

KURT WEILL NEWSLETTER

Volume 7, Number 1

Spring 1989

Kurt Weill: A Guide to His Works

will soon be published by European American Music Corporation. The 79-page guide, compiled by Mario R. Mercado, provides concise information regarding published editions and performance material, as well as specifications of cast, instrumentation, and duration. Intended as a handy reference tool for performers, conductors, and producers, the catalogue describes each of Weill's works available for performance and specifies publishers and representatives. In addition, a biography and chronology supply information which may be readily incorporated into program notes. The guide also lists recordings and includes separate indices of works and song titles.

To request a copy, please contact:

European American Music Corporation
P.O. Box 850
Valley Forge, PA 19482

Golan's Version of *Threepenny to Open in May at Cannes*

Director Menahem Golan and producer Stanley Chase have announced that Cannon Films's latest movie, *Mack the Knife*, based on *The Threepenny Opera*, will bow at this year's Cannes Film Festival. The film stars Raul Julia as Macheath, reprising his role of the 1976 New York Shakespeare Festival production. Julia Migenes, who has recently recorded *Die sieben Todsünden* (see review, page 23) takes the role of Jenny; Richard Harris is Peachum. The film also features Julie Walters as Mrs. Peachum, and Roger Daltrey, in an expansion of the Street Singer's role. As Polly Peachum, Golan has cast Rachel Robertson, a sixteen-year-old actress who first came to wide public attention in television ad campaigns for Levi Strauss jeans.

The film's worldwide release is slated for November.

Telephone Number Changes

Effective 9 February 1989, the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music has changed its telephone number to (212) 505-5240. The telex number (650 296-6674) remains the same.



Graham Harley (Mr. Peachum) and Simon Bradbury (Filch) in the Canadian Stage Company and Banff Centre co-production of *Threepenny Opera* at the Bluma Appel Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre, Toronto, 9 March-1 April. Photo: Michael Cooper

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Call for Performances

To celebrate Weill's 90th birthday, the Kurt Weill Foundation will publish a list of international events. Individuals or organizations planning a performance of a work by Weill during 1990 who would like their concert or stage production to be included in this special calendar should send the pertinent information to Mario Mercado (Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 7 East 20th Street, New York, NY 10003) by 1 August 1989. If you require assistance in selecting a work suitable for your group, please call Mr. Mercado at (212) 505-5240. To receive a free guide to Kurt Weill's music, please see the announcement on page 1.



Weill World-Wide in 1990

As the 90th anniversary of Kurt Weill's birth approaches (2 March 1990), plans are underway for special celebratory performances and productions by numerous performing organizations throughout the world. The Kurt Weill Foundation is pleased to announce a special grants program in support of professional performances during the 1990 anniversary year; please see information on this page and note the application deadline of 1 June 1989. To commemorate the anniversary year, the Foundation will publish a comprehensive schedule of productions and concerts.

Festivals

A major Kurt Weill Festival to begin in March 1990 is being organized by the city of Düsseldorf. All the events will be presented under the aegis of the honorable Dr. Johannes Rau, Minister-President of North Rhine Westfalia. Although many performances are still in the planning stage, the Festival will include a major production mounted by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk, performances of Symphony no. 2 by the Düsseldorfer Sinfoniker, *Recordare* and other choral works by the Düsseldorfer Musikverein, and staged presentations of *Der Jasager* and *Down in the Valley* at the Universität Dortmund, co-sponsored by an American university. A symposium, sponsored by the Kurt Weill Foundation, the Steinheim Institut, the Nordrhein-Westfalian Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung, and the city of Düsseldorf, will investigate the topic *Kurt Weill and the Lost Fatherland* on 23-25 March in Duisburg. (Please see the call for papers on page 3.) In addition, a major exhibit of Kurt Weill materials will be mounted by the Heinrich-Heine-Institut in Düsseldorf, and the Dumont-Lindemann-Archiv will display in the lobby of the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus documents related to premiere performances of Weill's works.

Elsewhere, 90th-birthday celebrations are being planned in Wales, Cleveland, San Francisco, and at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, details of which will be provided in the next issue.

Special 1990 Grants Program

The Board of Trustees of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music announces two grant programs for the years 1989-90. In addition to the Foundation's annual grant awards, a special "90th-birthday" program has been established to assist professional performing groups planning major Kurt Weill celebrations during 1990. Applications for this special round of funding are due by 1 June 1989. The application guidelines are given on page 3. Guidelines for the regular 1990 grants may be obtained by contacting the Foundation.



