

Kurt Weill

Volume 16

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Newsletter

LENNY
A

Centenary



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Cover photo: Lenya in her dressing room at the Theater de Lys, New York City, ca. 1955. Photo: Gena Jackson.

LENYA

In Praise of a Career



She was good. She was very, very good. Her diction was particularly good. I wish to note this here unequivocally.

—Alfred Kerr, *Berliner Tageblatt*, 1928.

Hence the voice of Lotte Lenya, sweet, high, light, dangerous, cool, with the radiance of the crescent moon.—Ernst Bloch, 1935.

Lenya can infuse the word "baloney" with a wealth of knowingness that makes Mae West seem positively ingenué.—Constant Lambert, 1933.

Lotte Lenya stepped to the front of the stage to sing her air about Pirate Jenny. At that moment the miniature confines of the theater stretched and were replaced by a broad and sweeping arena of genuine sentiment. For that's what art can do, and that's what an artist does.

—Jay Harrison, *New York Herald Tribune*, 1954.

Lenya has magnetism and a raw lovely voice like a boy soprano. Her stylized gestures seem strange because of her natural warmth; but in the strangeness lies the slight enigma which is her charm.

—Marc Blitzstein, *Modern Music*, 1935.



Lotte Lenya is a star and a loner. Nothing can be done about it. She is tremendous. [Her performance is] as exciting as anything I've ever heard, and bold enough to suit anyone.—Edith Oliver, *The New Yorker*, 1962.



Have you ever been where thousands of people begged replenishment from one person and poured down love on that person in return? I have, once or twice. Once a few years ago, when the person was Judy Garland. Once Friday night with Lotte Lenya. She is a woman who happens to have been born with the map of a life in her face and voice, and four decades have been stirred by it. She stands there, head back, hands on hips, the joyous scar of a mouth slightly grinning in

recognition of a disordered world. She pushes back her sleeves. She sings German, English, and mankind, with a healthy leavening of womankind. We shall not see her like again.—Jerry Tallmer, *New York Post*, 1965.

Up on the stage, glowing like a Halloween pumpkin under the hot lights of honky-tonk Berlin, was Berlin itself: face like a clock without a second hand, a red slash of lipstick across her mouth,

body draped in a tacky maroon wrapper with big yellow flowers, a gold medallion on a black velvet ribbon around her neck, one hand on her hip and the other waving gently toward imaginary stars, singing in that voice like a musical cement mixer.

—Rex Reed, *New York Times Magazine*, 1966.



I Remember Lenya . . .

During my marriage to Margaret Anderson, she and I were lucky enough to be visiting Kurt and Lenya on South Mountain Road when the conductor Maurice Abravanel had come to visit after a long interval and Kurt and Lenya were moved to reenact from memory what they recalled of *The Seven Deadly Sins*. Margaret and I sat on the floor entranced and became audience to a work we had no knowledge of, which was retailed to us in narrative interpolations. It was an unforgettable occasion. Lenya's performance, Abravanel at the piano, with Kurt's interventions of occasional scraps of low-pitched song carrying the narrative. I have no recall of when in the early 40s this happened; only of our awareness that we had been uniquely lucky.

—**Quentin Anderson**, New City neighbor and son of Weill's collaborator, Maxwell Anderson

I have so many memories of Lenya. I still live in the same building as she did, and I often think of wonderful evenings in her apartment on the sixteenth floor and in the country. One winter night in the city, as she stroked her beloved cat, Kenji, she told me about the day she became an American citizen.

It was in May, 1944, if I remember correctly, a few months after Kurt Weill got his papers. Lenya told me she'd studied everything "they" told her. "I said the Pledge of Allegiance to myself every day for a week," she said, "and the day I went, I was so nervous I thought I would be sick. The room was filled with people, all kinds, and the judge called almost everyone in the room before he got to me, and he asked them a million questions. I thought, 'Oh my God, I won't make it. They will send me back and everything will be over.' Finally, the judge called my name and I walked up saying the Pledge of Allegiance to myself. 'Mrs. Weill, who was the first President of the United States?' I looked at the Judge and I thought, Thank God, I know the answer! . . . 'Abraham Lincoln,' I said, as loud as I could. 'That's good enough,' he said, and I was in!"

I stared at her, speechless, and then she leaned over, took my hands and whispered, almost conspiratorially, "I would have been a real flop if he asked me one more question." We laughed until we were weak.

—**Dolores Sutton**, actress and friend

Some time after Kurt Weill died, Lenya married a gentleman by the name of George Davis. One night he was severely beaten and was taken to New York Hospital. Lenya rushed to the hospital to maintain a vigil while he was being operated on.

As it turns out, Ira Gershwin was in New York at the time and heard about it. Although it was late at night, he called Max Dreyfus at his country home. He thought that there might be accrued royalties from the stage musical *Lady in the Dark*, and Lenya could probably use the money for the doctor bills. Dreyfus came to the city along with Ben Goldberg, the firm's controller. There turned out to be about \$17,000 in the account and a check was hastily drawn.

Gershwin rushed to the hospital to find Lenya in the waiting room. He explained what he had done, and handed her the check. She looked at it for a moment and said to Ira, "Do I have to take it this year?"

—**John Cacavas**, composer

Lenya's often blunt frankness never ceased to astound and delight me. I'll never forget the dinner we took together with a friend who thought he was the world authority on theater. Halfway through the meal he unwisely pontificated to Lenya that he did not "think much" of Brecht & Weill's stage work — that it was "too intellectual." Lenya slowly puffed and dragged on her cigarette, then snapped, "The problem with you, Mr. M——, is that you don't like to *think* in the theater!"

Despite the many critics who have named Lenya as one of the great dramatic singers of the twentieth century, Lenya's insecurities plagued her to the very moment she stepped on stage. I remember sitting with her and Anna Krebs in her living room the morning after her legendary Carnegie Hall concert in 1965 and reading the rave reviews from numerous papers.

Lenya confessed: "The night before the concert I dreamed I was on stage singing, but the auditorium was empty except for a few old ladies sitting in the front row, passing a picnic basket between themselves and talking the whole time." But perhaps that was Lenya's secret for success: never grow full of yourself and allow a false sense of security to get the best of you.

—**Ted Mitchell**, friend



Top: Lenya in *Die sieben Todsünden*, Paris, 1933.

Bottom: After the Carnegie Hall concert, 1965. Photo: Ted Mitchell

I knew Lenya for more than a quarter century. We were collaborators and friends. Countless memories and images well up.

There was Lenya the grieving widow determined to protect Kurt Weill's music and reputation from all enemies (real and imagined); Lenya the entrepreneur with a head for business that J.P. Morgan would have envied, professing that she was an artist and did not understand money matters; Lenya, fiercely loyal to me at times when it might have been more convenient for her to forget her commitments to me and take an easier route; the funny Lenya, telling bawdy jokes in her idiosyncratic English and bringing the house down; Lenya the riverboat gambler, suavely dealing poker hands with a lit Pall Mall dangling from her lips; the elegant Lenya who, when she felt like it, could still dazzle in a Hattie Carnegie creation older than some of her fledgling fellow actors; Lenya, tough, guarded, warm, vulnerable—these Lenyas, and many more than there is space for here.

But for me, the image of her that is as vivid now as when I first saw it more than forty years ago is of Lenya the consummate artist—middle-aged, terrified, nearly unknown in the United States except to those European refugees who saw her in her first incarnation as one of the predominant figures in the Berlin theater—pacing the ratty stage alley of the Theater de Lys in Greenwich Village on the opening night of *Threepenny* and on every other night when she performed; hunched over, arms tightly clasping her breast, mumbling what seemed to be a furious prayer, looking for all the world like someone about to face the gallows, instead of one preparing to go on stage in a few minutes to give one of the truly extraordinary performances in the musical theater in this century.

—**Carmen Capalbo**, producer and director, *Threepenny Opera*, Theatre de Lys

I first met Lenya in Marc Blitzstein's Greenwich Village apartment in 1952 and remember particularly that she was very quiet, listening intently, but hardly speaking during the long conversation among Marc Blitzstein, her husband George Davis, my partner Carmen Capalbo, and myself. It turned out to be our "audition." The next day Blitzstein telephoned to say that Lenya was certain that Capalbo and I were the right ones to mount his new translation of *The Threepenny Opera*.

In our next meeting with Lenya, she was adamant that she was too old to play Jenny. We told her there is no *Threepenny Opera* without her as Jenny. Reluctantly she agreed to perform the role with *her* proviso that if she or we felt she didn't do it justice, she would be replaced during rehearsal. Lenya was concerned because the cast would be in their 20s and she was approaching 55. On opening night at the Theater de Lys, Lenya was an electrifying presence. After her emotionally pent-up rendition of "Pirate Jenny," audiences always remained silent for a long time, drained and moved by her artistry, until signaled by her trademark hand gesture.

The quality I came to admire most in Lenya was her loyalty. When she was your friend, she was your friend. But Lenya could be tough and uncompromising, especially when it came to protecting the integrity and posterity of Weill's music. And also, as I learned, during the poker games she played with ruthless savvy.

—**Stanley Chase**, producer, *Threepenny Opera*, Theater de Lys

Lenya was always charming and ingratiating. But she was not the world's most beautiful woman, and she knew it. When she was making *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*, she wrote to me from England and described how Vivien Leigh was so worried about controlling the camera angles so that the bags under her eyes wouldn't show. Lenya concluded the story in her characteristic manner, "Fortunately, Scott, I've never had that problem."

One day we were out shopping. We got in the car and she pulled out a portable sewing kit, worth about 98 cents. I asked her where she got it. She said, "I stole it." I said, "What?!" She said, "I have to keep in practice. When I was young, my mother used to say, 'If you want your breakfast, go out and steal it.'"

—**Scott Merrill**, actor and friend

In the summer of 1958, after recording for nine hours in a semi-air-conditioned Manhattan studio, Lenya was close to exhaustion. Yet she insisted upon going on, refused a break, and continued to call for retake after retake of two poems by Bertolt Brecht in Gustave Mathieu's and my anthology of German poetry. When at long last she declared herself "nearly satisfied" with her reading, she collapsed limply into a chair, asked for a cigarette, and said, "You see, I wanted to do right by Brecht."

—**Guy Stern**, friend and colleague



Lenya outside the stage door of the Theater de Lys, preparing to go on stage in *The Threepenny Opera*.

Photo: Avery Willard

When Lillian Ross came to interview the cast of *Brecht on Brecht* for the *New Yorker*, Lenya came up to me, warning, “Mendy, don’t tell her how long we know each other. They know how old I am. They *don’t* know how old you are —yet.” It was some time in 1935 when she and Kurt first came to our apartment, because my father Meyer Weisgal produced *The Eternal Road*. I had a front row seat for every Saturday matinee, and I can still see her as Miriam weaving a huge basket and singing in that inimitable voice, “My bruzzer iz high in zuh Councils of Egypt. My bruzzer is mighty in Egypt.” But it was in *Brecht on Brecht* that she literally saved my acting life. Struggling with a rather violent anti-war poem, I was probably ranting with emotion and certainly overdoing it—the director terribly unhappy and completely unable to give me any advice—when Lenya left her stool, came over to me and whispered, “Mendy, Brecht wasn’t Jewish.” Of course. No fancy babble about “*Verfremdungseffekt*” or “alienation”—simply say it. I shall never forget her.

