts, in the Grand Duchy of Gerolstein there is going to be war. In the camp, a small but enthusiastic army awaits its departure for this war which is to be fought against an unnamed enemy. We see soldiers, peasant girls, camp-followers, and a young couple: Fritz, a soldier, and Wanda, his betrothed. They are drinking, perhaps draining their last glass together, and dancing, spinning 'like tops' to give them a good send-off.

But pif ,paf, pouf. here comes General Boum, 'à cheval sur la discipline ['a stickler for discipline']. The women flee. Tara papa poum, the general gets angry at Fritz's insolence. An aide-de-camp announces that the Grand Duchess will shortly be arriving. Boum orders Fritz to stand guard, and leaves the camp with his army. Despite the order forbidding him to move, Fritz kisses Wanda, once, twice... The general returns: his large-scale troop-movement was just intended to catch the young soldier out. At the sound of cannon, Fritz and Wanda run off, just as Baron Puck enters. Baron Puck and General Boum are conspiring together. They have a single aim: to stay in power. But the Grand Duchess, with nothing to do, is bored; so, to amuse her, Puck has had war declared and is also trying to find a husband for her: Prince

Paul. But the Grand Duchess doesn't want him, and Puck and Boum are worried: 'si Son Altesse s'avisait d'avoir un favori! [What if Her Highness decided to take a favourite!]

The Grand Duchess arrives. It's another of Puck's ideas: she is here to 'encourage' the soldiers by singing the regimental song with the general. But the ruler, who 'aime les militaires [loves soldiers], gives Fritz a big shock; from being a private soldier, in a trice he climbs through the ranks. She makes him a captain - a staggering promotion!-and sings the regimental song with him. Still better is to come: after studying General Boum's non-aggressive plan of attack, she chooses the tactics recommended by the new captain and names him general and head of the army. She entrusts to him her father's sabre, and Fritz takes leave of Wanda, going off to battle as a future conquering hero.

Act II- A room in the Grand Duchess's palace

The war is over. The soldiers return; Fritz is victorious - The Grand Duchess is refusing to receive Baron Grog, the ambassador of Prince Paul's father, who wants to conclude the marriage; she is happily waiting for Fritz. But history is about to repeat itself. The Grand Duchess's grandmother, Victorine, once had a lover, Max, who was a soldier. Every evening he used to go down a secret corridor, hidden behind a picture at each end, to get to her room, and one night Max was assassinated. This is the fate which awaits Fritz. Boum, Puck and Paul conspire - in deadly earnest.

The great general makes his triumphal entry and recounts his heroic four-day battle. He got the opposing army so drunk they couldn't fight. The Grand Duchess, herself intoxicated with love, dismisses the court and is alone with her conqueror. She offers him rewards 'dans le civil' ['in civilian life'], telling him that from now on he is to live in the palace. Fritz has no idea what she is getting at. Then the Duchess has the idea of telling him about a lady, a friend of hers, who is in love with him - Fritz laughs at this, having no idea what she means. Moreover, he can't pursue it; he loves Wanda. She must tell the lady this. He asks the Grand Duchess to be a signatory to his marriage contract- This is the last straw, and the scorned ruler joins the conspirators' camp. Yes, Fritz must die! She might give the signal by having them do the dance of the 'carillon de sa grand-mère' ['her grandmother's carillon'] at the ball this evening. The notary arrives, and Fritz marries Wanda. The Grand Duchess chokes with anger, and gives the signal: the carillon strikes up.

Act III - Victorine's red boudoir

The Grand Duchess muses about the past, about her 'charmant petit naturel [charming little disposition], and about the present, with love affairs and murders vying for her attention. The conspirators, seventeen of them, arrive, sharpening their knives. Everything is ready. However, when she sees Baron Grog, the Duchess regrets not having received him: he is so handsome! She is left alone with him and suggests he quit the court of Prince Paul: he would do better at her establishment. Baron Grog refuses, ...but if she were to marry the prince..., Delighted, the Grand Duchess accepts. She will get married and no one will get killed. She tells the prince, who is overcome with joy. However, Boum and Puck are furious, and still want vengeance on Fritz. The Grand Duchess accepts this: vengeance, yes, but no killing. So instead, they upset Fritz's and Wanda's wedding night by sending the general off on horseback to fight quite another kind of battle.