Call for Papers International Symposium on Kurt Weill in celebration of his 90th birthday

23-25 March 1990

Duisburg, Federal Republic of Germany

An International Kurt Weill Festival organized under the aegis of the Ministerpräsident des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen will include a conference with the general theme *Kurt Weill and the Lost Fatherland*. Although papers need not address that theme directly, contributions assessing the ramifications of Weill's emigration from a musicological, theatrical, historical, or cultural viewpoint will be particularly welcome.

Those scholars who wish to deliver 30-minute papers, in either German or English, on any aspect of Weill's career, oeuvre, or related issues should submit an abstract not to exceed 500 words by **1 June 1989** to the Program Committee, c/o Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., 7 East 20th Street, New York, New York 10003-1106.

Sponsorship of the symposium is by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, the Salomon-Ludwig-Steinheim Institut für deutsch-jüdische Geschichte, Duisburg, the Nordrhein-Westfalian Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung, the City of Düsseldorf and the State of North Rhine-Westphalia.

Einladung zur Einreichung von Vorträgen Internationale Kurt Weill gewidmete Konferenz anlässlich seines 90. Geburtstag.

23-25 März 1990

Duisburg, Deutsche Bundesrepublik

Im Rahmen eines unter der Schirmherrschaft des Nordrhein-westfälischen Ministerpräsidenten stehenden internationalen Kurt Weill Festivals wird eine dem Komponisten gewidmete Konferenz *Kurt Weill und das verlorene Vaterland* stattfinden. Obwohl die erwünschten Beiträge sich nicht ausschliesslich mit diesem Thema zu befassen brauchen, wären Vorträge besonders erwünscht, die sich mit den durch Weills Emigration bedingten musikwissenschaftlichen, musikdramatischen, historischen, kulturellen, exilspezifischen Konsequenzen auseinandersetzen.

Wissenschaftler, die mit einem etwa halbstündigen Vortrag über Weills Lebenslauf, Schaffen oder Ähnlichem, auf deutsch oder englisch, teilzunehmen wünschen, werden gebeten, ein Abstrakt von nicht mehr als 500 Worten dem Programm-Ausschuss, c/o Kurt Weill Foundation, 7 East 20th Street, New York, NY 10003-1106, bis spätestens **1. Juni 1989** vorzulegen.

Die Konferenz wird unterstützt durch die Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, das Salomon-Ludwig-Steinheim Institut für deutsch-jüdische Geschichte, Duisburg, die Nordrhein-Westfälische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, die Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf, sowie das Land Nordrhein-Westfalen.

Guidelines Special 1990 Grants Program

Application Deadline: 1 June 1989

In celebration of Kurt Weill's 90th birthday year, the Foundation is offering a special round of competitive grants to professional performing organizations for performances which add to the roster of internationally recognized commemorations. To this end, the Foundation is accepting proposals which conform to the following guidelines.

Eligibility

1. The project must evidence international significance, by virtue of the stature of the performing organization, its venue, or the particular work presented. Only authentic performances of original Kurt Weill compositions are eligible for funding.
2. Performances must take place during 1990.
3. The applicant must be a non-profit, professional performing organization (symphony orchestra, opera company, chamber ensemble, theater company, performing arts series, including all European government-subsidized companies). Non-profit, "umbrella" organizations are invited to apply for assistance with direct expenses related to organizing and promoting major Kurt Weill festivals.
4. Performances of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Happy End*, and cabaret-type song evenings are not eligible for funding.
5. Dance performances (except for *Die sieben Todsünden*) are not eligible for funding.

Funding Priorities

1. Priority will be given to performances which take place within the context of a larger Weill festival and to those works which have had few recent performances by professional organizations.
2. Applications should demonstrate that the funds requested will be used to improve the musical values of the performance.

Evaluation Procedures

After applications have been reviewed by the Foundation's staff, additional supporting materials (including recordings, recommendations, and samples of previous work) may be requested for consideration by the Advisory Panel on Grant Evaluations, which will make recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The Advisory Panel shall be composed of independent, prominent members from the international musical community. Grants will be awarded on an objective and non-discriminatory basis. Grantee selection criteria will include:

1. Relevance and value of the project to the Foundation's objectives;
2. Quality of the project;
3. Evidence of the applicant's potential, motivation, and ability to carry out the project successfully;
4. Evidence of the applicant's prior record of achievement in the field covered by the project.

Applicants will be informed of awards by 15 July 1989.

