

Kurt Weill

Volume 25

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Newsletter

May 25, 1951

Mrs. Kurt Weill
Brook House
South Mountain Road
New City, New York

Dear Lenya:

Following our meeting last week, we have given a good deal of consideration to your idea for perpetuating the use of Kurt's music tied in with an estate plan for yourself. As I mentioned to you, the idea was rather new but I see no reason why we cannot go ahead with it and, personally, I find it a very interesting project.

Our thinking has been along the following lines, which I believe will carry out your intentions. First of all a membership corporation will be set up in New York. I would think that one of the following names would be satisfactory, unless you have other ideas:

The Kurt Weill Foundation, Inc.
The Kurt Weill Memorial Foundation, Inc.
The Kurt Weill Music Foundation, Inc.

Initially the foundation will not hold any assets but will be available to receive such assets as you may decide to transfer during your lifetime. As soon as the foundation will remain in shell until such time as it receives property pursuant to your will.

The purpose of the foundation will be to perpetuate Kurt's memory by promoting the use of his music and keeping alive an interest in his works. The foundation would have the power to exploit and publish Kurt's music, arrange concerts, award scholarships, give prizes, etc. In addition, I should

Volume 25 . . .

In this issue

Note from the Editor	3
Caring for a Composer: Looking Back on a Quarter Century <i>Kim H. Kowalke</i>	4
Kurt Weill Newsletter, 1983–2007: A Chronology	4
For the Record: Books, Recordings, and Manuscripts	9
Letters	12
<i>Books</i>	
<i>Ein Aparter im Unaparten: Untersuchungen zum Songstil von Kurt Weill</i> by Tobias Faßhauer <i>Stephen Hinton</i>	13
<i>Videos</i>	
<i>The 3Penny Opera</i> on Criterion <i>Foster Hirsch</i>	15
<i>Recordings</i>	
<i>LoveMusik</i> original cast on Ghostlight Records <i>Alan Rich</i>	17
<i>Violin Concerto</i> on Calliope <i>Annegret Klaua</i>	18
<i>Performances</i>	
<i>Der Silbersee</i> in Wexford <i>Rodney Milnes</i>	19
<i>Die Dreigroschenoper</i> in Berlin <i>Jürgen Schebera</i>	20
<i>Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny</i> in Charleston <i>David Maves</i>	22
 <i>Newsletter Reader Survey</i>	 23
 <i>Topical Weill</i>	 1a–8a

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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 image: Letter from John F. Wharton to Lotte Lenya, 25 May 1951. Weill-Lenya Research Center, Series 30, box 3, folder 1

KURT WEILL NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BY THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC
HENRY MARX, EDITOR

FALL 1983

**The President's Column:
A PROFILE OF
THE FOUNDATION**

It's hard for me to believe that Lenya has been gone nearly two years. When she asked me to succeed her as President of the Foundation, I had no inkling that these two years would be the most hectic, frustrating, rewarding and exhilarating of my life. Although it had been chartered nearly twenty years ago and had been active sporadically during those two decades, the Foundation had been little more than an umbrella for the feeless efforts of Lys Symonette, who instigated many worthwhile projects and funded the numerous requests for music and materials. Suddenly, after Lenya's death, the seven of us she had previously asked to join the Board of Trustees, were faced with the awesome responsibility she had discharged since Weill's death: to protect, promote, and perpetuate Weill's music.

The first year was consumed by legal battles. Although Lenya had specifically bequeathed to the Foundation all royalties and had named it the beneficiary of a remainder trust, her will made no mention of copyright ownership or disposition of archival materials that weren't already on loan at Yale. Finally in August 1982, the New York Surrogate's Court decided the Foundation held to all copyrights that Lenya had owned and awarded it the remaining archival materials.

This enabled us to work out a comprehensive archival agreement with Yale, whereby it would house, catalogue, and service a Weill-Lenya Archive containing nearly all of the original documents, with the exception of visual and audio-video materials. The Foundation established a Research Center and Business Office in New York City that will house photocopies of materials at Yale, and other collections, an audio-video and oral history archive, and satellite references for Weill-Lenya research. We were fortunate that David Farneth agreed to join us as Archivist in April 1983, and we look forward to the official opening of the facility in Lincoln Towers on November 1.

