

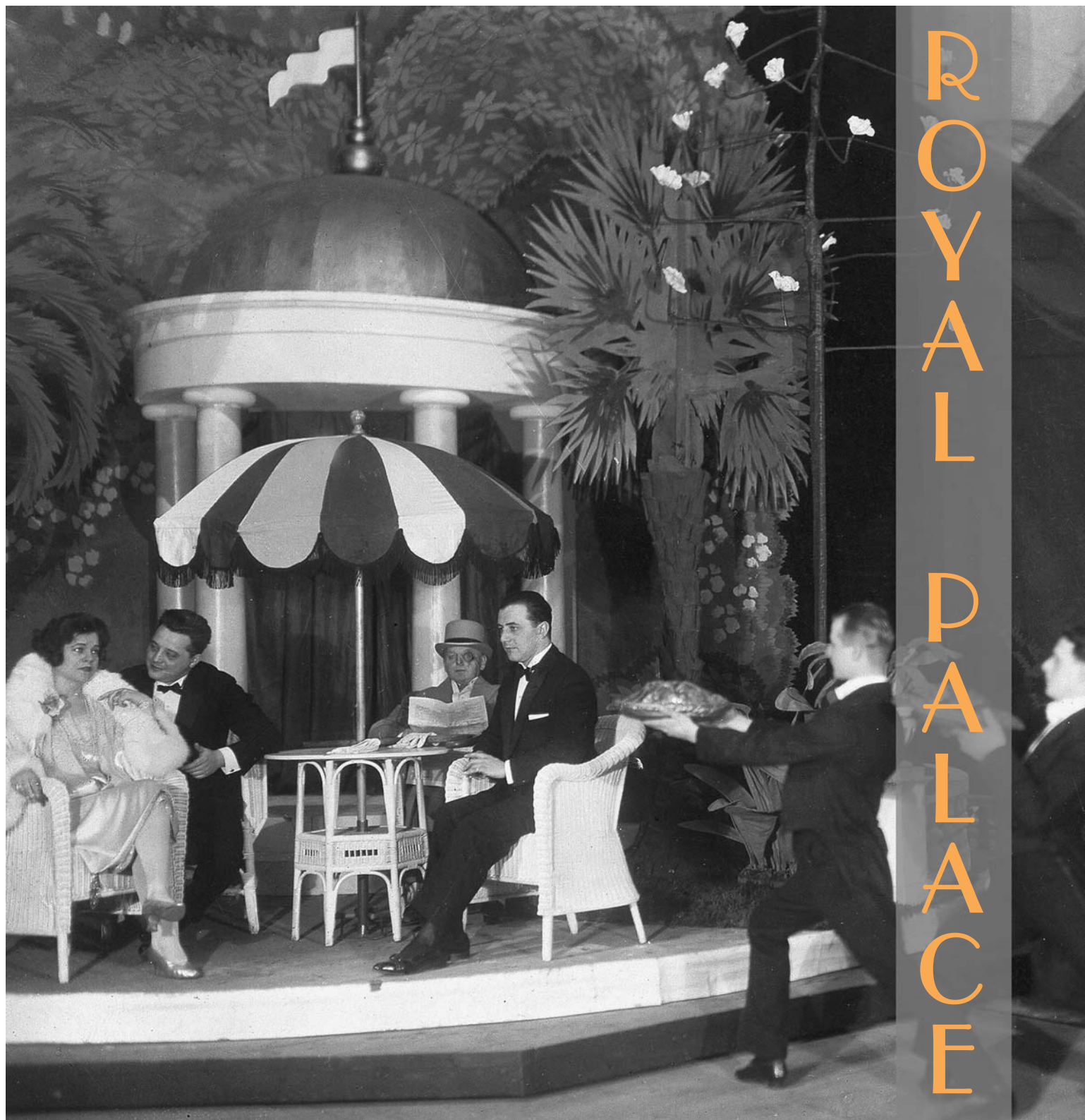
Kurt Weill

Volume 22

Number 1

Spring 2004

Newsletter



ROYAL
PALACE

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A variety of opinions are expressed in the Newsletter; they do not necessarily represent the publisher's official viewpoint. Letters to the editor are welcome.

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Cover: Weill's *Royal Palace* at the Berlin Staatsoper, 1927. Left to right: Delia Reinhardt, Carl Jöken, Leo Schützendorf, Leonhard Kern. Photo: Ullstein Bild

Letters

The previous issue of the Newsletter, vol. 21, no. 2 (Fall 2003), reproduced on page 3 a stamp in Weill's passport that showed his arrival in France on 22 March 1933 after he fled Nazi Germany by car. The stamp is not fully legible and it is unclear where he crossed. There are no additional stamps in the passport documenting a transit through Belgium, Luxembourg, or Switzerland, although an illegal crossing into one of those countries cannot be ruled out. Readers have suggested five different answers to this unresolved question.

I received the Newsletter today and I read your article about the enigmatic stamp. In my opinion the city could be "Luneville."

JEAN LEDUC
Paris

I tried to find an answer to your question "Where did he cross?" The place you are looking for could be "Longeville les Metz" (former German name "Langenheim") or Longeville St. Avold (former German name "Lubeln": <http://www.mairie-longeville-les-st-avold.fr/html/framesetHisto.html>). Both places are close to the German border.

VOLKER KROETZ
Germany

I happened to read the Newsletter with the question "Where did he cross?" (i.e., the French border). I may have an answer. You didn't give Kurt Weill's point of departure. It is not clear that he crossed the German border into France (i.e., Alsace or Lorraine; Longueville is in neither province). But there is a village at the Belgian border called La Longueville, east of Lille and Valenciennes in the département Nord. For various reasons it might have been easier to go through a smaller border station by taking a detour through Belgium or Luxembourg. The village has a web site with a map: mairie-lalongueville59.com.

PIERRE STABENBORDT
France

Hallo from Austria! Regarding the question in the Newsletter about Weill's border crossing to France: How about Longlaville, a small place very close to the border, located between Pétange, Luxembourg and Longwy in France? That would match the visible letters LONG . . . LLE. Maybe the Nehers drove him via Luxembourg?

KLAUS MATZKA
Vienna

Note from the Editor

Even though Weill professed to write for contemporary audiences, not giving "a damn about writing for posterity," this didn't preclude works from gaining acceptance with audiences over time, some even getting a "second life." *Happy End* and *Die sieben Todsünden*, which didn't do well during Weill's lifetime, are now among Weill's most popular compositions. A crucial factor in the renaissance of these works was Lotte Lenya's recordings of the late 1950s. Consequently, those works which were not suitable for Lenya's voice remained relatively obscure.

Of Weill's three one-act operas, *Royal Palace* is probably the least known. There is a simple explanation. The full score and performing materials have been missing since World War II, and the opera couldn't be performed for decades until Gunther Schuller and Noam Sheriff reconstructed Weill's orchestration in 1971. But there are more subtle reasons. At its 1927 premiere at the Berlin Staatsoper, the work was not well received despite a prestigious production team that included Erich Kleiber, Franz Ludwig Hörth, and Panos Aravantinos—the trio that had created the legendary *Wozzeck* premiere in December 1925 (Leo Schützendorf, the original *Wozzeck*, sang the part of the Husband in *Royal Palace*). Conservative critics dismissed the opera altogether, howling at Weill's "atonal" music that incorporated "jazz and revue" elements. But even progressive critics more sympathetic to Weill's music couldn't make much of Yvan Goll's cryptic and confusing libretto. This initial reaction of the critics has been echoed by many biographers of and writers on Weill.

A concert performance of *Royal Palace* in London in 2000 (repeated at the BBC Proms in 2001) turned out to be both a critical and popular success. It showed that an additional seventy years of opera and theater history prove to be a critical advantage when it comes to understanding the opera; today's audiences have a much wider frame of reference than Berlin's operagoers of 1927, suggesting that the opera may have been ahead of its time.

With a fully staged production of the opera scheduled for Bregenz this summer, this issue takes a closer look at *Royal Palace*, reproducing some original documents that relate to the original Berlin production while the feature article focuses on Goll's libretto. One book review looks at a new publication about the Broadway musical, and a review essay about a book on music and Nazism takes on issues of (music) historiography.

Elmar Juchem

Royal Palace: Moving toward Epic (Music) Theater

By Ricarda Wackers

“I had a surreal experience today.” In everyday language we frequently hear such expressions. But what do we really mean by calling something surreal or surrealist? Often, the adjective is used to characterize a situation which is perceived as weird, unreal, dream-like, hard to read, or all of the above. Thus, “surreal” shares a similar fate in today’s language to the word “absurd” or the Kantian term “in itself” (“an sich”). Few people will be aware of the original meaning of such words and phrases now watered down to mere clichés. Looking back at a major avant-garde movement, Philippe Soupault lamented that the label “surrealism,” its strict definition by André Breton notwithstanding, is used “on the spur of the moment for any given work or presentation that shocks common sense.”¹ The label has been attached numerous times to the one-act opera *Royal Palace* and in particular to its librettist, Yvan Goll. Scholarly literature on this work—which is oddly limited to Weill studies only—tells us that Goll supposedly was a surrealist poet in Breton’s circle who wrote a surrealist libretto. Ultimately, the entire opera—meaning words *and* music—is imprinted as “surrealist.” But that explains nothing.

There are, indeed, several intriguing links between Goll and the historical phenomenon of surrealism in France, especially in Paris, though the critical literature not only fails to provide any further clues but frequently offers badly flawed information. And yet, the use of the little word “surrealist” does tell us something about *Royal Palace*. It signals a qualitative judgment, the commonly held view that the opera, and especially its libretto, was a complete gaffe. Some people have deemed the libretto too ludicrous for serious consideration. Others have suggested the text should be revised or replaced. This, they say, would offer a means of “rescuing” Weill’s music, which—and here musicologists generally agree—is considered appealing. The surrealist label for *Royal Palace* has been used only in the vaguest sense of the word to dismiss the opera as “odd,” “cryptic,” or even “non-sense.” Can *Royal Palace* be called a surrealist work in a meaningful (and not pejorative) way?



Drawing of *Royal Palace* set by E. Plachte.

An adolescence between borders

Yvan Goll was born on 29 March 1891 as Isaac Lang in the French town Saint-Dié-des-Vosges near the German Reich’s border. His father, Abraham Lang, was an Alsatian textile manufacturer; his mother, Rebecca Lazard, came from the city of Metz in Lorraine. After his father’s early death, his mother moved with the six-year-old Isaac back to her family in Metz. After the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71 this city no longer belonged to France, but to the German Reich. Alsace and part of Lorraine, the département Moselle, had been annexed and renamed “Reich State Alsace-Lorraine” (“Reichsland Elsass-Lothringen”), with German as the official language. Thus Isaac spoke German in class and learned about German culture, but he spoke French with his family and friends. In 1909, in spite of her French roots, his mother applied for German citizenship, which was quickly granted to both mother and son.

The binational and bilingual upbringing had a strong impact on Goll’s outlook. In 1918, he tellingly remarked about his compatriot, the writer René Schickele: “He is an Alsatian. . . . In order to find peace of mind he had to combine fire and water, the Gallic and the German elements of the world . . . The dualism of his soul explains the nervousness and restlessness which make each of his verses tremble. . . . Two civilizations are brewing inside him, he wants to embrace both hemispheres. The express train of his life speeds nonstop back and forth on the line Berlin-Strasbourg-Paris. Nowhere does he find rest, liberation, or purification.”² Goll might very well have used the same words to characterize himself. Berlin and Paris form the two focal points of his life and literary output until the Nazis’ rise to power (in 1939, he would flee to the U.S.). Thus Goll—he adopted this name in 1915 but continued to use pen names, 16 altogether (the spelling of his first name also meanders: Ivan, Iwan, Yvan)—is a European poet in the truest sense of the word.

Fairly early, in 1912 or 1913, Goll discovered German-language expressionism. Of all literary movements, this is the one which would have the most substantial, lasting impact on his writing. When World War I erupted, Goll’s pacifist stance caused him to seek refuge in Switzerland, where he could avoid conscription into the German army’s battle against France. On neutral ground, he joined Swiss, German, and French pacifists, and he continued to work for a European reconciliation, especially between Germany and France, throughout the 1920s. His circle of friends and acquaintances included James Joyce, Romain Rolland, Stefan Zweig, Franz Werfel, Hermann Hesse, and later, in Paris, the painters Fernand Léger, Marc Chagall, and Pablo Picasso. Besides writing poetry, Goll explored major European avant-garde movements in art and literature: Italian futurism, French cubism, Serbo-Croatian zenitism, and primitivism popularized by the dissemination of African art. While Goll rejected the immediate predecessor

of Breton's surrealism, dadaism—whose founder he had met in Zurich in 1917—as too nihilist, Japanese literature and Walt Whitman's poetry served as sources of inspiration. Without adhering to any particular movement, Goll adopted and synthesized individual elements of aesthetic or programmatic positions and literary techniques in the years between 1917 and 1925 (contrary to a widespread myth in the Weill literature, Goll had no connection whatsoever to *Neue Sachlichkeit*). Goll wrote both in French and in German with equal eloquence. Time and again he translated his works from one language into the other, a process during which he recreated his poetry.

Surrealism: The brainchild of Guillaume Apollinaire

Another decisive influence was the work of the writer and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918), in particular his concept of surrealism. Apollinaire had coined the term “sur-réalisme” in 1917 when he applied it to the ballet *Parade*, a collaborative venture of Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie, Pablo Picasso, and Léonide Massine of the Ballets russes. The close collaboration of several artists and the equal interaction of different autonomous arts within a new, independent art form were two features that made *Parade* a surrealist work in Apollinaire's eyes. But *Parade* embodies another important aspect of Apollinaire's concept of surrealism: taken as a whole, it is marked by the use of anti-naturalist, non-mimetic artistic means.