Applications

Preliminary applications for the 1990 Celebration Grant Awards must be received by 1 June 1989 and should contain the following information:

1. A detailed description of the project, with particular reference to its commemorative function and international impact.
2. An up-to-date curriculum vita or resume for individuals, or a profile of purposes, activities, and past achievements (including a list of references), for organizations.
3. A detailed and itemized budget showing entire project expenses, including income, and other projected funding sources.
4. Performance Grant Fact Sheet.

Please address applications and correspondence to:
Mr. Mario Mercado, Associate Director of Programs
Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc.
7 East 20th Street
New York, NY 10003-1106
Telephone: (212) 505-5240

1989 Grants Awarded

In January 1989 the Board of Trustees of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc. approved the recommendations of the Independent Grants Advisory Panel to award the following grants in the areas of research and performance.

Research

Joachim Lucchesi, Akademie der Künste, Berlin (East). Travel grant to conduct research at the Weill-Lenya Research Center and Yale University.

Tamara Levitz, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester. Travel grant to Switzerland to conduct oral history interviews with members of Busoni's master-class.

Performance

Boston Conservatory. Professional production of *Street Scene*.

Court Theatre, Chicago. *Happy End*.

Steven Gross, Yale University. *Der Lindberghflug*.

Michael Kantor, New York. Professional production of *Der Lindberghflug*.

Light Opera Works, Chicago. *Lady in the Dark*.

Music Theatre Program, Banff Centre, Canada. *Johnny Johnson* and a workshop production of *Der Jasager*.

New York Chamber Ensemble. *Der neue Orpheus*.

Redwoods Summer Festival, Santa Rosa, California. Concert performances of *Marie Galante* and *Happy End*.



Shannon Cochran (The Fly) asks David Nisbet (Bill Cracker) for a light in the Court Theatre production of *Happy End* at the University of Chicago, 9 March-9 April. Photo: David Sutton

Sinfonia San Francisco. Kurt Weill Festival: A series of five concerts.

University of Houston. *The Tsar Has His Photograph Taken* and *Seven Deadly Sins*, held in conjunction with a symposium, "German Literature and Music: An Aesthetic Fusion."

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The Newsletter is published to provide an open forum wherein interested readers may express a variety of ideas and opinions. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the publisher's viewpoint. The editor encourages the submission of articles, reviews, and news items for inclusion in future issues. The submission deadline for the next issue is 1 September 1989.

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Darla Dee Barrow (the false Angèle) prepares the camera while Thomas Ballard (The Tsar) sits for his photograph in the University of Houston's *The Tsar has his photograph taken*. Photo: Buck Ross

LETTERS

Who Sings the Barbara-Song?

To the Editor:

Concerning Kim Kowalke's question "Who is Barbara?" in vol. 6, no. 2: I've always assumed that she's the Barbara mentioned by Desdemona in Act IV, Scene 3 of *Othello*:

My mother had a maid call'd Barbara;
She was in love, and he she lov'd prov'd mad
And did forsake her; she had a song
And she died singing it; that song tonight
Will not go from my mind;
I have much to do
But to go and hang my head at one side
And sing it like poor Barbara.

The "Barbara Song" in *Othello* (and in Verdi's *Otello*) is, of course, the Willow Song. Though this Barbara is easy to forget if you know *Othello* through reading, she's much more noticeable if you're involved with an actual staging of *Othello*. (And if you know Verdi well – which I doubt Brecht did – you're further reminded of her when Desdemona exclaims



in the middle of her Willow Song.)

If I'm right, then Brecht's title means "Song of the Ruined Woman." And his point is that Ruined Women don't sing songs as nice as "Willow, Willow."

Does this make sense? It's a far-fetched answer, but I've never heard any other explanation for the title. And my answer has, for me at least, the advantage that I didn't have to think it up: I've always assumed it was so.

WAYNE SHIRLEY
Washington, DC
23 November 1988

To the Editor:

I thought I might share with you an excerpt from a letter I received from Lenya in 1971, partially in answer to a question about the "Barbara-Song":

Why Barbarasong is called Barbarasong, I cannot give you a correct answer. For no visible reason. For the sound of it, maybe, like Brecht and Weill often chose names this way. Like "Surabayajohnny." I guess this is the closest explanation I can give you.

Thomas Nadar, who directed a German-language production of *Die Dreigroschenoper* at the University of Michigan in the 1970's and who is now a professor at the University of Oregon, hypothesized two possibilities for the name "Barbara." One of his suggestions was that it might have something to do with a Saint Barbara, although I forget the reason why she might be connected with this. Another idea, possibly obscure, was that it refers to the Barbara named in the Willow Song from

Shakespeare's *Othello*. While to my knowledge neither of these theories has any evidence to back it up, I offer them to fill what seems to still be a vacuum.