As a neophyte in the business of music, I was overwhelmed by the overlapping, often ambiguous, sometimes only verbal, always confusing maze of assignments and contracts with nearly fifty pub-

lishers and vendors throughout the world. My own research and performing activities had to be suspended while I doggedly learned about international copyright laws, terminations, extensions, the differences between small, grand and print rights, performing rights societies, and the curious internal mechanisms of the "publishing" industry wherein few "publishers" actually print music anymore. My rationale was necessarily short-lived as I reviewed contracts and accounts that apparently had never been verified, much less audited. I would hope that soon it will no longer be impossible to purchase or rent certain scores in this country because the U.S. rights had been ill-advisedly assigned to, and buried with poor publishers, and that new inquiries concerning rights for the entire Weill catalogue can be answered with certainty by the Foundation so that no one will be discouraged from performances. This process has only just begun, and scrupulous administration of the copyright catalogue will remain the highest priority in this decade.

Currently the Foundation is making application to the IRS to function as an "operating foundation." This will enable us to engage directly in our mission: the promotion and perpetuation of the legacy of Weill and Lenya. We are drafting procedures for grants and awards to fund research and editing projects, special

performances, recordings, productions, workshops, fellowships, and scholarships. Already the Foundation staff of Mrs. Symonette and Mr. Farneth, with the aid of a half-time secretary, are answering inquiries and assisting scholars, performers, conductors, and producers with various projects. Now that the Foundation's existence is secure and its role defined, we are entering an exciting new phase of activities. This is the first issue of a semi-annual newsletter; 1984 will witness the publication of Volume 1 of a Weill Yearbook; long-term plans are being formulated for publication, performance, or recording of such "lost" works as *Der Kuhhandel*, *Die Bürgschaft*, and *The Eternal Road*.

None of the progress during the past two years would have been possible without the unselfish devotion of the dedicated Board of Trustees. As we embark upon the second phase of this remarkable venture, I want to thank publicly Lys Symonette, Henry Marx, Milton Coleman, Guy Stern, Hal Prince, and Julius Rudel for their efforts and support during this formative time. The list of others who nurtured our work is too long to include, but the advice and concern of Ronald Freed, President of European American Music, and David Drew cannot go unacknowledged. My appreciation to all and hopes for a long and fruitful association in the pursuit of our common goals.



Kim H. Kowalek

REHEARSING "KNICKERBOCKER HOLIDAY" with (l. to r.) Walter Huston, Jane Madden and Maxwell Anderson

Twenty-five years ago: The first issue, a six-page fold-out, appeared in the fall of 1983, edited by Henry Marx. In the years between 1984 and 2001, editor David Farneth built the publication into a veritable "mini-journal" that garnered praise from the press.

Kurt Weill Newsletter Back Issues Online

Beginning with the Spring 2003 issue, we have posted current issues of the Newsletter online. In 2005, we started to place back issues online as well: The years 1996–2007 are currently available as searchable full-text PDF files. In addition, we have listed the tables of contents for all back issues. Direct your internet browser to:
<http://www.kwf.org/pages/newsletter/kwn.html>

Note from the Editor

Anniversaries are distinctly unoriginal events, in the sense that they arrive with deadening regularity. Spontaneous they are not. Yet it is the origin and, in our case, the longevity that we celebrate. Would Henry Marx, the first editor of the *Kurt Weill Newsletter*, have thought that the modest six-page "brochure" produced in the fall of 1983 would be the curtain-raiser to a durable "mini-journal" that is still in print a quarter century later? Twenty-five volumes of the *Newsletter* chronicle the activities of the Kurt Weill Foundation, but also, and more importantly, the activities of countless artists and organizations, writers and publishers, students and teachers that keep the work of Weill alive. We seize the opportunity of this anniversary to look back—and forward: Kim Kowalke, the Foundation's President, has accepted our invitation to revisit the last twenty-five years in this issue. And we ask you, our readers, to voice your opinion.