The latter criterion can be seen more prominently in Apollinaire's own play, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, which premiered only a few weeks after *Parade*. It is the first work that features the subtitle “surrealist” (“surréaliste”). Apollinaire explained the term in both preface and prologue. The existing form of theater clings to the principle of “vraisemblance,” i.e., the verisimilitude of naturalism—trying to create the illusion of reality. In contrast, he supports a non-mimetic representation of “nature.” Nature or tangible reality still serves as the artist's point of departure for reflections and source of inspiration, a kind of stockroom. But the artist's imagination is called to create new realities that don't exist yet. At the same time, the artist is supposed to transgress existing orders of space, time, logic, and style. The core of Apollinaire's surrealist concept is epitomized in the formula of the “intelligent use of improbabilities” (“l'usage raisonnable des invraisemblances”).³ This would become a guiding principle for Goll.

Surrealism vs. surrealism

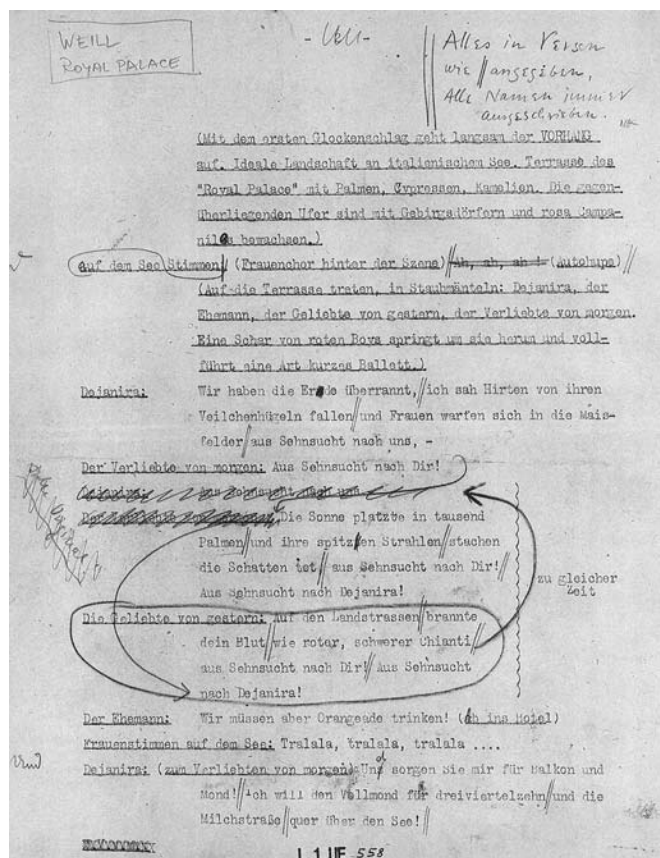
Goll never met Apollinaire in person, but Apollinaire knew André Breton, the towering literary figure almost synonymous with surrealism, much like Salvador Dalí in the visual arts. Breton had an ambivalent relation to Apollinaire. On the one hand, he saw him as a friend and model; on the other, he viewed him as a representative of an older generation to be distrusted. Similarly, Apollinaire was skeptical about some of the ideas and experiments of Breton and his friends. Despite this generational conflict, six years after Apollinaire's death Breton and his circle adopted the term “surrealism,” in order to give their movement an official name in 1924 (Breton had used the label “surrealist” for all of his own experiments with automatic writing as early as 1919, the year of *Les champs magnétiques*).

Breton appropriated Apollinaire's term for a variety of reasons. One of the primary motivations—despite all their intellectual differences—was probably the surrealists' reverence for Apollinaire. They regarded him as the creator of a fresh poetic language for

modern times. In particular, his poem “Onirocritique” (“Dream Critique”) of 1908, whose style seems to anticipate automatic writing, was considered a prototype for this type of literature. On the other hand, they ignored the fact that Apollinaire had employed artistic means different from those the surrealists were about to use. Even more: In his early years, Breton proudly emphasized that his understanding of the word “surrealism” had more or less displaced Apollinaire's concept.

It was precisely this issue that ignited the “querelle surréaliste,” the controversy over surrealism, which also involved Goll. The dispute reached its peak in the second half of 1924 when a series of provocative publications became increasingly slanderous (at one point an actual exchange of blows occurred).

Goll had adopted the term “surrealism” with most of the implications established by Apollinaire. Beginning in 1918, many of Goll's early essays and “poetologic” writings point out the concept's two major aspects: art needs to maintain an unconditional relation to tangible reality; but this reality should not be represented in mimetic form. Following Apollinaire, Goll's understanding of surrealism is primarily that an autonomous artistic Subject establishes its own set of rules for the creation of a work, regardless of pragmatic considerations and verisimilitude. Like a creating god, the Subject combines elements of vastly different areas of our world in an entirely new fashion, suspending common structures of space, time, plot, and relationship. In this concept the artist retains his traditional role as creator. The concluding sentence of Goll's “Manifeste du surréalisme,” published at the height of his contro-



The first page of the typescript that served as the printer's copy for Universal Edition's publication of the libretto. Original held by Sibley Music Library, Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY.

versy with Breton in October 1924, reads: “Our surrealism rediscovers nature . . . and moves . . . toward a construction, toward a will.”⁴ When we look at Breton’s famous 1924 definition of surrealism, it becomes clear why Goll strongly rejected it. According to Breton, surrealism was a “psychic automatism in its pure state,” “dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern”—a definition that followed the Freudian concept of the unconscious.⁵ This, along with Breton’s attempt to appropriate Apollinaire’s surrealism, must have appalled Goll.

Stylistic devices of Goll’s surrealism

By 1920, Goll was already applying Apollinaire’s concept of surrealism, especially to drama. He dismissed the traditional, illusionist theater of the Aristotelian type—psychological and naturalist drama. The stage would no longer depict and recreate reality but function as a kind of magnifying glass. For this purpose, it does not present human characters but de-individualized types, figures which show no development. Accordingly, the plot is non-linear, creating an open form of drama. The principle of montage replaces traditional drama’s logical connections. In addition, Goll employs elements that distort reality, as when he allows a character to split into several versions or when dead characters reappear. These techniques purposefully counter the audience’s tendency to identify with the stage action and its characters—a principle later pursued by Brecht (albeit with different means). Goll envisioned a kind of *Totaltheater* which he hoped to achieve with his satirical play, *Methusalem oder Der ewige Bürger* (*Methusalem: The Eternal Bourgeois*), written 1918–19, published in 1922, and premiered in Berlin in 1924. This play especially is often cited as a prototype of Gollian surrealism. Many of its devices can be found a few years later in the libretto for *Royal Palace*.

Royal Palace: Goll’s contribution

A note by Goll, sent to a friend after the opera’s premiere in March 1927, mentions surrealism in connection with *Royal Palace*: “The librettist . . . was fiercely attacked by the critics for his surrealism, which is still hard for Berlin to digest.”⁶ This remark is noteworthy, for it shows that Goll—at least among friends—still laid claim to the term “surrealism” in *his* sense, seemingly oblivious to the fact that the “querelle surréaliste” had occurred three years earlier and, as a result, by 1927 the term was generally associated with Breton’s brand, not only in Paris but also in Berlin. Could it be that Goll



Set of the original production of *Royal Palace* by Panos Aravantinos, Berlin Staatsoper, 1927.

viewed the collaboration with Weill as a last chance to rescue the cause of Apollinaire’s surrealism, pushing Breton’s movement to the side? Does *Royal Palace* perhaps even represent a stab at creating an ideal type of Apollinaire-inspired surrealist art?

There is more than one clue that supports such a hypothesis. The libretto shows features which have a clear connection to Goll’s concept of surrealism. We have an unrealistic plot (*Royal Palace* does show a clear connection to reality but does not represent it mimetically), there is a simultaneity of different spaces and time levels (the three gifts of the three suitors), and the characters appear as types, not individuals (Husband, Yesterday’s Lover, Tomorrow’s Admirer). Even more crucial is the use of language. The libretto alternates widely different styles of speech that shift between two extremes: a language still soaked in expressionism, replete with metaphors, and matter-of-fact, colloquial speech. Collisions of these levels are intended—as is the often illogical course of the dialogue: “TOMORROW’S ADMIRER: The sun burst into a thousand palm trees / And its pointed rays / Stabbed the shadows to death / Out of longing for you! / Out of longing for Dejanira!—THE HUSBAND: But we have to drink orangeade!”⁷ Such devices constantly undermine identification with the story and its characters.

The hypothesis is also backed by the form that Goll chooses: opera. For only a multimedia stage work can realize the synthesis of the arts that Apollinaire’s concept of surrealism calls for. Goll adheres to this concept and goes beyond it; *Royal Palace* even surpasses the ballet *Parade*. While both works feature music, dance, an elaborate set, and lavish costumes, the Weill/Goll collaboration also includes words, both spoken and sung, and film. And there are additional collaborators: the painter and set designer, Panos Aravantinos, the dancer and choreographer, Max Terpis, and the stage (and film) director, Franz Ludwig Höörth. Because opera by its nature employs such combinations of different artistic forces, this may seem trivial. The situation changes, however, when one considers that Goll initially planned to include Marc Chagall—whom he had once called Apollinaire’s true heir and successor—in the collaboration, along with the veterans of *Parade*, Serge Diaghilev and the Ballets russes.

These plans came to naught, and the performance of the one-act opera itself could hardly be called an overwhelming success. The libretto received the biggest share of the blame, as it still generally does today. The Berlin flop meant another blow to Goll in his attempt to champion the cause of Apollinairian surrealism. As a result, Goll quit his battle for this “-ism,” realizing that his hopes for artistic and sociological improvements had failed. Little by little, he withdrew from the theater and dedicated his creative energy to novels and especially to poetry, for which he is known and appreciated to this day.

Royal Palace: A “surrealist” opera?

The music of *Royal Palace* enjoys a reputation for high quality, and many scholars have pointed out that the opera represents an important step in Weill’s compositional development—a notion that is supported by Weill’s famous letter to his parents from October 1925, in which he describes the compositional process as a shift toward simpler musical language. *Royal Palace*, indeed, shows the conscious and calculated use of allusions to popular music and the actual integration of dances such as fox-trot and tango take a critical role. These forms of entertainment music, firmly rooted in tonality, become an integral part of the score. But Weill avoids a

simple imitation of the popular idioms. Rather, he integrates those elements into a language of expanded tonality, which characterizes the entire opera, and employs them at crucial moments of the stage action, assigning them a dramatic function, e.g., the concluding tango. The influence of popular music has been pointed out repeatedly, as has the impact of revue, the most popular musico-dramatic entertainment form of the 1920s. Weill himself (and the program book) called *Royal Palace* a “tragic revue.” Revue affects the form of *Royal Palace*. The action stops, for instance, as the three suitors’ gifts are represented by three musical inserts placed one after another: a film sequence, a ballet, and a pantomime (in true revue fashion, each segment is announced individually).

In light of these superficial features, i.e., the integration of both musical and formal elements of popular entertainment into an operatic score, it becomes clear that *Royal Palace* signals a trend: The opera can be viewed as a milestone on Weill’s path to music based on reception aesthetic (“Wirkungsästhetik”). This is an important finding, but the discussion of *Royal Palace* has not gone any further. The question of whether and how the libretto may have influenced Weill’s composition has simply not been raised and certainly not answered. What is the influence of Goll and his concept of surrealism?

A minor influence was the libretto’s modern setting, which apparently inspired Weill to use elements of popular music of the time. More important are two features of Goll’s text that Weill’s music reflects: pluralism of style and, partly related, a distancing element which is aimed against an uncritical reception of the work. Regarding the pluralism of styles, Weill goes beyond the obvious revue pattern and conceives the opera as an uninterrupted series or even a montage of stylistically diverse musical segments. Unlike the case of the three suitors’ gifts, where the segments are arranged back to back, the sections mostly overlap. The pluralism of styles was already heralded in *Der Protagonist* as a dualism of styles between the pantomimes and the main plot. In *Royal Palace*, it becomes the guiding principle—but not a principle for its own sake. The different levels of style, frequently used for the purpose of parody, lead to a musical mixture that allows for both empathy and distancing. This makes it hard for the listener to identify with the work, spoiling any “culinary” reception; instead it demands the intellect’s participation. A good example would be the concluding tango which accompanies the protagonist’s suicide. Dejanira’s act does not elicit any dramatic reaction in the music. The music doesn’t even take notice. The Husband’s final—spoken—utterance that somebody just drowned rudely awakens the spectator from his indulgence in the tango music and the fantastic set design. The opera ends abruptly, with a question mark. It seems as if Goll and Weill employed these means to make the audience rethink the end or possibly the entire opera.

It appears that the libretto’s features, which are surrealistic in Goll’s sense, influence the opera’s musical structure, where they assume an important function. This raises the question whether the entire opera, and not just the libretto, can be called surrealistic. Strictly speaking, it is possible and legitimate, but if we do so, we always have to add the qualifier “Goll/Apollinaire,” which quickly becomes impractical. Failure to attach this qualifier will simply create confusion because the term is now exclusively linked to Breton, whose surrealism—as we have seen—is of an entirely different kind that has nothing to do with *Royal Palace*. Since the past has shown us many bad examples of unreflective use of the “surrealism” sticker, the term is best avoided.

If we step back from the issue of surrealism, we see that the col-

laboration with Goll carries a larger significance for Weill. Though many publications have dismissed the opera without giving it much thought, some scholars have pointed out that *Royal Palace* marks a turning point in Weill’s career. But these scholars fail to give Goll’s contribution any attention or credit, denying that the libretto and Goll’s literary conceptions had a decisive influence on Weill’s composition. On close inspection, it becomes apparent that Goll, in addition to the distancing elements, used a large variety of stylistic means which belong to the arsenal of epic theater. In *Royal Palace*, Goll achieves a form of theater that—much as Brecht would do soon after—probes, highlights, and reflects on the genre itself. This was something new at the time, and it has to be viewed as part of a larger trend of similar experiments in modern theater. Two years before his collaboration with Brecht, Weill had already found in Goll a proponent of theater that works through epic and defamiliarizing elements. Therefore, it doesn’t seem surprising that elements which correspond to Goll’s concept of surrealism (i.e., the “objective” music that counteracts identification, or the pluralism of styles) also appear in subsequent works by Weill, for instance in *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren*, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Der Silbersee*, or even *Street Scene*.

