

A Word from the Sponsor

CCM Presents Year-Long Weill Festival

The Kurt Weill Foundation is proud to announce a collaboration for the 2012–13 season with the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, more extensive and wide-ranging than any it has had before with an academic institution. Through its sponsorship program, the Foundation is offering funding, expert advice, and other assistance to CCM as it presents a season of stage productions, concert performances, cabaret evenings, master classes, and guest lectures, all built around Weill's works. The season is anchored by two major theatrical presentations: *Street Scene* (15–18 November) and *The Threepenny Opera* (28 February–10 March), directed and conducted by CCM Opera and Musical Theatre faculty. Both departments are nationally recognized for the stature of their programs and their success in launching students in professional careers.

Robin Guarino, chair of the Opera Department, has worked closely with the Foundation and with her colleagues at CCM to make the Weill season possible. “Many things happened at once,” said Guarino. “I knew that the Opera Department at CCM had never produced *Street Scene*. This year marks our fiftieth anniversary as part of UC and it seemed the perfect moment to celebrate Weill's music while celebrating the uniquely synergistic nature of CCM. As the Opera Department was planning *Street Scene*, Musical Theatre faculty Aubrey Berg and Roger Grodsky were planning *Threepenny Opera*. That production will be very special because Tony Award-winning set designer John Arnone will come to CCM to work with students from the Department of Theatre Design and Production for a month-long residency.

“The Director of Orchestral Studies, Mark Gibson, has long wanted to collaborate with Professor Bruce McClung and me on a Weill project, and that's how the cabaret ‘Speak Low’ started. When Bruce got wind of what was going on in Opera and Musical Theatre programming, he responded by focusing his fall seminar course, ‘Music in Culture,’ on Weill's music theater. So the festival grew, and soon we had Dr. Earl Rivers, Director of Choral Studies, programming *Kiddush* and ‘*Ho, Billy O!*’ Aubrey Berg and Roger Grodsky added another cabaret.”

Cooperation among faculty members and entire departments and a willingness to look beyond the immediate resources offered by the school were essential to the growth of the festival. Guarino will direct Musical Theatre students in *The Threepenny Opera*, and the Opera Department has brought in cast members for *Street Scene* from both the Drama and Musical Theatre departments. As Guarino notes, “One of the things that the festival will do—and is already doing—is getting students to cross the ‘departmental divide,’ and the same thing is happening for the faculty.” Aside from Professor McClung, none of the faculty members involved are Weill specialists, but they have been eager to explore options and to work together to create new opportunities for themselves and their students.

McClung's graduate seminar is an essential part of the festival at CCM, helping students to understand how Weill's stage works helped frame some of the twentieth century's central esthetic debates. Enthusiastic about the forthcoming season, he commented on the crucial link that the seminar provides to the performers: “Such collaboration creates a reflexive model of



A scene from the cabaret evening “Speak Low.”

PHOTO: CRIS DAVIS

education where students are able to study what they perform and perform what they study. It addresses different learning styles and multiple intelligences, and creates a higher level of engagement than if theory is divorced from practice.” Indeed, the combination of studying Weill's music and theories of musical theater in the classroom and seeing them worked out in performance seems like an ideal way to absorb the full spectrum of the composer's work. Several cast members from *Street Scene* are taking Professor McClung's course, which is over-enrolled with thirty-one students.

Other visiting speakers and performers round out the academic components of the Weill season. Two respected scholars will give lectures coinciding with the stage productions: Kim H. Kowalke, President of the Kurt Weill Foundation, will team-teach McClung's seminar on *Street Scene* and give two public presentations during his residency; and Howard Pollack of the University of Houston, author of a new biography of Marc Blitzstein (see review on p. 19), will discuss *The Threepenny Opera*. Tony Award winner (and Foundation Trustee) Victoria Clark offers a master class in Weill interpretation in November; conductor and director Ted Sperling, long known for his interest in Weill's American works, will give a master class in performing Weill's works in January.

The Foundation's sponsorship program helps organizations plan festivals comprising several events, usually a mixture of performances and scholarly elements, such as symposia. Foundation staff members work with the sponsored organization from the early planning stages, offering guidance as well as financial assistance. Guarino describes the collaboration: “[Director] Carolyn Weber contacted me to make sure that CCM Opera and Musical Theatre were applying for financial support. How often does that happen?! After receiving our grant application, Carolyn suggested a sponsorship, if we could expand the two productions into an entire Kurt Weill Festival. She contributed ideas for guests and repertoire, and I set about working with my CCM colleagues to expand the festival.” Weber encourages other schools to seek Foundation sponsorship: “CCM's schedule of stage productions, concerts, and ancillary activities, unprecedented in scope in an academic context, has inspired the Foundation to expand its sponsorship program to cover academic institutions in addition to professional performing arts organizations. We hope the CCM festival will set the stage for other such sponsorships in the future.”

Press release and schedule: <http://www.uc.edu/news/NR.aspx?id=16709>