Keeping Weill's work alive and building its popularity was Lenya's resolve when she established the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc. in 1962. The idea of a foundation that would promote Weill's music is actually older, dating back to the spring of 1951, just a year after Weill's sudden death. John F. Wharton, a trusted attorney and theater expert who had been a founding member of the Playwrights' Company in 1938 (which Weill joined in 1946), discussed with Lenya the possibilities of such a foundation. In a letter of 25 May 1951, he outlined a structure, suggested tasks, and even proposed three names, all very similar to the one eventually adopted. As such, the letter—displayed on our cover—may be the earliest document in the Foundation's "prehistory." There are no documents that tell us why Lenya waited a decade to set up the organization, but we can assume that she thought she could help Weill's memory more effectively with her own artistic contribution. Considering the sheer volume of her activities in the 1950s, it is small wonder that she got "sidetracked."

Lenya's busy schedule also explains why the Foundation's endeavors during her presidency were necessarily limited. Based on recommendations from friends and her own judgment, she awarded scholarships to a number of educational institutions and composers, among them Stefan Wolpe and the young William Bolcom. But as her life came to an end, she took several precautions in an attempt to ensure that the Foundation could operate without her. This was a far cry from (and yet an ironic twist on) the lines sung by the narcissistic hero in *The Firebrand of Florence*, so ingeniously lampooned by Weill and Ira Gershwin as a shameless self-promoter: "To maintain a Cellini Foundation that will keep alive / My memory for generations yet to arrive."

Elmar Juchem

Caring for a Composer

Looking Back on a Quarter Century

by *Kim H. Kowalke*

I had no idea what I was getting into. In early November 1981 I had received a phone call in Los Angeles from Margo Harris, Lenya's friend who was caring for her: "Lenya's dying, and she wants to see you. Can you come to New York? She has to talk to you about the Foundation." I said I'd stop by enroute to the American Musicological Society's annual meeting in Boston the following week. When I arrived at Ms. Harris's apartment, Lenya was alert but alarmingly weak; she had refused morphine that morning so that her mind would be clear. "Kim, I want you to take over the Foundation when I'm gone," she whispered. "I'm leaving everything to the Foundation." I tried to decline politely: "Lenya, I'm deeply honored, but I'm a musicologist and conductor. I know nothing about publishing, copyrights, contracts, and the music business. I'm the wrong person." "You'll learn," she insisted. "You really care, and you're the only one I can trust—you've never asked me for anything. I've made a new will requesting the Board to elect you as my successor as President. Lys will be musical executive." My resolve weakened as Lenya's condition did; I couldn't refuse her under these circumstances. "Is there anything you want me to do for you now," I inquired. "Go out to Brook House in New City and in my second-floor bedroom there's a steel file cabinet that contains all Kurt's and my letters," she instructed. "You'll know what to do with them. Margo will give you the key." But Margo adamantly refused, claiming that everything in the house was being left to her. I had lost the first of countless battles to be waged in the year following Lenya's passing over the controversial deathbed testament—her final act as custodian of Weill's legacy.

Fortunately, upon learning of her terminal cancer diagnosis, Lenya had heeded the advice of Lys Symonette (Weill's musical assistant on Broadway after 1945) and Milton Coleman (Lenya's accountant since the 1950s) to expand and formalize the Foundation's board of trustees, and in September 1980 Harold Prince, Julius Rudel, Guy Stern, and Henry Marx had joined me in accepting Lenya's invitation to become trustees. Having been alarmed by conflicting claims concerning legal misconduct, rumors of confiscated recordings of conversations between Lenya and her executors, and thus the extent to which the will reflected Lenya's stated intentions, three of us now petitioned for a special meeting of the board, which convened eight days after Lenya's death on 27 November. The board elected new officers (including me as President), ascertained that the assets of the Foundation totaled just \$4300 in cash and \$15,000 of AT&T stock (which Lenya had donated previously), and terminated as the Foundation's legal counsel the attorney who was now one of two executors of her estate. When the executors finally filed the will for probate, we learned that the Foundation was actually not the beneficiary of "everything," but rather only future income deriving from the copyrights of Weill's music, which would, however, be administered in perpetuity by the executors. Ms. Harris was indeed bequeathed the contents of both Brook House and Lenya's apartment, as well as the income deriving from the entire residuary estate (along with Lenya's sister in Vienna and a close friend in Hamburg). Yale's Music Library would inherit all musical manuscripts and memorabilia already on deposit there—without any stipulation of the terms of an archival agree-

