

# REVIEWS



Scene from Act 1 of *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, revival at Metropolitan Opera, New York

## The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny

Metropolitan Opera, New York, New York, January 1984.

When *Mahagonny* came to the Met in 1979, the cutting edge of both its score and text made it one of the season's high points—an exhilarating change of pace amid a repertory stacked with 19th-century classics. The performances, both in the house and in the televised broadcast, had their shortcomings; but with Teresa Stratas as an alluring Jenny, and with James Levine directing a carefully paced and well-balanced rendering, the work's biting cynicism came through vividly.

In its current run, some of the production's excitement survives; but until the last act, when Weill's irrepressibly volatile finale catches fire on its own, the sparks in this year's version are all too intermittent. Too often, in the course of the performance I attended (January 24), the singers seemed to be walking through their roles, rather than living them. There were exceptions, of course: Richard Cassilly, who appeared in the 1979 cast, made Jimmy Mahoney into a three-dimensional character, something of an innocent among *Mahagonny's* cardboard villains. Among the latter, Ragnar Ulfung, as Fatty, and Cornell MacNeil (also in the 1979 cast), as Trinity

Moses, seethed with oiliness and evil intent.

But this was, overall, an ensemble performance in which the cast interacted as equals. In theory, this seems a rational alternative to the star system, and at a glance, *Mahagonny* seems suited to the ensemble approach. In practice, though, it doesn't quite work. At the very least, Jimmy Mahoney, Jenny, and Leocadia Begbick must be commandingly and vividly portrayed. This time, only Cassilly's Jimmy really came to life; in fact, his pre-dawn/pre-trial aria, at the start of the last act, was the first passionate moment in the performance.

In fairness, Geraldine Decker, as Begbick, was a last minute substitution for Lili Chookasian, and it took her a while to rise to the role. At the start, she lacked the power and assurance to prove a convincing founder of Brecht's oasis of capitalistic greed; indeed, her voice often failed to carry over the orchestration, and although her lines indicated that she was the driving force behind *Mahagonny's* founding trio, her demeanor was far less rugged. She didn't fully come into her own until the trial scene, in the last act.

Ariel Bybee's Jenny was curiously nondescript: she sang the role nicely enough, and she carried herself with a brazen swing that seemed adequate to the part. Yet, Jenny's character never

emerged from beneath the physical superficialities. If she is, as Andrew Porter describes her in his program notes, "an honest girl who must live in a dishonest world," Bybee showed little of the inherent conflicts. Hers was an entirely heartless Jenny, one-sided and selfish, and betraying nothing in the way of the sympathetic honesty a more rounded portrayal can suggest.

The inconsistency of the performance also reached into the orchestra pit. Jeffrey Tate drew some deliciously blended playing from the Met orchestra, but he seemed to hover inconclusively between brashness and timidity. The hurricane music, for instance, was disappointingly tame, as were the choral and orchestral underpinnings of the second act's "Eating," "Loving" and "Fighting" scenes. Elsewhere, though, Tate summoned up the required punch and more, and his emphasis of the brass and wind sections shed an interesting and unusual light on Weill's score, and supplied at least some of the robustness the work deserves. The finale, at least, was incandescent—the only time in the performance when the power of this Brecht-Weill collaboration was fully unleashed.

ALLEN KOZINN  
New York

# PERFORMANCES

## Lenya: Life to Legend

Leo S. Bing Theatre, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California. December 11, 12, 15 1983.

Sorry, indeed, the posthumous lot of diminutive red-haired singers of memorable stage presence and unforgettable style. Life after death has been bad enough for Edith Piaf, whose earthly torments have already served as smarmy essence for at least two wretched entertainments on Broadway and *Le Bon Dieu* knows how many more elsewhere. And now it's Lenya's turn: one show already in the works (and, praise be, out again), and several others on the drawing board.

It would be comforting, but probably not realistic, to state flat-out that no worse fate can befall the glowing memory of Lenya than *Lenya: Life to Legend*, which cast its baleful pall over the Bing Theater in the Los Angeles County Museum for three perfor-

mances last November. The script was the work of a Manhattan actor, director, and sometime writer named David Man; the dramatic outline (filched from at least one of the aforementioned Piaf extravaganzas) was to sketch a psychodrama of Lenya's inner and public life as it might develop from a running conversation among three—count 'em, *three*—Lenyas, with, of course, a few other essential characters on the sideline. Perhaps there is some validity in the basic notion of arriving at the essence of a character through this kind of divide-and-conquer approach, but Man's script came nowhere near either truth or interesting fantasy, settling instead for an continuous sniggering nattering on whom to sleep with and why not. Viveca Lindfors had been advertised right up until opening night as the leading Lenya—*prima inter pares*. Actually, she had dropped out well in advance, pleading illness—whether from reading the script or from natural causes is not known. Sally

Kemp, Lenka Peterson, and Joan Ryan played the three Lenyas; Keene Curtis (whose qualifications at least included baldness and a pair of horn-rimmed glasses) played Weill as Phil Silvers might have.

The show had been planned to include a score of Weill songs; one meeting with David Man sufficed to move the Foundation to withhold clearance. To her credit, music director Rhonda Kess stitched together a workmanlike original set of usable songs in not much time; last spring Kess had, with an ensemble of her own, presented a most enchanting Weill evening at USC's Schönberg Institute. The fiasco of *Lenya: Life to Legend* had nothing to do with Kess's well-intentioned efforts; here was one girl who, despite the old saying, was definitely ruined by a book.