In the early 1990s, the literary scholar Klaus-Dieter Krabiell diagnosed “disciplinary bigotry” in scholarship on the Brechtian concept of *Lehrstück*. Why? Brecht scholars, according to Krabiell, worked only with a notion of *Lehrstück* cut in half, severed from all musical aspects. The opposite charge could be leveled against the one-sided reception of *Royal Palace*, whose libretto has been ignored and dismissed for decades. This limited view of a multimedia work of art leads to a grossly distorted image of it. Only an interdisciplinary approach can do justice to such collaborative works by devoting equal attention to the different arts involved.

Notes

1. Philippe Soupault, “Ursprünge und Beginn des Surrealismus,” in *Surrealismus in Paris 1919–1939: Ein Lesebuch*, 2nd edition, ed. Karlheinz Barck (Leipzig: Reclam, 1990), 10.

2. Iwan Goll, “René Schickeles Vortragsabend,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 12 March 1918 (2nd evening edition).

3. Guillaume Apollinaire, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias: Drame surréaliste en deux actes et une prologue. Œuvres complètes de Guillaume Apollinaire 3*, ed. Michel Décaudin (Paris: A. Balland et J. Lecat, 1966), 620.

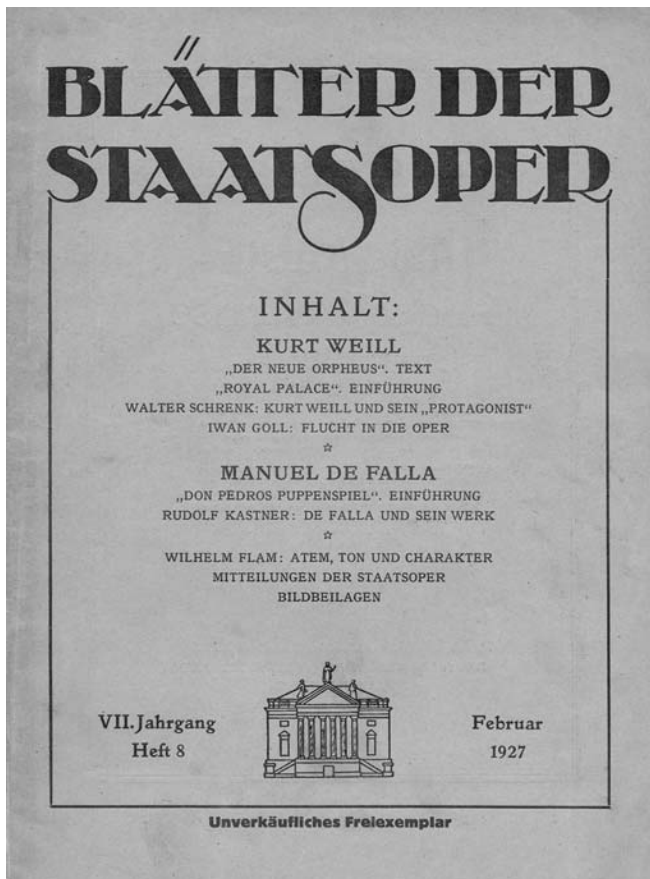
4. Iwan Goll, “Manifeste du surréalisme,” *Surréalisme 1* (October 1924): unpaginated. Goll himself had established the journal and served as editor-in-chief. Only one issue appeared.

5. André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 26.

6. Letter from Yvan Goll to Nino Frank, 7 March 1927. Quoted in: *Paris – Berlin 1900–1933: Übereinstimmungen und Gegensätze Frankreich – Deutschland: Kunst, Architektur, Graphik, Literatur, Industriedesign, Film, Theater, Musik* [Catalogue of the exhibition at the Centre National d’Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, 12 July – 6 November 1978; expanded German edition in 1 vol.] (Munich: Prestel, 1979), 525.

7. Iwan Goll, *Royal Palace: Oper in einem Akt*, Text von Iwan Goll. Musik von Kurt Weill, op. 17 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1926), 6.

Translated from the German. Ricarda Wackers is a journalist and broadcaster at Saarländischer Rundfunk, Saarbrücken. Her interdisciplinary dissertation in musicology and German literature on the collaboration of Goll and Weill has just been published by Waxmann Verlag (*Dialog der Künste: Die Zusammenarbeit von Kurt Weill & Yvan Goll*).



Goll's essay appeared in the Berliner Staatsoper's magazine from February 1927.

Yvan Goll

Escape into Opera

The greatest blessing a poet might wish for is to hear his work turned into music. Because didn't he write it, ultimately, for the sound, this divine x-ray that shines into the soul? Music brings a sisterly warmth to the poet who stands freezing in this cold stone age. He who is forever startled from his dreams under the linden trees of Walther von der Vogelweide, the olive groves of Hölderlin, or the nocturnal bushes of Trakl! For the trees in whose shadows he wanders today are made of sheet metal and concrete. And the material of his longings is of hardly superior quality. Even language set to the beat of our times is brittle, hard, naked, and gray.

The modern poet is a Poverello, walking about only in tatters and remnants of language since he tossed away the brocade gowns and the fake precious stones of meter and rhyme, so it seems that his poverty comes from the inside. He forces himself to strip everything from the poem that is not a direct expression of experience: all thoughts and explanations, ivy on a suffocated statue.

Thus, poetry is nowadays an orphan which stands as a beggar along the grand avenues of the arts. Suddenly Princess Music comes by in a tall calèche, resounding with stars and flowers. Does she perhaps remember that they are of the same blood? She lifts the lonely creature into her car.

Opera is the most accomplished form of poetry.

In no way does it belong to the dramatic arts simply because it is performed on stage. Opera and drama are antipodes. The soul of drama is action, that of opera is rhythm. Drama involves thinking, opera feeling. The matter of drama is logic, that of opera is the dream. Drama is life, opera is fairy tale.

Royal Palace is written expressly for music and for an exceptional artist of our time. It features calculated effects that serve only the music, selflessly renouncing more brilliant ornamentation. A poet was happy to have his visions fitted to the transparent body of music and abstained from beautiful verses where fragrant lightness had to be preserved. Opera relies on singing, not saying; on dreams, not on evidence. Operas are our last fairy tales.

The text for an opera consists of words, not of verses or sentences.

In a worn-out civilized language, the task of the new ideal poet seems to be helping the "word in itself" regain its original meaning. The word, not the sentence structure, as a distinct unit of value! The word is a unit of value in the Negro and Indian poems which have been discovered everywhere over the past decades. Do we know their original power?

But since most people dismiss such attempts at linguistic renewal by European poets as babbling and ineptitude because they cannot recover the ability to think simply, such poetry remains banished. All of a sudden opera comes to our help! Because the original element for the opera composer is not the sentence, the verse, or the dactyl—but the word, the syllable, the vowel. In song, the pure vowel is decisive, not the philosophical thought.

Why not, then, directly create a musical language that may appear arrhythmic when read but redeems itself when sung?

In *Royal Palace* I tried to put the ball of words into the musician's court. Exalting in the freedom that I had, I tore the words from the rock of thoughts in chunks and tossed them over. I provided the musician with musical themes rather than theatrical situations. Ballets to variations: lyrical interpretation of existence. It was supposed to be an expedition to the limits of experience, where the citizen would shout, "I am speechless!" and where the musician had to step in.

And what Kurt Weill has made out of that one word, "Dejanira"! The woman's magic is surpassed by the magic of her name. This word plays the opera's main part. The eternal longing in transience. The unattainable in perfection. The thirst at the most shady springs. Freezing to death in a blazing fire. Dejanira, woman, never understood, never understanding herself. A name full of laughing, hymnic, full of dying vowels. Only music could express them. A world of stars that explodes, spins off into its elements, and disintegrates.

The three types of man: husband, yesterday's lover, tomorrow's admirer: they don't recognize you, soul become flesh. They want to hold and to have what comes into being only by passing away. Nothing that can be reached, longed for, or even dreamed by humans suffices for the spiritual phenomenon woman.

Royal Palace is the fairy tale of life that recognizes itself only in death.



Yvan Goll, ca. 1930.



Franz Ludwig Hörth, ca. 1925. Photo: Binder

Hörth (1883-1934) was born near Aachen; he received a doctorate in Erlangen and worked as an actor and director at theaters in Trier, Munich, and Stuttgart (at one point as Max Reinhardt's assistant). In 1920, he accepted the prestigious position of "Oberspielleiter" (director of production) at Berlin's Staatsoper, where he was promoted to Intendant at the end of 1926. In 1922, he had directed Weill's *Zaubernacht*; his best-known stagings were the premieres of Berg's *Wozzeck* (1925) and Milhaud's *Christophe Colomb* (1930).

News from the Archive

In December 2003, the Weill-Lenya Research Center acquired five letters from Kurt Weill to Franz Ludwig Hörth, director of *Royal Palace*. The letters are dated as follows:

22 December 1926, 1 February 1927 (see translation), 6 April 1927 (see facsimile), 18 October 1927. One letter is undated but probably was written shortly after the premiere of *Royal Palace*.

In this letter, Weill asks Hörth to schedule another performance of *Royal Palace* before Delia Reinhardt's departure on 10 April for an extended stay in London. Weill suggests Göta Ljungberg and Violetta de Strozzi as alternative singers for Dejanira. The sixth performance of *Royal Palace* occurred on 31 March 1927, and one more performance took place, presumably with Reinhardt still singing Dejanira.

Berlin, 1 February 27

Dear, esteemed Professor,

For some time now I've been mulling over an idea which I would like to present to you today as a suggestion. In the fall of 1925, as a study for *Royal Palace*, I wrote a cantata, *Der neue Orpheus*, for soprano, solo violin, and orchestra on a text from Iwan Goll's *Eiffelturm*, and until now I have always been hesitant to arrange the premiere of this work. For the past several months I've been considering using it as a prelude to *Royal Palace*. It would fit exquisitely into the larger picture, it would even deepen and emphasize most effectively the idea of a serious revue which *Royal Palace* embodies. I would imagine that the performer of Dejanira would present the piece, which represents a new genre between aria and chanson, in front of the curtain with small gestures, somewhat in the style of Yvette Guilbert, and that the opera will follow immediately.

I would be very pleased if you and I could discuss this and other urgent questions very soon, and if you could set a date for this purpose.

With best wishes,
Your sincerely devoted,
Kurt Weill

Berlin, 6. 4. 27.

Direktor
Staatsoper
BERLIN
8-APR 1927

Herrn den Professor,
sind Sie nicht böse, wenn ich Sie nochmals bitte,
,Royal Palace', wenn irgend möglich, vor der Abreise von
Frau Reinhardt noch einmal anzusetzen. Da Frau Rein-
hardt ja sehr lang wegbleibt, würden die Aufführungen
eine sehr grosse Unterbrechung erfahren.
Wegen der Übersetzung hatte ich mich reinzeit. Wenn
Rat möglich, an Herrn Generalmusikdirektor. Darüber gewandt, er
hatte mir zugesagt, dass er sich mit der Frage beschäftigen
wolle. Nun wäre es nicht, ob Fr. Johansen geeignet sei.
Vielleicht würde es mit Frau Ljungberg oder de Strozzi? In
jedem Fall wäre es für mich in diesem Moment äußerst
wünschenswert, wenn Sie eine Weiterführung der 'Royal-Palace'-
Vorstellungen ermöglichen könnten.

Mit den herzlichsten Grüßen
immer zu ergeben
Kurt Weill.

Michael Feinstein, one of the top interpreters of the popular American song, is renowned for his live performances on the concert stage and in nightclubs, his recordings of a wide range of repertoire, his film and television appearances, and his songwriting. Feinstein hosted the “Great American Songbook” recently aired on PBS, and he is also a familiar voice on BBC Radio 2, where he has presented several series focusing on the great American songwriters.

Impressions of “Unsung Weill”

By Michael Feinstein

It is rare that a song has a second chance at life. If it isn't used for the purpose for which it was created, its shelf life becomes woefully short, and it quickly mildews and disappears.

This rich collection of *Unsung Weill* is an unusual undertaking (and perhaps undertaking is the perfect word) because the public is rarely privy to lost and cut songs by so distinguished a composer. Several decades ago a volume of *Unpublished Cole Porter* appeared, and while the songs were all of very high quality (especially by today's pitiable standards), critics inevitably compared them to Porter's best known works and decreed that these outcasts were inferior creations. If those same songs had been used when they were first created, they might not have been so quickly dismissed because there are various mitigating circumstances to consider. As an example, when we hear a classic “standard” like “Speak Low,” we are responding to more than just the quality of the song; we are also reliving its resonant sixty-year history. We have become heavily conditioned by the countless recordings and live renditions that carry memories that have cemented the tune into our collective consciousness. If “Speak Low” were published for the first time today, it would most likely be relegated to the “not as good as” category, and therein lies the rub.

These newly published Weill songs must be very carefully presented so listeners will be able to fully appreciate what they are hearing, very much like the proper setting of a precious gemstone. How to present and perform such songs is an interesting challenge for the interpreter. As a performer, when recreating a song I always try fervently to adhere to the intention and spirit of the composer and lyricist, even though my ultimate presentation may be quite different from what has been notated on paper. There may be wholesale changes in tempo, chord structure, and phrasing, yet people refer to me as a purist. The ultimate interpretive decision boils down to stylistic and historical knowledge combined with the public's ability to accept a certain musical idiom and, most importantly, taste.

Weill is fundamentally more challenging to interpret than his pop contemporaries because he was so much more than a popular songwriter. His songs were thoroughly composed in an integrated manner, so that the melody must be presented with

the accompaniment in the exact way he notated it, or it will lose its Weillian essence. In his lifetime, many of his songs were printed two ways, in vocal scores of larger works and as individual songs. The vocal scores contained his songs reproduced to his specifications, but the individual song sheets were often edited for simplicity with the lowest common denominator in mind. After all, the music business was commercial and the publishers were out to create hits. It is generally agreed that songs become popular through the variety of interpretations given to them, thereby insuring their longevity. Depending on one's point of view, the survival of “Mack the Knife” can be seen as a testament to Weill's genius or as a travesty of it.

