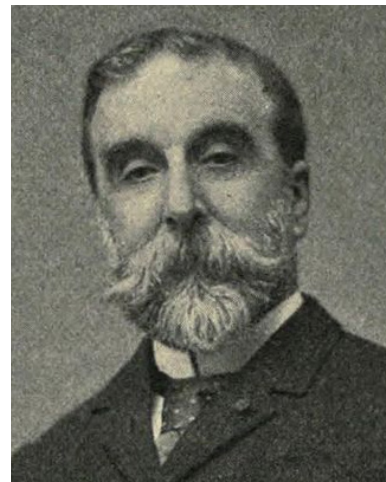


Ludovic Halévy (1834-1908)

Ludovic Halévy was born in Paris. His uncle, Fromental Halévy, was a noted composer of opera; hence the double and early connection of Ludovic Halévy with the Parisian stage. At eighteen he joined the ranks of the French administration and occupied various posts, the last being that of secrétaire-rédacteur to the Corps Législatif.

In 1865, Ludovic Halévy's increasing popularity as an author enabled him to retire from the public service. Ten years earlier, he had become acquainted with the musician Offenbach, who was about to start a small theatre of his own in the Champs-Élysées, and he wrote a sort of prologue, *Entrez, messieurs, mesdames*, for the opening night. Other little productions followed, *Ba-ta-clan* being the most noticeable among them. They were produced under the pseudonym of Jules Servières. The name of Ludovic Halévy appeared for the first time on the bills on 1 January 1856. Soon afterwards, the unprecedented run of *Orphée aux enfers*, a musical parody, written in collaboration with Hector Crémieux, made his name famous.



In the spring of 1860, he was commissioned to write a play for the manager of the Variétés in conjunction with another vaudevillist, Lambert Thiboust. The latter having abruptly retired from the collaboration, Halévy was at a loss how to carry out the contract, when on the steps of the theatre he met Henri Meilhac. He proposed to Meilhac the task rejected by Lambert Thiboust, and the proposal was immediately accepted. Thus began a connection which was to last over twenty years, and which proved most fruitful both for the reputation of the two authors and the prosperity of the minor Paris theatres. Amongst the most celebrated works of the joint authors were *La belle Hélène* (1864), *Barbe-bleue* (1866), *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* (1867), *La Périchole* (1868), and *Le Réveillon*, which became one of the sources of Johann Strauss's operetta *Die Fledermaus*.

Meilhac and Halévy will be found at their best in light sketches of Parisian life, *Les Sonnettes*, *Madame attend Monsieur*, *Toto chez Tata* and *Le Roi Candaule* (the title of the last is derived from the Classical Greek account of the semi-legendary King Candaules).

M. Halévy remained an assiduous frequenter of the Academy, the Conservatoire, the Comédie Française, and the Society of Dramatic Authors, but, when he died in Paris on 7 May 1908, he had produced practically nothing new for many years.

His last romance, *Kari Kari*, appeared in 1892. His diary was published in book form in 1935 as well as serially in the pages of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1937-38.