—Michael Wager, actor



In *Brecht on Brecht*, 1962.

Lenya’s frugality was notorious to everyone who knew her. As her accountant, I knew that she didn’t need to worry about the basic necessities of life. I remember being with her and her friend Victor Carl Guarneri in a New York shop when she stopped to admire a blouse that cost \$75. “I’d love to have that blouse,” she said with a reluctant hint in her voice, “but it’s really too expensive.” So Victor, who was always generous toward Lenya, bought it for her as a surprise.

—Milton Coleman, Lenya’s accountant

In the world of repertory opera and theater, the job of the prompter is of utmost importance. This person sits in an inconspicuous box in front of the stage apron and supplies lines, makes up for missed cues, and unobtrusively readjusts forgotten lines during the course of a performance. Needless to say, this takes a great deal of skill and a sharp presence of mind. An experienced prompter knows when to prompt, but also, when *not* to prompt!

At a festival in Recklinghausen, Germany, Lenya was playing one of the longest and most exhausting parts ever written for an actress: the title role in Brecht’s *Mother Courage*. She studied the original German script and Dessau’s songs in New City, where I coached her in the songs. (She used to call the first song—“Ihr Hauptleut, laßt die Trommel ruhen”—“The Tschaikovsky Song,” because it starts on the same four notes as Tschaikovsky’s Piano Concerto.)

It so happened that during the rehearsal period in Recklinghausen the regular prompter suddenly fell ill, and a substitute had to take her place. Lenya always knew her lines to perfection—something an experienced prompter would realize immediately. But not the substitute in Recklinghausen. She religiously

“threw” Lenya one line after another. For a while Lenya put up with it. But when the prompter kept doing it—even for the shortest of sentences—Lenya dropped her character, walked straight ahead to the prompter’s box, and—in her best Viennese—exclaimed for all to hear: “*Hören’s! Ich geb Ihnen 100 Mark, wenn Sie diese Scheisse für sich behalten!*” [“Listen, I’ll give you a hundred Marks if you keep this shit to yourself!”]

—Lys Symonette, vocal coach and friend

Lenya brought so much joy and happiness to our lives during the last few years of her life when we really got to know her as a friend. I remember her stopping for dinner on her way home to Brook House one day, coming from New York City. That evening, *Semi-Tough* was on television. In the scene where Lenya is giving Burt Reynolds a massage, she couldn’t understand her own lines. She asked us, “Vat did she say?”

—Jan and Niles Davies, neighbors in New City



With Burt Reynolds in a scene from *Semi-Tough*. Photo: United Artists

My partner Gene Lerner and I worked very closely with Lenya before, during, and after our production of “Berlin to Broadway with Kurt Weill.” The show opened in late September of 1972. When we learned that Lenya’s birthday was on October 18, we told her we would very much like to give her a very special birthday celebration right from the stage of the Theater de Lys, with the entire audience, cast, musicians, tech people, etc., toasting her. At first she demurred, “I don’t want to go public with my age,” she protested, acknowledging that this would be her sixty-fourth birthday. (So the lady dropped ten years. “So what!” as her famous song goes.)

Eventually she came around and agreed to our plans. And what an evening it was! With the entire audience sipping champagne, the cast and musicians on stage serenaded her with special songs (Weill, of course) concocted for the occasion, and the president of Paramount Records gave her a special “Lifetime Achievement Award.” She later confessed that it was her most wonderful birthday ever.

—Hank Kaufman, producer, *Berlin to Broadway*, Theater de Lys

From the day I started working on *Cabaret* I never thought of anyone but Lenya for the role of Fräulein Schneider—and I'm quite sure I can speak for my collaborators as well.

When Lenya finally came in to hear the score for the first time, John Kander and Fred Ebb began by playing and singing “So What” for her. Without a moment’s hesitation, she said “I’ll do it!” I remember her agent blurting out, “Not so fast, Lenya. Not so fast.”

But that was Lenya—direct, decisive, outspoken. I liked and admired her.

And—to me—she was the soul of *Cabaret*—bringing 1930 Berlin on stage with her as no one else ever could have done.

—**Joe Masteroff**, book writer for *Cabaret*

Once, as I sat chatting with Lenya in her dressing room in Boston during the tryout of *Cabaret*, she suddenly took my hand and stared at me. “Darling,” she said, “You remind me of Kurt.” I remember how thrilled I was at that sentence. Could it possibly mean she felt I was that gifted, that talented, or was her affection for me so intense that she drew some parallel between how she felt about me as a co-worker and Kurt as a husband?

Wanting to hear the compliment I thought was forthcoming, I said to her, “Really, Lenya? How do I resemble him?” She looked me deep in the eyes and clutched my hand even harder. “Because darling,” she said, “you sweat.”

—**Fred Ebb**, lyricist for *Cabaret*

We were out of town with *Cabaret*, before the Broadway opening. When I had started to work on this project, I had listened to a lot of German jazz and vaudeville music from the 1920s, and there were already grumblings from critics that the score sounded too derivative and Kurt Weill-ish. I didn’t agree, but I thought I should go to Lenya and warn her that some critics were claiming that I had done nothing more than imitate Kurt Weill.

She took my face in her hands and said, “No, no, don’t worry, it’s not Kurt. When I go out on the stage and sing the songs, it’s not Kurt. It’s Berlin.” After that, I decided I didn’t give a shit about what the critics thought.

—**John Kander**, composer of *Cabaret*

Place: Rome, Italy, during the production of the movie *The Appointment*. From the window on a high floor in the hotel room we enjoyed the fine panoramic view of the Colosseum. Then Lenya remarked, “You know, looking at those two-thousand-year-old ruins makes one feel quite young.”

—**Anna Krebs**, friend

After one of my sessions with Lenya during which I was drawing her, in a spirit of gratitude I invited her to choose one of the drawings as a gift. She said, “Thanks Richard, but you must not do that.” I said, “Why not?” She replied, “They are works of art and I’ll be more than happy to buy them from you, but you have to remember this: people do not value what they don’t have to pay for. I appreciate your offer, but please remember what I’m telling you.”

During the Weill-Lenya exhibition at the Library of Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, there was a recital of little-known works of Kurt Weill in the small auditorium opposite the exhibition space. Alan Titus sang some of Weill’s music, and after he had finished he motioned to Lenya, who was in the audience, to stand and acknowledge the audience and perhaps take a bow. She refused to stand, and said, “This has nothing to do with me. This is for Kurt Weill.”

—**Richard Ely**, illustrator and photographer

It was not long ago I had delighted in Lenya’s incandescence on stage and despaired with her in her moments of grief offstage. I’m certain I was one of many friends who shared these personal sentiments.

She passed away after a long illness, lying on a bed in the hallway entrance to a friend’s studio. I held her frail, soft, pink, transparent hands gently in mine in this obscure surrounding. Her pink veins ran across the back of her hand and flowed into the dark red vessel to my heart.

When I stood beside her at the end, the totality of our existence suddenly touched me emotionally. Reality had kidnapped a star and showed me how temporary life can be. There in that dim hallway Lenya gave her last encore to me. No matter how grand, productive, and opulent life may be, the unavoidable end comes wherever we happen to be, in a hallway, or in an alley below a marquee.

—**S. Neil Fujita**, friend, photographer, designer

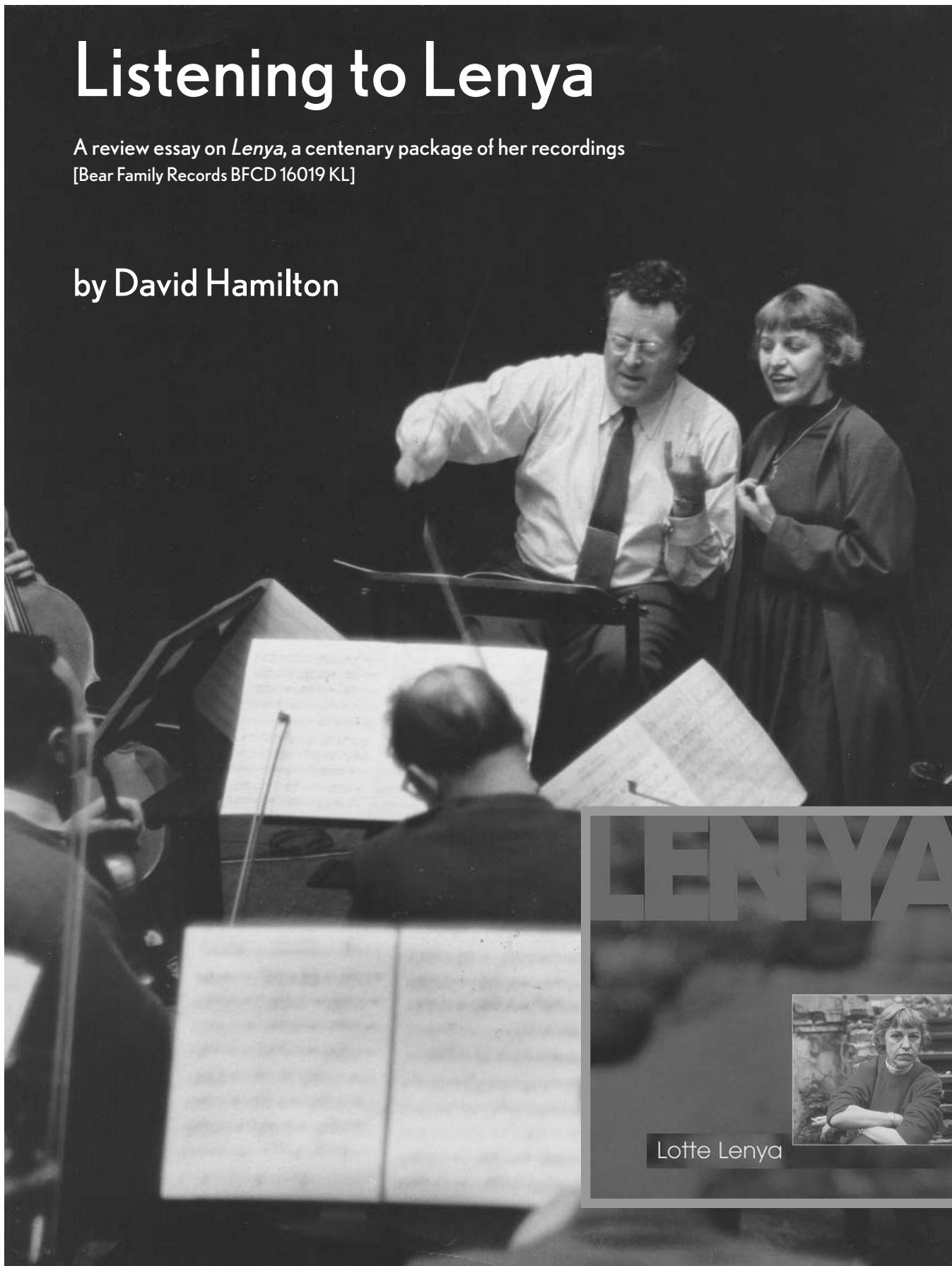


Rehearsing for her concert at Lewisohn Stadium, New York, 1958.