The military encampment: In camp there is drinking again, this time to celebrate the royal wedding. The Grand Duchess joins the festivities and is astonished by the absence of General

Fritz. Boum explains; he sent General Fritz off on a Pavlovian horse which automatically gallops to the house of a lady whom General Boum himself used to visit but the husband got suspicious. Fritz returns beaten up, with 'le sabre de papa' all bent. So the Grand Duchess relieves him of all his ranks and honours, but when she tries to bestow all these distinctions on Grog, the chamberlain tells her that he has three children, soon to be four. The Grand Duchess, her ardour cooled by this, sends him back to the court he came from and decides that after all that 'puisque'elles ne peut pas avoir ce quelle aimer, d'aimer ce quelle a [since she can't have what she loves, she will love what she has].

The Bartered Bride Smetana

The Bartered Bride (Czech: Prodaná nevěsta, The Sold Bride) is a comic opera in three acts by the Czech composer Bedřich Smetana, to a libretto by Karel Sabina. The work is generally regarded as a major contribution towards the development of Czech music. It was composed during the period 1863 to 1866, and first performed at the Provisional Theatre, Prague, on 30 May 1866 in a two-act format with spoken dialogue.

There is a most interesting background article available here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bartered_Bride

Roles

Krušina, a peasant	baritone
Ludmila, his wife	soprano
Mařenka, their daughter	soprano
Mícha, a landowner	bass
Háta, his wife	mezzo-soprano
Vašek, their son	tenor
Jeník, Mícha's son by a former marriage	tenor
Kecal, a marriage broker	bass
Principál komediantů, Ringmaster	tenor
Indián, an Indian comedian	bass
Esmeralda, dancer and comedienne	soprano
Chorus: Villagers, circus artists, boys	

Synopsis

Act 1: A crowd of villagers is celebrating at the church fair ("Let's rejoice and be merry"). Among them are Mařenka and Jeník. Mařenka is unhappy because her parents want her to marry someone she has never met. They will try to force her into this, she says. Her desires are for Jeník even though, as she explains in her aria "If I should ever learn", she knows nothing of his background. The couple then declare their feelings for each other in a passionate love duet ("Faithful love can't be marred").

As the pair leave separately, Mařenka's parents, Ludmila and Krušina, enter with the marriage broker Kecal. After some discussion, Kecal announces that he has found a groom for Mařenka – Vašek, younger son of Tobiáš Mícha, a wealthy landowner; the older son, he explains, is a worthless good-for-nothing. Kecal extols the virtues of Vašek ("He's a nice boy, well brought up"), as Mařenka re-enters. In the subsequent quartet she responds by saying that she already has a chosen lover. Send him packing, orders Kecal. The four argue, but little

is resolved. Kecal decides he must convince Jeník to give up Mařenka, as the villagers return, singing and dancing a festive polka.

Act 2: The men of the village join in a rousing drinking song ("To beer!"), while Jeník and Kecal argue the merits, respectively, of love and money over beer. The women enter, and the whole group joins in dancing a furiant. Away from the jollity the nervous Vašek muses over his forthcoming marriage in a stuttering song ("My-my-my mother said to me"). Mařenka appears, and guesses immediately who he is, but does not reveal her own identity. Pretending to be someone else, she paints a picture of "Mařenka" as a treacherous deceiver. Vašek is easily fooled, and when Mařenka, in her false guise, pretends to woo him ("I know of a maiden fair"), he falls for her charms and swears to give Mařenka up.

Meanwhile, Kecal is attempting to buy Jeník off, and after some verbal fencing makes a straight cash offer: a hundred florins if Jeník will renounce Mařenka. Not enough, is the reply. When Kecal increases the offer to 300 florins, Jeník pretends to accept, but imposes a condition – no one but Mícha's son will be allowed to wed Mařenka. Kecal agrees, and rushes off to prepare the contract. Alone, Jeník ponders the deal he has apparently made to barter his beloved ("When you discover whom you've bought"), wondering how anyone could believe that he would really do this, and finally expressing his love for Mařenka.

Kecal summons the villagers to witness the contract he has made ("Come inside and listen to me"). He reads the terms: Mařenka is to marry no one but Mícha's son. Krušina and the crowd marvel at Jeník's apparent self-denial, but the mood changes when they learn that he has been paid off. The act ends with Jeník being denounced by Krušina and the rest of the assembly as a rascal.

Act 3: Vašek expresses his confusions in a short, sad song ("I can't get it out of my head"), but is interrupted by the arrival of a travelling circus. The Ringmaster introduces the star attractions: Esmeralda, the Spanish dancer, a "real Indian" sword swallower, and a dancing bear. A rapid folk-dance, the skočná, follows. Vašek is entranced by Esmeralda, but his timid advances are interrupted when the "Indian" rushes in, announcing that the "bear" has collapsed in a drunken stupor. A replacement is required. Vašek is soon persuaded to take the job, egged on by Esmeralda's flattering words ("We'll make a pretty thing out of you").