ALAN RICH  
Los Angeles

## Mahagonny Bouffes du Nord, Paris, France. November-December 1983.

Located in a marginal neighborhood in the 10th arrondissement, the aging Bouffes du Nord theatre has become an important home for experimental theatre in Paris. The interior has been stripped of all ornamentation and the bleak, spotted and unpainted walls of the stage emanate a paradoxical reflection of the cultural demimonde which seems to flourish amid urban decay. This 600-seat house was the home of Peter Brook's *La tragédie de Carmen* and is familiar to many as the setting for the opening concert scene in Jean-Jacques Beineix's popular 1981 film *Diva*. Directed by Hans Peter Cloos and co-produced by La Salamandre, Alpha-FNAC, and Skarabäus, this production of *Mahagonny* was set in the near future in an age dominated by computers, high technology and social decadence. This was yet another dramaturg's attempt to create a play with music by reworking material from the full-length opera into spoken dialogue with accompanying songs. But this production went many steps beyond. In keeping with the production's unifying elements of high technology and

popular culture, musical director Peter Ludwig demolished the original score and reconstructed it entirely on synthesizers, pre-recorded the voices of the singing actors, and added the songs "Surabaya Johnny," "Bilbao Song," and "Ballade von der Höllenlili," from *Happy End*. (All of the songs, except these three, were translated in the program.) Additional newly-composed musical materials drawing upon Weill's rhythmic cells and harmonic language were added throughout for underscoring and scene changes. The performers lip-synched the words while the soundtrack was played back at extremely loud levels using a liberal amount of echo and reverberation. The minimal sets featured neon lighting and industrial scaffolding and the video screens of four computer terminals provided additional visual imagery of faces, moving lips and dancing. The eight-member cast (Begbick, Billy, Trinity Moses, Jenny, Bessie, Jimmy, Alaska Joe and Fatty) performed their pantomimes with well-rehearsed accuracy, but due to the nature of the pre-recorded sound, they were completely stripped of any personal involvement in their characterizations. A silent Brecht-impersonator appeared from time to time to oversee the action and, as seems to be a prerequisite for works

of this genre, the necessary doses of nudity and depictions of intravenous drug use were not spared.

Was this a successful production of *Mahagonny*? It is impossible to evaluate it in the context of the real opera, as none of the original musical structure remained intact. This production can be more likened to a performance art piece, where the uniqueness of sound and visual imagery provides the main sensual stimulus, and hence the primary elements of evaluation. The intense audio and visual bombardment soon lost its shock value, and since all the elements of musical and dramatic interaction were destroyed, the production quickly became very boring. The audience was generally receptive, with the exception of a few loud and scattered boos, presumably from patrons who had come intending to see *Mahagonny*. For those popular culturists who had come to experience a new theatrical art form, my guess is that they went away satisfied. And because they didn't have the opportunity to experience the musical and dramatic intricacies of the real *Mahagonny*, they will probably never understand the artistic and esthetic rape that took place for the sake of a re-creator's glory.

DAVID FARNETH  
Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

# PERFORMANCES

## The Threepenny Opera

The Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis, Minnesota. June-July 1983.

Abandoning its usual repertory schedule last summer, the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis presented successively *The Threepenny Opera* and *Guys and Dolls* in six-week straight-runs. Because I had grown up in Minneapolis during the golden years of the Guthrie when it was one of the finest theater companies in the world, I had high hopes that this production of *Threepenny*, directed by the new artistic director Liviu Ciulei, would confirm reports that the Guthrie's gradual decline had been reversed. I was disappointed. Despite a high-budget production sponsored by Dayton's retail chain and a cast imported specifically for the piece, the Guthrie's *Threepenny Opera* was a failure.

Ciulei used Marc Blitzstein's adaptation dating from the 1950s; it is the only version available to "stock and amateur" theaters until November 1984, when its exclusivity expires with the current contract with Tams-Witmark Music Library. The Guthrie did obtain permission from the Blitzstein Estate to make cuts, re-order material, and substitute early versions of the translation for some passages of the script. Presented in two acts (the three "Dreigroschenfinals" were simply re-named), this *Threepenny* restored the "Barbara Song" to Polly, its rightful owner. "Pirate Jenny," traditionally usurped from Polly ever since Lenya claimed the song in the 1930 Pabst film and in the Theater de Lys production, was sung by Jenny here. Musical Director Dick Whitbeck preserved the transpositions of the Blitzstein score, which distort Weill's careful voicing of the respective characters. Despite its shortcomings, Blitzstein's adaptation still holds up in the theater, far better than the more literal, less theatrical, and almost unsingable Manheim-Willett translation.

Visually the production was intense and provocative. Ciulei removed the action from Victorian Soho to an American industrial city during the twenties, with deafening factory whistles accompanying each set change. Mr. Peachum's modest outfit shop became a conglomerate's head-

quarters, complete with steno pool and revolving neon signs advertising his biblical sales' slogans. During the overture, the cast one-by-one poked through plain brown wrapping-paper that enveloped the entire stage, and Ciulei's elaborate sets revolved into position on a giant turntable. Only a huge paper eye remained static, ominously glaring at the audience throughout the evening. Songs were staged on a vaudeville ramp, lit by blinding white footlights. The most spectacular visual effect was the gigantic canopied wedding bed that miraculously erected itself from a carry-on foot locker. There must have been a "concept" behind all of this, but it was buried in the grab-bag production. (In the November 1983 issue of the *Communications* of the International Brecht Society, Linda Schulte-Sasse lamented the audience's inability "to read Ciulei's interpretation" and presented an elaborate *apologia*—it remains an enigma to me.)

If the Guthrie's production had been assembled from a resident repertory company or had been compromised by

financial constraints, one could understand Ciulei's casting choices. Theodore Bikel's Tevye-goes-to-Berlin Macheath ranged in energy from laconic to somnolent. He missed the basic dimension of the character, not to mention any stylistic nuances required by the hoodlum-businessman cum operetta tenor. Polly, as portrayed by Pamela Nyberg, a recent graduate of Juilliard, abandoned Dallas Cowboy cheerleader antics and drawl only when she tried to sing—without success. The rest of the principals seemed no more than caricatures of caricatures: a cowardly-lion Tiger Brown, infinitely less dramatic without a tail; a Mrs. Peachum who impersonated Phyllis Diller appearing in a Mae West look-and-sound-alike contest; a strident Jenny more at home in the chorus of *La Cage aux Folles*. In fact, only Lucy (played by Peggy O'Connell, a local actress) and Reverend Kimball (James Handy) turned in professional performances. Even the talented Mark Baker (*Candide*) was rendered innocuous as the Streetsinger. All this, despite a leisurely eight-week rehearsal period.



Mack the Knife (Theodore Bikel) is brought to justice in Guthrie Theatre's *Threepenny Opera*.