Kurt Weill Newsletter 1983–2007

The following pages list some of the most important topics and events (performances, publications, recordings, etc.) drawn from the pages of the *Newsletter*.

1983

Foundation offices
open at 142 West
End Avenue,
New York
Yale conference and
festival (2–5
November)



1984

KWF grant program initiated and first
grants awarded
Down in the Valley broadcast on PBS
Yale exhibition of Weill/Lenya archive
Tryout released by DRG Records
Reissues of Lenya recordings:
Dreigroschenoper, *Aufstieg*, *Berlin Theater
Songs*

Lady in the Dark with Gertrude Lawrence
from AEI
Weill biographies
from Jarman,
Schebera
Aufstieg at
Gärtnerplatz
Theater,
Munich



1985

R&H adds *Threepenny Opera* (Blitzstein) to
its catalog
Reissues of *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *One Touch
of Venus*, Lenya song recordings
Comprehensive publishing agreement with
EAM
Arena Stage *Happy End* broadcast on PBS

ment I had negotiated the previous summer on Lenya's behalf. Our new legal counsel recommended that the Foundation contest the will and petition the Surrogate's Court to construe its ambiguities and omissions so as to allow the Foundation to fulfill its chartered mandate to "protect, promote, and perpetuate the legacy of Kurt Weill."

In July 1982 the Foundation emerged from months of court proceedings and private negotiations with the ownership of archival materials related to Weill and Lenya still contained in the dwellings, an agreement with Yale's Music Library, and the right to administer Weill's copyrights (though the executors would continue to collect their commissions in perpetuity as if they were doing so). At the board meeting on 1 September 1982, I could report that the Foundation was now Weill's legal successor in interest, and our real mission could begin in earnest. At the agenda-packed 1982 annual meeting in December, the Board adopted its first annual budget (\$275,000), established a Special Projects Fund, committed itself to creating a grants program, laid plans to obtain the Rita Weill Collection of autograph scores and correspondence, decided to commission a biography of Lenya, and authorized the employment of a part-time secretary and full-time archivist.

I also presented a forty-point proposal for a "long-term activity agenda," overly ambitious if not hopelessly naïve in its aspirations: setting aside royalty income each year for an endowment because copyrights, as a finite "wasting" asset, would not outlive the Foundation's mission; publishing a promotional brochure, a newsletter, and an annual yearbook; establishing a grants program for performance, production, and scholarship related to Weill's works; editing and publishing Weill's music, culminating in a complete critical edition; evaluating all current contractual agreements and whenever possible recapturing copyright assignments, auditing royalty statements for accurate and timely payment, nurturing cooperative relationships with co-owners of copyrights; finding a permanent home for the Foundation suitable to house a projected Weill-Lenya Research Center, which would aspire to "complete documentation," at least in photocopy; sponsoring conferences, symposia, festivals, productions, recordings; serving as the "first call" for information, photographs, program notes; editing, trans-

lating, and publishing Weill and Lenya's literary legacies; founding an international Weill society; initiating prize competitions for young performers, composer/lyricists, scholars; defining the structure and roles of officers, trustees, employees and recruiting incrementally a dedicated full-time staff to implement these programs.