In examining these unknown songs I'll begin with those written with my mentor, Ira Gershwin, because my first access to unpublished works began in 1977 when, as a twenty-year-old, I was engaged for a six-year apprenticeship. While I was most excited about delving into the mass of George Gershwin melodies that Ira had spent decades stockpiling, I was also ardently interested in his work with Kurt Weill. While Ira had no copies of his unpublished Weill songs, he did have all of his lyric sheets plus a prodigious memory that was spurred by my enthusiastic prodding.

When recalling *Lady in the Dark*, Ira spoke of the joy of collaborating with Kurt and how it was so different from writing with his brother George. George was a master pianist and Kurt was not. There were occasional difficulties because Ira preferred to write lyrics to a melody and Kurt preferred to have the words first. Ira solved this problem by writing many of the lyrics to his own “dummy” tunes that he never revealed to Kurt, except for “Girl of the Moment,” which contains an idea of Ira's fleshed out by Kurt. Of the deleted material, Ira pointed out that he had two song titles that were later used by other songwriters and became hits. Ira and Kurt had worked on a San Fernando Valley dream sequence that was never completed and contained a song called “San Fernando Valley.” Bing Crosby had a major hit with the same title just a few years later. “Unforgettable,” contained in this folio, was the other recycled title to become successful for others. Ira did not consider his version of “Unforgettable” to be very good, and he was not sorry to see it cut from the show. “Bats about You,” how-



Michael Feinstein, “America's Ambassador of Song.”
Photo: Rande St. Nicholas

72
YOU AND ME

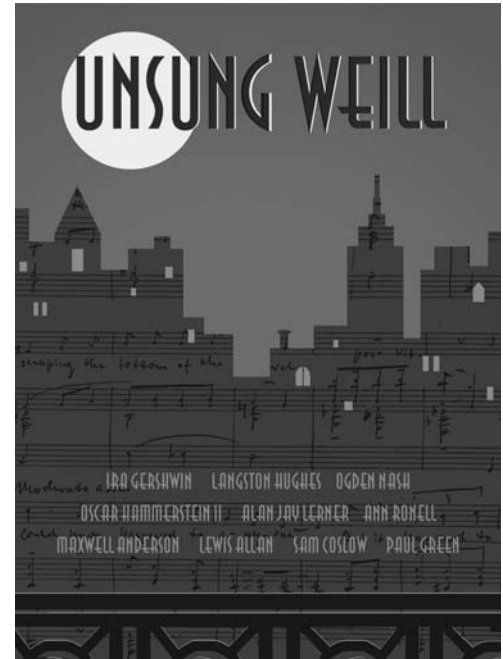
The Romance of a Lifetime

Lyrics by SAM COSLOW Music by KURT WEILL

Molto tranquillo

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Copyright renewed

“Unsung Weill” contains 22 songs by Kurt Weill, cut from Broadway shows and Hollywood films. Published by European American Music Corporation (EA 830), \$19.95



ever, is another story. In spite of its unusual winged term of endearment, “Bats” is for me one of the standouts of this collection. It was written as a twenties pastiche yet is melodically distinctive, harmonically brave, and well suited to a slow and sexy reading.

The third inclusion from *Lady in the Dark*, “It’s Never Too Late to Mendelsohn,” may be known to Weill aficionados from a vintage Danny Kaye recording. Danny (who was originally supposed to sing it on Broadway) evidently remained fond of the song through the years. One day Kaye’s wife Sylvia Fine called me at the Gershwin house and demanded that I obtain for her Weill’s original orchestration of the song so her husband could perform it on television. I subsequently spoke to Lenya, who simply told me to tell Sylvia that the music was in storage and that she had no access to it. That was the end of the story.

The last Gershwin/Weill collaboration comes from the film *Where Do We Go from Here?* and is called “It Could Have Happened to Anyone” (Ira always referred to this song as “It Happened to Happen to Me”). I enjoyed rediscovering this song since I knew it from the demo recording that the writers made, but I was even more surprised to discover another song from the same film, the haunting “All at Once,” reprinted with a different lyric by Oscar Hammerstein titled “The Good Earth.” While I am more accustomed to the romantic Gershwin lyric, Hammerstein’s eloquent message is deeply affecting and equally at home with Kurt’s tune, proving that the words sitting on a note can completely change the character of a melody.

There are more rich discoveries in this volume, and the book unexpectedly provides a chance to juxtapose Weill’s American collaborators. For example, the contributions from *Street Scene* by Langston Hughes show that eloquent as he was with poetry, he was not a seasoned lyricist in comparison to Alan Lerner. This is a stylistic observation and not a criticism because his words succeed quite well when adroitly wedded to Weill’s passionate music, but Lerner would never have allowed a closed consonant to be held for a two-bar phrase as Hughes does in “The Street Light Is My Moonlight.” “Great Big Sky” is a modern-day aria and closer to opera than anything else contained herein. Both of Maxwell

Anderson’s collaborations with Weill are represented and were bookends to Kurt’s American career. Anderson’s words are similar in nature to Hughes’ lyrical approach, and I enjoyed taking “The Little Tin God” (tossed from *Lost in the Stars*) at a slower tempo, so as to give proper weight to his philosophy.

Three contributions by Ogden Nash from *One Touch of Venus* are of wide ranging-interest. “Who Am I?” consists of characteristically complex Nashian wordplay, and “Love in a Mist” is to be sung in your best Dietrich/Keller/Lenya baritone. Are you listening, Ute Lemper?

Of the twenty-two songs included in *Unsung Weill*, the ones that I found most attractive and powerful were those created by the four most experienced songwriting veterans: Ira Gershwin, Alan Jay Lerner, Sam Coslow and Ann Ronell. Lerner’s “You Understand Me So” has a grace and lyrical flow that makes it gratifying to sing. It is unfortunate that he and Weill worked together on only one show, *Love Life*. Sam Coslow wrote so prolifically that it seems miraculous he didn’t run out of ideas. His work with Weill yielded solid craftsmanship that ascended several levels when exposed to his partner’s inspiration. One tune, “The Romance of a Lifetime,” is the zenith of their hybrid style and I find it inexplicable that it was deleted from the film *You and Me*. It is closer to a hit than anything they wrote together and deserves to be recognized.

In a book filled with discoveries, the greatest surprise for me came from the three songs written in collaboration with Ann Ronell. Her two big hits were polar opposites: “Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf” and “Willow Weep for Me.” I was unaware that these songs concealed a consistent, first-rate lyricist who created inspired work with Weill. The song that has singularly haunted me since I have become acquainted with *Unsung Weill* is “The River Is Blue.” With a languorous yearning that carries me along, it evokes the same feeling of revelation that I felt as a teenager upon first hearing Weill’s music. I smooth out the tango beat in the accompaniment and luxuriate in the discovery of new and passionate music from a man whose voice can never be stilled by time. It’s time to sing *Unsung Weill*.

Performances

Street Scene

Dessau

Kurt Weill Fest

27 February 2004

Dessau's theater is known for its wide and deep stage. The large space offered set designer Stefan Rieckhoff the opportunity to create a truly impressive set. An entire city block extends from downstage right to the back center. The street is filled with piles of rubble, the brick houses are ruins with caved-in facades, a gaping hole appears in the street close to the orchestra pit. "Urban culture" is the motto of the 12th Kurt Weill Fest, where *Der neue Orpheus*, *Mahagonny Songspiel*, and *Die sieben Todsünden* could be seen; *Street Scene* was the contribution of the Anhaltisches Theater.

Whoever discusses urban issues in the year 2004 will have to talk about destruction. The first thing that comes to mind is the epochal date of September 11; next one thinks of cities in eastern Germany like Dessau, whose population is steadily dwindling, so that entire city blocks are already deserted and dilapidated. The American director Nicholas Muni has a third idea, as he tells us in the program notes. He takes up a recent discussion of Germans' traumatic experiences caused by Allied bombing raids during World War II, when entire city centers were wiped out, countless areas became uninhabitable, and historically valuable cityscapes vanished. Dessau is a prime example.

It is snowing on the stage. A young woman, wrapped in a coat and freezing, enters. She rummages through a pile of rubble, drags out an old radio, and turns it on. From the speaker squawks the Voice of America, announcing a live broadcast of an opera on Broadway. The first bars of *Street Scene* sound from the speaker. The young woman escapes cold, post-war Germany in a daydream: the skeletal buildings slowly fill with people, a deep yellow light brightens and warms the stage. At some point, the woman begins to move to the music's rhythm. The transition from speaker to orchestra pit is made very smoothly; it's

hardly noticeable when Golo Berg takes over and conducts the Anhaltische Philharmonie Dessau live.

This is a fascinating opening, but in Muni's staging it comes at a high price: The street and its residents remain drenched in yellow; individual characters can hardly be discerned within the enormous cast, either visually or acoustically; and "people we know—with whom we rub shoulders every day of our lives" (Weill in an interview with *The Musical Digest*) become an amorphous mass. Despite a lot of movement on stage, the performers congeal into ghostly figures, the dialogues frequently appear stilted and forced, funny situations are insufficiently pointed, and transitions into song are often abrupt. The distinction between proximity and distance



Rose Murrant (Christina Gerstberger) and Sam Kaplan (Jörg Brückner) in the foreground.

Photo: Kai Bienert

is destroyed when intimacies are blasted out at the same volume as speeches to larger crowds. We see immediately that Anna Murrant (Janice Hall) is having an affair with the milkman, Sankey (Pavel Šafář, who also plays Easter and Vincent Jones), and one wonders what use the hints and gossip in the next scenes will have. The fine network of musical references which Weill wove into his score becomes superfluous. And while the orchestra's playing is clean and driving, the leitmotif-like comments on the action are only faintly discernible.

Nevertheless, it is a moving moment when Sabine Noack (substituting for

Christina Gerstberger), in the role of the female radio listener, takes off her coat and assumes the role of Rose Murrant, as if the music's magic had pulled her into the action. But the lighting of this scene doesn't change, and the identification with Rose doesn't really stick. Noack alternately participates in the action and withdraws to observe. Doubling of the role would have made more sense because no tension can arise between the main characters, who are made rather simplistic in Muni's concept. Especially Jörg Brückner as a somewhat rough Sam Kaplan displays little of a young intellectual's sensitivity. In contrast, Ulf Paulsen comes across as a fairly soft Frank Murrant; the role is cast slightly against cliché.

The erotic encounter between Rose and Vincent, escalating into something close to rape, is an interesting interpretation, but unfortunately the scene steals the thunder of Mae and Dick's jitterbug (Anja Karmanski and Kai Bronisch). Rose's character in general seems too shallow: She has constant hysterical fights with her brother Willie (Christian Reichel), and the way in which she talks to her parents is always melodramatic. When Anna Murrant, fatally wounded, briefly revives for her final words, the level of kitsch is reached. It is regrettable that the scene of the two babysitters in Act II is cut. This kind of ironic distancing apparently doesn't fit into Muni's soap-opera ending: The young woman (aka Rose) smashes the radio with a brick.

The energy and dedication of the entire ensemble, including the terrific children, remains impressive. Overall, the singing is solid and appealing. But even though articulation is generally good, the phrasing is not always clear enough to make the new translation by Stefan Troßbach understandable. Troßbach's program notes make a good point about *Street Scene's* balancing of realistic and romantic elements. Despite an ambitious approach, neither element receives enough attention in Muni's staging. And yet, the production represents a good sign: When directors and set designers begin to try new interpretations of *Street Scene*, Weill's American opera may have fully arrived in Germany.

Andreas Hauff
Mainz

Performances

Die Dreigroschenoper

St. Pauli Theater, Hamburg

8 January – 8 February 2004

The *Dreigroschenoper* in Hamburg's red-light district was a success story during a dreary January. Ulrich Tukur and Ulrich Waller had just moved from the intimate Kammerspiele on Hartungstraße to the hardly less cramped St. Pauli Theater on Spielbudenplatz, right next to Reeperbahn, when they celebrated their first big success—although the evening gets off on the wrong foot musically (in front of a curtain that announces “Bloody Bertie’s *Die Dreigroschenoper*”). The pit turns out to be a mere pothole, so most of the musicians must be placed in the proscenium box seats; the amplified sound is uneven, and the score is treated with an exaggerated sloppiness that apparently supports the director’s style, which favors gutter language over smooth theatricality. Led by Matthias Stötzel, the small orchestra sounds like the band of a tiny circus that doesn’t know if its animals are going to make it through the winter. That said, Stötzel is an experienced theater conductor whose credits included engagements at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg and Vienna’s Burgtheater, before he took over the musical direction of Hamburg’s *Buddy: The Musical*. Perhaps it’s best to ignore the poor musical performance; let’s assume it was all part of a larger artistic concept.

When the curtain finally rises, we experience this musical theater classic with an all-star German cast. The Peachum family is played by Eva Mattes, Christian Redl, and Stefanie Stappenbeck. Mattes, the famed Fassbinder-Herzog-Zadek actress, gives a brilliant rendering of Mrs. Peachum. She convincingly portrays her as a vulnerable woman whose greed has given her a hard shell. The smug affluence of Redl’s Peachum, combined with a put-on weepiness, makes him resemble an aging top executive. This oh-so-nice family is completed by a terrific Polly, who wonderfully displays girlish naïveté before turning on a more seductive and commanding side.

What this trio does in terms of acting can hardly be surpassed. Unlike many productions, the characters are not caricatures but living creatures—human beings, driven by narcissism and greed. Above all, Macheath is more of a petty bourgeois womanizer experiencing midlife crisis than a high-stakes gambler. Those who know Tukur will know that he is an excellent choice for the part. He acts and sings as if he’d been born and raised in Soho. While he plays the tough guy among his peers, his shabbiness becomes clear in the beginning of the second act, when he showers Polly with his disrespectful aggressiveness. The “Grab-schrift” is simply flung at the audience with a wickedness that produces a lingering



Ulrich Tukur as Mackie Messer. Photo: Katharina John

chill. Needless to say, Waller custom-tailored this production to his long-time collaborator. Tukur even gets his own band, the Rhythm Boys, made up of Walter, Robert and Jakob—a neat joke. Arranged in an organ-pipe line-up, the Rhythm Boys create an air of slapstick, and in those moments the staging could pass for a production of the Hal Roach Studios.