ED GLAZIER
Palo Alto, CA
30 November 1988

To the Editor:

I read Kim Kowalke's piece about the "Barbara-Song" with general interest and profit but must point out what looks to me like a crucial ambiguity concerning the orchestral reference in the middle of the Third Finale. *Polly*: "Ich bin sehr glücklich" [I am so happy] conjures up the brothel [using the notes of "in dem Bordell" from the "Zuhälterballade," then in the orchestra (molto rit.) those of "wo unser Haushalt war," or as near as makes no difference]. Then under this comes the "Barbara" phrase, with a lingering ending. ("Think about it" or "Da könnt ihr etwas lernen.") For the question is, which is on top? The music is undercutting Polly's happiness, irrespective of how one attributes the "Barbara-Song." And it does so more sharply, of course, if one sees it as *Polly's* "ja, da muss man ..." than in any possible connection with Lucy. So I see the Lucy issue as unimportant. Kowalke's argument could be if anything stronger for Jenny to sing "Mein lieber Macheath" etc. than for Lucy.

In any case I do not believe that Brecht minded about logic in such matters. He cared much more about which actor was going to sing a given song than which character, and if he changed its allocation (as with the Second Finale) I doubt if it signified much; it could even have been a slip of the memory. His doctrine of "separating the songs from the rest" would justify this. Unless Weill disagreed with it, which I would have thought not until after the big *Mahagonny* at the earliest.

I suppose one could argue that it would be rational for Polly's proclamation of her happiness to be undercut by references to both other women, not Jenny alone. But I would have thought the prime reference aurally (for the average listener at least) was to the brothel, and the ironic element would lie in the fact that it is Polly who initiates it with her closing phrase. The Kühl manuscript which you reproduce as Figure 2 seems to break off before the "Barbara" phrase, by the way.

It might be worth mentioning Brecht's short story entitled "Barbara" which was published in a Dortmund paper (I've no idea why) on 27 August 1927. There's no real connection that I can see, but I'm sure Elisabeth Hauptmann was right when she told me that Brecht was "ein Namensfetischist";

i.e., the name was in his mind. (Jenny, Begbick, and Anna are other examples.)

A postscript for "Barbara": It may be remembered that when the Threepenny novel was published in London in 1937 (under the title *A Penny for the Poor*) the translation was by Desmond Vesey, with the exception of the songs and verses between chapters, which were by Christopher Isherwood. There is a reference to this in the latter's autobiographical *Christopher and His Kind* (Methuen, London 1977, paperback edition pp. 197-98) which discloses that Isherwood deliberately, and quite understandably, changed the sense of the "Barbara Song," whose German text had the boat being cut loose from the shore in the first two stanzas and tied up in the third. This, Isherwood thought, was incomprehensible as it stood, so he shifted the "cut loose" metaphor to where it would seem normal in English, i.e., the seduction stanza. "No one protested," writes Isherwood. The book appeared with Christopher's version of the poem. It was only when Christopher met Brecht for the first time, in California about six years later, that he had his misunderstanding corrected. Brecht told him mildly, with the unemphatic bluntness which was so characteristic of him: "A boat has to be tied up before you can f— in it!"

What Isherwood evidently did not know was that in all the original editions (the typescript, the 1928 libretto, and the 1928 piano score) the boat was as he thought – tied up for two stanzas, then let go. So when did Brecht change his view of boating-and-sex? Or did he and Weill disagree about the subject? I prefer to think this is just one more example of Brecht changing his views to the exact opposite of what he had said before (cf. Jasager/Neinager, *Unaufhaltsamer/Aufhaltsamer Aufstieg* of [des] Arturo Ui, the behavior of steel in an earthquake, and the dozen or more other instances which some scholar really should enumerate). Some call his process dialectical, others contradictory, yet others simply cussed. Whatever it was, it was extremely characteristic of Brecht. And a recurrent problem for translators. For, of course, he was right.

JOHN WILLETT
London
30 January 1989

Kim H. Kowalke replies:

I am grateful to Messrs. Shirley, Glazier, and Willett for their interesting comments concerning the identity of Brecht's Barbara. Mr. Shirley's "assumption" is certainly an intriguing one, even if the First Folio (and many modern editions) of *Othello* mentions not Barbara, but *Barbarie*, a variant popular

LETTERS

in the sixteenth century. But then who knows how the name was spelled in the German edition Brecht knew? For he did know the play: in *Brecht in Context* (pp. 27,76), Mr. Willett points out that Brecht referred repeatedly in his theoretical notes to *Othello* and that he saw Leopold Jessner's production, starring Fritz Kortner, during the 1921-22 season. Brecht might well have known Verdi's (but certainly not Rossini's) *Otello*, too; he didn't divorce the opera singer Marianne Zoff until 1927. By then she had introduced him to much of the standard repertory.