Weill's musical numbers appeared as incidental omissions onstage and as a minor footnote in the elaborate program book. The invisible, over-amplified orchestra raced through the score without regard to the singers, idiom, style, or proper tempo of the music. (Why is the "Second Finale" always performed at double the tempo that Weill specified?) Only the actresses playing Lucy and Mrs. Peachum could meet the vocal demands of their roles, and their performances were swamped by unnecessary amplification (only when singing) that converted the intimacy of the thrust stage into a giant, half-filled rain barrel. The rest of the cast amply illustrated the continual folly of casting *The Threepenny Opera* with "actors" instead of the "actors who sing" specified by both Brecht and Weill. The parody of opera and operetta conventions and language, so crucial to both structure and meaning, was simply ignored. But parody was not altogether absent: during the "Tango Ballad" the whores formed a chorus line to croon "oohs and ahs" as campy back-up singers. Most of the other musical numbers played monotonously and motionless on the same spot of the vaudeville ramps—perhaps this was Mr. Ciulei's notion of *Verfremdungseffekt*. Not only did the production close with the spurious and wholly superfluous strophes of the "Moritat" that Brecht wrote for *Die Beule* (to replace the third finale in the film-script), but the intended framing-function was confused by dividing the verses between the Street-singer and Jenny.

Twin Cities critics, who recalled Wesley Balk's imaginative productions of the work for the Minnesota Opera and Bloomington Civic Theater, panned the muddled staging at the Guthrie. In the end, all of its inconsistencies and flaws might have been forgiven by the audiences had the production been even remotely "fun." But it was more devoid of humor and overweighted with didacticism than Richard Foreman's production in New York. The Guthrie production played to an average house of less than sixty per cent. In her review, Miss Schulte-Sasse ascribed the poor reception to the local critics' and audiences' inability to decipher Mr. Ciulei's reading "as a brilliant new method of reinterpreting Brecht." I look to the other side of the footlights for this misunderstanding of a masterpiece.

KIM KOWALKE  
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## BOOKS

**Kurt Weill: An Illustrated Biography.** By Douglas Jarman. London: Orbis, 1982. 160 p.

**Kurt Weill: Leben und Werk: mit Text und Materialien von und über Kurt Weill.** By Jürgen Schebera. Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1983. 350 p.

Two recent biographies of Kurt Weill by Douglas Jarman and Jürgen Schebera reflect a gratifyingly international trend toward coming to terms with the entire range of Weill's creative output, as well as reevaluating his contributions to his best known collaborations with Bertolt Brecht. Though neither study makes any significant forays into new territory, each makes generous use of Weill's published essays, contemporary reviews and impressions, and the growing body of scholarly research which has been done on Weill in recent years. These books, then, must be judged on their merits as general introductions to Weill and his music and as conduits by which current scholarship finds its way to a broader public.

Douglas Jarman's *Kurt Weill: An Illustrated Biography* is a lucid, well-organized and well-illustrated survey of Weill's life and times, and of his music and its music-historical context. Chapters Two ("Weill's Berlin") and Six ("The Early Instrumental and Vocal Music") are particularly valuable introductions to the book's two biographical and music-analytical sections. Jarman's study provides an interesting resume of the ties between Weill's music and antecedent and contemporary styles. Especially noteworthy are his thoughts on Weill's relationship to Schönberg, Mahler and Busoni and the life-long conflict in his music between the romantic and anti-romantic impulses of German musical tradition.

Jarman's book, however, is marred by a number of misspellings, inaccuracies, and errors, which seem as unnecessary as they are vexing. There is a consistent misuse of the German *Umlaut*, which appears inexplicably in such words as 'Hochschüle' (rather than *Hochschule*) and 'Novembergrüppe' (rather than *Novembergruppe*) and is

missing elsewhere, as in 'Kunstler' (rather than *Künstler*). Still worse are the frequent misspellings of names such as Karoline 'Blaumauer' instead of Blamauer, 'Brook' instead of Brooks Atkinson and Fritz 'Korner' instead of Kortner, to name but a few. These rather minor proofreading errors are further compounded by a number of factual inaccuracies which might lead the unsuspecting reader astray. 1925 instead of 1926 is given for the date of the *Protagonist* premiere (p. 39), July 18th instead of 17th for the *Mahagonny-Songspiel* premiere (p.42), 1934 instead of 1935 for the London premiere of *Der Kuhhandel* (p.70), 1935 instead of 1940 for Gustav Brecher's suicide (p. 65), and Walter Straram instead of Maurice Abravanel as the conductor of the 1932 Paris performance of *Der Jasager* and the *Mahagonny-Songspiel* (p. 67). These and numerous other errors could easily be corrected in a revised edition, which might also take into account some more recent scholarship, as Jarman does not seem to have used any literature past 1978. Such changes would make Jarman's otherwise attractive study a valuable source book for the general reader.

*Kurt Weill: Leben und Werk* is Jürgen Schebera's second book on Weill. His *Kurt Weill—Für Sie porträtiert* (Leipzig, 1979) was a short sketch on Weill which has been greatly expanded for this volume. The great number and quality of illustrations (nearly 150) make Schebera's book an essential source, though some of the pictures and personalities in them might have been more precisely identified and dated (one photo, dated December, 1941 shows Weill and Maxwell Anderson outside in shirtsleeves in what looks like decidedly un-December temperatures).

Though Schebera draws heavily upon the published work of David Drew, Kim Kowalke, Gottfried Wagner and Ronald Sanders, some of the performance information and much of the photographic documentation reflect original research. Schebera's book is divided into a 'life and works' biography and a collection of texts by or about Weill, all but two of which appeared in the two German language volumes edited by David Drew. Unlike Jarman, Schebera includes no musical examples (save a few manuscript facsimiles) and restricts his remarks on

the music to descriptive generalities. His approach is less music historical than aesthetic and sociological and is not without occasional editorial asides which may prove distracting to some readers. Though the factual content of Schebera's study is on the whole reliable, there is a tendency to gloss over significant details, such as the fact that the 1930 Berlin *Mahagonny* production was quite a different matter from the opera which had its premiere at the beginning of the year in Leipzig. As a consequence Schebera's narrative is often too 'neat', and leaves little room to explore the numerous contradictions in Weill's work and the frequent overlap of various projects.