By the fall of 1983, when the first, six-page issue of the semi-annual *Kurt Weill Newsletter* appeared in conjunction with the opening of the Weill-Lenya Research Center in Lincoln Towers and the Weill Symposium/Festival at Yale, the President's Column presented a brief "Profile of the Foundation," including the announcement of the appointment of the first full-time staff member, David Farneth, as Archivist. Over the next two decades that staff would grow steadily with the Foundation's programs and annual operating budget, peaking at eight in anticipation of the Weill centenary celebrations. Although Farneth's eighteen-year tenure would provide a pillar of stable leadership, other key members of the team for at least eight years each included Mario Mercado (1986-1994), Edward Harsh (1992-2000), Brian Butcher (1994-2003), as well as Elmar Juchem (1998-), Carolyn Weber (1998-), and Farneth's erstwhile assistant and then successor, Dave Stein (1994-). The "profile" concluded with acknowledgment of the unselfish dedication of the Board of Trustees, whose membership would remain remarkably stable, with six of Lenya's original appointments eventually serving at least twenty-five years and three continuing as active members today, all unanimously committed to high ideals rather than petty self-interests. The key figures of the formative period of the Foundation's programs were also my principal mentors: Lys Symonette, who had handled so much of Lenya's business correspondence during the seventies and would work indefatigably as both trustee and staff member "für Weill" until her death in 2005; Ronald Freed, President of European American Music, who masterminded consolidation of worldwide publishing arrangements, gave me an almost daily tutorial in copyright law and business affairs, and functioned as the Foundation's advocate and partner; David Drew, who had served as a trustee of the Foundation until 1977, shared his encyclopedic knowledge of Weill's music and reception history, and continues to advise as an honorary trustee.

That first issue of the *Newsletter* also announced "long-term

1986

Lost in the Stars at Long Wharf Theatre and 92nd Street Y (Maurice Levine)

Aufstieg and *Zar* recordings from Capriccio Hal Willner produces *Lost in the Stars*, a

Weill tribute recording

Aufstieg at Scottish Opera

Stratas Sings Weill released by Nonesuch

Strehler directs

Threepenny in Paris

Four Walt Whitman

Songs published

1987

British premiere of

Der Silbersee at

Camden Festival

Foundation moves

to 7 East 20th Street

McDonald's TV ad: "Mac Tonight"

Weill Festival at NYC's Merkin Hall

Dreigroschenoper at Theater des Westens

1957 *Johnny Johnson* recording reissued

One Touch of Venus at Goodspeed Opera House

David Drew's *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* published

A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill (ed. Kim Kowalke) wins ASCAP's Deems



Taylor Award

1988

Aufstieg at Teatro Colon, Buenos Aires

Michael Tilson Thomas records *Seven Deadly Sins, Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* (LSO)

Original Broadway cast album of *Street Scene* reissued

Angelina Réaux in *Stranger Here Myself* at New York Public Theater

1989

Kurt Weill: A Guide to His Works (ed. Mario Mercado) published by EAM

Threepenny Opera revived on Broadway with Sting

Aufstieg in Los Angeles



plans for publication, performance, or recording of such 'lost' works as *Der Kuhhandel*, *Die Bürgschaft*, and *The Eternal Road*." With the release on CD next year of a "complete" *Eternal Road* and a DVD of the Vienna Volksoper *Kuhhandel*, those plans will have taken a full quarter century to come to fruition. But in the interim more than forty new recordings of Weill's "completed" stage works appeared on disc or videogram, seven of them for the very first time and *Die sieben Todsünden* in no fewer than thirteen renditions. Within a single decade the Weill-discography increased five-fold, and today only *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *One Touch of Venus*, and *Love Life* still await such documentation.

By the time the second issue of the *Newsletter* went to press in 1984, it had already become apparent that the cozy alliteration of "protect and promote" camouflaged a dynamic tension between the compound verbs articulating the Foundation's mission. Five theaters (in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Paris, and Bochum) had mounted productions of unauthorized "mish-mash" *Mahagonnys* as plays-with-music, in which Weill's contribution had been either discarded entirely or so mangled as to be unrecognizable. Working in tandem with his publishers, the Foundation had no choice but to adhere to Weill's own precedent, insisting that completed stage works be performed with his music and orchestrations intact. Closing the Bochum production caused particular furor among German spoken-drama theaters; this incident initiated the negative and persisting image of the Foundation as the uninformed American "policeman." My proclamation in the *Newsletter* did nothing to dispel that impression: "Let it be known that poachers and other copyright infringers will be prosecuted with the same vigor with which the Foundation will assist honest revivals of the work. There may be 'nothing you can do to help a dead man,' but Weill's music is still very much alive. It will be protected."

