

Problem Three: Field Documentation and Formal Analysis of Historic Buildings  
Woodlawn Cemetery  
Victor Herbert Mausoleum

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Victor Augustus Herbert was born in 1859 in Dublin, Ireland, although he spent his adult life in New York as a successful cellist, orchestral conductor, and composer of operettas including *Babes in Toy Land* (image 1) and *Naughty Marietta*. Herbert had studied cello at the Stuttgart Conservatory, and later joined the Stuttgart Court Orchestra where he played in the orchestras of Eduard Strauss and Johannes Brahms. Here, he met his wife, Theresa Förster, who sang as a soprano for the court opera<sup>i</sup> (image 2). The two relocated to New York in October of 1886, just months after wedding, where they continued their musical careers. By his final year in life, Victor and Theresa had raised two children, Clifford and Ella, and had purchased a fashionable row house in New York's Upper West Side, complete with a butler, cook and a maid<sup>ii</sup>. Victor Herbert was remarkably active in the city's music scene – a member of various musician and composer groups, continuously overseeing productions of his numerous works, and fighting for the publishing rights of musicians through the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), which he help to found with Irving Berlin and John Philip Sousa<sup>iii</sup>. Because of his activism, the organization commissioned a bust of Herbert in Central Park in 1927<sup>iv</sup>.

According to Herbert's in-depth biography by Neil Gould, his unexpected passing left his wife in shock, while his daughter Ella, who was 31 and unmarried at the time of his death, managed all arrangements for his funeral and interment. Unfortunately, while his will concisely covered the dispersal of his estate, the value of his assets quickly dwindled due to unpaid debts<sup>v</sup>. Woodlawn Cemetery was chosen as an ideal site for his remains not only because it was in vogue as a burial place in high society, but also many of his comrades in the music industry had already lain to rest there and Ella felt he would be in good company. Following both a public and private funeral, Herbert's body was transported to Woodlawn where he was kept in a holding crypt for the year following his death<sup>vi</sup>. During his first week in the holding crypt, ASCAP requested that a death mask and mold of his right (conducting) hand be made in commemoration, both of which are now at the Library of Congress, along with many of his original manuscripts (image 3).

Ella and Theresa sold their handsome row house at 321 West 108<sup>th</sup> Street the month following Herbert's death to support themselves and moved to the Park Lane Hotel<sup>vii</sup>. Herbert's library and effects were auctioned for additional funding. Soon after, Ella contracted Presbrey-Leland Studios, then located on-site at Woodlawn, to construct Herbert's mausoleum. The plans for the mausoleum, while very similar to the standard options available in the Presbrey-Leland catalogue, were designed by architect W.L. Smith of Manhattan<sup>viii</sup>. Ella opted for a simple yet classic square Greek revival monument. The mausoleum reads as a basic Doric propylaeum, framed by four attenuated columns while the stepped roof can easily be read as a pediment from the street. In her correspondence with Presbrey-Leland, Ella Herbert writes that the mausoleum must be built of "Dummerston Vermont white granite free from cracks, iron, sap and other objectionable substances," and continues to specify the purity and high quality of each of the materials used<sup>ix</sup>.

The structure is located on a modest trapezoidal plot of approximately 27 feet wide by 40 feet deep that rests on a gentle incline. The mausoleum is placed at the top of the slope, about 20 feet away from the street, with no walkway or path leading to the structure. The original plan includes the placement of a linden tree – a symbol of fidelity and luck – at the roadside to the right of the mausoleum's entrance, which is no longer located there. This would have created a visual screen as you approached the site from the main entrance. Facing the mausoleum from the street, it stands as a modest, elegant form, almost a perfect square divided into three sections by the pilasters at each end and the Doric doorframe carved from the surrounding granite. Sitting at the top of a small set of stairs that reach out beyond the main block of the foundation is a set of brass doors, each decorated with twelve small rosettes and a square window with an eight-armed cross at the top, which also opens into the mausoleum for additional ventilation if needed. The entire building maintains an austere symmetry throughout the entire composition on various axes – the floor plan is perfectly divided down the center, and were the rear window extended to a door, the building would mirror itself exactly on this north-south axis. There is an ongoing motif

throughout the structure of eight-armed crosses that echo a deliberate uniformity – both the front door window as well as a finer pattern set in the stained glass to the rear bear this double cross, as do the numerous rosettes (image 4).

