

Otto Reutter (1870 - 1931) was the pre-eminent music hall artist of the imperial era. As the popular singer of the man on the street and a philosophical humorist, he was the most popular—and highest-paid—star of Berlin's "Winter Garden" (Wintergarten), among other venues. From 1895 until his death, this witty king of the punch lines and "ancestor of Germany's singing comics" (Max Herrmann-Neiße) made guest appearances in all the German-language variety theaters. The unique blend of topical criticism, everyday observances, and Berlin impudence in his songs (over a thousand of them) and monologues is still a model for cabaret and song authors today. "In fifty years, it'll all be over" ("In fünfzig Jahren ist alles vorbei"), "Nothing can surprise me any more" ("Ick wundre mir über gar nischt mehr"), "Take an old guy" (Nehm'n Sie 'n Alten"): many of his refrains crept into the everyday language and became catchwords.

Otto Reutter

"He had to fight against a language that is clumsy and has to be bent and kneaded, a language you have to practice for years and years before it will dance... But with him, it hopped. There are the most unusual, almost melancholy ideas there, skeptical ones written with beer, but close to the clowning jests of genius." (Kurt Tucholsky)