The circus folk leave. Vašek's parents – Mícha and Háta – arrive, with Kecal. Vašek tells them that he no longer wants to marry Mařenka, having learned her true nature from a beautiful, strange girl. They are horrified ("He does not want her – what has happened?"). Vašek runs off, and moments later Mařenka arrives with her parents. She has just learned of Jeník's deal with Kecal, and a lively ensemble ("No, no, I don't believe it") ensues. Matters are further complicated when Vašek returns, recognises Mařenka as his "strange girl", and says that he will happily marry her. In the sextet which follows ("Make your mind up, Mařenka"), Mařenka is urged to think things over. They all depart, leaving her alone.

In her aria ("Oh what grief"), Mařenka sings of her betrayal. When Jeník appears, she rebuffs him angrily, and declares that she will marry Vašek. Kecal arrives, and is amused by Jeník's attempts to pacify Mařenka, who orders her former lover to go. The villagers then enter, with both sets of parents, wanting to know Mařenka's decision ("What have you decided, Mařenka?"). As she confirms that she will marry Vašek, Jeník returns, and to great consternation addresses Mícha as "father". In a surprise identity revelation it emerges that Jeník is Mícha's elder son, by a former marriage – the "worthless good-for-nothing" earlier

dismissed by Kecal – who had in fact been driven away by his jealous stepmother, Háta. As Micha's son he is, by the terms of the contract, entitled to marry Mařenka; when this becomes clear, Mařenka understands his actions and embraces him. Offstage shouting interrupts the proceedings; it seems that a bear has escaped from the circus and is heading for the village. This creature appears, but is soon revealed to be Vašek in the bear's costume ("Don't be afraid!"). His antics convince his parents that he is unready for marriage, and he is marched away. Micha then blesses the marriage between Mařenka and Jeník, and all ends in a celebratory chorus.

The Duchess from Chicago Emmerich Kálmán (1882 - 1953)

THE DUCHESS OF CHICAGO, an operetta in two acts with a prologue and an epilogue. Book and lyrics by Julius Brammer and Alfred Grunwald. Premiered in Vienna, April, 1928.

The cast: King Pancras XXVII of Sylvaria / Prince Sandor, impoverished heir to the throne / Count Negresco, adjutant to the Prince / Count Boiazovitch, Finance Minister of Sylvaria and Marquis Perolin, Minister of State / Princess Rosemarie of Morenia, cousin of and intended bride of Prince Sandor; The millionaire Mr. Benjamin Lloyd from Chicago and controller of Sylvaria's oil wells / Mary Lloyd, his daughter / Johnny Bondy, private secretary to Mr Lloyd / Dolly Astor, Maud Carnegie and Edith Rockefeller, daughters of American millionaires and members of the "Young Ladies' Eccentric Club of New York" / The American Ambassador to Sylvaria / and various other characters including Mihaly Kupp, the leader of a gypsy band, Tihany and Kompoty, the manager and head waiter respectively, of the "Grill Americaine" in Budapest and assorted friends and employees of Prince Sandor.

The action takes place in the Balkans, some time in the mid-1920s.

Prologue: Set in Budapest in the "Grill Americaine" club.

Prince Sandor, the impoverished heir to the throne of Sylvaria, is enjoying himself incognito, trying to forget that his country's oil wells have been pawned to Benjamin Lloyd, a millionaire from Chicago and that he is soon to enter into an arranged marriage with his cousin, the equally impoverished Princess Rosemarie of Morenia. Apart from these worries, Prince Sandor's enjoyment is marred somewhat by the fact that the music being played in the "Grill Americaine" is very up to date and includes the Charleston and other jazzy music - he prefers good old Hungarian czardas and Viennese waltzes. His enjoyment is further put to the test when Benjamin Lloyd's daughter, Mary (on a trip to Europe with other members of the "Young Ladies Eccentric Club of New York") arrives at the night-club with her father's secretary, Johnny Bondy. She announces that while in Europe she hopes to win a million dollar bet, made with members of her Ladies Club, through purchasing something money usually can't buy. She also wants to dance the Charleston with Prince Sandor, but Prince Sandor, pretending to be his adjutant, refuses on his master's behalf. Although he would be happy to dance a waltz with her, an auction ensues in which Mary and the supposed adjutant bid against each other. Mary wins, and the guests of the "Grill Americaine" sing the praises of jazz while Mary proclaims that before too long Prince Sandor will be dancing the Charleston with her.