Despite its exotic appeal, I'm still unconvinced by the *Othello*-origin, though. If Desdemona's mother's maid did inspire Brecht initially, he apparently never let on to Lenya or Weill, who, in setting the text, typically would have wryly tipped his cap to Verdi. The fact that Brecht and Weigel chose to name their daughter Barbara in 1930 also argues against too secure an identification of Barbara as the "ruined woman" from *Othello*. I still lean toward Lenya's (and Hauptmann's) explanation: a phonetic fetish for the sheer sound of the name.

As for the character in *Die Dreigroschenoper* who sings the "Barbara-Song," I'm puzzled by some of the points in Mr. Willett's letter. I can certainly understand how he might hear the three pitches of Polly's "Ich bin sehr glücklich" as a reminiscence of Jenny's or Macheath's "in dem Bordell," even though that particular melodic embellishment of scale degree 5 occurs prominently several times elsewhere in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, not to mention in countless non-Weill scores. I might also concede that the trumpet's countermelody to the quotation from the "Barbara-Song" could allude back specifically to "wo unser Haushalt war" rather than merely to a 3-2-1 cadential cliché. But even if these are indeed heard as pointed references to the "Zuhälterballade," and therefore to Jenny's erstwhile "happiness" with Macheath, they only reinforce the plot-specific irony of the orchestra's quoting from the refrain of the "Barbara-Song" in response to Polly's minor-mode declaration of her joy at Macheath's reprieve.

If, however, Lucy, not Polly, sang the "Barbara-Song" (as was the case at the premiere and the several other important productions I documented) and Polly nevertheless sang the "Gerettet!" section of the finale, we have a very different sort of musical commentary. For then the orchestra puts the lie to Polly's sentiments from the viewpoint of both Lucy and Jenny (if, for the sake of argument, we accept Mr. Willett's hearings). I don't think that's what Weill intended, for, as Mr. Willett observes, it is

stronger if Polly sings both the "Barbara Song" and the "Finale," as confirmed in all published editions.

That's why I think the autograph of the "Barbara-Song" in the Kate Köhl Collection is the key: when Lucy (for whatever reason) sang the "Barbara-Song" at the premiere, Weill also gave her this section of the Finale. That is, for the actress who played Lucy, Weill wrote out not only the "Barbara-Song," but also Polly's section of the Finale. And if Mr. Willett looks closely at Figure 2, which is certainly too small to support any more subtle readings, he'll find that the orchestral "Barbara" passage occurs immediately above the "Gerettet" section. Weill would have had scant reason to write it out at all for Köhl, since it is an instrumental postlude; he certainly had no need whatsoever to write it out *again*.

I can only conclude from Mr. Willett's letter that he missed the point of my essay. I must have failed to make it clear, as I surely do *not* advocate that Lucy sing the "Barbara-Song." Rather, I tried to account for the discrepancy between the pervasive performance tradition of Lucy singing the song and the published sources which unanimously name Polly as the intended performer. That's why I turned to Weill's autograph for a clue, and I think it (and the music itself) provided a plausible answer.

I suspect that what ultimately disturbs Mr. Willett is this appeal to the authority of the music: that's why he must "see the Lucy issue as unimportant" and believe that *Brecht* [my emphasis] wouldn't have "minded about logic in such matters." Willett asserts:

if [Brecht] changed its allocation (as with the Second Finale) I doubt if it signified much; it could even have been a slip of the memory. His doctrine of 'separating the songs from the rest' would justify this. Unless Weill disagreed with it, which I would have thought not until after the big *Mahagonny* at the earliest.

I repeat this section of his letter here because the disarming nonchalance of such vintage Willett almost allows the wizardry of its author's sleight-of-pen technique to go unnoticed. But if we replay the dazzling trick in slow motion, frame by frame, to savor its sheer virtuosity, we'll be able see the modus operandi whereby the composer simply vanishes into thin air, leaving Brecht alone at center stage as the smoke clears.