Waller has scored a coup with Jenny and her hooker colleagues. Freed of all romantic notions, they could easily have walked in from one of the adjacent brothels through the theater’s back door. Jenny (played by Maria Bill) embodies the underside of the sex business, where drug abuse and poverty leave their marks. As a tattered street walker, she staggers across the stage rather

than walks. When she appears in front of the curtain to sing “Salomonsong,” we see someone who has given up. Life has dealt her one blow too many. All that’s left to her is sad cynicism. With cold contempt she looks down from the stage, which no longer supports her. She staggers, examines her abused body, and croaks remarks about wisdom, boldness, and passion, holding the audience in a tight, chilling grip. The first-rate cast is rounded out by Peter Franke as a simpleton Tiger Brown, Kai Maertens as a mean Münz-Matthias whose ambitions are stymied, and Anja Boche as Lucy in a starlet outfit.

While aiming for authenticity on a superficial level, the production team doesn’t stick too closely to the original. The “Zweites Dreigroschenfinale” is moved to an earlier spot, and the director places Jenny instead of Mrs. Peachum next to Macheath. Also, one wonders why some vocal parts have been transposed beyond the bounds of musical propriety. Waller doesn’t take much of a risk when he places his production in sparse, 1920s sets (Götz Loepelmann) and costumes (Ilse Welter) that recall Otto Dix. This can’t go wrong—and it doesn’t—but it’s a bit on the predictable side. The St. Pauli Theater is a commercial house, much like the Schiffbauerdamm in 1928; hence, this production emphasizes the work’s entertainment value. The fact that Hamburg’s red-light district is literally next door seems to make this theater an ideal venue for the work, even though Waller laments in the program notes that “there are no more gentleman gangsters like Mack the Knife.” “In times of globalization and unleashed capitalism” the *Dreigroschenoper* is “again very topical in a frightening way,” something that can be observed “on Reeperbahn more clearly than elsewhere.” This somewhat naïve notion leaves its mark on the production. Without such a strong cast, Waller would have been in deep trouble due to a lack of ideas. But he was lucky. And so were those who managed to obtain a ticket for this *Dreigroschenoper* production in these sinful surroundings. Even before opening night the entire run was sold out. This shows the audience’s trust in the theater, the cast, and in Weill/Brecht. In the end, nobody was disappointed.

**Christian Kuhnt
Lübeck**

Books

The Cambridge Companion to the Musical

Edited by William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird

Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 310 pp.
ISBN: 0-521-79639-3

No one refers to the field as “musical comedy” any more, and with good reason. Unencumbered gaiety is no longer at a premium in it. Today one speaks of “musical theater”—or even less restrictively, “the musical”—as if the levity which still characterizes the medium now has to contend with forces both heavier and darker than comedy suggests. Seriousness in the field is no longer taken lightly. That is perhaps the single most remarkable change to have taken place in the late twentieth century on the light, or at least non-operatic, musical stage. Yet almost as remarkable is the seriousness with which the intellectual community has come to grips with the medium over the same period, having largely relegated it earlier, during the heyday of modernism, to an aesthetic place somewhere between kitsch and the banal. Indeed, the academic embrace of the musical as a topic of study and the vigor of research into it since the 1980s have been nothing short of astonishing. They are evidence of a major reassessment of values occasioned by the rising aesthetic ambition within the musical medium, as well as by a growing tendency among scholars and critics to view the medium in light of that shift in cultural sensibility which goes by the name of post-modernism.

Historiographically, *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical* takes its place against this backdrop even if the volume’s editors, William Everett and Paul Laird, give little hint of any intellectual context for this addition to Cambridge University Press’s “Companion” series. The publication brings together 14 essays by 14 authors, though not necessarily one apiece. Each essay addresses an aspect of those commercially speculative entertainments produced on the stages of Great Britain and North America from the eighteenth century to the present that are generally understood to belong to the genus *musical*. The essays are brief, eminently lucid, and written mostly by musicologists. With an emphasis on the presentation of factual information, many follow the life-and-works approach to key creators and their shows that has dominated comprehensive studies of the field from Cecil Smith’s pioneering *Musical Comedy in America* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1950) to Andrew Lamb’s recent and more cosmopolitan *150 Years of Popular Musical Theatre* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2001). Their subjects and scopes are varied, however. At the broad end of the spectrum there is Katherine Preston’s “American Musical Theatre before the Twentieth Century,” an elegant survey of over 150 years of stage activity in 26 pages that represents the author’s attempt, as she puts it, “to examine the whole picture—albeit in summary fashion” (p. 4). (Her description might well serve as a motto for the book.) At the narrow end, there is Jim Lovensheimer’s “Stephen Sondheim and the Musical of the Outsider,” an interpretative essay that offers a trenchant look into a single aspect of Sondheim’s work (it is so well focused, in fact, we

get little sense of the composer-lyricist in context as a Broadway collaborator and insider). Between these lies a range of essays, more generally balanced when it comes to forests and trees, treating musicals from a variety of topical perspectives, such as genre (Ann Sears’s “The Coming of the Musical Play: Rodgers and Hammerstein”), medium (Graham Wood’s “Distant Cousin or Fraternal Twin? Analytical Approaches to the Film Musical”), and race (John Graziano’s “Images of African Americans: African-American Musical Theatre, *Show Boat* and *Porgy and Bess*”).

At the same time the volume gives the appearance of being more than a compendium of separate essays. The editors even state in the preface that the collective effort of those who contributed to it amounts to “a history of the musical in the English-speaking world” (p. xv). That reach exceeds the book’s grasp, however, on both counts. What is meant by a musical in the English-speaking world, they imply, is one “first conceived for Broadway or for London’s West End” (p. xv), and the guideline generally holds. But not without glaring inconsistencies. Indeed, the musicals that receive the most extensive coverage in the volume altogether hardly fit the description: *The Merry Widow* (which was first conceived for neither, though it was later a hit in both) and *Assassins* (which, if ever conceived for Broadway, is only now about to be produced there for the first time since its 1991 Off-Broadway premiere). The disjunction stems perhaps from the fact that the portions of those essays that deal with these works were themselves first conceived for other occasions—they appear here as distillations from prior publications or presentations which, however engaging, seem disproportionately inserted into what is purportedly a history of musicals otherwise defined.

More troublesome is the editors’ reluctance to explain what they mean by “history,” except to say that, since “in some ways the musical theatre has never outgrown its messy adolescence,” it is their intention only “to try to bring a modicum of order” to the “variety and confusion” (p. xvi). To be sure, they have arranged the essays in chronological order to suggest a history, or more nearly a historical succession of chapters. But neither does one chapter motivate the next as in a narrative (except for “The Successors of Rodgers and Hammerstein from the 1940s to the 1960s” by Tom Riis and Ann Sears, which follows Sears’s own chapter on the work of the two collaborators whom their successors succeeded). Nor do the chapters gain in force by juxtaposition, as multiple discourses responding to and deepening the arguments of one another. Instead, chapters tend to remain discrete and their ideas underargued, though the coverage of *West Side Story* appears at first to be an exception: it is folded into the discussions of four chapters, one each touching on the show’s music, lyrics, choreography, and film adaptation. Only the last of these chapters, however, actually reinterprets the earlier discussions, especially as its author, Wood, looks for the meaning behind two songs in the Broadway production switching places in the film, “Cool” and “Gee, Officer Krupke”: “this exchange of songs for the two different versions represents the difference between the ‘theatrical truth’ and the ‘literal truth,’ or, in other words, it illustrates the difference between what is dramatically convincing in a live theatrical genre and what is equally convincing in the film medium” (p. 216). But Wood offers no further explanation of the double truth idea. And as he fails to go back to its original source—Stephen Sondheim, in fact, who remarked that “for the movie, the numbers were reversed and weren’t nearly as effective”—he seems to have missed the point.

Perhaps the freshest essays in the collection are Scott Warfield’s “From *Hair* to *Rent*: Is ‘Rock’ a Four-Letter Word on Broadway?”

and John Snelson's "‘We Said We Wouldn't Look Back’: British Musical Theatre, 1935–1960." This is partly because these topics are not usually treated at length in books that survey the field. It is also and more importantly because both writers bring a knowing sense of social, political, and cultural context to the table as they map their terrains. Warfield deftly unpacks the multiple meanings encoded in the term "rock musical" as he examines the uses to which it has been put as a marketing device, as an indicator of musical style, and as a marker of rock's original "counter-culture" status. Snelson considers such factors as the insular concerns of English musicals that limited their appeal abroad, the postwar "American invasion" of the West End, and the inhibiting institution of the Lord Chamberlain in an attempt to answer the question why the middle third of the 20th century is now "a largely forgotten era in the history of the British musical" (p. 101). Snelson's act of remembrance, in fact, searching, eloquent, and nuanced, may well be the closest any essay in the book comes to an ideal of historical writing that goes beyond the descriptive.

Of particular interest to readers of this Newsletter is the chapter by Bruce McClung and Paul Laird, "Musical Sophistication on Broadway: Kurt Weill and Leonard Bernstein." Linking Weill and Bernstein in this fashion is anything but new—mainly because in the 1940s and 1950s both musicians were by training and temperament "overqualified" for work on Broadway. But the way it is done here is inspired: through a telling (albeit not disinterested) remark of Lotte Lenya's relating to *The Threepenny Opera* concert version that Bernstein conducted at Brandeis University in 1952, a pivotal moment in Bernstein's developing career outside the concert hall and in Weill's posthumous "renaissance" on the American stage. The section devoted to Weill consists of a seven-page overview of the composer's theatrical output in the United States, show by show. However brief, it is among the finer contributions to the volume, deeply informed throughout and smart in bringing Weill's own words to bear on the points it makes.

It tends to falter, however, when it comes to accepting certain premises as givens without sufficiently laying bare for the reader the complicating factors involved—a tendency found elsewhere in the book as well. One of these involves citing the number of performances a musical production initially ran as if the number had self-explanatory power, and as if, by using market forces as a measure of the musical's success as a work (rather than as a production), they ultimately vindicated its cultural value. *Street Scene*, for instance, is described as having "closed after 148 performances—a disappointing run for [what was billed on Broadway as] a 'dramatic musical', but an impressive record for 'An American Opera', as it was subtitled when the piano-vocal score was published" (p. 172). It doesn't take a Marxist to recognize the economic substrate beneath the figure cited: the profit potential in exceeding the number of performances actually needed for a production to recoup its initial investment while covering its running costs (since this number is not given for *Street Scene*, one infers from the description it was greater than 148). But invoking the box office as a standard for success, a questionable practice even if it is true to the ethos of Broadway and the West End, is misleading where operas are concerned. Alone, the differences between operating a commercial theater and an opera house—institutional, financial, cultural, ideological—argue against applying the same standard to both, though Graziano persists in doing so in his essay when he assesses *Porgy and Bess*: "By Broadway standards, *Porgy and Bess* was not a great hit with the public [at its 1935 premiere]; it closed after 124 performances. By operatic standards, however, it would have been considered quite

successful. The most notable American opera premiered at the Metropolitan during the 1930s, Deems Taylor's *Peter Ibbetson*, was given only sixteen performances over three seasons" (p. 76). The Metropolitan, however, was and remains a repertory house; and since *Porgy and Bess* has been given a total of only 58 performances since its premiere there 20 seasons ago, one might be tempted to ask whether that figure indeed represents a success *by operatic standards* were one not inclined to have second thoughts about asking the wrong kind of question.

Another premise involves the status accorded to the writer of music for the numbers in a musical as if such a writer were the primary creative force behind the musical, or as if the total of all such numbers were tantamount to a musical composition. Riis and Sears even speak of "Jerry Bock's *Fiorello!*," for example, as if the show were somehow the property of the songwriter with no mention of those collaborators whose contributions were at least as crucial to its creation, to say nothing of its success (p. 153). Yet in the practical and highly collaborative medium of musical theater, a musician is but one of several creators and rarely if ever the most important—unlike operatic collaborations where the composer is now generally held to be at least first among equals. In musicals, moreover, the creative musician may not even be, strictly speaking, a composer. This makes Kurt Weill a particularly problematic figure in the history of Broadway: a composer (*pace* T.W. Adorno) working in a metier which in the 1940s rather called for songwriters, though the distinction was far from absolute. Weill was thus viewed as a misfit by some on both sides of the aisle. Alec Wilder, defending the genius of American popular song, faulted him as a songwriter for managing only "the astute imitation without the quality of self-involvement." Adorno, defending the genius of European high musical culture, faulted him as a composer whose profile, he said, "is scarcely touched by the concept of a composer as such." Both of these critiques, moreover, say as much about different expectations of the medium in which Weill worked as they do about Weill himself. But neither critique is mentioned here. The assessments of Weill's Broadway achievement that are cited come rather from enthusiasts. We read that playwright and erstwhile collaborator Maxwell Anderson admired Weill as a "rounded and complete composer," and that drama critic Brooks Atkinson praised him because he was "not a song writer but a composer of organic music" (p. 173)—as if there were nothing contentious about such remarks in the context of a medium that took its musical measure at the time from the achievements of men of brilliance in their own right, but who *were* essentially songwriters: Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, even Richard Rodgers.

If ultimately, then, *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical* disappoints, it is largely because the volume leaves scant room for the kind of probing and critical penetration one would hope for in order to take seriously the editors' claim for its subject: "those who created this book, and many of its readers, think of the musical as art" (p. xv). While the view that musicals can acquire so prestigious a cultural status is widely shared today, it is of relatively recent vintage in the intellectual scheme of things. There may indeed be grounds for such a claim. But the case would have to be made. As it stands, like so many other assertions in the book, we simply have to take it on faith.