Both books are disappointing in the assessment of Weill's American period. It has become fashionable to avoid direct comparisons between Weill's American works and their European predecessors and both authors make an argument for evaluating the American works in their 'proper context'. Unfortunately neither author seems sufficiently well acquainted with American theater and, in spite of their protestations to the contrary, an implicit bias is apparent. Schebera in particular, seems to have little understanding for, or appreciation of American commercial theater and the vitality of the Broadway of the thirties and forties, and both books contain comparatively little on the works and personalities of this period and next to nothing on the music.

In the body of both these books and in their works' list there are nagging discrepancies in dating and chronology. These discrepancies are indicative of the problems facing Weill scholarship today. For too long an accretion of familiar stories, published reminiscences and theater legend have formed the basis of our picture of and knowledge about Weill. Neither of these books is entirely free of this and many of the errors arise because the authors failed to take a critical look at the sources. While both of these biographies are welcome additions to the literature on Kurt Weill, they are a reminder of how much work remains to be done. Numerous sources central to Weill's personal and professional life have yet to be tapped, long-accepted information must be checked and rechecked and above all, Weill's music—through scores, performances

and recordings—must become as central to a discussion of Weill as the life and times it reflects.

CHRISTOPHER HAILEY  
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**Brecht: A Biography.** By Ronald Hayman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. xxiv, 423 p. \$24.95.

The need for a full-scale biography of Brecht has been obvious for a number of years as the Brecht diaries, work books and letters have been published and new material for a biography has become available. But as the diaries and work books are only partially reliable, and the volume of letters did not contain dozens and dozens of important documents, the scholar seeking to use these materials in a biography must know as much about what has been left out as about what these works actually contain. Regrettably, Ronald Hayman does not have the requisite background knowledge to sift fact from fiction and to fill in deliberate gaps left by Brecht's various editors. The result is that his book is *not* a full-scale biography of this complex figure, but a rather pedestrian retelling of some of the hoariest clichés about Brecht. Let us look at places where this approach leads to huge omissions or to flat errors.

We are told (p. 10) that though the child Brecht was a rather sharp business person, "later he would reject middle-class values and develop a violent antipathy towards buying and selling." This does not square with the facts and Hayman should have known this. Until the end of his days Brecht declared that his own name was copyright and he insisted on setting up innumerable conflicting contracts with the strictest regard for his own income and only the most casual concern for the rights or income of his coworkers (such as Elisabeth Hauptmann, Kurt Weill, Ruth Berlau, Hella Wuolijoki, Erwin Piscator and Margarete Steffin). Brecht consistently sold work as though it were solely his to sell, even when it was abundantly clear that significant portions of the work were not by Brecht at all. And indeed the whole area of co-authorship is largely ignored by Hayman. We are told (p. 104) that Hauptmann's influence "may have

been more than catalytic" in the period of *A Man's a Man*, but this is not discussed further. Hayman then goes on to treat Hauptmann generally as a kind of glorified secretary while consistently referring to other adult women as "girls." We are told casually (p. 150) that Hauptmann was responsible for 75% of the text to *The Yes Sayer*, but Hayman then fails to ask what else she might have written in this and other periods. In fact, he confidently asserts (p. 146) that she did not write *Happy End*, and quotes Manfred Wekwerth (no source given) as confirming this view. This astonished me, as I knew no reliable authority who would maintain this, and I wrote at once to Wekwerth for an explanation. It came back at once. Yes, because the text was somewhat weak, she would at times deny her role, but yes of course she did write it and she (rather than Brecht's heirs!) authorized Wekwerth to make a film of the script. Hayman's original observation does considerable disservice to Hauptmann and this in turn obscures our vision of Brecht and Brecht's real contributions to "Brecht's" plays and poems. The careless treatment of Hauptmann is then repeated with Berlau, Wuolijoki, Weill and Steffin. A careful and thorough analysis of Brecht's often exploitative contractual relationships with his partners has yet to be written.

The failure to actually dig out the facts behind Brecht's carefully constructed fictional facade is one signal failing of this book. Hayman's use of his own sources is another. At least two careless and crucial errors of German translation occur. Where Hayman claims he is directly quoting (p.69) Aufrecht's German book on the original *Threepenny Opera* rehearsals, it is plain that that is not his source. He picks up (p. 132) the outright mistranslation made originally by Sanders (p. 107) in his biography of Weill (*The Days Grow Short*) of Carola Neher's supposed veto of her lines. In fact, as Aufrecht makes very plain to those who bother to read his clear German text, Neher delightfully accepted the new lines given her by Brecht. Neher's problem was not with Brecht's lines but with her treatment by Aufrecht! Carelessly misinterpreting the perceived relationship between Neher and Brecht, Hayman compounds this error with a similar translation error at another point in the

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book. When Hayman quotes a letter to Helene Weigel (a letter in which Brecht argues that one of his mistresses should be allowed to join "the family") it is flatly wrong to translate "Ich habe dich gern" as "I love you." The mis-translation and lack of context creates a completely erroneous impression of Brecht's relationship with his wife and his various lovers.

These rather obvious examples of the careless use of source materials point to a larger critical problem. Hayman has not managed to absorb critically either the voluminous published Brecht bibliography or to check out these materials against those which have not been published and which often gainsay the published account. This is not *the* Brecht biography we have been waiting for.

JOHN FUEGI  
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**Otto Klemperer: His Life and Times.** Volume I: 1885-1933. By Peter Heyworth. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. 488 p. \$34.50.

Peter Heyworth's biography of Otto Klemperer represents the first major study of this important 20th-century figure. Heyworth's earlier *Conversations with Klemperer* (1973), Klemperer's own *Minor Recollections* (1964), and a handful of articles have been till now the only sources of information on the innovative and at times controversial conductor. Utilizing a variety of documentary materials—such as the previously unknown Klemperer family correspondence, archival holdings of a number of state institutions, plus the author's own interviews with many of Klemperer's associates—Heyworth has pieced together a meticulous account of the conductor's early life and legacy.