Listening to Lenya

A review essay on *Lenya*, a centenary package of her recordings
[Bear Family Records BFGD 16019 KL]

by David Hamilton



LENYA



Lotte Lenya

On my shelf of German LPs devoted to “Berlin zwanziger Jahre” nostalgia is one titled “Die Damen, ja, die Damen” (Telefunken NT-907) that presents a dozen tracks by female popular singers circa 1930. Some are almost operatic in manner: the exotically tremulous Rosita Serrano and the more conventional Erna Sack indulge in coloratura-style reprises. Others practice the art of the diseuse, lightly touching the pitches: Greta Keller is atmospheric and expressive, Trude Hesterberg alternates *Sprechstimme* with a baritone belt. Loni Heuser’s “Ach wie schön, man singt immer tiefer” parodies the fashion for mannish-sounding chanteuses, and, sure enough, along comes Marlene Dietrich (“Jonny”), deploying abundant “sexy” portamentos to draw attention away from her uncertain intonation.

At the end of the B side, like a fresh and cool mountain spring, comes Lotte Lenya’s Telefunken version of “Denn wie man sich bettet.” In this company, Lenya sounds novel and strange. Unlike most of the others, she balances speech and song without apparent disfavor to either. Her diction—those crystalline consonants!—compares well to any of the diseuses; her singing is as musically precise as any of the singers. She is also more direct than any of them, eschewing their trademark mannerisms.

Further listening turned up other singers sharing Lenya’s directness; each likewise trained initially as an actor. For example: Grete Mosheim, a member of Reinhardt’s company, singing a Holländer song with sweet girlish tone and limpid diction, or the feisty cabaret satirist Claire Waldoff delivering her gamier material straightforwardly and on pitch, with a crackling Berlin accent and in the vocal range Lenya would eventually inhabit after 1950. This encourages the thought that Lenya’s singing owed everything to her dramatic experience (and also, no doubt, to the coaching of Weill and Brecht) and little to her more celebrated contemporaries.

Early in his introduction to Bear Family’s centenary package of recordings by Lenya, Kim Kowalke notes the fascination of comparing her performances of the same songs across her career. Not being able to resist following that suggestion, I traced the path of her recordings of “Surabaya-Johnny” from her very first 1929 session through a 1965 concert performance.

The 1929 Orchestrata gives us the “raw lovely voice like a boy soprano” described by Marc Blitzstein. Lenya sings in the original key of E-flat, accompanied by a fair approximation of the original scoring. The second stanza is omitted, presumably for reasons of time. The song’s verse (to use American terminology) is in two parts, the first in 4/4 time (basically narrative, 16 bars), the second in 3/4 (accusatory, 8 bars); the refrain (love song, 16 bars) returns to common time; the only tempo marking is the initial “Sehr ruhig: Blues.” In this recording, the quarter note in the 4/4 sections is around $\text{♩}=110$, in the 3/4 section around $\text{♩}=88$ (with a greater contrast in the third stanza). The now standard ritard in the refrain’s final line (“und ich liebe dich so”) is on this occasion very small. Lenya sings the first part of the verse with a light, almost staccato articulation, the second part (as in all later recordings) parlando. The third stanza is similar in character to the first; the likely prospect that Johnny will pack up and depart some morning does not unduly disturb the singer. (Lenya makes a rare false entry beginning the second half of the first refrain.)

In the 1943 Bost recording, the song is performed a step lower, in D-flat. The piano accompaniment is not a reduction of the orchestral score but an arrangement made by Weill especially for this recording (the autograph survives). The composer himself may or may not be the accompanist. The purposeful

“Americanization” of the song, especially in rhythmic character, will disconcert those weaned on other recordings. Again, the second stanza is omitted, and the total timing is almost the same as before.

But what a difference! Tempos for the two parts of the verse are distinctly faster than before, but the refrain is slower and the final ritard much greater. Lenya’s voice is still essentially that of 1929. She sings the first stanza with warmer tone and more legato, phrasing through some rests in the refrain. But the third stanza is uttered in tones of desperation, and “nimm doch die Pfeife aus dem Maul, du Hund!” has resonances of defeat, perhaps even abuse. From Brechtian objectivity, we have moved into emotional narrative, approaching the torch song (though much more honestly and musically than did Marianne Oswald).

In the 1955 “Berlin Theater Songs,” the song is transposed down a fourth to B-flat major and at last includes the second stanza. Though related to the original, Rudi Bohn’s scoring strips away most of the countermelodies. Lenya’s postwar voice, deeper and sometimes harsher than before, still retains her clarity of articulation, but the interpretation, although beginning somewhere near the gentle naïveté of the earlier recordings, is at once more stylized and more complex. The basic tempo is around $\text{♩}=126$ with the refrain a bit slower, but the accusatory parlando is different in each stanza. In the first stanza it is slower than the main tempo, spoken matter-of-factly around a low pitch; in the second, nearly as fast, with rising pitch, frantic and desperate; in the third, even slower than the first stanza, reaching a still higher pitch, the voice almost

Lenya recording
*Aufstieg und Fall
der Stadt
Mahagonny.*
Hamburg, 1956.





Recording sessions in
Hamburg, 1956.



breaking on “und ein Schiff liegt unten am Kai.” Through both its idiosyncratic but clearly intentional tempos and its general musical discipline, this reading conveys an intensity of purpose and a more monumental quality than either the Orchestrola or Bost versions.

In the 1960 *Happy End* conducted by Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg, we finally hear the original orchestration (albeit transposed down a fourth) and it makes a difference, especially because its elements are so well balanced in this performance. Uniquely, the refrain is here faster than the opening tempo, while the 3/4 section varies from stanza to stanza, though not as strikingly as in 1955. Emotionally, this seems a less intense performance than earlier ones, less specifically characterized.

The last “Surabaya-Johnny” was recorded three-and-a-half decades after the first at Lenya’s 1965 Carnegie Hall concert conducted by Milton Rosenstock. It is performed once again complete, in B-flat, and in substantially the original scoring (although less well balanced than in 1960). Hearing it after the earlier ones, one notes a loss of vocal firmness, some verbal slips, and a reading less specific, both musically and theatrically. In its original context, however, it remains exhilarating proof of Lenya’s continuing vitality and need to communicate, at the age of 66.

(A footnote to this sequence is a performance of the song’s first verse only, from an unidentified TV program at the time of the Theatre de Lys *Threepenny Opera*. The clip features Lenya, Blitzstein, and an interviewer whose ignorance is surpassed only by her grotesque enthusiasm. Blitzstein is at the keyboard and, apparently improvising from memory, gets the harmonies seriously wrong. Sadly, the editors omitted the second and better half of this program, where Blitzstein sings and plays his version of the “Solomon Song” and accompanies Lenya in his version of the “Moritat.”)

This survey makes it clear that one should not expect consistency from Lenya. Many factors must have influenced her different interpretations of “Surabaya-Johnny.” The song’s gradual evolution from the original theatrical context into an independent song was certainly an important one, not to mention Lenya’s biographical circumstances. If we want to treat her recordings as gospel, we must accept an evolving gospel. (The notion of faithful adherence to the score was not a relevant concept for her in that she knew Weill’s works aurally, not from notation.) Hers was a church with room for many—though not *all*—interpretations; her remark to Weill that “the police should ban” Marianne Oswald’s records has our sympathy. She herself inadvertently functioned as a sort of “false prophet,” when her baritone later voice and the transpositions it necessitated in the Columbia-Philips recordings were taken as models by others. Still, some such followers, notably Gisela May, made individual and compelling contributions to the tradition.

A significant merit of the Bear Family set is its reminder that Lenya’s career embraced more than Weill and/or Brecht. Weill does loom large here; the famous Columbia-Philips recordings are all included complete—rightly so, since her role in their creation, effectiveness, and quality clearly encompassed the totality, not just the parts in which she sang. Beyond those, recordings of Lenya speaking, in both German

and English, remind us of her dramatic career, while live concerts, interviews, and a recording-session clip show her in spontaneous contexts, original in expression, scathing or rueful in wit. Enough of this is new and fascinating to make the set essential for admirers and students of Lenya's art, despite some editorial deficiencies of selection and packaging.

Typical of Bear Family productions, this one (comprising 11 CDs) comes with generous context and documentation. The lavishly illustrated booklet in LP format (12" square, 250 pages) contains an appreciation by Kim Kowalke; biographical articles by Jürgen Schebera (the European career) and David Farneth (the American years); reminiscences by Guy Stern, Lys Symonette, Gerhard Lichthorn, Alan Rich, George Avakian, Harold Prince, Teresa Stratas; reproductions of original liner notes and record labels; and a detailed discography. Here, the variety and richness of the Lenya career—and its twists and dead ends and rebirths—are carefully traced, and we also learn about the making of the recordings and where they fit into the career.

Like that career itself, Lenya's work in the studios was erratic: protean, bifurcated, gapped. Her published German recordings up to 1933, all from Weill-Brecht works, have been available on earlier CD reissues reviewed in these pages. (The Bear Family discography notes that she apparently recorded two songs from *Der Silbersee* at a Berlin session on February 26, 1933, but these were never published and the masters were probably destroyed for political reasons.) Then comes a decade-long gap, except for a dim and fascinating off-the-air recording of a song from a 1937 Blitzstein radio "song-play." The text of this piece is printed in the booklet, ostensibly because of the sound quality. In truth, Lenya's foreign pronunciation and her not-quite-natural accentuation of the words account for much of the difficulty in decipherment, foreshadowing her problematic future on the American stage.

More successful are the 1943 recordings: the Bost set of six Weill songs and the powerful recordings for the U.S. Office of War Information. The latter include Paul Dessau's setting of Brecht's "Lied einer deutschen Mutter," not previously published. (Later, among the tracks from *Brecht on Brecht*, Lenya sings Eisler's more haunting version of the same poem—a striking contrast to Therese Giehse's more canonical recording, and more moving to these ears.) Another decade ensues before the 1954 Theater de Lys recording of the Blitzstein *Threepenny Opera* adaptation. From this, and from MGM's 1956 *Johnny Johnson*, the 1962 *Brecht on Brecht*, and the 1966 *Cabaret*, Bear Family includes only the tracks involving Lenya.

Less familiar will be the two LPs of readings recorded in 1958.

"Invitation to German Poetry" comprises forty-one short poems read in the original German from an anthology edited by Gustave Mathieu and Guy Stern. Bear Family generously reprints the original LP booklet, with notes, texts, and English translations. Particularly telling are the readings of the two Brecht poems, to which is appended a private recording (tentatively dated c. 1962) of his "Kinderkreuzzug." Here is another case where Lenya's openness to emotion generates an impact quite different from Giehse's stoic, tonally monotonous non-interpretation.

The second spoken group comprises Kafka stories, read in English with restrained effectiveness. (I noted one amusing pronunciation slip, when a body appears to be "covered in suede" rather than in "sweat"!)

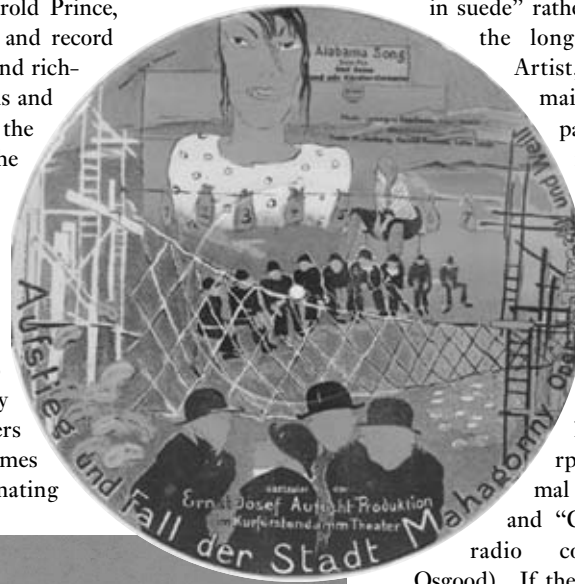
In the longest tale, "A Hunger Artist," Lenya admirably maintains the narrative pace over nearly twenty-four minutes, using variety of tone and pitch as well as that miraculously precise diction.