If the issue of who sings a given song or passage becomes "unimportant," one need not consider that the composer has conceived his music for a specific persona, with a range, timbre, and technique appropriate to that character. Then Jenny can sing the Second Finale or the "Moritat," and Macheath can be a bass-baritone (or, for that

matter, a non-singer, as in the current Berliner Ensemble production). After all, *Brecht* "cared much more about which actor [my emphases] was going to sing a given song than which character." Musical values, or more accurately, specifically "compositional" values are, as a corollary, secondary, if not altogether unimportant. Changes affecting the music are consequently insignificant – maybe just a slip of memory – in any case justified by "separating the songs from the rest." Never mind that many of the songs in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, including the first and third finales, are actually plot numbers or that the composer, even in such a play-with-music, has woven an intricate tonal, motivic, and harmonic web across the fabric of the entire work, carefully linking characters, motivations, ideas.

The final incantation, Willett's veritable abracadabra, is the assumption that Weill surely wouldn't have disagreed with Brecht "until after the big *Mahagonny* at the earliest." When? At the start of their joint work on the libretto in spring 1927? At the completion of the score two years later? After the Leipzig production in 1930? Or during the Berlin blow-up in December 1931? Since work on *Mahagonny* spanned virtually their entire collaboration in Germany, one can only infer that Weill deferred to Brecht in all matters.

This, of course, is the critical moment in the trick, for such a deception defies both common sense and what is by now common knowledge within the informed scholarly community. But if so distinguished an audience can be convinced that Brecht is speaking for Weill throughout their collaboration – that Brecht's Notes to *Die Dreigroschenoper* or *Mahagonny* (for example) were actually declaimed in unison, that the *Versuche* texts take precedence over those published with the music, that one can say "yes" and "no" with the same score – then no one will notice that Weill has disappeared from the stage altogether, that the faithful, able, but mute assistant has been sawed in half before dropping through the trap door.

Though he has certainly become a master of it, Mr. Willett didn't invent that trick. It has a long tradition, inspired by Brecht's own contradictory attitudes toward music, his misunderstanding and distrust of the independent parameters of music, especially Weill's. The threat inherent in such music became apparent to Brecht soon after the success of *Die Dreigroschenoper* in Berlin, and it accounts for many of his revisionist responses to its original text (both libretto and score), which, I note with some personal satisfaction, Mr. Willett now seems ready to acknowledge as such.

In the context of such ideologically blinded hagiography and its concomitant, corrupt performing tradition, Weill's music has too often succumbed, whether (to paraphrase Brecht) "das Boot" was tied to the "das Ufer" or not. In this sense (to echo Willett), "of course, Brecht was right." Standing in the wings, apparently unscathed by the trick and not so mute after all, Weill (for once) has the final word: "with respect to these phenomena, the quiet awe that one accords any marvel is to be recommended." [*Melos* 8 (March 1929): 111.]

A Note on the Bentley-Vesey Version of The 3penny Opera

[A response to Ronald Shull's review of *The Threepenny Opera* in vol. 6, no. 2, p. 21.]

To the Editor:

Who was Vesey? In an account of the life of Guy Burgess we find this: "He [Burgess] lived for a time at the Rothschild house in Bentinck Street, which, together with Guy's other quarters, temporarily became a center of Dionysianism for highly placed people in wartime London. Anthony Blunt, the art critic, lived with him ... Frequent visitors included Guy Liddell and Desmond Vesey, both of the secret services ..."

But Desmond Vesey was known to me only as a translator and publisher. He was the pioneer translator of Brecht into English, having begun this work in the middle-Thirties with the *3penny Novel*. In the Forties he must have learned of my own interest in Brecht, because he mailed me the manuscripts of his *Galileo* and *3penny Opera*. (We were not on the same side of the Atlantic.) I arranged for the publication of the latter in my anthology *From the Modern Repertoire*, Volume One, 1949. Since Vesey gave me a free hand with the revision of his text, it was credited to us both, with his name preceding mine. I made further changes for the Anchor Books edition six years later, and this text was called an "English Version by Eric Bentley and Desmond Vesey" (*The Modern Theatre*, Volume One). When, in 1960, Grove Press undertook to bring out *3penny Opera* as a separate paperback, Desmond and I decided on a different distribution of credits: this time he took on the revision of the dialogue, and I took on that of the lyrics. The title page reads, in full: "Bertolt Brecht / The Threepenny Opera / With the author's notes and a foreword by Lotte Lenya / English book by Desmond Vesey / English lyrics by Eric Bentley / An Evergreen Black Cat Book / Grove Press, Inc. / New York."