Balancing promotion of Weill's works to the widest possible audiences and performing institutions with protection of their artistic integrity remains a precarious walk on a tightrope, especially as hardly a week goes by without a staff member trying to explain and defend the distinction Weill himself articulated between the "anything goes" policy concerning interpretation of single songs in a popular context and the "present what Weill wrote" mandate for

productions of complete stage works. (That Lenya herself, but only after Weill's death, exercised her unique legal and personal prerogative and frequently recorded the works in uncredited adaptations accommodating her diminished vocal range only complicates matters, as her precedent is continually cited as authoritative license to adapt the works to the performers rather than cast performers capable of meeting the music's demands—most recently last summer in a high-profile production in Madrid.)

By the time Volume 5, no. 1 appeared in 1987, Weill's principal publishers stipulated in every license that his music must be performed in the theater or concert hall without reorchestration, rearrangement, interpolations, or additions. A report from Universal Edition's promotional director that "some of the prohibitions, especially the one in Bochum, exert a permanent influence on the readiness of producers to contemplate staging Weill operas, for the main reason that they are afraid to be involved in copyright problems" prompted me to pen "Is Anyone Minding the Store?" to explain the Foundation's artistic policies, especially in the wake of McDonald's glitzy television and radio advertising campaign promoting the culinary delights of a "Big Mac Tonight" to the strains of the "Moritat": "We urge anyone who disagrees with our policies to engage us in dialogue; and we welcome creativity in performance and production within the limits of the integrity of Weill's music. We will not interfere with productions, performances, or recordings by attempting to enforce 'quality control' beyond adherence to Weill's musical texts." Two decades later staff members continue to recognize, as I had written in 1987, that "times and circumstances do change, so the Foundation considers each case on its own merits, but an argument for tampering with Weill's scores must be very compelling indeed for the Foundation to deviate from the central mission stated in its charter: the protection of Weill's artistic legacy."

A controversy of a very different sort had arisen the previous year in the *Newsletter*, as Richard Taruskin reviewed the Foundation's first scholarly publication, *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*. Hailing a new era of Weill scholarship enabled by "the means to support primary research on Weill and his times on an unprecedented scale," Taruskin advocated exorcising from Weill

WLRC acquires the Hanns and Rita Weill Collection

1990

Weill Festival in Düsseldorf (other festivals at Almeida Theatre, Boston



Aufstieg at Hamburg Staatsoper, Frankfurt Oper, and Maggio Musicale, Florence

Conservatory, Great Lakes Theater Festival (Cleveland)) Maurice Abravanel honored with first Kurt Weill Distinguished Achievement Award

Kurt Weill: Eine Biographie in Texten, Bildern und Dokumenten, by Jürgen Schebera (Engl. version 1995)

BBC broadcast of *Bird of Passage: Kurt Weill in Exile* (performances from Almeida Festival)

Gesammelte Schriften published (eds. Hinton and Schebera)

Hinton's *The Threepenny Opera* published in the Cambridge Opera Handbook Series

Love Life at American Musical Theater Festival, Philadelphia

Berlin im Licht, with HK Gruber and Ensemble Modern, released on Largo Capriccio releases *Happy End, Silbersee, Lindberghflug/Ballad of Magna Carta*

1991

Capriccio Der Jasager/Down in the Valley Ronald Taylor's *Kurt Weill: Composer in a Divided World* published

Two recordings of *Street Scene*: Scottish Opera on Decca (Mauceri) and English National Opera on TER (Davis)