Herbert's mausoleum is entered by ascending the small hill on which it stands, scaling two slate steps, and opening the double doors, which swing out. The interior is faced in layers of gray-white marble. Although Herbert was Anglican, the mausoleum is devoid of religious iconography. The rear window, which looks to the west, is traced with a broken laurel wreath with a blue ribbon tied at the top (image 5). This likely symbolizes Victor Herbert's great accomplishments in his musical career, perhaps broken below because he passed while still quite lively and productive. The light from the window hits the marble surfaces to illuminate the narrow aisle between the crypts. At the far end of the aisle sits a low marble bench that invites the visitor to rest for a moment among the family. There are six crypts within the mausoleum, three on either side of the building – to the visitor's right upon entering, in the center, rests Victor Herbert, directly across his wife Theresa Herbert (1860 – 1927), who passed away just nine months after her husband. Ella is buried immediately above Victor, and below, her husband, Robert Stevens Bartlett (1885 – 1956), who had been a comfortable sales official<sup>x</sup>. On the windowsill, a small brass urn contains the remains of Maud Herbert (1893 – 1894), a child of Theresa and Victor's who died in infancy in 1895. Victor and Theresa's son, Clifford Herbert (1891 – 1961) passed away on his cattle ranch in El Paso Texas, and was buried at the Forest Lawn Cemetery in Hollywood Hills, California.

Overall the mausoleum is a modest final resting ground for Victor Herbert, who was known for his convivial personality and colorful productions. While his small temple could be read as a clean melody with the regular rhythms of pilasters and exacting symmetry, it seems to reflect the ascetic nature of his daughter and the financial austerity that she and her mother had to maintain for their well-being while managing to keep up Herbert's appearances.

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<sup>i</sup> Gould, Neil. *Victor Herbert: A Theatrical Life*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press. 2008. p. 15

<sup>ii</sup> United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1920*.

Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1920. Accessed at <http://search.ancestrylibrary.com>, 10/13/2011.

<sup>iii</sup> Gould, p.317.

<sup>iv</sup> "Victor Herbert Statue: Central Park", NYC Parks Dept, accessed at:

<http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/centralpark/highlights/12818>, 10/09/11.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> *New York Times*. "Widow of Victor Herbert sells her West Side home." June, 29, 1924. E1

<sup>vii</sup> Columbia University. Avery Drawings & Archives. Woodlawn archive. Accessed 10/12/2011

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>ix</sup> United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*.

Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930. Accessed at <http://search.ancestrylibrary.com>, 10/13/2011.

#### Additional Resources

Clark, Laura. *Musical Opinion*. "Victor Herbert (1859-1924): The Core in the Big Apple's History of Operetta – a sesquicentenary acknowledgement." 03/2010. pp 23 - 24

Waters, Edward N. *Victor Herbert: A Life in Music*. New York, NY: MacMillan Co. 1955.

*New York Times*. "VICTOR HERBERT'S LIFE AS SHOWN IN ANECDOTES: Friends Tell of His Abounding Kindliness and Humor." 06/10/1924.

*New York Times*. "MRS. VICTOR HERBERT LEFT \$200,000 ESTATE: Victor Herbert Memorial Hall May Get..." 04/30/1927.

Presbrey-Leland Studios. Commemoration: Book of Presbrey-Leland memorials. Presbrey-Leland Inc. 1932.

Images

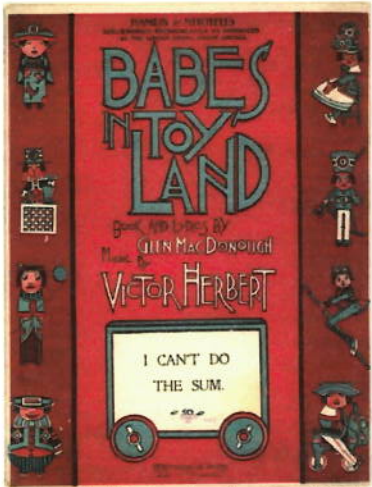


Image 1: "Babes in Toy Land" Playbill.  
<http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/inharmony>



Image 2: Theresa Herbert and husband Victor Herbert,  
Following performance of "The Queen of Sheba"  
Library of Congress.



Deathmask (Library of Congress)  
Image 3: Herbert's deathmask, 1924.  
Library of Congress

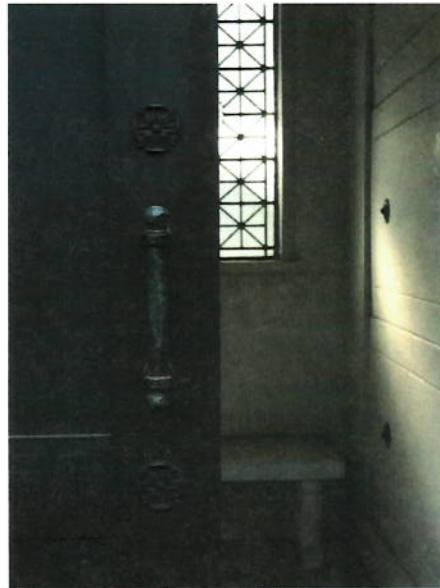


Image 5: Repetitions of eight-armed cross  
Photo taken 9/24/2011



Image 4: Entrance to mausoleum, view of rear window and interior. Photo taken 9/24/2011