

## Henri Meilhac (1831-1897)

Henri Meilhac was born in Paris in 1831. As a young man, he began writing fanciful articles for Parisian newspapers and vaudevilles, in a vivacious boulevardier spirit which brought him to the forefront. About 1860, he met Ludovic Halévy, and their collaboration for the stage lasted twenty years.

Their most famous collaboration is the libretto for Georges Bizet's *Carmen*. However, Meilhac's work is most closely tied to the music of Jacques Offenbach, for whom he wrote over a dozen librettos, most of them together with Halévy. The most successful collaborations with Offenbach are *La belle Hélène* (1864), *Barbe-bleue* (1866), *La vie parisienne* (1866), *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* (1867), and *La Périchole* (1868). Also *Froufrou* (1869), with Halévy.

Other librettos by Meilhac include Jules Massenet's *Manon* (with Philippe Gille) (1884), Hervé's *Mam'zelle Nitouche* (1883), and *Rip*, the French version of Robert Planquette's operetta *Rip Van Winkle* (also with Gille). Their vaudeville play *Le réveillon* was the basis of the operetta *Die Fledermaus*.

In 1888 he was elected to the Académie française. He died in Paris in 1897.