Act 1: Prince Sandor's uncle, King Pancras, has had to go to Monte Carlo on business and in his absence Sandor assumes the regency. He is also celebrating his birthday but his

enjoyment is short lived when he is told that Mary Lloyd has arrived in Sylvaria with her father's secretary, Bondy, sixteen dancing girls and a jazz band, to teach the locals the Charleston, an activity he immediately outlaws. Shortly afterwards, Bondy arrives at the palace and interrupting discussions between government officials about the proposed marriage of Prince Sandor to his cousin, Princess Rosemarie, announces that Mary intends to buy and modernise the royal palace, spending up to six-million dollars for this purpose. News of this infuriates Prince Sandor, who still has not revealed his true identity to Mary Lloyd. However when Sandor explains to her that the run down palace she intends to modernize is his childhood home she realises just who she's been dealing with all the time. And after he agrees to the plan, which he hopes will improve the lot of his people, Mary cables her father that while she has succeeded in buying a palace she now intends to buy the prince who goes with it as well. Meanwhile, Bondy and Princess Rosemarie have met and find that they are in similar situations with others trying to force them into loveless arranged marriages.

Act 2: A reception is being held in the palace by Mary Lloyd to celebrate its modernisation, and although Prince Sandor has not yet arrived, Mary hopes that it will not be too long before he is dancing either the Charleston or the fox trot with her. In fact he has been taking lessons secretly as has Mary in the old fashioned Viennese waltz. Members of the government are very pleased with the renovations, although when Prince Sandor arrives, he feels that tradition has been somewhat sacrificed. But the talk soon turns to the dance music of their respective countries, and it seems that some rapprochement has been reached at last. After Prince Sandor's departure, the Ministers of his government, after selling most of Sylvaria's other assets to Mary Lloyd, report on the progress of their plan to have Sandor betrothed to Mary. The absent King Pancras cables that he thinks this to be rather a good idea, and to facilitate it, has elevated Mary to the rank of Duchess of Chicago, and her father's secretary, Bondy, to the rank of Count, for services rendered. Meanwhile, Benjamin Lloyd, intrigued by his daughter's cable, has arrived from Chicago with members of the "Young Ladies Eccentric Club". Although he understands the challenge that his daughter has undertaken in respect of winning her million dollar bet with the other ladies, he senses that she is now in love with Prince Sandor and agrees to meet with him. At first Lloyd thinks the Prince useless, but later changes his mind, considering him to be a man of character. The newly ennobled Count Bondy and Princess Rosemarie, have, in the meantime, met again, and encouraged by his somewhat changed status, agreed to marry. After all, it is so much easier to say yes to a rich count, than to a poor prince. It is then the turn of the ladies of the "Eccentric Club" to inspect Sandor and to declare that Mary has won the bet. However the proposed pairing of Prince Sandor with the Duchess of Chicago and Count Bondy with Princess Rosemarie falls apart when the Prince not only discovers what his ministers have been plotting but sees a copy of Mary's original cable to her father. And in a fit of temper, announces his engagement --- not to the Duchess of Chicago, but to his cousin Princess Rosemarie. Bondy and Mary are shattered, and so, presumably is the Princess.

Epilogue: King Pancras has returned from Monte Carlo, rather annoyed that his nephew Prince Sandor has not married the rich American heiress Mary Lloyd, whose monies would have helped secure his country's future. He is thinking about these matters in the "Grill americaine" in Budapest, when Mary arrives with a mysterious stranger, who later turns out

to be the Chief Executive of Paramount Fox, on the lookout for a happy ending to the film he is currently making. Although King Pancras considers marrying the heiress Mary LLOYD himself, Prince Sandor fortuitously turns up at the night club as well, after learning that his bride Rosemarie has eloped with a rich American, Count Bondy. He sees Mary, and affronted by her mysterious friend, who is staring at him quite shamelessly, summonses them both over to explain themselves. And of course, all the movie executive wants is for Prince Sandor to be provoked into admitting and reciprocating the love Mary Lloyd already feels for him, and help ensure that the new film, which he has already titled "The Duchess of Chicago" will be given the ending which will make American movie-goers happy. Both Mary and Sandor oblige by expressing their love for each other, but when asked to dance the Charleston with her, counters that he would prefer a slow foxtrot, as the Charleston is now, in his view, somewhat passé.