Since there has been comment in the *Kurt Weill Newsletter* to the effect that these lyrics

do not always fit the music [vol. 6, no. 2, p. 21], this must be contradicted here. Though sometimes tiny changes in the musical line may have been made to fit the new words (as they always are in translated opera), most often the words fit the music exactly as it stands. Indeed these lyrics have been used in many productions, unbeknownst to those who know their *Threepenny Opera* exclusively through newsletters. What happened was this. For many years, producers were told they must use the Blitzstein text. But they didn't always do it. What they did do was credit Blitzstein in the program and send along monies which presumably found their way into the Blitzstein Estate. But my lyrics were sung. If I was informed of such goings-on ahead of time, I was bound to comment that I did not think they were legal, and that I could not accept either credit or money. However, returning to the topic of how the English words fit the music, I did take a pencil and write in the English words under or over the notes they belonged to, so that no wrong conclusions would be drawn. (From a lyric, without musical note, it is frequently quite impossible to tell how the lyricist intends his word to fit.) Thus, I do know that no accented syllables fall on unaccented notes unless that should be an intended effect (a joke, for example). If productions of the Bentley-Vesey were piracies, suppose I did become an accomplice of the pirates if and when I showed them my pencilling in the score. Beyond that, I not only plead not guilty, but would now like to get the Bentley-Vesey version legally performed. Credit and money would, I trust, follow. My only regret is that no benefits could be shared with Desmond Vesey, the real pioneer. He is no longer with us.

P.S. About our use of lines by Christopher Isherwood. Two points: first, we had a green light from Isherwood; second, we used very few of his lines.

ERIC BENTLEY
New York
5 November 1988

Lost in the Stars: A Concert Sequence

To the Editor:

In his thoughtful review (vol. 6, no. 2, p. 24) of last October's premiere by the American Composers Orchestra of the concert sequence I've devised from *Lost in the Stars*, Glen Becker refers to the previews at the Guggenheim Museum and summarizes some of the comments offered on that occasion during the course of the panel discussion between Betty Allen, Dennis Russell Davies, Peter Wexler, and myself. May I try

to clarify two points in his summary and a third which arises from them?

Having correctly noted that I intended to focus the concert sequence "not on the personal drama ... but on the larger drama of the South African society," he continues:

Thus, he has removed most of the "sentimental and popular" songs from the score, implying that they represented a once necessary compromise between the proper tone of the story and the commercial requirements of the Broadway theater.

Mr. Becker's reasons for placing the words "sentimental and popular" in quotation marks elude me, but their effect is to suggest that the phrase was mine and that it somehow explains my exclusion of these songs. It wasn't; and it doesn't.

Mr. Becker continues in the same vein:

A starting premise for the suite was the desire to excise the numbers Weill had originally penned nearly ten years earlier for his unfinished *Ulysses Africanus* - though strangely, for reasons of "musical balance," Drew has retained "Trouble Man."

I cannot imagine what leads Mr. Becker to suppose that my "starting premise" was anything of the kind. The retention of "Trouble Man" is wholly consistent with my aims from the very start.

One last point concerning the so-called "sentimental and popular" songs (about which, incidentally I neither made nor implied any value judgments). With an impressive air of authority, Mr. Becker reports that "following discussions with the conductor, Drew discarded the odd notion of grouping these numbers together in a prologue." Without going into tedious detail about a purely contingent issue, I can only assure your readers that there was no such notion to be "discarded" and hence no such discussion.

DAVID DREW
London
14 February 1989

More Threepenny

To the Editor:

Another piece of trivia for your "Threepenny Chronology": circa 1973 in Copenhagen, Danmarks Radio Theatre Department aired a production of *Threepenny Opera* with the leading actors of the day. The same season the Folkes Theater under Preben Harris staged a production for a run. This latter production, directed by Harris, was the best realization of Brecht I have seen, except for Harry Buckwitz's *Galileo* in Frankfurt, in 1961 or 62.

BERT WECHSLER
New York
28 November 1988

I Remember**To the Editor:**

Christopher Hailey's analysis of David Drew's *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* and his comments concerning that book's coverage of Weill's collaborators prompts me to write to you today. Although I have not seen the work, nor have I talked to Mr. Drew since Lenya brought him to my house in California many years ago, the review compels me to share a few reminiscences about the early days in Berlin.

Kurt Weill and I were very close friends in Germany when we were both young, and we resumed our relationship again much later in the USA. As a music critic (second to Oscar Bie) for the *Berliner Börsen-Courier* in the Twenties, I was closely connected with Kurt's early career. My first stage play, *Fünf von der Jazzband*, had opened in Berlin, and I was looking for a story which would lend itself to an operatic treatment for Kurt, who after Georg Kaiser's one-act libretti, was looking for a full-length opera. I had met Kurt via the late composer Philipp Jarnach - he and Kurt were both pupils of Busoni - and I suggested to Kurt an idea based on a newspaper story. That is how the opera *Nan und?* developed. We worked together on it for one year, but the opera was rejected by his publisher, Universal Edition. The score and book were lost during the Nazi years, and Lenya's attempt to find them were futile.