As Heyworth states in the preface, Klemperer's four years at the helm of the Berlin Kroll Opera "represent the keystone of his life and hence this volume." And Heyworth's discussion of Klemperer's positions before the Kroll amply explains the conductor's disgust with the repertory system and his dream to be "sole master in his own house." In contrast to the "rosy-hued

recollections" of Klemperer's colleague Hans Curjel in *Experiment Krolloper* (1975), Heyworth attempts to assess objectively the strengths and weaknesses of the institution which, though born of the Weimar spirit, was doomed through its dependent relationship with the Volksbühne, an organization which cared little for Klemperer's innovative artistic policy.

For all its problems, often exacerbated, as Heyworth shows, by Klemperer's lifelong manic-depressive psychological condition, the Kroll Opera had its monumental successes and all but fulfilled "its role as midwife to a new operatic age." Klemperer himself summed up the Kroll's major achievement:

Every work was completely newly studied and designed. We never gave more than ten to twelve operas at any one time. The terrible *Leitmotive* of German operatic life, 'We don't have time', was at last abolished in our theatre. Thus we could give each production a strength that enabled it to stand up to frequent performances.

The events surrounding the closing of the house—Klemperer's suit against the Prussian state and subsequent appearance before the Labor Tribunal, the last minute change of heart by several conservative anti-Kroll politicians, and Klemperer's abandonment of his beloved opera at its final performance—make for fascinating reading.

Klemperer's Kroll contract stipulated a concert series in the opera house, and these performances with the Staatskapelle took on Klemperer's distinctive stamp, and their popularity soon rivaled the other Berlin orchestras. Heyworth's discussion of the symphonic conductor demonstrates how Klemperer, always the innovator, championed both music of the pre-19th-century past and the Weimar present. Klemperer's performances of J. S. Bach, often criticized at the time for "their attempt to let the music speak for itself," show an early recognition of performance practice issues ahead of the time. And Klemperer consistently gave premieres or first Berlin performances of works by Ernst Krenek, Kurt Weill, Paul Hindemith, and Igor Stravinsky. Especially impor-

tant was the commission of Weill's *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* spawned by Klemperer's love for the opera, and he programmed the suite a number of times side-by-side other "serious" symphonic literature.

It is difficult to find fault with such a well-documented examination of the subject, though one may object to Heyworth's subjective judgements of certain works and composers. Most bothersome, though, is Heyworth's careless use of the term *neue Sachlichkeit*, a catch-phrase used much in the 20s initially to describe an artistic vision but later applied to literary and musical works as well, in reference to Klemperer's conducting style. Heyworth fails to define adequately the concept which critics of the time, such as H. H. Stuckenschmidt and Heinrich Strobel, found manifested in the works of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and the *Zeitopern* of Krenek and Hindemith.

Heyworth includes several useful appendices; particularly welcome is part I of Michael H. Gray's discography of Klemperer's recordings. This study may be too detailed for the casual reader, but for the serious scholar, the work represents a welcome addition to the study of 20th-century opera and music in the Weimar era.

SUSAN COOK  
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# RECORDINGS

**WEILL Die sieben Todsünden.** Soloists: Elise Ross, Anthony Rolfe-Johnson, Ian Caley, Michael Rippon, John Tomlinson; City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Simon Rattle, conductor. Angel DS-37981 (1 disc, stereo, digital)

**WEILL Die Dreigroschenoper** (complete musical score). Soloists: Wolfgang Neuss, Willy Trenk-Trebitsch, Trude Hesterburg, Erich Schellow, Johanna von Koczian, Lotte Lenya, with others; Gunther Arndt Chorus, Orchestra of Sender Freies Berlin, Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg, conductor.

**WEILL Berlin Theater Songs.** Lotte Lenya; orchestra, Roger Bean conductor. Columbia M2-38964 (2 discs; *Dreigroschenoper* in stereo, songs in "electronic stereo").

**WEILL Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny.** Soloists: Lotte Lenya, Heinz Sauerbaum, Gisela Litz, with others; North German Radio Chorus, orchestra, Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg, conductor. Columbia M3X-37874 (3 discs, "electronic stereo").

About the new recording of *Die sieben Todsünden*, there is good news and bad news. Precedence to the good: this is the first recording of the score in the keys (and the precise instrumentation) of Weill's original 1933 composition for the younger Lenya, rather than in the alternate keys (for the solo sections) a fourth lower, devised for her latter-day range and published in the first vocal score of 1955. (Gisela May's impressive, recently deleted recording also used the lower version.) The City of Birmingham Orchestra plays the score well, if without the edge of the German bands heard in the earlier recordings, and the male quartet sings vigorously and pungently.

Now the bad news: the solo singer is hopelessly out of her depth in the music; even with the help of the microphone, she's so preoccupied with getting the notes out that there is little room for the kind of characterization

we hear from Lenya and May. Like those earlier recordings, this one furnishes the German text and the Auden-Kallman translation—a "singing" version, and thus hardly what is needed by listeners to a performance sung in German. Next time round, it would be nice to have a literal translation, and also a precise synopsis of the stage action, which is definitely not inferable from the sung words.

The CBS reissues, on imported pressings, of some famous recordings from the Fifties, inspire mixed feelings. Not with respect to the performances themselves, which remain invaluable, both as documents and in their own right. There's little point in complaining at this late date about the transpositions made to accommodate Lenya (or the cut in No. 5 of *Mahagonny*); for everything that's wrong (such as the impossibly creaky "Crane Duet," with Lenya singing *below* the tenor's pitches), so much is incredibly and irreplaceably right. To one who grew up with these recordings—and for whom this *Mahagonny* provided the first conclusive evidence that Weill's compositorial powers extended beyond "songs" (in either the Brechtian upper-case or the Broadway lower-case sense)—reacquaintance occasioned both nostalgia and pleasure, for the vividness and point of so much in the singing stands up well, as does Brückner-Rüggeberg's direction. (To single out a few characteristic instances from *Mahagonny*: Gisela Litz's rapt concentration at "Sie soll sein wie ein Netz" (in No. 1); Lenya's slight hesitation and pointedly "proper" pronunciation of "our good *old* mamma"; Heinz Sauerbaum's occasionally strained but verbally always incisive delivery of Jimmy's music.)

Owners of the original editions may want to think twice about trading them in. The reissued *Mahagonny* is in fake stereo—no travesty, but also no improvement over the first issue: the frequency balance has been tipped downwards, without relieving the occasional fierce sibilants. On the other hand, the *Dreigroschenoper*, from an original stereo tape, seems to have gained in clarity.