Books

Music and Nazism: Art under Tyranny, 1933–1945

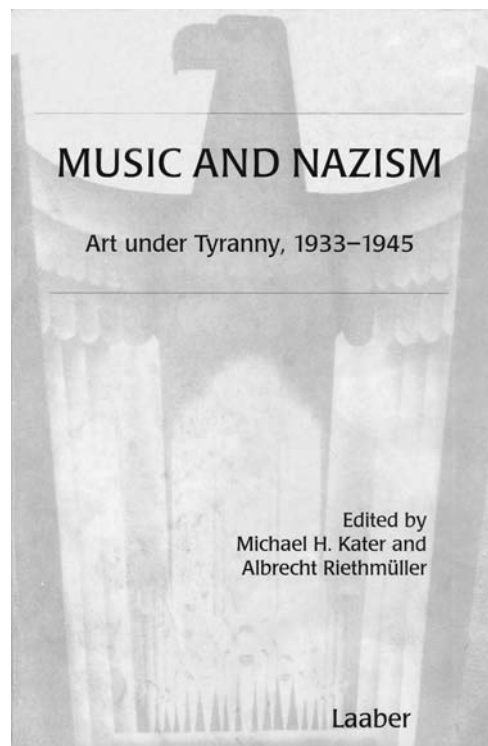
Edited by Michael H. Kater and Albrecht Riethmüller

Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2003. 328 pp.
ISBN: 3-89007-516-9

If we ask “What motivates this book (or the conference during which its contents were initially presented)?”, Michael Kater’s introduction provides as its focal point the premise for an answer. The array of topics constituting the core of its chapters shows how far the reach of the Nazis’ control extended over all aspects of musical composition, performance, criticism, aesthetics, publication, research, institutional organization—even beyond the control they sought over the visual and literary arts, it would seem. And hand in hand with control came support. Why? “Music and Germany have been said to be synonymous,” writes Kater in his opening sentence. He traces this conceit from Wagner to Furtwängler, who declared Germany the creator of pure instrumental music which, as the influential nineteenth-century critic Eduard Hanslick put it, was the only pure form of the musical art. Under the Nazis, music of the German masters, who were themselves idolized, came to stand for German uniqueness and superiority. (Perhaps this idolization accounts for the large number of films about the great German composers that were produced in the Third Reich, a trend that is the subject of “Hardly Heroes,” one of the essays in the book, by Guido Heldt.) Listening to German music was to promote a sense of German identity and unity, and insulation from an unfriendly world. Such use of music for “political chauvinism” can be recognized in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the Berlin music critic and theorist A. B. Marx was urging his readers to attend symphony concerts in the interest of consolidating their German identity.¹

To display the consequences of the Nazis’ exploitation of music as a centerpiece of this nationalistic chauvinism, and to display music as an object of Nazi politics, are the declared purposes of the project of which this book is a part. Claiming music for Germany, and more specifically, for the National Socialists and the Third Reich, entailed claims about the “Germanness” of music and efforts at laying down the criteria for a “National Socialist” music. This is the subject of one of the book’s essays (to be discussed presently), and it comes up in several other essays. But it is not the book’s main subject, as the reader might have expected from its prominence in Kater’s introduction.

That seems to be an indication of the importance to this editor of disavowing the claim about the supremacy of German music that the Nazis appropriated from nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century writers. And that, in turn, touches on signs evident here and there in the book of a need on the part of some of its authors to distance themselves from their repellent subjects—something that is



hardly surprising or blameworthy, but that nevertheless constitutes a constraint or an obstacle. It strikes me as I read this book that fifty-eight years—the span of two generations—after the collapse of the Third Reich, the shoddy claims and dogmas of its denizens still haunt scholars engaged in the study of its twelve-year duration, working, seemingly, “*Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?*” (title of a publication of the original documents of the *Historikerstreit*, the issues of which still lie deep, if tacit, in this book).²

In fact, the book has no main subject more focused than what is denoted by its title. It is a miscellany of studies about the fate of individuals, institutions, relationships, scholarship, commerce, public performance, historical representation, aesthetic conceptions, evaluation and canon formation, compositional paradigms, all in the domain of music under the pressure of the tremendous power, ambitions, and pretensions of the Nazi regime for the control of all aspects of music. At the same time it is an astonishing trove of information, the product of assiduous archival and historical research.

The first essay, “Hitler’s Wagner: Musical Discourse as Cultural Space,” by Hans Rudolf Veget, is appropriately placed because it illuminates historiographic considerations that would have properly conditioned every study in the book but that have not consistently been kept in mind throughout. A summary can be generated by way of unpacking the two parts of Veget’s title. The first phrase signals Veget’s preferred way of formulating the much-discussed relationship between those two figures—preferred, that is, to the reverse formulation, “Wagner’s Hitler.” The difference is crucial for the way historians view causal connections between phases in a historical sequence. It is the difference, in seeking to explain Hitler and the Holocaust, between understanding Hitler’s construal of Wagner’s career, ideology, and works to buttress his own ambitions

and obsessions and to frame his self-image as “Führer” and savior (thus, for example, the suggestion that “Hitler came to visualize his own political career in the spirit of *Die Meistersinger*”), as against focusing on the influence of Wagner in the formation of Hitler’s ideology and policies—“Wagner’s Hitler.” Veget characterizes the latter as “taking the easy way out” by “scapegoating Wagner.” The former, “reconstructing Hitler’s Wagner . . . is a much more complicated matter.” Veget attempts such a reconstruction with considerable skill. His comments on the concept of “influence” are worth citing in detail for their suggestiveness far beyond the particular history that has elicited them here.

The crux of the problem . . . lies in the fixation of historians . . . on the notion of influence. . . . [I]nfluence has long since given way to notions of reception and appropriation, denoting a more complex and indirect mode of intellectual and ideological transfer, and shifting attention from the source to the recipient. To speak of Wagner’s influence on Hitler, in the last analysis, is frankly both inappropriate and unproductive. [Veget backs this up with a detailed view of the evidence and its absence, and then returns to his critique of the “influence” concept.] To begin with, “influence” is not what it is commonly thought to be: some sort of private, more or less involuntary transmission of “ideas” directly from source to recipient. What looks to the untrained eye like a direct line from Wagner to Hitler may in fact be an optical illusion, the result of multiple refractions, because what we call “influence” accrues from, and is affected by, an entire constellation of factors involving language, media, cultural practices of remembering, and the various ways in which these factors interact within a sharply defined cultural space (p. 20–21).

The quotation ends with the last two words of Veget’s title. They are translated from the expression *geistiger Raum* in the title of an address delivered by Hugo von Hofmannsthal in Munich in 1922, “Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation,” that space or domain in which the members of the nation could find a sense of belonging, of identity, of unity. But Hofmannsthal referred to France in his talk. In Germany, writes Veget, the role of cultural space was primarily conceived as being played by music—hence A. B. Marx’s sense of symphonic music as the cultural space for German identity-consolidation. This is the basis of that reciprocal conceit with which Kater begins his introduction: music, the most German of the arts; Germany, the font of pure, serious music. With the concept of “cultural space,” then, Veget’s tone-setting contribution extends to a concern for the cultural conditions under which National Socialism was able to succeed, and to a concern for the historian’s assessment of that cultural nexus as a basis for an interpretation of history.

The circular conceit about music and what is German, the certainty about something essentially and uniquely German about serious music, is the subject of Bernd Sponheuer’s essay, “The National Socialist Discussion on the ‘German Quality’ in Music.” But Sponheuer reports straightaway that “the search for ‘the German quality’ led to no tangible results . . . What constitutes ‘the German quality’ no one was able to say” (p. 32f). Then why make a study of what turns out to have been a vacuous discussion? Because of the very conviction, to put it in the words of the influential musicologist Friedrich Blume near the end of the game, “that this ‘German quality’ in music exists we are all convinced to the very

depths of our souls.”³ Who is “we?” The German people. The “German quality” was postulated as an axiom. Its function in German consciousness was more important than any idea about what it consisted of. It shared a conceptual sphere with the equally axiomatic concepts of “German nature” and “German folk.” It was thus a core concept of that German nationalism that was a secular replacement for religion. There is no point in asking, therefore, for an operational definition in terms of its concrete properties.

To exemplify the style of talk about the “German quality” Sponheuer begins his essay with a passage from Hans Joachim Moser’s *Kleine deutsche Musikgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1938), according to which German music eschews the slick, cheap, easily understood, physical, clever, superficially beautified, and seeks a beauty from the soul, the spirit, “graced by virtue of an intellectual struggle, radiated from the world beyond, bedewed by the supernatural, . . . chaste, the childlike dream . . . secret . . . remote . . . metaphysical . . . a bitter seriousness for ultimate meaning . . .” Small wonder that the search for “the German quality” led to no tangible results. Try to think of a single item of music of any provenance at all that would conform to all of it.

Two things stand out in this remarkable passage: first, that there is nothing new in it. It is a jumble of shards of aesthetic paradigms from all over and of many ages: the fear of decadence, sensuality, licentiousness that is expressed in writings from antiquity to modernism, the call for innocence and simplicity in propaganda for classicism, the otherworldliness of Schopenhauer, the seriousness and intellectual struggle associated with Beethoven. Second, the shards cannot be glued together in a coherent vessel. What, for example, is music of the Folk that is not understandable by all? These contradictions yielded standards that produced phenomena of bewildering inconsistency in their application in all domains of musical life. Instances of that are encountered throughout this book. The reaction of some of the authors to such inconsistencies has been to speak misleadingly of “paradoxes,” a subject to which I must return.

Sponheuer is struck by the absence of “a National Socialist tone” from the literature that he cites about “the German quality.” And he takes that as an indication of “the almost limitless adaptability of the traditional discourse. The ideological transformation work necessary for a National Socialist reinterpretation could therefore be kept to a minimum—based on the fundamental occupation of the ‘national’ by an aggressive cultural chauvinism since the late nineteenth century.” Historical interpretation and evaluation turn on the question: How far are National Socialist ideology and policies natural growths from immanent German seedbeds, and how far are they deliberate changes in course, using, transforming, even distorting, tradition? This is obviously a critical question for German historical consciousness and identity. The urgent need for distance from the Third Reich that is manifested in this book is assuaged through insistence on interpretations of the second kind. Sponheuer’s account withholds exactly that opportunity. In the mid-1980s the interpretation of a relatively minimal transformation in the continuity from the “traditional discourse” was given a different face: the nationalist, exceptionalist, anti-Western-liberal, authoritarian temper that made the National Socialist move initially possible and made its re-evaluation in the context of the *Historikerstreit* of the nineties as an appropriate move also possible.

Reinhold Brinkmann’s account of the National Socialist appropriation of another doctrine of aesthetics leaves no doubt that it is

an interpretation of the second kind, as Brinkmann declares at once with his title: “The *Distorted Sublime: Music and National Socialist Ideology, A Sketch* [my emphasis].” The doctrine, transmitted by German writers among others since the eighteenth century, is about the quality of sublimity as a positive value in art works.

Brinkmann portrays the Nazi version in the following terms. Hitler, writing in *Mein Kampf* about art, “emphasizes the monumental, the heroic [= ‘the great’], the forceful, even violent action . . . at the expense of the beautiful.” And “Art is a sublime mission that carries an obligation to fanaticism.” From this point of view, “the Nazis executed a powerful self-representation as instruments of the ‘will to power’: glorification through the sublime, causing respect, even admiration, but also intimidation, fear, subjection to a terrorizing use of force.” This view of the sublime is “selective,” writes Brinkmann, as we can see by comparing it with the characterization of the sublime as an aesthetic concept that is presented in Edmund Burke’s treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). The attributes that are missing from the Nazi version are vastness, infiniteness, difficulty, ruggedness, darkness and gloominess, light, solidity and massiveness, sound, loudness, suddenness; the effects that are excluded are astonishment and reverence. This selectivity does indeed slant the concept of the sublime in one direction, a slant that is “governed by power politics,” Brinkmann puts it. He calls it “the first distortion of the original philosophical idea . . . But a more subtle and farther-reaching misuse of the sublime characterizes Nazi ideology as well” (p. 46). It is the overriding of Immanuel Kant’s dictum that sublimity is not a property of the object but a condition of the subject, a human’s ability to think, judge, and categorize the powers that radiate about the sublime.

The significance of this lies in the domain of human freedom. As that quality arises in us, those powers are our powers. Our state is exalted above that of the object, and that maintains our independence, our freedom to act. To the National Socialist regime such a doctrine would have been anathema. Brinkmann shows Alfred Rosenberg, the regime’s chief ideologue from 1934, lurching and sliding his way from initial acceptance of Kant’s point back to a doctrine of beholder passivity in the face of the dictatorial power of the great and monumental, which resides ultimately in the folk and their leader. The starting point is the claim that in encountering the sublime in an artwork we experience an identity with the “personality” of its creator which, in turn is identified with “the folk,” “the collective will,” Brinkmann adds, “to which the Subject must submit. Toward this collective power—at the center of which . . . stands the Führer—the attitude of the individual can only be acceptance, belief, submission” (p. 47). We can, for example, see the sense of sharing in that collective power embedded in the label *Blitzkrieg* as token of “the distorted sublime.” The effect has been re-embodied in the code-name “Shock and Awe,” widely applied by the U.S. regime to the bombardment of Iraq not long ago, although it is hard to imagine that the originators and purveyors of that phrase could have had the concept of the sublime in mind, and that makes me wonder in turn whether such brutality really begs to be understood in terms of aesthetics.

What is the point of this analysis, really? To be sure Brinkmann demonstrates the Nazis’ appropriation of a sensitivity to the sublime in the interest of enhancing the respect for and fear of the power of the regime among the populace. His demonstration hinges on Kant’s subject-object distinction, and he argues that in investing the property of sublimity in the object the Nazis subverted it. Can this philosophical-psychological fine point support the weight of

the implicit political-ideological conclusion that rests on it? Would Nazi thugs have had Rosenberg’s revision of Kant on their minds? And is this demonstration relevant to the grounding of their deeds in tradition?

For me a personal reminder of the sense of the sublime is my recollection of the experience of seeing the film *Frankenstein* as a boy of ten. Kant’s distinction strikes home whenever I recall the sense of terror that remained with me long after seeing the film and that my brother, with the sadistic pleasure of the sixteen-year-old, was able to evoke by imitating the gait and call of the Monster. *Of course* the feeling provoked by the film is in my mind, not in the film. But Kant’s point about this is an aspect of his general epistemology, which we all share, even if only tacitly. I could nevertheless say that “*the film* is scary” without fear of committing a philosophical impropriety. So I am inclined to think that the difference between the demonstrations of Sponheuer and Brinkmann is not so great. That the Nazis appropriated the traditional concept of the sublime I think carries more historical weight than the—possibly ameliorating—demonstration that they had more reconstruction to do on that one than on “The German quality.” Brinkmann makes that point most effectively with his account of the space that was created through this appropriation for monumental compositions—symphonies and works for the rituals of the “Nazi cult of the dead hero”—that have been quite forgotten, if they were ever known in the first place.