Before this, however, I was instrumental in getting the major music critics' attention for Kurt's early works. I remember the first performance of *Der Protagonist* in Dresden where Lenya and I were sitting in quiet agony holding hands until the final major chords which released the tensions and led to a surprising ovation.

There is much about Kurt Weill, the man, which is unknown. In our younger years Kurt and I saw each other almost every day until Brecht stepped into the picture. Brecht's personal influence on Kurt was destructive in many ways, and Kurt was not on speaking terms with Brecht in later years.

What I admired about Kurt was - from the very start - his unshakeable belief in himself and his work. He always knew that he was an important composer. When I once withdrew one of my early plays after attending a dress rehearsal, Kurt was furious with me. His verdict: "You have to have the courage to let a bad piece of work be performed."

FELIX JACKSON
Camarillo, CA
14 December 1988



The Beggars in the Nuova Commedia
production of *L'Opera da Tre Soldi* at
Teatro Bellini, Naples. Photo: Fabio Donato

Errata:
A Threepenny Chronology
and
3-Penny Bits: Sixty Years of
Trivia

The following corrections should be incorporated into two articles published in the last issue of the *Newsletter* (vol. 6, no. 2). I thank John Fuegi, Stephen Hinton, and John Willett for calling my attention to some of these errors.

"*A Threepenny Chronology*," pp. 12-16

1928 April 26. Under this date it was incorrectly stated that Elisabeth Hauptmann signed an appendix to Weill's and Brecht's agreement for *Die Dreigroschenoper*. The appendix she signed was actually for *Happy End*, dated 2 May 1929.

1928 May. There is no primary evidence to verify the working title of "Gesindel."

1938. Regarding the entry discussing the Nazi interdictions, some readers requested the source for this information. An account of the incident can be found in Heinrich Strobel's obituary of Kurt Weill published in *Melos*, April 1950.

1949 January. The two new songs performed in Munich were probably written as early as 1946, and not 1949.

"*3-Penny Bits: Sixty Years of Trivia*," pp. 4-5

It was claimed erroneously that the last performances [in Germany] until after the war were given in 1938 at Hamburg and Munich; in fact, according to Universal Edition licensing records, the last productions in Germany probably occurred in 1932 (Frankfurt, Leipzig, Hamburg, Potsdam, and Hildesheim) and the last production in Europe at Antwerp in 1938.

D.F.

Strong Case for Weill

Though many cello recitalists lock themselves into a repertoire ranging chronologically from Bach to Debussy, George Kennaway is clearly one who doesn't.

As proof, he brought to Edinburgh University yesterday a fascinating lunchtime program which began with Kurt Weill's cello sonata, written just after the First World War, and ended with the Poulenc sonata, written just after the Second.

Partnered by Alan Cuckston, the Edinburgh-born cellist made a strong case for the Weill, a real rarity whose British premiere was given (by Mr. Kennaway himself) just four years ago.

One of the few surviving works of the composer's formative years, it tells us little about the Weill we know from *Mahagonny* and *Dreigroschenoper*, but quite a bit about the Weill whom, with Schoenberg and Schreker as his mentors, he might have turned into.

The tough, virile, densely-packed music of the first movement and parts of the finale certainly seemed worlds away from the sweet-sourness of the familiar theatre pieces, though the soft little waltz, which floated in as postlude, did hint at things to come. In few other respects, however, did this grainy, emotional and prevailingly abstract work make concessions to popular melodic appeal.

The performance conveyed the somber intensity of the music to admiration, particularly in the sudden fierce surges of piano writing and in the anguished cry from the cello which brought the first movement to its close.

Conrad Wilson
The Scotsman, 11 January 1989

Believing in Fairies

...Which composer of the twentieth century, as we approach its last decade, is going to speak for our troubled times and will deserve the kind of comprehensive, revelatory retrospective which the London Sinfonietta organised 10 years ago for Stravinsky? My choice would be Kurt Weill, whose committed, accessible, elemental, and above all humane music has still to be fully explored. The Sinfonietta has revealed music of the Berlin years and before, but much has since been discovered about the very early period, and the vividly contrasted output of Weill's time in America needs to be rehabilitated. Perhaps the Scottish Opera production of *Street Scene* this year will begin the process: Mauceri, Tilson Thomas, Atherton and Knussen should all be in the scheme.

Nicholas Kenyon
The Observer, 1 January 1989