More disappointing is the shortfall in annotation. Columbia's original *Mahagonny* booklet was lavishly illustrated with photos from the recording sessions and from the original Baden-

Baden (*Mahagonny Songspiel*) and Berlin productions, plus original drawings by Caspar Neher; almost none of this survives in the reissue, while H. H. Stuckenschmidt's essay suffers the indignity of anonymity (and, in the new trilingual format, of back-translation into German!) In the *Dreigroschenoper* set, not only photos, but essays by Stuckenschmidt, David Drew, and Horst Koegler have vanished completely, replaced by the work of one Michel Pérez, awkwardly translated (presumably from the French) and riddled with stupidities and inaccuracies that need hardly be enumerated for readers of the present publication. At least both sets still include a complete libretto, with the same translations as before, by Guy Stern.

Squeezing *Dreigroschenoper* onto two-and-a-half sides has the advantage of containing each act on a side; it also makes room for most of the contents of Lenya's earlier "Berlin Theater Songs" record (in fake stereo, this time unacknowledged)—all but its three *Dreigroschenoper* titles. Perhaps somebody at CBS assumed that they duplicated the "complete" set, but of course in the latter only the "Seeräuber-Jenny" is sung by Lenya, for the "Moritat" and "Barbara-Song" belong to other roles (as, indeed, originally did "Seeräuber-Jenny")—and, "authentic" or not, Lenya's performances of these pieces have aesthetic as well as documentary impact. One can only hope that they will turn up as fillers to later reissues of Lenya's *Sieben Todsünden* or *Happy End* recordings, for they should not vanish into limbo.

But I wouldn't count on it; the presentation of these reissues indicates that the current CBS management has little understanding of their significance or of the standards appropriate to material of such importance—let alone anything like the knowledge, enthusiasm, and imagination that brought these recordings into being in the first place.

DAVID HAMILTON  
New York

# RECORDINGS

**WEILL Recordare: Lamentations of Jeremiah, Chapter V, Op. 11. DALLAPICCOLA Canti di Prigionia.** The Tanglewood Festival Chorus, John Oliver, conductor. Nonesuch 79050 (1 disc, stereo, digital)

Kurt Weill's *Recordare* for unaccompanied SATB chorus and two-part children's choir (1923) demands from the performers the utmost in technical musicianship, vocal stamina, and empathy with the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* text. The recording by The Tanglewood Festival Chorus conducted by John Oliver provides all of these qualities in abundance, and fails Weill's score only in some debatable, highly personal interpretive decisions made by the conductor.

As Kim Kowalke points out in his extensive liner notes, the tradition for polyphonic settings of the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* dates back to the fifteenth century, when motet-like pieces were composed for use during Holy Week. Although Weill's version, which sets only the fifth chapter of *Lamentations*, may owe its polyphonic basis and broad outline of form to its renaissance forbearers, it seems to draw heavily on baroque style for details of its contrapuntal structure. It is in one movement with six distinct sections that vary in tempo and compositional procedure: contrapuntal imitation, long-note cantus firmus, ostinato, choral recitative, two child-soloists over sustained chords in the SATB choir, and passages set homophonically. Weill's exercise of contrapuntal devices in a piece composed in 1923 is not surprising. Since 1920, he had been a member of Busoni's master class for young composers, where expositions on Bach's music frequently had been given. Heeding Busoni's advice, Weill also had studied counterpoint with Phillip Jarnach, resulting in a series of contrapuntal works for orchestral, choral, and chamber groups.

What is gratifying is that, as in the music of Brahms, Weill's contrapuntal technique masterfully serves the powerful emotional content of *Recordare's* music and text. The use of cantus firmus technique on the recurring text, "Remember, O Lord" not only serves to unify the composition musically, but also intensifies the plea

of the exiled Israelites with whom Weill undoubtedly identified in the midst of the deprivation and hardship of Berlin in the 1920s. The ostinato sung by the children on the text "Our fathers sinned" not only ties together the two overall divisions of the composition, but also increases the pathos of a work composed at a time when one-fourth of the children in Berlin were starving.

*Recordare* is a rewarding composition to study and hear, but it is a very difficult piece to perform. A single-movement, multi-sectional unaccompanied work that is approximately 19 minutes in duration presents unique problems of intonation and vocal color (cf. Copland's *In the Beginning*). Furthermore, Weill's melodic and harmonic language makes accurate singing a tremendous challenge. Nevertheless, both the adult and children's choruses meet these challenges admirably. Especially memorable are such moments as the opening section with the somber tone of the text reflected in the dark quality of the basses; the excellent unisons of the men in the choral recitative and other unison passages (where, unfortunately, the women do not fare as well); the sweep of sound on the incredibly difficult choral coloratura "Joy has fled," which passes through each vocal part; and the powerful dynamic climaxes achieved, as at the end of the third section.

Noteworthy also is the work of the children's choir, as in their singing of the ostinato figure, "Our fathers sinned; remember, O Lord," reminiscent of the Innocents pursued by Herod after the birth of Jesus of Nazareth; or in the section where the two child-soloists are accompanied by chordal passages, recalling the innocence of the angelic children in Mahler's Third Symphony. Unfortunately, some of the pathos of the ostinato figure is lost because of Oliver's curious decision to sing the figure *ben marcato*, even though Weill marks the passage *un poco tenuto* when it first appears earlier in the piece.

Indeed, Oliver makes a number of debatable interpretive decisions in this recording. There are several passages that use a form of the Baroque "sigh," clearly emphasized by Weill with nuance markings. Oliver chooses to ignore these indications, as well as other dynamic subtleties, in favor of an interpretation that emphasizes anger and

bitterness rather than the sadness and despair that would seem to be more consistent with the music and with Weill's reaction to the Berlin of the twenties. Most offensive are erroneous and long fermati imposed by the conductor at the end of every major section, as well as some smaller groupings, in a piece in which the sectionalization is already inherently pronounced. But, despite these flaws, this recording of *Recordare* provides the listener with a very good hearing of a rarely performed Weill composition.