Summarizing the conclusions from his general discussion, Brinkmann stirs up in the following passage—without directly addressing—a historiographical conundrum that we encountered in the essay of Vaegt.

In its puristic one-sidedness . . . the Nazi ideology distorted the original idea [of the sublime] with its subtle balance of subjectivity and collectivity. This “National Socialist sublime” resembles the political ideology of the Nazis in general, exemplified by the loss of the subjective factor on the one hand, and the overwhelming power of a collective will . . . on the other. . . . Thus, too, the fascist reinterpretation of the classical musical tradition, of the symphonic heritage from Beethoven to Bruckner, in particular, is a distortion of the works’ humane message. . . . One has, however, to discuss the crucial question of whether the first traces of this totalitarian imbalance at the expense of subjectivity might not already be present in the forced revolutionary form and message of these great works of art themselves (Beethoven’s Fifth and Ninth, for example) and in their early nationalist reception, thus preparing the ground for a fascist use and misuse. (p. 48f)

Why does one have to discuss that? It seems like another version of the question “Wagner’s Hitler or Hitler’s Wagner?”: “Beethoven’s Rosenberg or Rosenberg’s Beethoven?” Brinkmann does not initiate such a discussion, and his formulation places the possibility of a coherent answer out of reach. If the “totalitarian imbalance at the expense of subjectivity” is a product of the machinations of Nazi ideologues, then what is the sense of asking whether its first traces “might already be present in the *forced* revolutionary form and *message*” of those symphonies? (I have emphasized words that puzzle me.) Does Brinkmann really hold Beethoven and Bruckner responsible for “preparing the ground for a fascist use and misuse” of their symphonies? Would he even propose that as a question for discussion? Or is he simply committing the elementary historiographic error that one would have thought we had long

since worked out of our system, of seeing a determinism wherever there seems after the fact to be a continuity?

Be that as it may, Brinkmann concludes that “the sublime National Socialist symphony that would pass the test of history, one written in the monumental spirit of Beethoven and Wagner, never materialized.” That may be added to the failure reported by Sponheuer: “the search for ‘the German quality’ in music led to no tangible results.” And to those may be added a third failure reported by Giselher Schubert in his essay “The Aesthetic Premises of a Nazi Conception of Music”: “the Nazis failed in their attempt to develop unmistakable, valid, ‘racially pure’ criteria for the substance of German music” (p. 72). It thus emerges from this book that the Nazi cultural-ideological establishment aimed to establish criteria and standards for a German National Socialist music and to promote the composition of lasting musical works of value in accordance with those criteria and standards, and that this project failed.

The project was bound to fail, according to Schubert, because the category “German music” could only be a functional one for the Nazis, not one defined by criteria of innate “substantive” musical qualities, as he puts it. Music was made German and National Socialist by virtue of the way the Nazis contextualized it, harnessing it to Nazi rituals, turning musical performances into Nazi celebrations by placing decorations in the concert hall, putting uniforms on the performers, locating Nazi leaders conspicuously around the concert hall. It wasn’t that music that was inherently German or National Socialist became functionally useful, but that whatever music was found to be functionally useful could be dubbed “German” or “National Socialist.” Those labels marked political, not aesthetic categories. Here Schubert introduces the fundamental distinction between aesthetic criteria of substance and those of function, between a theory of inherent musical meaning and one limited to functional or contextual meaning. It is not that he favors either of those theories over the other, but that, however dogmatically they insisted on substantive criteria for “German music,” the Nazis showed through those contextualizations how little trust they themselves placed in music’s ability to convey significance and meaning on its own.

That impression is reinforced by the strange reception history of Hindemith’s *Mathis der Maler* symphony, which was given its premiere performance by the Berlin Philharmonic under Wilhelm Furtwängler on March 12, 1934 to accolades nationwide, even from Nazi critics. Schubert quotes from the following day’s review in the *Deutsche Zeitung*:

Paul Hindemith, who for more than a decade has been denounced and attacked as a musical Bolshevik, unanimously rejected as a representative of German music by all the circles of a nationalist sentiment, shunned for the past year and all but crucified, has now been legitimized virtually overnight. How is such a thing possible? How, when the circumstances remain unchanged, can such a reevaluation of all standards take place so unexpectedly? (p. 68)

But then

There is hardly any contemporary music that reveals less solidarity with the *Volk* than that of Hindemith. Not a trace of the German soul is found in it. (p. 69)

The background to which the critic referred is summarized by Kater in *The Twisted Muse*:

[Hindemith] had made deadly enemies in the Nazi camp before 1933, significantly not for musical but for ideological reasons. The initial source of this opposition was Hitler himself, who allegedly had seen the soprano Laura in Hindemith’s opera *Neues vom Tage*, in a flesh-colored body suit, sitting in a bathtub on a Berlin stage in 1929, and was disgusted. . . . Hindemith’s collaboration with Bertolt Brecht in the late 1920s was also spitefully remembered. [There follows a list of associations with Jews] . . . Hindemith himself made derogatory remarks about Hitler while in Switzerland, which caused a proscription of his works on German radio. . . . Hitler forbade a planned premiere of the opera *Mathis der Maler*.⁴

On the other hand, Kater reports that Hindemith spoke of the National Socialist phenomenon as “transient,” he collaborated with leaders of the Hitler youth, the German Labor Front, the *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur*, and he accepted appointment to the Leadership Council of the *Reichsmusikkammer*.

The opera was premiered in Zurich in June of 1938 to great acclaim. The review in the *Neues Winterthurer Tagblatt* concluded, “It seems to us that this work is especially deeply rooted in German culture. [Its] depth of feeling [is] old German to the core” (p. 69). Critics of the time in Germany and elsewhere around Europe likewise attributed German character to it. In light of that, Schubert’s report on the Nazis’ resolution of the “Hindemith Case” is stunning:

. . . [T]he composer was defamed as an opportunist and a follower of trends. Thus it was not necessary to determine whether or not the Symphony *Mathis der Maler* was German in the sense desired by the National Socialists; the accusation of opportunism made it possible to attribute even a successful attempt at accommodation to a flaw in the composer’s character. (p. 69)

The aesthetic is here made a function of the primacy of politics. And the larger, covering question about intrinsic as against contextual meaning is itself at least as much a matter of ideology as of philosophy, as we learn from the next and most curious turn of all in the reception history. In 1968 Adorno published a kind of final evaluation of Hindemith, “Ad vocem Hindemith.” He cited the German critic Paul Bekker’s offhand remark that Hindemith would have been a real Philistine if he weren’t so talented. But Adorno raised the level of the charge, writing that the Philistine tendency overrode the talent, in the end interfering with his best potential. “After Hindemith put the simple, heartfelt German master Mathis into opera there was no stopping him. That the speculation that probably played into his intention failed the realist Hindemith, says little [In plain language: that his expectation that the opera would regain him his stature with the Nazis failed the opportunist Hindemith, says little to his credit]; never could an artist or thinker produce something bad enough for the fascists [i.e., put them in a bad enough light] . . . To not raise oneself up, to remain in the depths, the practice of hard-boiled adaptation, became itself a virtue, soaked with desire for revenge against those who aimed for something different.”⁵ Schubert observes “This presentation is hardly different from the Nazis’ assessment of Hindemith as an opportunistic trend-follower.” But his judgment meanders. “[I]n retrospect, they turned out, as it were, to be right,” but then “this discussion of the opera completely ignores its contemporary reception; what is more, it proceeds as speculatively as unhistorically.

Even more, it completely hands over German art, again determined according to rigid criteria, to the Nazis, who are once again unintentionally validated” (p. 71).

In any case, no one in this reception history has revealed the secret of what is, or is not, German about the music, nor has anyone done any better than the Nazi ideologues at the larger task of explaining how it is that music, in its substance, reveals its ideological, political, national, or racial character and meaning to those who can read it. Writing in “Stefan Zweig and the Fall of the Reich Music Chamber President, Richard Strauss,” Albrecht Riethmüller cites Strauss’s remark to Zweig, in a 1934 letter, “that there is no distinction between ‘Jewish’ and ‘Aryan’ music (a view many musicians held—a few years earlier Arnold Schoenberg, for example, had also denied that there was such a thing as ‘Jewish’ music)” (p. 280). This is a challenge to the dogma that the musical work is a text from which one can read the work’s national or racial identity and its political-ideological meaning—a dogma that has curiously been shared by totalitarian regimes and certain recent theorists of music aesthetics. The Hindemith story is a highly refined version of that dogma, as it features not only the reading of the national character of *Mathis der Maler* from the music’s substance, but even more the reading of Hindemith’s character through the claim that the inscription is counterfeit.

II

It seems almost inevitable that in a book on this subject some of the authors would engage, directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, in adjudicating the conduct of prominent German musicians—performers (Gerhard Hüsch, Wilhelm Furtwängler) and composers (Carl Orff, Richard Strauss, Hans Pfitzner)—musicologists (Hans Joachim Moser, Otto Strobel, Manfred Bukofzer), or music publishers (Hans Heinsheimer, Willy Strecker) in the circumstances of the Third Reich. There is indeed an entire essay given over to the process of adjudication conducted by the occupying forces after the collapse of the Nazi regime—the outcome of which would determine whether the musicians under consideration would be permitted to practice their professions or would instead be blackballed (David Monod, “Verklärte Nacht: Denazifying Musicians under American Control”). That process had practical consequences affecting the lives of the musicians and the professions to which they belonged. But I refer here to authors weighing the behaviors of the subjects in the abstract, so to speak, rendering moral judgment as to whether they were Nazis or anti-Semites or Nazi collaborators, or opportunists or people caught between conflicting sentiments and reactions, or innocents, or heroes who spoke up or protected and supported victims of the regime at their peril. Still, one may wonder about the propriety or value of such classification as a musicological project for its own sake, and I wonder that the editors did not address this question. (I hope I may say this without fear of being thought to exonerate reprehensible characters.) If the subjects’ beliefs, conduct, and allegiances are suspected of carrying over to their work and influencing it, then moral judgment becomes an inseparable aspect of the criticism that is the historian’s business. And that is an opening, again, to the belief that art inevitably reflects social and political circumstance and ideology. But then there is risk that the historian will read such circumstance and ideology into, rather than out of, the art, making the process of judgment a circular one.

I am cautiously trying here to describe a dilemma that can confront the historian who is committed to taking account of the political and moral world in which the behaviors, events, personalities, and works that are our subjects are enveloped, and who has her/his own strong feelings about that world. It is a dilemma that I sense throughout this book. Perhaps I can concretize my attempt with a hypothetical problem that I might confront in today’s circumstances.

I am a strong opponent of the present regime of the U.S., and in particular I regard the war on Iraq, with all of the deceit and manipulation of public opinion that were directed at gaining support for it, as a crime against humanity and an offense to civil society, and as violations of legal, moral and ethical principles that I believe belong to our tradition. Imagine that I am trying to develop an account of American music composition in the early twenty-first century up to the present, and I come to works that are widely performed to critical acclaim by a composer who is an outspoken supporter of the regime and an apologist for the war, and whose career is abetted by what can be considered collaboration with the regime, say through appointment to the chairmanship of the National Endowment for the Arts. How do these circumstances play into my account of these works? The commitment that I have described—which is not hypothetical—does not allow me to say they are irrelevant, yet I question whether my feelings about the composer’s politics have any proper place in my historical-critical account. I may be tempted to try to demonstrate that the works, in their substance, reflect a personality that can embrace the policies and attitudes that I so despise, or that they have a nationalistic and warlike character. That could be the basis of a case that I might make for the influence of a sharp rightward swing in American politics on contemporary American musical trends. But I do not share the confidence in the possibility of reading such things from musical texts that has lately been displayed in our field.

I return from my fantasy to Kim Kowalke’s indictment of Anton Webern, in his essay “Music Publishing and the Nazis: Schott, Universal Edition, and Their Composers,” which returns us to the question about the status of music as ideological or sociological text. (I don’t mean to imply that my hypothetical composer is a crypto-Webern.) Kowalke bases his indictment on Webern’s “enthusiastic embrace of Hitler and the National Socialist ideology” and “his politics and wartime conduct.” He cites “Schoenberg’s anguished and unanswered question put to Webern in June 1937: ‘Is it true that you have become a supporter, or even a member of the Nazi Party?’” (p. 202). He debunks what he calls the “Webern martyrology” in which, without evidence, it was claimed that “the Nazis banned his music, burned his writings, and forbade him all activity.” He writes that “Webern’s purported persecution for his aesthetic allegiance to twelve-tone composition has also been called into doubt.” And he cites testimony that contradicts the supposition that the Nazis suppressed serial music (Paul Klenau, a successful composer of the Nazi era, “who defended the twelve-tone compositional principle as ‘totalitarian’ and thus ‘entirely appropriate to the future direction of the National Socialist World,’” p. 216). In this connection Kowalke cites Richard Taruskin’s remark “It was precisely its utopian (its ‘scientific’) aspect, as well as the myth of its political suppression, that facilitated serialism’s seeming natural selection as the neomodernist *lingua franca* from out of the ashes of the Second World War” (p. 203). This is recognizable as a passage from an early installment in Taruskin’s serial polemic, conducted over many years, against serial composition, its products and its practitioners.⁶ Finally Kowalke cites Taruskin’s confident assess-

ment of Webern's String Quartet as his "most stringently constrained and dehumanized work." In these citations Kowalke seems to find the musical expression of Webern's political sympathies. He should have been more cautious, for such translations come rather too easily to Taruskin. Some other instances:

Toscanini's revolutionary transformation of orchestral performance—he virtually created the modern standard of clean, efficient, uncomplicated (in a word, streamlined) execution—chimed excellently with fascist ideals of polity.