A final commercial recording is, like Lenya's very first sides, a 1969 Metromedia 45 rpm disc of two fairly dismal songs by John Cacavas and "Charles O. Wood" (the radio commentator Charles Osgood). If there's a story behind this curious *envoi* to a distinctly unconventional studio career, we can probably live without knowing it.

The studio work is supplemented by approximately two CDs worth of material from "live" situations (some already noted above). The lengthy sequence from the last of Lenya's Carnegie Hall appearances (1965) once circulated on a Rococo LP. It includes two selections from *Love Life* she didn't record elsewhere ("Love Song" and "Susan's Dream") and vividly captures her poise and professionalism, as well as the chemistry between singer and audience. Also otherwise unrecorded is "Zu Potsdam unter den Eichen," included here both in the Carnegie excerpt and in a 1960 Munich concert devoted

to Weill's German songs. The latter, a more formal event, finds her in firmer voice and is better rehearsed and recorded.

Easily the most entertaining new material is that stemming from the pop-hit status of "Mack the Knife" in 1955. In the booklet, Columbia producer George Avakian relates his efforts to promote the "Moritat" to various jazz men, and how Lenya became involved. A session with Turk Murphy yielded an English-language version sung by Murphy and introduced by Lenya's inim-



Above: A facsimile of this picture disc, originally distributed at the 1931 Berlin production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, is included as a "bonus" in the Bear Family set.
Below: Lenya's recording for Bost Records, 1943.

itable spoken line from the Theatre de Lys production: “Look, there goes Mack the Knife!” (a line she also speaks on the “Moritat” track in the MGM recording, not included here). Lenya then recorded the song with Murphy’s group in the original, for the German market, keeping bravely abreast of the driving tempo while singing the rhythms absolutely straight.

Neither Murphy version was released, partly because six nights later, in the same studio, Louis Armstrong recorded the song (from charts arranged by Murphy). At Avakian’s suggestion, an Armstrong–Lenya duet was worked up on the spot. The Bear Family set includes a nine-minute clip from the actual session devoted mostly to working over the “Suky Tawdry” stanza, which involves a break and a syncopation that give Lenya difficulty—a rhythmic move apparently not in her vocabulary. Throughout the retakes, the interplay of these two personalities is a delight. In the end, Avakian fixed the syncopation by editing the tape. The result is bracing evidence of how cheerfully oil and water can co-exist. Armstrong jazzes pitches and rhythms all over the place, while Lenya gamely sticks to Weill’s tune in strict time with only rare departures.

Also from the Columbia period are two takes of “Song of Ruth” from *The Eternal Road* made for the “American Theater Songs” album. These were never used, perhaps because neither musical style nor subject matter really fit with the Broadway focus of the album’s other contents. (A forthcoming CD release in Sony’s Masterwork Heritage series promises not only the complete “American Theater Songs” plus “Song of Ruth,” but also tracks from *Cabaret* and *Brecht on Brecht*, and Lenya’s versions of “Mack the Knife” with Armstrong and Murphy.)

As already suggested, the interview material is partly disappointing. The best is the talking part of a 1975 Dick Cavett Show. Lenya is at least comfortable with the host, who asks fairly sensible questions. But the concluding “Bilbao-Song,” in which he joins her, is embarrassing and would better have been omitted. Another, more formal television clip, from 1964, includes performances of “How Can You Tell An American?” and “September Song.” Absent their visual elements, these TV sound tracks make us very aware of the under-rehearsed musical detail, a condition that may also explain why Lenya often seems uncomfortable in them, especially when dealing with material she did not sing often. Another angle of the same problem affects the songs from the 1966 German telecast of her performance as Brecht’s *Mother Courage*. Less compelling on their own than Weill’s theater songs, these—and her singing—really need to be experienced in the context of the whole production.

Although Bear Family went this far in their inclusion of soundtracks from film and video, they managed to neglect the oldest and most important example thereof. What about “Seeräuberjenny” from the soundtrack of Pabst’s *Dreigroschenoper* film? Someday, perhaps we can also have a Lenya video anthology—not, please God, every interview, but a video “portrait” that concentrates on what she did best: bringing words and music and character to vivid theatrical life. Until that time, Bear Family has provided us with much to enjoy, both familiar and novel, and in a format that gives pleasure and stimulates thought.

Matters of Presentation

As one who has produced similar record packages, I feel a great sympathy for the Bear Family team, faced with the challenge of coordinating such a wealth of elements—audio, literary, and photographic. As of the late proof stage that I saw, though, a few things were not quite in synch. For example, David Farneth’s text promised more of the Blitzstein interview and the 1964 CBS TV program than is actually included on the CDs. The typographic treatment of extended quotations was also ambiguous—not always making it clear where they end and main text resumes.

Likely to be repeatedly irritating is the inadequate listing of contents for the CDs. The track listing at the back of the booklet is significantly deficient with respect to dates and collaborating performers. In order to find that information one must constantly refer back to the discography, which is ordered chronologically (unlike the CDs) and snakes through many heavily illustrated pages. And, perhaps because Bear Family’s collections are usually populated by single songs and not long works, *Mahagonny* in particular is described awkwardly. The tracks are identified in the list only by act and scene number, without the text incipits more familiar to most listeners, even specialists. Also, the two CDs the opera requires are allotted to separate jewel cases, a situation that easily could have been avoided. (Indeed, the eleven CDs would have fit into three jewel cases instead of four.) In the abbreviated listings on the back of the jewel cases, the titles of the long works never appear at all; one has to deduce them from the section titles!

What is more, except for the German poetry sequence, no texts or translations are provided. Many collectors will want to retain their original LPs of the Columbia-Philips series, or even the less-well-annotated CD editions of *Dreigroschenoper* and *Mahagonny*. (The recent and technically excellent Sony reissue of *Die sieben Todsünden* and the “Berlin Theater Songs” was also notably deficient in this respect.)

Deadlines did not permit extensive comparison of the sound to earlier issues, but random sampling of *Mahagonny* suggested that this transfer is a more solid representation of the original Columbia LPs than were the Sony CDs from the early 1980s, among other things reducing some edgy sibilants. However, Lenya’s closely-miked sibilants in the Kafka stories are very distracting (no original was at hand for comparison). Thanks to modern noise-reduction techniques, the transfers from 78s are easier to listen to than in some earlier editions.

A cute bonus disc is enclosed: a quasi-facsimile of the picture record issued in conjunction with the Berlin premiere of *Mahagonny*. Though Lenya’s name is listed as a member of the cast, she is not heard on the record, which contains “Slow-Fox” arrangements of “Alabama Song” and “Wie man sich bettet...” [*sic*] by “Emil Roósz und sein Künstler-Orchester.” Presumably in recognition of the limited accessibility of 78 turntables, it is not an actual pressing from the original master, but a dubbing at 45 rpm.

D. H.

Books

Excerpts from

Lenya the Legend *A Pictorial Autobiography*

Compiled and edited by David Farneth*

New York: Overlook; London: Thames & Hudson, 1998

I love singing with an orchestra. Like a fish in water. Like on the ocean, being carried on a wave of marvelous sound. It's a happy loneliness when I approach a microphone to begin a performance. There is just the microphone and you, and it's almost like being on top of Mt. Everest. No one can touch you. It's a strange and wonderful feeling.

My attitude in the theater is that you just step in and step out of your performance. If someone asked me a question in the middle of singing "Pirate Jenny," I could stop, answer the question, and pick up singing right where I left off, because I don't need to create a mood. I'm like a ditch digger, digging the ditch. He can stop, drink his coffee, and keep on digging until the ditch is finished. There's no difference.

My mother came to see me in a lovely production of *Pioniere in Ingolstadt* by Marieluise Fleisser. She sat in the seat of honor—the Kaiser's box. Backstage afterwards she said, "Haven't you had enough of playing the clown for these people?" But she still came three times. She pretended to dismiss the theater, but she was still proud of me. And she certainly understood the story of the play, which is about a servant girl.

I adore making pictures, especially shooting all the scenes out of order. I have a terrific ability to concentrate, so it's no problem for me. Once during the filming of *From Russia with Love*, the director, Terence Young, said to me, "Lenya, darling, at this point, please look straight into the camera." I said, "Where is it?" I was surrounded by six cameras but didn't see any of them. That's how deeply I get into it.

I never can do much in a rehearsal, you know? Especially not with those opera singers listening to me. Zemlinsky always said, "Sing out! Do you ever sing out in the rehearsals?" I said, "Never." He said, "Well, I have to hear you." That was in a rehearsal room. I said, "I can't do anything here, you know? I'll show you. Let me get on stage and you will see what I can do." And then the first rehearsal on stage, where all those trained opera singers fluffed, I went straight through the score, of course, without the slightest mistake. And then he looked at me, and said, "Okay, I know now what you are doing." And from then on he left me in peace.

Strangely enough, I had a reputation in Berlin for being a fascinating heap of sensuality. But privately I'm not sexy at all. Oh sure, I played the part of a vamp for all the pictures, but that was just being an actress. Sex didn't mean much to me. I could live without it, you know? At that time I couldn't live without the theater—it was my life.

Brecht hated actors who talked. He'd say, "Don't talk, show me. If it's good, I'll take it." He never listened to an actor—it bored him. But he was great with actors, even the dumbest ones. He had incredible patience.

I had given up smoking for three months before the opening of *The Seven Deadly Sins* at the New York City Ballet, which was very hard for me, being a chain-smoker. I gave it up and sang clear as a bell. When the reviews came in—and they were beautiful—one of them said, "Here she is again, with that inimitable, husky, marvelous voice of hers." When I read that I went into the drugstore, bought a pack of cigarettes, and practically ate them. I was so mad.

Some people thought Kurt was arrogant. But he wasn't arrogant at all; he was just terribly shy, and that shyness kept people away from him, like a wall he built around himself. Nobody really knew Kurt Weill. I wonder sometimes whether I knew him. I was married to him twenty-four years and we lived together two years without being married, so it was twenty-six years together. When he died, I looked at him, and I wasn't sure I really knew him.

No, you don't have to pray for me. I don't believe in that escape either—I'd rather face whatever my fate has lined up for me. I admit, the other way is easier, and I have seen it work, but why try to escape pain and despair for someone I loved so dearly? Does he not deserve that grief I feel? I think it is a healthier and more honest way of facing life. I look out the window and see the seasons change and know, since we are part of nature, that I too will change and will find a purpose again for existence.

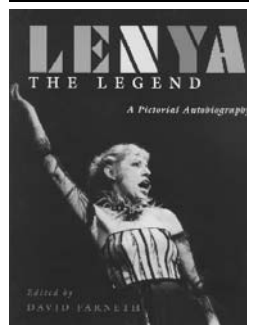
Plain irony is boring, but when it's subtle you really have something unusual and interesting. It's the subtlety underneath the obviousness that gives the strength to *The Threepenny Opera*. *Threepenny* will last for a long time because it deals with corruption and poverty. Corruption, we know, has quite a future, and, Lord knows, what a past!