1992

Aufstieg at Staatstheater Stuttgart (cond. Markus Stenz, dir. Ruth Berghaus) *Lost in the Stars* at Boston Lyric Opera Britten-Weill Festival



studies a number of “demons from the old era,” including Brecht, Adorno, Schoenberg, and the Broadway Weill: “as long as we remain shackled, on the one hand, by allegiance to values Weill rejected, and on the other, by our cursed inability to accept as valid a disunified entity, be it a sonatina movement or a life’s work, the American Weill will remain a demon to be locked up in Pandora’s box, or else a blot that disfigures the whole career in retrospect.” Prompting a brilliant retort by David Drew (Volume 5, no. 2), Taruskin responded in turn with an ecstatic review of Drew’s *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (Volume 6, no. 1). Taruskin’s admission that he found himself “far more interested in Weill and his work than I was before” aptly characterizes the sea-change in Weill’s standing at large within the broader world of academic discourse. Committed to enabling scholarship of every persuasion on an international scale, the Weill-Lenya Research Center quickly acquired the reputation of being the “friendliest” of archives, a treasure trove of primary materials, continually augmented with acquisitions such as the Rita Weill/Hanne Holesovsky Collection of manuscripts and correspondence.

Whereas only three doctoral dissertations had focused primarily on Weill prior to 1983, in the intervening decades twenty-five theses have been completed, with almost two-thirds emanating from Europe, where Weill had been virtually a non-entity within academia. The Foundation itself initiated eight volumes, including three editions of *Kurt Weill: A Guide to His Works*, *A Guide to the Weill-Lenya Research Center* (1995), two collections of essays, the award-winning Weill-Lenya correspondence in both English and German (1996, 1998) and the correspondence with his family (2000), *Lenya the Legend* (1998; German 1999), and *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents* (English and German, 2000). The Foundation also collaborated decisively in the preparation and publication of eleven other books during this period and sponsored dozens of symposia and conferences. Weill is no longer a footnote in the history of music and theater in the twentieth century, as he was when I began my dissertation in 1974, when Lenya welcomed my interest by asking what flavor of ice cream I liked when she opened the door to her apartment on East 55th Street for my first meeting as a Yale graduate student with her and David Drew. Now

doctoral seminars focus on Weill, and all but the most “retro” histories of music consider him to be a major figure. In fact, scholarship on Weill and musical theater of the past century have blossomed so rapidly and fruitfully that the Board of Trustees inaugurated the Kurt Weill Prize for Distinguished Scholarship in 1995, with awards now given biennially for both book and article publications.

Three years later, on the occasion of a Weill symposium festival at the Eastman School of Music celebrating the centenary of Lenya’s birth and the arrival of all of Weill’s European autographs published by Universal Edition, the Board authorized the founding of the annual Lotte Lenya Competition for Singers, a contest unique in its repertoire demands and its emphasis on acting as well as singing. Although merely a regional pilot event then, it quickly grew into a major international competition, attracting more than 150 contestants last year from around the globe, with the top prize increasing to \$10,000 in 2008. Previous winners and finalists are now appearing in roles on Broadway and with the most prestigious operatic companies around the world. The Lenya Competition is only the most visible of the Foundation’s programs dedicated to nurturing and abetting performances of Weill’s music, building sturdy bridges to performers, producers, institutions, and audiences, both present and future. In the 1990s, the Foundation self-published a series of five “sourcebooks” to assist producers of Weill’s stage works, and the Weill-Lenya Research Center’s visitors continue to comprise more performers, conductors, directors, and producers than scholars. Since its initiation in 1984, the Foundation’s grant program has disbursed nearly two million dollars in support of performances and productions of Weill’s works, not counting funding of research, subvention of publications, and sponsorship of conferences and symposia.