Although it was not accompanied by outspoken fascistic oaths or pronouncements, Schoenberg's neoclassical conversion exhibited similar traits of authoritarian intransigence, fealty to a rigid social hierarchy, and . . . the aggressive propagation of a national hegemony.⁷

"Pounding rhythm and endless ostinato [learned from Stravinsky, writes Taruskin] makes [Carl] Orff's music suited to accompany propaganda . . . Repeat anything often enough, Dr. Goebbels said, and it becomes the truth."⁸ [In a letter to the *New York Review of Books* commenting on an article by Robert Craft (June 15, 1989, p. 57) Taruskin provides the non-musical clues to Stravinsky's political sympathies that, for him, support this reading of the music: indications of his "enthusiastic anti-Semitism," his "campaign to rehabilitate himself with the Nazis," his eagerness "to perform at Bad Nauheim in 1938," and his declaration of loathing for "all communism, Marxism, the execrable Soviet monster, and also all liberalism, democratism, atheism, etc." Craft's reply follows in the same issue.]

Webern, Schoenberg, Toscanini, Orff, Stravinsky, all under a fascist cloud—whether or not by virtue of their acts or associations or utterances, in any case by virtue of their music or conducting. The insinuations about Schoenberg and Webern are part of a polemic against serial composition, as I've mentioned. The title of the *New Republic* article hints at the broader, more inclusive polemic against musical modernism.

It would be satisfying, in a way, if the "pounding rhythm and endless ostinatos" of Orff's and Stravinsky's music, the "constrained" and "dehumanized" character of Webern's String Quartet, and the controlling impulses of serial composition and Toscanini's conducting conveyed to us directly the political sympathies that have directed them. But this sort of confident exegesis—"short circuit," Milan Kundera called it with reference to Adorno, its founding practitioner—is too simplistic to be really satisfying, too simplistic for serious history.⁹

III

Is it, then, that we aspire to objectivity, letting the reader make judgments, but that here we must indulge a suspension of that standard by some of the authors because the subject is so thoroughly awash in evil? Monod writes ". . . as historians we need always to keep in mind that our own definitions and understandings are not necessarily drawn from the past; and our own sense of how actions and beliefs should have been dealt with were not necessarily options at the time. In this way only can we avoid becoming judges as well as attorneys, moral philosophers as well as historians" (p. 310). Are we certain that we want to avoid being judges and moral philoso-

phers as well as historians, or are those roles incorporated in some way in our roles as historians?

Here is a short, direct answer, found by chance in a recent review of a new biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt (Conrad Black, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Champion of Freedom* [New York, 2003]). The reviewer writes "the question is how deeply he was an idealist, the real thing, and how much an opportunist, a poseur."¹⁰ Someone might object that one can hardly avoid judgment in biography, whereas history must be scientific, i.e., objective. And so I turn to one of the greatest of natural historians, practitioner in a field in which objective observation would seem to be of the essence.

In a letter written in 1861, encountered also by chance, Charles Darwin wrote

About thirty years ago there was much talk that geologists ought only to observe and not to theorize; and I well remember someone saying that at this rate a man might as well go into a gravel-pit and count the pebbles and describe the colours. How odd it is that anyone should not see that all observation must be for or against some view if it is to be of any service.¹¹

I believe that Monod is wrong to assume that as historians we aim to avoid becoming judges and moral philosophers. But his reminder that our own definitions and understandings are not necessarily drawn unchanged from the past touches on a conundrum that confronts historians of all subjects, shaping the dialectic between striving for an understanding of the past as a present for its contemporaries, and understanding it from the perspective of our present. Whether "our own sense of how actions and beliefs should have been dealt with were . . . options at the time" is a question that requires refined judgment, and arguing that they were not is no satisfactory basis for exculpation. During the very days on which I write this passage we in the United States are confronted with the attempt by our regime to make just such an argument. Before the attack on Iraq the justification for war, we were told, was the imminent danger to our security from the weapons of mass destruction that were in the possession of the Iraqi military. Now we are told by the regime's chief weapons hunter in Iraq, following his resignation, of his certainty that there are not now and were not at the time of our invasion, such weapons, and that Iraq posed no threat to our security. And we are told by our Secretary of State, in effect, that our consequent sense today that the invasion was not necessary—at least not on those grounds—was not an option then. Not everyone is persuaded by that argument, even those who believe that the intention was just, considering the thousands of humans killed and maimed and the destruction of a culture and of a civil order consequent to a decision that rested on grounds now discredited.

This book betrays a kind of agony over this conundrum, especially because the past of which it treats "has a vividly negative character" and "is suspended above the present like an executioner's sword," in the words of a participant in the *Historikerstreit*. The agony is visible in Stephen McClatchie's essay, "Wagner Research as 'Service to the People': The *Richard-Wagner-Forschungsstätte* [RWF], 1938–1945." McClatchie characterizes the RWF as "a Nazi institution with some beneficial results *in spite of itself* (p. 150)." The meaning of the italicized clause is spelled out two pages later: "The basic rationale behind the RWF was *abhorrent* from the outset (p. 152)," and reinforced further with "By far the most *hideous* of Strobel's plans for the RWF were those relating to the Wagner biography (p. 157). The "beneficial results" are summarized at the conclusion: "This is the *paradox* of [Otto] Strobel and the RWF:

that this *Nazi* research center should in the end have had some beneficial results. Through Strobel's efforts and scholarly rigor, Wagner research was placed on a strong documentary footing." (All emphases in this paragraph are mine.) How was this paradox possible? How could scholarly rigor evade the corruption that is evoked by the very use of the single word "Nazi" as identifier of "research center" as it might not have been evoked had the author written "National Socialist?" Just because "Music analysis and the publication of primary source materials do have a claim to objective truth and validity, regardless of the form and forum in which they appear," writes McClatchie in his opening paragraph. That this premise is questionable to start with need hardly be stated. But beyond that, McClatchie's effort to have it both ways does not work. On one side "Nazi" refers for him to a totalizing ideology. On the other side McClatchie wants to see some good emerging from that "Nazi-tinged institution." It is almost as though the harshness of his judgments and the language in which they are rendered were meant to give assurance of his right opinion despite his crediting of a Nazi institution with benefits rendered to music history. One wonders about the necessity for this complex apparatus.

Pamela Potter, writing about "Musical Life in Berlin from Weimar to Hitler," reports that "Berlin's musical culture not only survived but even thrived under Nazi patronage," especially in comparison with conditions under the Weimar Republic. This she finds "surprising" and, again, a "paradox," even a "great paradox." The expectation about the uniformity or consistency of cultures—vestiges, it could seem, of an earlier *Kulturgeschichte* or better, perhaps, another sign of the reincarnation of that tradition in post-modern cultural studies—that underlie these reactions of surprise and accompanying impulses to explain, is situated for Potter in a broader context still: "Perhaps the greatest challenge in interpreting Germany's history is to come to terms with the paradox of the cultural and intellectual legacy of the 'land of poets and thinkers' and the 'people of music' and the murderous legacy of the Third Reich." Related conditions that she finds surprising: the "curious juxtaposition of the progressive with the regressive" and the "attempts to build a modern, technologically advanced state while emulating the simplicity of peasant life rediscovered."

As a participant in the society and culture of the USA I cannot help thinking of parallels. We have different slogans about this country than "land of poets and thinkers" and "people of music" (e.g., "the land of the free and the home of the brave," "the cradle of liberty"), but this country, too, has produced its share of poets, thinkers, and musicians. And we have a strong "murderous legacy" that does not challenge the uniqueness of the holocaust but that has ravaged through the slaughter of innocents in virtually every generation since the founding of the Republic. Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries are modern, technologically advanced states that emulate, or rather continue, if not the simplicity of *peasant* life (a dubious image in any case) then a rural and bucolic lifestyle. Yet I am not aware of characterizations of these conditions as paradoxical. An explanation is wanting of why it is particularly the "inconsistencies" in the Third Reich that need explaining.

IV

The shadow of the *Historikerstreit* hangs over this book as I read it. The talk of "paradox" and "surprises," of ways that music benefited under the obsessive attention of the regime of the Third Reich

"in spite of itself" suggest a number of underlying premises that are surprising in themselves: a general historiographic assumption of a norm of cultural uniformity, an expectation that the regime had the power to align the culture entirely in accordance with its ideological and political programs regardless of any interfering factors, a tacit and false assumption that the regime was free of rivalries and competing policies, ideologies, and ambitions (e.g., as between Goebbels and Rosenberg), and signs of uneasiness and discomfort that accompany the appearance of any benefits that resulted from policies of a regime from which some of the authors are still at pains to distance themselves. These reactions might have been tempered by attention to such factors as the commercial value of popular music, even jazz, for tourism despite ideological polemics against it, the survival of scholarly habits beyond ideology, the ambitions of individual German musicians, the ego-involvement of regime members who became patrons of music or musical institutions, the appeal of international prestige for musical events and institutions, the appeal of such events and institutions to non-Germans interested in advancing their careers. Why should it be surprising, as Joan Evans writes in "International with National Emphasis: The *Internationales Zeitgenössisches Musikfest* in Baden-Baden, 1936–1939," that Bela Bartók accepted an invitation to attend the second International Contemporary Music Festival in Baden-Baden in 1937 "given his well known anti-fascist stance," that he proposed to have his Fifth String Quartet premiered there, and that the Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta had a "strikingly successful career in Nazi Germany?" (Evans cites, by way of explanation for the latter, one critic's assessment that "despite its atonal environment the piece somehow displayed the most convincing national character.") These are real-life complexities that are not easily ironed out in the service of top-down ideology. To present them as paradoxical, that is, as abnormalities, is to leave in place grounds for the call for the normalization of the historiography of the Third Reich that launched the *Historikerstreit* in the mid-1980s.¹² In a way the reactions of some of the authors of this book display the same intolerance of the contradictoriness of the historical world that frustrated members of the regime. The difficulty lies in attempting to hold fast to the moral judgment that underlies the distorted vision manifested in the "paradox" topos while trying at the same time to correct that vision. But the hope of a sharp demarcation of the moral from the methodological is illusory in both theory and practice, and it will certainly not be widely accepted today as an historiographic imperative that we aim to avoid being judges and moral philosophers (if by that is meant historians who make moral judgments).

A more realistic historical view is represented by the portrayals of some of the highly complex characters in the drama, for example Riethmüller's sensitive account of the Strauss-Zweig story ("Stefan Zweig and the Fall of the Reich Music Chamber President, Richard Strauss").

The two collaborated once, on *Die schweigsame Frau*, during 1933–34 (premiere June '35). Strauss was extremely happy with Zweig's libretto, to which he made the fewest changes of any libretto that he set, and he was determined to continue the collaboration, unmindful of the political circumstances. Zweig's Jewishness was an issue for him only insofar as he detected what he seems to have seen as a kind of Jewish chauvinism in Zweig. Judging at least from their correspondence, he espoused a music aesthetic free of essentialism of any racist or nationalist kind, and also of political significance—a striking position for the president of the *Reichsmusikkammer* reporting directly to Goebbels (he wrote to

Zweig that he was only playing at that office as a mimic). In other words, he seems to have inherited a nineteenth-century idealist notion of absolute music. This attitude allowed him not only to press Zweig to continue their collaboration—apparently not giving any thought to how that would play with his boss—but also to provide music for Goering’s wedding and other Nazi rituals.

Zweig persisted in refusing, out of complex motives: principle (Strauss’s political office), care for his own reputation beyond Germany; but also care for Strauss’s reputation and position. He did not want to be seen as exploiting his association with Strauss, but also wanted to spare Strauss the consequences of being associated with *him*. He not only refused further collaboration but offered to renounce financial gain and artistic credit from the success of *Die schweigsame Frau*.

Of the two, Strauss was the naïf in failing to understand what he was dealing with in the regime and in his belief that he could have his way both with them and with Zweig. In the event, a key letter of Strauss’s to Zweig (written a week before the premier of *Die schweigsame Frau*), in which he pressed his case for further collaboration and made light of his office, was intercepted by the Gestapo and forwarded to Goebbels, who discussed it with Hitler, with the result that Strauss’s immediate resignation was demanded. Strauss complied, but four weeks later—and here is perhaps the most telling move—wrote to Hitler, attempting to explain everything. Riethmüller writes that it was lucky for Strauss that Hitler sent no reply. (In overplaying his hand with the regime in this way Strauss displayed a striking similarity to Carl Jung, judging from the recent biography of the latter by Deirdre Bair.)¹³

In the end, Strauss was able to extract enough from this story to be cleared by the denazification commission.

The denazification story told by Monod in a way presents another perspective on the inconsistent texture of events, individuals, and institutions. It seems in fact to have foundered short of achieving its initially formulated goal of a cultural transformation in Germany just *because* of the very complexity, self-contradictory nature, inconsistency of the individuals who were its targets and the institutions that carried it out. It was usually not possible to establish clear moral judgments on the target individuals because of their own protean nature and because of the inconsistent and constantly shifting goals, standards, and strategies of the authorities.

The inconsistencies in the candidates were magnified by contradictory policy directives and the pressures of political and economic considerations (“the mounting communist threat,” the need to get the German economy going). At the same time there was no coordination among occupation authorities, no consistency of standards. A musician might be banned in one zone and receive immediate employment in another. What began as an ambition for radical reform of German society ended in a compromise to gain support of Germany’s conservative elite. In March, 1946, control of denazification was handed over to German tribunals (*Spruchkammern*), which cleared almost everyone.

V

This book is meant to be about the impact of a gross political phenomenon on the art of music in its full aspect. Austin Clarkson writes in his contribution (“Stefan Wolpe: Broken Sequences”) “The Nazi fact was the final and most catastrophic manifestation of a culture of authoritarianism that induced in an artist of Wolpe’s

sensibilities the desire to act out his anger against the forces of oppression.” The thread of continuity in Clarkson’s vivid account of Wolpe’s composing career is his struggle against authoritarianism of every sort and his solidarity with others who carried on such a struggle of their own. The account thus highlights the act of composition as a political act, which could result in musics of quite different character—music of great ferocity, or music of great simplicity, the difference reflecting different kinds of engagement in Wolpe’s inseparable personal and political life. This is an important alternative way of thinking about the interaction of music and politics—especially where the boundary between policy and politics is invisible—alternative to the reading of musical scores to reveal the ideologies of their composers or the socio-political circumstances of their composition. It recommends itself as a perspective on music and Nazism that is best taken in this essay.

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Notes

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