As Kowalke points out, the relationship of Weill's *Recordare* and Dallapiccola's *Canti di prigionia* is one of "inverted parallels." *Recordare* is an early work, composed when Weill was 23 years of age, whereas Dallapiccola composed the "Songs of Imprisonment" (1938-41) when he was in his late thirties. The classical contrapuntal elements of *Recordare* are a direct result of Busoni's influence on Weill, whereas Dallapiccola did not know Busoni's work until 1941, just after the completion of *Canti di prigionia*, at which time Dallapiccola applauded Busoni's emphasis on melody.

But these parallels converge at one point: in these works, both Weill and Dallapiccola are what Kowalke terms "committed" composers: composers whose music speaks from and to the human conscience. *Canti di prigionia* is in three movements unified by the use of two twelve-tone rows, and by the appearance of a portion of the *Dies irae* liturgical chant like a motto in each movement.

The music again presents formidable technical demands on the singers, and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus again meets these challenges nobly, marred only by a wobbly soprano section that causes one to occasionally worry about pitch-focus. To their credit, the sopranos do sing the taxing tessitura and range with amazing stamina. The intensity of the musical lines is fully realized by the vocal intensity of the chorus, and the instrumental accompaniment is properly crisp and balanced. The final effect of this performance of *Canti di prigionia*, as with that of *Recordare*, is powerful in the emotional impact made by first-rate music that touches humanity's deepest concerns and highest aspirations.

THOMAS SOMERVILLE  
*Occidental College*



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The following listing of Weill performances is based upon the best information available from publishers, news clipping services and correspondence. We encourage readers to assist us in maintaining future calendars by informing us of performances worldwide.

## NOVEMBER

**HAPPY END**—Schauspielhaus, Frankfurt—extended run  
**BERLIN TO BROADWAY**—JCC Theatre, Baltimore—3 weeks  
**DOWN IN THE VALLEY**—BBC-4 Broadcast—2  
**CELLO SONATA**—Yale University, New Haven, Conn.—D. Shamban, cello; L. Green, piano—2  
**DIE BEKEHRTE AND RILKE SONGS**—Yale University—R. Tabachnik, mezzo; S. Miyamoto, piano—2  
**VOM TOD IM WALD**—Yale University—R. Osborne, bar.; Yale Contemporary Ensemble—2  
**FRAUNTANZ**—Yale University—B. Miller, soprano—2  
**KLEINE DREIGROSCHENMUSIK**—Yale University—Yale Contemporary Ensemble; A. Weisberg, cond.—2  
**STRING QUARTET NO. 1 and STRING QUARTET IN B MINOR**—Yale University—The Sequoia String Quartet—3  
**DOWN IN THE VALLEY**—Peoria High School, Peoria, Ill.—3  
**DER JASAGER**—Showa Music College, Tokyo—3, 13  
**SYMPHONY NO. 2**—Yale University—Philharmonia Orchestra of Yale—Otto-Werner Mueller, cond.—4  
**VIOLIN CONCERTO**—Vienna—Kovacic; Pay, cond.—ORF Sinfonietta—7  
**DIE SIEBEN TODSÜNDEN**—Villacher Studiobühne Kellertheater, Klagenfurt—15, 20-22, 27, 28, 30  
**DIE SIEBEN TODSÜNDEN**—Wuppertaler Tanztheater, Essen—Pina Bausch, dir.—16, 13, Jan. 1  
**DOWN IN THE VALLEY**—Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX—17, 19  
**THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS**—BBC-2 Broadcast with Ross; Rattle, cond.—19  
**VIOLIN CONCERTO**—Basel—Radio-Sinfonieorchester—Pasquier, Bamert, cond.—22  
**DIE SIEBEN TODSÜNDEN**—Salle Favart, Opéra de Paris, Paris—with Milva—22, 23  
**DIE DREIGROSCHENOPER**—Atelier Lyrique, Tourcoing—22, 25-27  
**BERLINER REQUIEM**—Ballet Rambert, BBC Broadcast—25  
**DIE SIEBEN TODSÜNDEN**—Opéra Comique, Paris—with Milva—26  
**HAPPY END**—Marlet Theatre, Albany, NY—Nov. 26-Dec. 18  
**MAHAGONNY**—Oper im Schauspielhaus, Graz, Austria—25, 27, Dec. 1, 13, 16, 19  
**KLEINE DREIGROSCHENMUSIK**—Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Detroit—27

## DECEMBER

**THE THREEPENNY OPERA**—Orchard Theatre Co.—2-month tour throughout England  
**DIE SIEBEN TODSÜNDEN**—Wallgraben Theater, Freiburg—3-8  
**BERLIN TO BROADWAY**—Chappaqua Library, Chappaqua, NY—4  
**ONE TOUCH OF VENUS**—Players of Sarasota, Sarasota, Florida—4-16  
**BERLINER REQUIEM**—Elizabeth Hall, London—7  
**MAHAGONNY**—Halle Münsterland, Münster—8

**DIE DREIGROSCHENOPER**—Schauspiel Köln, Köln—10, 25, 31  
**MAHAGONNY**—Osthaus Museum, Hagen, 11  
**HAPPY END**—Studiobühne, Leverkusen  
**MAHAGONNY**—Budapest—17  
**THE THREEPENNY OPERA**—Land Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge, England—17-19  
**"LABOR OF LOVE"**—New Center Arena Theatre, Detroit—Weill cabaret, dir. P. M. Esser—Jan. 23 through Feb. 18  
**DER JASAGER**—Teatro Regio, Parma—26, 27

## JANUARY

**"NA ALSO—GOODBYE"**—Göttingen—Revue of Weill songs, dir. M. Wallner—2  
**MAHAGONNY**—Metropolitan Opera, New York City—with Bybee, Cassilly, Chookasian; Tate cond.—5, 9, 13, 18, 21, 24, 27  
**L'OPERA DE QUAT'SOUS**—National Arts Centre, Ottawa—30 perfs. Jan. 10 through Feb. 4  
**HAPPY END**—Theaterfreunde, Erkelenz—13 (premiere)  
**DIE DREIGROSCHENOPER**—Soviet Theatre of Leningrad—18  
**THE THREEPENNY OPERA**—Hartt College of Music, West Hartford, Conn.—Opera Dept.—26-28  
**MAHAGONNY**—1 Tours, France—J-Y Ossonce, dir.; A. Batisse, cond.—27, 29  
**MAHAGONNY SONGSPIEL**—Austrian Arts Ensemble, W. Van Zutphen, cond.—27 (Deutschlandsberg), 30 (Eisenstadt), 31 (Vienna, Graz)  
**DIE SIEBEN TODSÜNDEN**—Villacher Kellertheater, Villach—with I. Ahren; W. Lhotsky, cond.—29, 30