* Editor's note: Foundation personnel involved in non-Foundation publications are excused from participation in the solicitation or copy-editing of reviews. This policy has served well in the past and I expect it will continue to do so. However, to avoid even the appearance of conflict of interest in the case of *Lenya the Legend*, we will not publish a formal review in the *Kurt Weill Newsletter* but run excerpts from the book instead. A future issue will include digests of reviews that appear elsewhere.—David Farneth



256 pages

57 color and 280
b&w photographs



Books

Emigrierte Komponisten in der Medienlandschaft des Exils 1933-1945

Edited by Nils Grosch, Joachim Lucchesi, Jürgen Schebera
(Veröffentlichungen der Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft Dessau,
Band 2)

Stuttgart: M&P Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 1998
ISBN 3-476-45183-6



Exile studies have tended to take only a marginal interest in the cinema, and within this special field composers driven into exile have, in turn, received only scant attention. It is therefore gratifying to note the recent increase in biographical descriptions and research reports on musical creation in exile; each in a different and distinct manner, they record and analyze the close links between art and society, between the cinema and politics. The second volume of the Proceedings of the Kurt Weill Society Dessau, *Emigrée Composers in the Media Landscape of Exile 1933-1945*, is concerned with the development of an art form synonymous with twentieth century modernity and exemplary for a new epochal consciousness informed by National Socialism and emigration.

“Every intellectual in exile, without exception, has suffered loss, and is well advised to recognize the fact if he wishes to avoid being made cruelly aware of it behind the tightly closed doors of his self-

respect,” writes Theodor W. Adorno in *Minima Moralia*. The Hollywood film studio’s conception of music as a second-rate art form, in which the composer is viewed as an arranger and the musician as a technician, signifies this loss—and its redemption, too. How to survive is a question that affected both biography and oeuvre.

The particular appeal of the present volume, however, is that it goes beyond the relations between exile, film, and music to examine the context of life and work in the culture of twentieth century mass media, dealing not only with film but also with radio and recordings. The authors present a multi-faceted picture of exiled composers developing and placing their works in a modern and dynamic media landscape. And at times it is surprising to find how the theses and arguments of the (in modern parlance) “media” critic Frank Warschauer, who played a decisive role in this discussion during the Weimar Republic, emerge and reassert their validity.

Two informative and theoretically well-founded essays—by Nils Grosch (on Eisler, Weill and composing for the mass media in exile) and Kim H. Kowalke (on Kurt Weill, modernism, and popular culture)—provide a frame for the other contributions, which deal with Hanns Eisler, Ernst Krenek, Arthur Lourié, Klaus Pringsheim, Joseph Schillinger, Miklós Rózsa, Franz Waxman, and Kurt Weill. These other articles are close-ups, generally convincing in their microscopic investigation, but sometimes suffering from the use of unnecessarily arcane technical language—perhaps a price the reader has to pay when tackling the proceedings of a scholarly conference. Nevertheless, all of the papers are useful and informative.

For example, Claudia Maurer Zenck’s contribution traces Ernst Krenek’s experience in radio broadcasting between 1925 and 1945, and Elmar Juchem’s essay treats Weill’s forays into the art of radio in the United States (complemented by Pascal Huynh’s report on Weill’s activities in the French media landscape). The convergence and divergence of views about how artistic demands and ideals can hold their own, be accommodated, and even be implemented profitably in a musical culture designed for mass reception make for intriguing reading. The papers on Ernst Toch (by Anja Oechsler) and on Arthur Lourié and Joseph Schillinger (by Detlef Gojowy) take a more biographical approach, whereas Erina Hayasaki presents a factual study of Klaus Pringsheim’s *Jasager* project in Tokyo (1932) and of other Japanese Weill premieres in the thirties; the papers on Waxman (by Joachim Lucchesi) and Miklós Rózsa (by Matthias Wiegandt) tend to be guided by musical aesthetics. In his essay on Hanns Eisler, Jürgen Schebera succeeds in convincingly combining these discursive approaches and in raising a general question relevant to the other contributions too: How were these composers’ theoretical ideas and practical experiences accepted at the time, and how did they influence future directions?

Despite the limits to which this volume is subject, the difficulties brought on by exile become apparent. It is necessary and commendable that all of the authors insist that judgment must presuppose information, and they succeed in providing much of the necessary data. But still the larger, crucial question remains: exactly *how* did emigrants (and the composers in question) survive their period in exile?

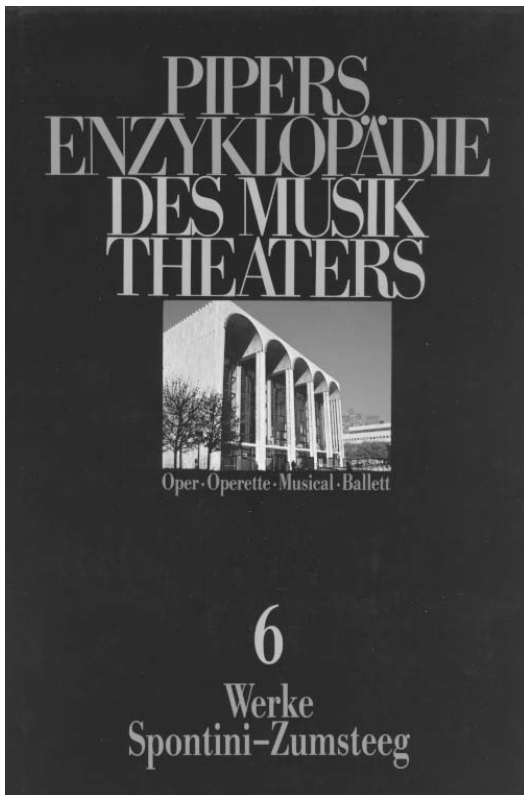
Wolfgang Jacobsen
Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin

Books

Pipers Enzyklopädie des Musiktheaters, Band 6

A review of the Kurt Weill work entries

München: Piper Verlag, 1997.
ISBN 3-492-02421-1



Piper Verlag has now reached volume six—the “W” volume—in its serial publication of the *Pipers Enzyklopädie des Musiktheaters*. Just in time for preparations leading up to the celebration in 2000 of the hundredth anniversary of Kurt Weill’s birth, this volume offers a representation of the composer’s musical theater work with entries on fifteen of his pieces. Each entry adheres to a strict format that opens with relevant data concerning performance history and performing forces and follows with sections on genesis, plot, and influence as well as further commentary. This organization ensures, at least for the works selected for inclusion, a valuable addition, expansion, and updating in the German language of the sort of information to be found previously in David Drew’s *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*.

For most of the entries the editors have succeeded in finding authors who are able to provide not only a summary of current scholarship and an overview of sources but also a point of entry for those unfamiliar with the works. In many respects, the articles offer a fund of new knowledge and source material that is not easily obtainable elsewhere. This applies especially to the contributions by Jürgen Schebera (*Der Protagonist*, *Der Zar läßt sich photogra-*

phieren, *Der Silbersee*, and *Der Jasager*), Rainer Franke (*Royal Palace*), David Farneth (*Der Weg der Verheißung*), Bruce McClung (*Lady in the Dark*), Richard Weihe (*One Touch of Venus*), and Stephen Hinton (*Down in the Valley*, *Street Scene*).

Josef Heinzelmann contributes an appealing and well-organized article on *Der Kuhhandel*. Without neglecting important details, he uses the allotted space for an economical narration of the plot and a comprehensible account of the work’s complicated genesis and development. His description of Weill’s score is so vivid as to paint a tangible musical picture. The essential quality of Heinzelmann’s writing stems from his conviction, stated firmly but unpretentiously, that *Kuhhandel* “is one of Weill’s best stage works and the best operetta written in this century.” This sort of engagement would have been welcome in the work of the other authors.

Rainer Franke’s articles about *Mahagonny Songspiel* and *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, although possessed of good ideas concerning the works’ critical interpretation, add up to little more than unstructured collections of details about their genesis and performance history. Just as in Matthias Spohr’s piece on *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Franke’s over-emphasis on plot leaves little room for consideration of the musico-historical innovations of the works in question, let alone any insights from which a reader might deduce any ideas relevant for staging them. And surely the tiresome, barely annotated list of the many productions of *Dreigroschenoper* and *Aufstieg* cannot be the sort of performance history that editor Sieghart Döhring correctly identifies in the Preface to the volume as “simply essential” for the musical theater. The reviews of historical reception appearing earlier in these essays would have been sufficient. A positive counter-example is Stephen Hinton’s clearly sketched reception history of *Street Scene*.

A few factual uncertainties are regrettable in the otherwise successfully woven developmental history of *Lost in the Stars*. Surely it was not the “Theaterdirektor” who caused Weill to replace several of the original musical numbers with more popular ones. [In Germany, the “Theaterdirektor” runs the business operations of the theater.—ed.]

In general it would have been better had the editors avoided corny translations of titles from Weill’s American oeuvre. This was a missed opportunity to consider the question of translation and translatability of these works. In any case, one can only hope that the pieces are never again produced in Germany under the titles given here, such as *Die Dame in Dunkel* and *Drunten im Tal*.

Most incomprehensible is the exclusion from primary consideration of eight of Weill’s works. Only five works from the American period receive entries. *Marie galante* is mentioned only with reference to *Der Kuhhandel*. *Happy End* does not appear at all. At the least, the editors should urgently be advised to consider publishing, in some later supplemental volume, entries for three of the excluded eight: *Die Bürgschaft*, which Weill considered among his best and most important works; *Die sieben Todsünden*, one of his most frequently performed pieces; and *Love Life*, the ingenious and pathbreaking musical from late in his career.

Perhaps that supplement would also be the place to reflect upon Weill’s overall importance for the musical theater and to acknowledge his historic contribution. Only through occasional hints in this volume can one learn that Weill introduced decisive innovations while addressing his works to a public which “naively demands its fun in the theater.”

Performances

Propheten

London

BBC Proms Concert

Royal Albert Hall

26 July 1998

Der Weg der Verheissung, The Road of Promise, was the last score that Kurt Weill composed in Europe, and his last big setting of a German text. It was the work that took him to America. Its wide musical perspectives—as David Drew wrote in a program note for this performance of *Propheten*—“on the one hand afford a means of reviewing every one of his major compositions from *Mahagonny* to *The Seven Deadly Sins* and the Second Symphony, and on the other look forward to his very last stage work for Broadway, *Lost in the Stars*.” Yet through the decades of Weill revival and rediscovery *Der Weg der Verheissung* has remained the mystery piece

—ever since its production, as *The Eternal Road* (in Ludwig Lewisohn’s English translation), closed at the Manhattan Opera House in May 1937. Just six brief or abridged numbers were published in vocal score. Then some newsreel clips of the production were seen and four choruses, piano-accompanied, were heard in Merkin Hall in 1987, providing modern listeners with glimpses, no more, of the forgotten epic. *Propheten*, which had its first performance in the Konzerthaus, Vienna, in May this year, and its second at the BBC Proms, provided more than a glimpse: forty-five minutes of profoundly stirring music, most of it never heard before.