## FEBRUARY

**MAHAGONNY SONGSPIEL**—Austrian Arts Ensemble—1 (Linz), 11 (Bruck)  
**"VON BERLIN BIS NEW YORK"**—Bad Hersfeld—Revue of Weill songs, dir. M. Wallner—1  
**MAHAGONNY**—WDR-TV, West Germany—2  
**SYMPHONY NO. 2**—Leamington Chamber Orchestra, Leamington, England—4  
**HAPPY END**—Kidderminster College, Birmingham, England—8, 9, 10  
**MAHAGONNY SONGSPIEL/KLEINE DREIGROSCHENMUSIK**—Opernschule der Staatliche Hochschule, Stuttgart—with M. Zilm, cond.—8  
**MAHAGONNY SONGSPIEL**—University of Washington, Seattle—16-19  
**THE THREEPENNY OPERA**—Seaview Playwright's Theatre, Staten Island, NY—17 (premiere)  
**SONGS**—White Swan, Alnwick, England—with the Penna Trio—17  
**THE THREEPENNY OPERA**—Alliance Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia—dir. Stephens—Feb. 18 through Mar. 25  
**VIOLIN CONCERTO**—Florida State University, Tallahassee—25  
**STREET SCENE**—Claremont Colleges, Pomona, Cal.—Feb. 29, Mar. 1-3  
**MAHAGONNY**—Oper im Schauspielhaus, Graz—Feb. 29, Mar. 18, 22

# COMMUNICATIONS

We wish to use this newsletter as a communications forum for the sharing of information about current research, resources and performances. The only way to achieve this is for readers to respond about their current activities. Please make liberal use of these forms, and address all correspondence in care of the Newsletter Editor, Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., 142 West End Avenue, Suite 1-R, New York, New York 10023.

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## PRODUCTION NOTICE

I want to report a production/performance of \_\_\_\_\_

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Cast \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this form along with one copy of the program.

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## RESEARCH FORM

I want to report: \_\_\_\_\_ work in progress \_\_\_\_\_ other's publication \_\_\_\_\_ book  
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Publication information \_\_\_\_\_

Expected date of completion \_\_\_\_\_

Please send at least one copy of publication/typescript to the Weill/Lenya Research Center at the Foundation's address.

## MARCH

**DOWN IN THE VALLEY**—Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville—2, 3

**THE THREEPENNY OPERA**—University at Montevallo Lyric Theatre, Montevallo, Alabama—B. Middaugh, dir.—3, 5

**DIE DREIGROSCHENOPER**—Teatro Romea, Barcelona—5

**DIE DREIGROSCHENOPER**—Kleinen Theater, Berlin—G. Lenssen, soloist—6, 7, 9, 10

**KLEINE DREIGROSCHENMUSIK/MAHAGONNY SONGSPIEL**—Studio des Planetariums, Stuttgart—M. Zilm, cond.—7

**HAPPY END**—New York University, New York City—8-12, 15-19

**HAPPY END**—Blake Schools, Minneapolis—9-11

**THE THREEPENNY OPERA**—St. Lawrence College, Ramsgate, England—15-17.

**MAHAGONNY**—Städtliches Theater Oberhausen, Oberhausen—with Schechtmann—16 (premiere: 10 perfs. in Oberhausen; 12 on tour)

**VIOLIN CONCERTO**—University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee—24

**FRAUENTANZ**—Oldenburgisches Staatsorchester, Oldenburg—24

**KLEINE DREIGROSCHENMUSIK**—Conservatoire, Juvissy—24

**CONCERT WORKS**—Jewish Community Center, Indianapolis, Indiana—Selections from Happy End, Zum Potsdam Unter den Eichen, Vom Tod im Wald, Concerto for Violin and Winds, Muschel von Margate—29

## APRIL

**DER ZAR LÄSST SICH PHOTOGRAPHIEREN**—Sibelius Akademie, Helsinki—8

**DOWN IN THE VALLEY**—Salem State College, Salem, Mass.—8

**VIOLIN CONCERTO**—North Texas State University, Denton—10

**CONCERT WORKS**—Queen Elizabeth Hall, London—with London Sinfonietta, Zagroszek—Klops-Lied, Muschel von Margate, Crane Duet, Pantomime aus Der Protagonist, Vom Tod im Wald, Mahagonny Songspiel—10

**MAHAGONNY**—Städtische Bühnen, Mainz—with Kink—10 (premiere of 10 perfs.)

**DOWN IN THE VALLEY**—"Great Performances," PBS-TV—16 (see article)

**MAHAGONNY SONGSPIEL**—Chelsea Concert Series, New York City—E. de Cuy, cond.—27

**THE THREEPENNY OPERA**—Pennsylvania Opera Theatre, Philadelphia—B. Silverstein, cond.—28, May 4, 5

**DIE DREIGROSCHENOPER**—Deutsche Schule, Bogota—date TBA

## MAY

**HAPPY END**—Hendrix College, Conway, Arizona—26

**HAPPY END**—Arena Stage, Washington, D.C.—May 4 through June 10

**DIE SIEBEN TODSÜNDEN**—Teatro della Pergola, Firenze—with Milva, Orchestra da Camera; M. Panni, cond.—22-24

**BERLINER REQUIEM**—University of Northern Colorado, Greeley—25

## JULY

**MAHAGONNY**—Theater des Westens, Bad Hersfeld—K. Vibach, dir.—beg. 4

**MAHAGONNY**—Staatsoper, Stuttgart—H. Pleva, cond.—7

## AUGUST

**DIE SIEBEN TODSÜNDEN**—Villacher Kongresshaus, Villach, with G. May, Prague Symphony; C. Thisther Sommer, cond.—23

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