Let me briefly try to put *Propheten* into context. (David Drew will be writing about it at length in forthcoming issues of *Tempo*.) *Der Weg der Verheissung*, a dramatic oratorio or epic pageant, was conceived in 1933 by the Zionist (and entrepreneur) Meyer Weisgal, who that year had presented a pageant of Jewish history at the Chicago World’s Fair. Max Reinhardt was engaged as director, Franz Werfel as librettist, and Weill as composer. Weill was already in Paris exile, Werfel was still in Vienna, and Reinhardt was in his Salzburg castle. The British Zionist Lord Melchett

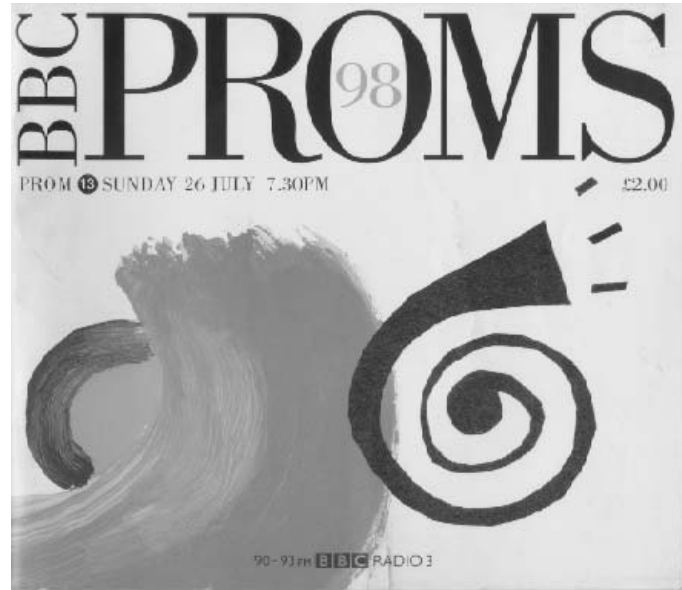
was an early patron, and initially an Albert Hall premiere, followed by an international tour, was mooted. But by August 1934 a New York premiere had been decided on. A Werfel fair-copy manuscript of his *Bibelspiel* is dated 14 September 1934. Two days later, Weill wrote to Lenya, “Musically this Bible thing is becoming very beautiful and very rich. It actually makes me notice how far I’ve developed since *Die Bürgschaft*. It’s just as serious, but in expression much stronger, richer, more varied—Mozartian.” The Mozart of *Die Zauberflöte* was an evident influence; so were the Bach Passions, Handel’s oratorios, perhaps Gounod, surely Mendelssohn, and Mahler’s Eighth Symphony.

But *Der Weg der Verheissung* still had a long path to tread. Werfel resisted cuts in his text. Weill insisted on the integrity of his score. Norman Bel Geddes, the designer who had previously designed Reinhardt’s *The Miracle*, in extravagant and spectacular fashion rebuilt the Manhattan Opera House to hold five tiered stages reaching from a contemporary synagogue to the threshold of Heaven. In doing so, he consumed the orchestra pit, and so Weill’s full-orchestra music was pre-recorded; a small band played some numbers from perches behind the proscenium arch. The premiere announced for December 1935 was abandoned when the company broke up in financial disarray: Werfel returned to Vienna, Reinhardt went to Hollywood to complete his film of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and Weill decided to stay on and try his fortune in America. Resumed in late 1936, *The Eternal Road* played for over four months, winning much praise and losing much money; and it closed unhappily, amid recrimination and threats of lawsuits, having raised not a cent for the Central Fund for the Relief of German Jewry that it had been intended to benefit.

Der Weg der Verheissung originally had four parts: The Patriarchs (Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph), Moses, The Kings (Saul, David, and Solomon), and Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Messiah). Part 3 ends with



Scene in the synagogue from the original production of *The Eternal Road*, New York, 1937.



Solomon's dedication of the new-built Temple and a triumphal setting of Psalm 47, "O clap your hands together, all ye people." But the fourth part, *Propheten*, was dropped before the New York performance (and Weill did not complete its orchestration). A community of Jews has gathered in the synagogue. A Rabbi begins to read from the Scriptures. Beside him is a thirteen-year-old boy (in 1937 the role was played by Sidney Lumet); beside him, turning away, is his father, who has lost his faith.

On a higher level, Isaiah's "Watchman, what of the night?" is answered by Jeremiah's "Woe, Jerusalem, woe!"; Isaiah's "Comfort ye, my people" leads to new lamentations from Jeremiah. There follows "a vision of the decadence of Jerusalem under Zedekiah" (here Weill draws closest to his *Mahagonny* manner). On high, two White Angels and a Dark Angel define the choice that Zedekiah and Jeremiah then debate below. Zedekiah ignores Jeremiah's counsel. The Temple is destroyed, the people fall to the ground, and amid the smoking ruins Rachel is heard mourning for her children. The boy calls on the Messiah, and from the highest level the crowned Messiah (later called the Angel of the End of Time) sings:

Ye people who sleep in grief! No
temporal judgment

Can extinguish Israel and bring
her to naught.

The eternal bond, the promise of
the Lord

Shall endure beyond sun and
stars . . .

Be grateful for the fire: refining,
it drives you

To spread God's love throughout
the world.

The King's Messenger arrives with a diaspora decree. The boy rallies the people, and calls on his estranged father to join them. The close is an apotheosis: all five stages now radiant, thronged on every level with all the characters of the drama, Abraham with Sarah and Isaac; Moses with the Tables of the Law; David with his harp, Solomon with a model of the Temple, Miriam (Lena's role in 1937), Ruth, Isaiah and Jeremiah, the Messiah and the heavenly host on high. Psalm 126, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion," sounds in a big choral setting, a reprise of march music heard earlier.

It is not hard to think of reasons, beyond that of timing, for Reinhardt's omission of *Propheten* in 1937. For the performance of *Propheten* today as an independent work, David Drew has devised a different close. After Rachel's lament, the Messiah's promise, and the royal decree, narrative time is suspended on the contemporary and the scriptural levels: and we hear the finale of Part III: the rebuilding of the Temple, Solomon's dedication, and the jubilant setting of Psalm 47—cut short by a thunderous crash on the doors of the Temple, and darkness except for a guttering candle on the Rabbi's lectern. In a poignant coda the boy, affirming his faith,

and his no longer estranged father join the Rabbi by the Torah-scroll: stirring music of intense, simple dignity and—dare one claim?—"moral beauty." As a prelude to this *Propheten*, there is Weill's 1947 orchestration of the Israeli anthem, *Hatikvah*, Hope; and Drew has placed four brief, charged "fugatos" that Weill composed for *The Eternal Road* as flashpoints amid the spoken exchanges of the start. Noam Sheriff has orchestrated what Weill left unscored.

The London premiere, given to a full hall (also broadcast and later rebroadcast to reach millions), was a great occasion. Mathias Bamert led the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus and the Finchley Children's Music Group in a secure, impassioned performance. David Edwards laid out the drama in the Albert Hall's tiered, ample spaces, and Bernie Davis lit it, to striking effect. A fine cast of singers and actors was led by Kurt Azesberger as the Rabbi (tenor) and Albert Dohmen as Jeremiah, then Solomon (baritone). Others of special note were Janice Watson (Rachel), Neil Jenkins (Isaiah and the Messiah), Stuart McIntyre (the Dark Angel), and Julian Becker (the boy).

The Chemnitz Opera plans a full production of *Der Weg der Verheissung* next June, with performances at the Brooklyn Academy and in Israel to follow.

Andrew Porter
London

Performances

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny

Salzburg, Austria

Salzburg Festival

24 July - 25 August 1998

First, the good news: Never, either in the 1950s when Weill's German works started to re-emerge via the Philips recordings and gripped my imagination as almost no other music has, or—especially—twenty years later when we Europeans got to know his American scores, did I think I'd live to see the day when a giant photograph of the composer would adorn the walls of the Salzburg Festival Theatre, and one of his major works would be performed within. Well, it's happened, and I hope that Herbert von Karajan is spinning in his grave.

That, I fear, is more or less the last of the good news—in a sense Salzburg, or rather the Großes Festspielhaus, won out in the end. I think it beyond the wit of man—even some divine conflation of Fritz Busch, Bertolt Brecht, and Max Reinhardt—to stage *Mahagonny* effectively in that great barn of a theater with its wide-screen proscenium opening and capricious acoustics. Even so, it was dispiriting that this, the third performance (5 August 1998), should have had such minimal theatrical impact, should have ruffled no feathers, should have upset no one. If anyone could, indeed should, be upset, it's the Salzburg Festival audience.

Maybe the very size of the place led conductor Dennis Russell Davies to opt for a leisurely overall tempo and then to set some slow speeds within it, simply to allow the music to be heard. This, combined with clumsy handling by the director Peter Zadek of the announcements (originally intended as titles to be projected before

each scene) and resulting pauses between the scenes—including a disastrous one before the finale—meant that the piece never really got going, let alone kept going. Even so, the contributions of the ever-alert Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra and the concert wing of the State Opera Chorus proved the most satisfying aspect of the evening, and Davies certainly showed sympathetic understanding of the music. When he felt he didn't have to take account of the acoustics and let rip—the uproarious entry of the lumberjacks, the beautifully shaped accompaniments to the “Havana Song,” and Jimmy's aria—Weill spoke; but when Davies took the trial scene at a proper tempo, the theater again won, and voices were muffled. The use of two



As Jim (Jerry Hadley) prepares to die, Jenny (Catherine Malfitano) strides away unmoved. Meanwhile, God arrives on a tricycle. Photo: Salzburger Festspiele/Roswitha Hecke

separate stage bands for the brothel and boxing scenes—money being no object in Salzburg—was a big plus.

The production as a whole seemed to have little connection with either the work or the audience. Richard Peduzzi's decor, all straight lines and cool, admittedly beautiful lighting, presented an antiseptic Hopper-cum-Rockwell America spiced up with a mock *Intolerance* movie set, with little hint of danger or sleaze. Norma Moriceau's costumes were anodyne. The Statue of Liberty made guest appearances. It all conspired, along with unaccountably decorous goings-on in the brothel and placing the execution as far upstage as it

was possible to get, to let the audience off the hook. This was not here and now, not even here and then, just an everyday festival performance to be sat through like an agreeable meal. Brecht, too, must be spinning in his grave.

The three villains were underplayed and, in the case of Trinity Moses, undercast; Gwyneth Jones (Begbick) walked on stage—no truck—a smart businesswoman already, and she stayed that way with nowhere to go, nowhere to have come from. This trio, who should surely be omnipresent and running the show, were too often noticeable by their absence. In general, the work seemed undirected, unfocused, in part due to the theater's size: you couldn't really see what Dale Duesing's Pennybank Bill, perhaps the pivotal character in *Mahagonny* (he stands in for the audience), was conveying in too internalized a performance—probability? Duplicity? And there was little sense of Jim's disillusionment and alienation; both his attempted escape from the City of Nets and proto-formulation of the “Du darfst es” ethos (“Wir brauchen keinen Hurrikan”) were given over to cute little dance routines—alienation of quite the wrong kind.

The Salzburg production, therefore, provided a less than an ideal setting for some really good singing. The pleasure of hearing Jenny sung, and very beautifully sung, by a true lyric soprano, Catherine Malfitano, was immense. Jerry Hadley, too, was ideally cast as Jim, his tenor bright, firm, and unstrained. Roy Cornelius Smith was a vocally formidable Fatty—if only he could have also sung Jakob Schmidt in place of the over-the-hill character tenor cast in the role. Harry Peeters's Alaska Wolf Joe could have floored Trinity Moses both vocally and dramatically in less than a round in that boxing ring. At least the powers that be recognized that Weill has to be *sung* just as carefully as Mozart or Handel; would that they had realized he has to be staged as well.

Rodney Milnes
London

Performances

Go for Kurt Weill concerts

Salzburg Festival, Austria

Wiener Virtuosen, 9 August 1998

Klangforum Wien, 14 August 1998

Who would have guessed that Kurt Weill's music would be welcome at the venerable Salzburg Festival, a place still closely identified with diamond tiaras and Herbert von Karajan, in spite of a new artistic vision conceived by Gerard Mortier during the last several seasons. The great disappointment of this summer's festival—Peter Zadek's production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*—was somewhat lessened by the inclusion of four programs of Weill's concert music presented under the title "Go for Kurt Weill," which featured performers such as Heinz Karl Gruber and Marianne Faithfull—not at all the kind of performers one expects at Salzburg. This review covers the first two of the four concerts.

The opening night of the series on 9 August featured Weill's Violin Concerto, with Haydn's *Feldparthie* and Mozart's *Gran partita*—both attractive but comparatively innocuous pieces—providing rather unusual company. Weill's gripping concerto, the centerpiece, emerged as the evening's highlight, its forceful virtuosity and tonal intensity enhanced by the eighteenth century music that surrounded it. Regrettably, the Wiener Virtuosen, a chamber ensemble composed of members of the Vienna Philharmonic, appeared to have put little effort into preparing Weill's score. This piece requires much more intensive rehearsal than the old Viennese standards. The orchestra, by playing mechanically and indifferently, seemed to abandon the soloist for long stretches at a time. One expected better communication among the musicians, and between the orchestra and conductor Martin Turnovsky. The consequences were a lack of precision in the wind solos and inadequate exploitation of the wealth of instrumental color inherent in this score. Johanna Madroszkiewicz, an unusually talented violinist, was left to her own devices to render the constantly changing, expressionistic tonalities and to

capture the qualities of virtuosity and utter intensity which the work undoubtedly possesses. She succeeded splendidly and in the process won the Salzburg audience over to Weill.

In the second concert, Heinz Karl Gruber juxtaposed some of Weill's most daring songs with some of Eisler's most militant ones in his program on 14 August with the Klangforum Wien under the direction of Sylvain Cambreling. The concert was not what the Salzburg audience had bargained for. Gruber's provocative fierceness never diminished throughout the evening, as he bawled Weill's "Muschel von Margate," "Berlin im Licht," and ballads and theater songs by Eisler, into the microphone. His style in these numbers simply could not have been improved upon. At the same time, he allowed the orchestra to explore lovely colors (especially in the Eisler songs) in places where nuances have rarely been heard before. Gruber's voice lies somewhere between nasal singing and brutal bellowing, and it worked surprisingly well even for Weill's somber ballad, *Vom Tod im Wald*. Especially here, the microphone allowed him to explore a whole spectrum of expressive possibilities, and the result did a great deal for Weill's setting of Brecht's text.

Clearly Gruber's singing style is influenced by Ernst Busch. However, while Busch was an actor, Gruber prefers to remain strictly a "chansonnier"; his only reason for being on stage is to sing. This non-acting approach becomes a hindrance when he ventures into Weill's theater music from *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Happy End*. I would have preferred that he had restricted his selections to the type of non-dramatic songs that are better suited to his presentational style. In any case, the Klangforum Wien provided the high point of the evening. They played Eisler's second and third *Orchestral Suites* so energetically that it was a miracle the musicians and the conductor did not fall over from exhaustion at the end. This exhilarating performance took the audience's breath away.

Perhaps a few of the well-dressed members of the audience felt the blunt force and harsh provocation in lines like "Prolet, kämpfe!" ["Worker, fight!"] or in the final words of the concert coming from Weill's "Das Lied von der harten Nuß" ["Song of the Hard Nut"]—"... nur keine Noblesse,



Logo from program cover of 1998 Salzburg Festival.

immer eine in die Fresse!" ["Don't give me that high-mindedness, just hit me in the mug"]. If so, they seemed to ignore it and fell under the spell of Weill's and Eisler's music, rewarding the performers with a standing ovation.

With the other two concerts including Symphony No. 2 (played by the Radio Symphoniorchester Wien conducted by Dennis Russell Davies), *Die sieben Todsünden* (sung by Marianne Faithfull and the Hudson Shad), and a song recital by soprano Catherine Malfitano, a representative sampling of Weill's concert music has now been properly introduced in Salzburg. This provocative beginning proved the festival audience ready to embrace Weill with enthusiasm. One can only hope for better quality stage productions in the coming years.

**Nils Grosch
Freiburg**

Performances

Mahagonny Songspiel

Karlsruhe, Germany

Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe

Premiere: 27 May 1998 (in repertory 1998-99)

In the May 1927 issue of *Anbruch* that focused on the theme “Music on the Rhine,” Heinrich Burkard praised the city of Baden-Baden for its generosity and artistic foresight. With the founding of the “Deutsche Kammermusik Baden-Baden” Festival, the spirit of Donaueschingen Musiktage (Donaueschingen Music Days) had found a home for new music in the spa located at the edge of the Black Forest. But the situation in Karlsruhe—only forty kilometers away from Baden-Baden—was quite different. Hans Schorn wrote that the town had a “good bourgeois theater,” which could “ill afford experiment,” because seasonal programs “must be selected according to the taste of middle-income people and civil servants.”

Now circumstances have reversed. Delusions of grandeur have beset Baden-Baden. Its new opera house—the second largest in Europe, completed this year at a cost of 120 million Marks—engages guest ensembles for exorbitant fees, only to present conservative repertoire to half-empty halls. In contrast, Karlsruhe’s Badisches Staatstheater displays a true grit for pre-

senting “unusual” repertoire. Last year, its newly appointed director, Pavel Fieber, offered several operatic rarities, among them Krenek’s *Jonny spielt auf*. This year, the complete Baden-Baden chamber opera program of 1927—which included the sensational premiere of Weill’s *Mahagonny Songspiel*—was revived (after a seventy-one year lapse) in the small hall of the Badisches Staatstheater, not in Baden-Baden.

The 1927 program sequence did not strive for an overall structure. Ernst Toch’s *Prinzessin auf der Erbse* (*Princess and the Pea*) was followed by Darius Milhaud’s *L’enlèvement d’Europe* (*The Abduction of Europe*), Weill’s *Mahagonny Songspiel* and finally, Paul Hindemith’s *Hin und zurück* (*There and Back*). Rudolf Zoellner, in his 1927 review for *Der deutsche Rundfunk*, stated: “The four composers have this in common: a matter-of-fact yet musicianly attitude.” But what was considered modern or avant-garde in 1927 can no longer shock an audience in 1998. It is therefore understandable that the French stage director Patrick Guinand approached the works from a new vantage point. Guinand used the title “Kunststücke Baden-Baden 1927” and arranged a different sequence for the evening, as if it were some kind of a “collective opera in four acts.” He also added Stravinsky’s *Ragtime* as an overture and—as a rondo-like intermezzo—“Tanz des Dämons” from Hindemith’s concert suite, *Der Dämon* (1923).

Designer Claude Santerre created a unit set of three white walls. An opening upstage right accommodated the singers’ entrances and exits. An opening on the left, adorned by a red curtain, was reserved for special entrances by magician Pius Maria Cüppers: his magic tricks provided artistic diversion during the intervals between scenes. Cüppers, who won the championship as a comic magician at the Dresden World Congress of Magicians in 1997, handled the few stage props in the most astonishing ways. Costume designer Pierre Albert dressed the men throughout in ordinary suits; the ladies appeared in various costumes, some long, elegant and distinguished, others

tight and sexy. Karlsruhe’s second Kapellmeister Wolf-Michael Storz conducted.

Since the artistic team was intent on creating a sense of unity, the profile of the individual works suffered. Hindemith’s *Hin und zurück*—now the opening piece—was stripped of its commonplace setting, and with that went its provocative and, at times, parodistic contrast between the detailed realism of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) and operatic stylization. Fortunately, the scene in which the action is reversed (as in the rolling back of a film) was played with comic charm. Jolanta Kuznik, in the role of Helen, carried her performance with vocal ease and careful acting. In *L’enlèvement d’Europe*, the second piece of the evening, the exaggerated stylization of the stage proved even more disturbing. The laconic wit of the piece was lost, and even the orchestral playing seemed pale compared to the performance of the Hindemith piece.

In contrast, the orchestra’s reading of Toch’s *Prinzessin auf der Erbse* was full of color and revealed the composer’s musical character. Among the four operas, the plot of *Prinzessin* is surely the most conventional, but Toch wrote it with a secure hand and a sharp instinct for the stage. The actors fully enjoyed the comic potential of the story, especially Douglas Nasrawi, who played the childish prince with slapstick brilliance. The well-paced forty-minute work went by quickly.

Unfortunately, the director seemed to have run out of ideas by the finale of the evening, *Mahagonny Songspiel*. Of the four operas, *Mahagonny* broke most radically from the tradition and institution of opera. While Weill’s song style coalesced with Brecht’s texts and Caspar Neher’s projections to communicate a startling, socially critical message in 1927, the stiff singing, forced acting, clichéd props, miserable articulation, and poor balance made the Karlsruhe revival almost sterile. Only the humming scene (at the end of No. 4 in the full score) was really gripping. Otherwise, even Cüppers’s magic tricks failed to prevent boredom—surprising, because the city of Mahagonny could not be more topical and current as a prototype of everything the German sociologist Gerhard Schulze characterizes as *Erlebnisgesellschaft* (society that shares life experiences), and what Chancellor Helmut Kohl refers to “*Deutschland als kollektiver Freizeitpark*” (Germany as communal amusement park).



The full cast of *Mahagonny*, along with magician Pius Cüppers, in a tableau. Photo: Bettina Strauss

Andreas Hauff
Mainz

Recordings

Symphony No. 2

Concerto for Violin and Wind Instruments

Suite from Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny

(arr. Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg)

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

Frank Peter Zimmermann, violin

Mariss Jansons, conductor

EMI Classics 724355657329



This superb recording unites the well-known Concerto for Violin and Wind Instruments with two compositions that are less familiar. With six releases currently listed in Schwann, the Concerto remains one of Weill's most frequently recorded works. The Second Symphony, on the other hand, has not fared as well on CD and the Suite from *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* has never been recorded at all. The Suite was adapted from the opera in late 1950s by Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg, best known for conducting the series of landmark Weill recordings Lenya made for Columbia (now Sony) Records. It is similar stylistically to Weill's *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* and, as in that more familiar piece, the seven selections in the *Mahagonny* suite are arranged according to their order in the original opera. The length of each selection, instrumentation, and doubling of vocal parts follow the composer's example.

These are truly outstanding performances. The musicians seem genuinely inspired by the pieces and play with an ideal combination of passion and technical finesse. These readings crackle with energy, the orchestra plays with superb ensemble and rhythmic incision, though the effect is never mechanical or rushed, and the lyricism of the slow movements is never compromised. The solo playing of the Berlin Philharmonic members (the trumpet, clarinet, cello, and trombone especial-

ly) could not be better. This is particularly evident in the way they are able to communicate the missing verbal component in the Suite.

Mariss Jansons's interpretation of these pieces is especially compelling. I was most impressed by his ability, reminiscent of Bruno Walter, to capture the dramatic mood of individual sections without losing sight of overall structure. He accomplishes this in part through a wonderful sense of dynamic shading. Like Furtwängler, Jansons has a marvelous talent for building crescendos over long periods. Equally impressive is his ability to draw long phrases from the orchestra. His thoughtful use of tempo modification and *Luftpausen* also promotes the sense of drama. His choice of tempos, as well as their coordination from section to section, was ideal. The conductor also deserves credit for observing Weill's legato and staccato markings, which are often overlooked or indistinct in performances of these works. Finally, a subtle analytical element is evident in these readings; Jansons illuminates a number of structural and thematic connections of which one is often unaware.

Frank Peter Zimmermann, the soloist in the Concerto, is a tasteful violinist. He shares the orchestra's formidable combination of technique and emotion in a symbiotic relationship with ensemble and conductor. These qualities are particularly evident in the cadenza section, the finale, and

the closing passage in which the soloist plays against a backdrop of oscillating woodwind figures. Although the Concerto is conceived for a virtuoso, Zimmermann's reading never seems showy or vulgar. I was very impressed by his wonderful legato phrasing and use of portamento, which is used to good effect in the concerto's *Notturmo* movement.

It is customary in music criticism to laud praise with a consideration of flaws. Others may possess sharper ears and finer sensibilities, but I must confess that I was unable to find anything significant to complain about. I cannot imagine how this recording could fail to satisfy even the most discerning listeners.

Michael von der Linn
Columbia University

Recordings

Lady in the Dark

Original London Cast Recording

Royal National Theatre, London

Mark W. Dorrell, conductor

TER records CDTER 1244

(in the United Kingdom: Jay Productions CDJAY 1278)



For those who missed the Broadway run of *Lady in the Dark* in the early 1940s, there has been precious little in the way of recordings to convey the full work that played 777 performances in the Alvin Theatre and on a ten-city tour.

The original production predated the long-playing record, at a time when complete, original cast recordings were unheard of. The original Liza Elliott (Gertrude Lawrence) and Russell Paxton (Danny Kaye) did, however, record some numbers from the show (for RCA and Columbia, respectively) shortly after the opening on 23 January 1941. Preserved, too, are various radio broadcasts made by Lawrence over the following decade that show her living up to her reputation as an uneven and unpredictable performer. Of her three recordings of “The Saga of Jenny,” she ranges from sounding like Billie Burke, delivering the song in a most straightforward manner with more than evident vocal trouble with high notes, to one broadcast where she rips loose with the musical equivalent of her spontaneous “bump and grind” stage performance on opening night when the preceding “Tchaikovsky” (as delivered by Kaye) threatened to steal the show.

Kaye’s own 1941 recordings include four songs written for the character of Liza, his show-stopping “Tchaikovsky,” and a song penned for Charlie Johnson, “It’s Never Too Late to Mendelssohn” (this last now a historical curiosity as it was cut before the show reached Broadway). Kaye’s renditions are fun, a little campy, a little jazzy, but only “Tchaikovsky” retains a feeling of authenticity.

Hollywood’s 1944 attempt at a film of the musical starring Ginger Rogers fails utterly as a representation of the show. It omits virtually all of Weill’s music and Ira Gershwin’s lyrics and lacks even a complete rendition of “My Ship.”

On 25 September 1954, Oldsmobile sponsored a then-rare color telecast of a ninety-minute, bowdlerized version of the show with orchestrations by Irwin Kostal. Ann Sothern starred, with Carleton Carpenter and James Daly as Paxton and Charley Johnson respectively. The production was preserved on Kinescope (it can be seen at the Museum of Television and Radio in New York) and its soundtrack was recently transferred to CD, along with nine of Lawrence’s performances (AEI-CD 041). Though this version makes drastic cuts, omitting several numbers entirely, it does include three numbers (“Hobo Dance,” “Wedding Dream Ballet,” and “Two-Step”) which were not present in the original production. It also includes a contrived “Intro-dution” and several transition sequences based on Weill’s music. “This Is New” is given to Liza, a practice held over from the original Broadway run when it was discovered that the hunk found to play Randy Curtis, Victor Mature, could not sing. Of interest is the inclusion of the show’s finale, the duet version of “My Ship” between Liza and Charley suggested in the Random House first edition of the complete Moss Hart book but omitted from the piano-vocal score. This duet can be heard only on one other recording, a broadcast by Gertrude Lawrence and MacDonald Carey. Sothern makes a case for the show, but ultimately seems over-

matched by the versatility and vocal technique demanded by the role of Liza Elliott. The inclusion of some dialogue proves interesting but unnecessary. The result is forty-four minutes of tidbits.

In 1963, Columbia Records assembled a distinguished cast and prepared what was to be (and until now had remained) the only studio recording of a basically complete *Lady* with modified versions of Weill’s orchestrations. This long-treasured LP has been lovingly transferred to CD (Sony MHK 62869) along with Kaye’s 1941 recordings. Risë Stevens, one of the first American opera singers to reach the status of “household name,” was cast as Liza. By this time, though, the luster and shading of her instrument had given way to time. Despite her attempts to sing in pop voice, she never once allows us to forget that she is an Opera Singer. Adolph Green is sheer delight as Paxton / Beekman / Ringmaster. But the show is clearly stolen by John Reardon as Randy Curtis, who finally gets to sing “This Is New.” He uncovers the lush eroticism of the song as delivered by a beautiful baritone voice at the height of its powers. Bound by the limits of the LP, the recording features many cuts to accommodate a running time of forty-five minutes, with the Overture and “Dance of the Tumblers” omitted entirely. Still, the orchestra and chorus under Lehman Engel’s able hands finally give us an accurate portrait of the show.

It was against this historical backdrop that London’s Royal National Theatre produced *Lady in the Dark* in 1997, presenting a version of the show that promised the most complete rendering of the score,

lyrics, and book in fifty-six years. Reassembling in the studio, the cast made the recording reviewed here, the first to use Weill's orchestrations unadulterated. The few faults one can find here and there are minor indeed when compared to the enormity of the overall project. Ultimately, the stars are the orchestra and chorus directed by Mark W. Dorrell. John Yap's digital production is a revelation, allowing many details and layers of Weill's original orchestration to emerge. To quote Randy Curtis, "This Is New."

Listening to this CD, one realizes that until now we have been provided only glimpses of the full glory of *Lady in the Dark*. Every note of the authorized piano-vocal score is here, and then some. The recording clocks in at twenty-six minutes longer than any other, a great deal of that time taken up by previously unrecorded music. All repeats are taken and all lines are sung and spoken by the characters for whom they were intended. The addition of some underscored dialogue gives us a much better sense of the book, ranging from its sophisticated, Eve Arden-like wit (though I do miss the exchange between Liza and her secretary: "Skylight Room?" "Yes, Sacheverel and I are reviving the cakewalk") to the heavier implications of the drama. On occasion, book passages are incorporated into Liza's dreams.

"One Life to Live" is shared, as written, by Liza and Beekman. Curiously, the lines ending "Lead me, speed me straight to the bar," although present in the score, are omitted in favor of a short dance break. (I can find them sung only on Teresa Stratas's second volume of Weill songs [Nonesuch 9 79131-2].) "This Is New" is expanded from the versions presented in both the published book and score, with a stanza by Randy, a stanza by Liza, a dance break, and reprise of the second half of the second stanza by Randy. "The Saga of Jenny" is presented complete with additional choral punctuations at the end of each verse.

The Overture appears in its proper place at the beginning of Act II. Previously unrecorded, both it and the Exit Music are pretty standard for their day, although the "boogie-woogie" piano rendition of "The Saga of Jenny" is an unexpected delight. Another piece of instrumental music, "The Dance of the Tumblers," was previously issued on a now out-of-print Polydor CD (839 727-2) recorded by MGM's in-house symphonic forces. Here, one could wish for just a bit more freedom from Mr. Dorrell; perhaps some *rubati* would make

this raucous music sound a bit less polite.

Paul Shelley, Ashleigh Sendin, and Adrian Dunbar comport themselves nicely in the small but important sung roles of Kendall Nesbitt / Pierre, Miss Foste / Sutton, and Charlie Johnson / A Marine, retaining some of the spontaneity of live performances. Although James Dreyfus took home an Olivier Award (Best Supporting Performance in a Musical) for his Russell Paxton/Beekman/Ringmaster, this recording fails to demonstrate the reason for such an accolade. Perhaps his spoken role as Paxton overshadowed his mannered, undersung, and strident Beekman/Ringmaster. Steven Edward Moore's light, lyric baritone does more than justice to "This Is New," even though he lacks John Reardon's operatic heft.

Liza Elliott's musical role makes it easy to forget that she is a woman on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The spoken text unflinchingly addresses the psychological depths which drove this woman to utter failure in her personal life. Liza Elliott is a sham, a façade. Musically, however, her identity crisis is apparent only in the brief, disastrous endings to each of her three main dreams. One can think of her as a variation on Hofmannsthal's Marschallin, a fortyish woman obsessed with aging, an emotionally distant husband, and a dream lover who can never be hers. Maria Friedman brings an underlying sense of vulnerability to the role, a component often missing in previous Lizas. Possessing a much lighter and lyrical voice than those of Lawrence, Sothorn, or Stevens, Friedman can still bitch and belt with the best of them, but she never allows us to forget that this lady is, indeed, in the dark. One could wish for a bit more depth and versatility, or steadier, less strident high notes (her top occasionally resembles that of Ute

Lemper), or less deviation from the notes as written. Still, Friedman totally wins us over, making a meal of "Jenny" (note her pronunciation of the word "Portuguese") and leaving us with a lilting "My Ship" which illuminates Liza's cathartic journey to self-realization.

The CD booklet provides us with some interesting anecdotes, penned by Bruce D. McClung, about the creation of the show and its subsequent recordings and performance practice. Also included are some delicious color photos of Adrienne Lobel's sets and Nicky Gillibrand's costumes for the original Francesca Zambello production. The complete lyrics are most welcome. But missing from this CD (and all others) is a plot synopsis! Nowhere are the complexities of the full story explained. Equally frustrating is the absence (as in all other recordings and even the piano-vocal score) of an explanation of the double and triple casting. While Russell Paxton is listed in the *dramatis personae*, one is left on one's own to figure out who sings Beekman and the Ringmaster. These facts are found only in the stage directions of Moss Hart's book.

Still, fans of the show would be privileged to own this recording. While not without fault, it is simply the best overall realization of the show likely to appear on disc for years.

Larry Lash
New York

In addition to the collector's items served up by Lawrence, Kaye, and those who followed, Dawn Upshaw's swinging, sexy "Saga of Jenny" [Nonesuch 9 79345-2] and Angelina Réaux's tender, committed "My Ship" [Koch 3-7087-2 K2] deserve attention. Both provide tantalizing casting fantasies for a long-overdue, major American revival of Lady-LL.



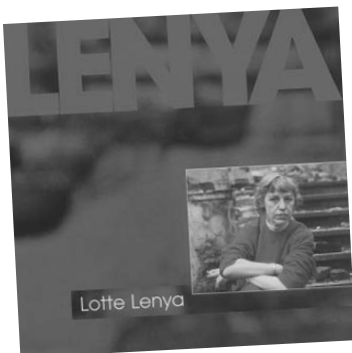
Allure magazine office as represented in the 1997 Royal National Theatre production of *Lady in the Dark*. Photo: Dominic Sweeney

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