But perhaps none of the Foundation’s programs reifies the intersection of performance and scholarship more vividly and permanently than the Kurt Weill Edition. In 1990, at its meeting in Marienthal, Germany, following the 90th birthday festival and symposium in Westphalia, the Board of Trustees, acting on the recommendation of the International Advisory Panel and recognizing the urgent need to make Weill’s music available in reliable editions,

at Aldeburgh
Kurt Weill Edition is established

1993

Protagonist/Zar double bill at Santa Fe
Opera

First Kurt Weill Fest in Dessau

Weill’s autograph of the revised Second Act
for *Bürgschaft* surfaces

Lost in the Stars recorded by Rudel and
Orchestra of St. Lukes released on
MusicMasters Classics

Weill-Lenya Research Center awarded
National Endowment for the Humanities
grant (NEH)

1994

NEH grant to Kurt Weill Edition

Lady in the Dark
in inaugural
season of
“Encores!” at
New York City
Center

Houston Grand
Opera *Street
Scene*, travels
to Ludwigshafen and Berlin’s Theater des Westens

Kurt Weill in America (Barrie
Gavin/Kowalke) produced by
Hessischer Rundfunk, Frankfurt
Deutsche Grammophon releases *Die sieben
Todsünden* with Anne-Sofie von Otter
(cond. John Eliot Gardiner)



1995

First Kurt Weill Prize for scholarship in
twentieth-century musical theater
awarded

Love Life at Opera North, Leeds

Houston Grand Opera *Street Scene* broad-
cast on European TV

Kurt Weill Festival organized by Jeunesse
Musicale, Vienna

Lotte Lenya: Ein erfundenes Leben (Gavin)
produced by Hessischer Rundfunk

Dreigroschenoper in Frankfurt (televised)

1996

Weill-Lenya correspondence published (eds.
Symonette / Kowalke), wins ASCAP’s
Deems Taylor Award, *New*

authorized a feasibility study of a complete critical edition of his oeuvre. At its annual meeting in 1991, the Board endorsed the funding, organization, and announcement of the Kurt Weill Edition; in 1992 I appointed the editorial board of David Drew, Stephen Hinton, Giselher Schubert, and myself; the following year the editorial board drafted the editorial principles and commissioned the first nine volumes from outside editors. To date, five volumes and their critical reports have been published, garnering widespread praise and several awards for their graphic excellence and their pathbreaking approach to editing the work of a composer for the theater. Six more volumes are in various stages of preparation, but it's clear that the Kurt Weill Edition will require several more decades to achieve its aspirations to "completeness."

By any standard, the pinnacle of activity and achievement in the first quarter century since Lenya's death was the worldwide observance of the centenary of Weill's birth and the fiftieth anniversary of his death, extending from May 1999 until May 2001, when the Foundation's actual annual operating expenditures exceeded one million dollars for the first time, including more than \$250,000 in grants and prizes. Headlined by major festivals in New York, London, Berlin, Dessau, the centenary celebrations included symposia, conferences, exhibitions, as well as performances and recordings of all but a handful of Weill's compositions. Weill's musical legacy enjoyed the luxury of being heard virtually complete, probably for the very first time. No period in the history of Weill reception had witnessed so wide or thorough a reassessment of his works and their significance.

The 2006 annual meeting of the Board of Trustees marked yet another milestone in the Foundation's history: 25 years since the troubling days following Lenya's death, when the Foundation's future was anything but certain, its assets all but negligible, and its agenda unformulated beyond the vague "protect and promote" clause of its charter. I was surprised to find in retrospect that the 40-point "Outline of Activity Agenda" presented in 1982 had, in the interim, been implemented to a degree beyond any expectations I might originally have entertained. I suggested in my annual report to the Board last year that "in taking stock of what we've accomplished, we can all be very proud, but we can't be complacent. With

such success come new opportunities, obligations, and issues." I therefore proposed that they and the staff collectively embark on a major "strategic planning" initiative, which I tentatively dubbed "KWF: The Next Quarter Century." That process is now well underway, with the staff "retreating" last September to evaluate current programs and to imagine future goals, needs, and initiatives. The Board will consider that report at its annual meeting this December and meet mid-year in 2008 to continue the process, which will have to take account that in 2020 the majority of Weill's works will fall into the public domain throughout much of the world and royalty income will decline precipitously. Will the Foundation's endowment be sufficient to enable it to continue its core mission beyond 2020 and what should the priorities be? Should we now (reflecting my Minnesota farm background) make hay while the sun shines and expand programs? What new programs should be initiated? Should the Foundation now broaden its initiatives beyond Weill- and Lenya-specific projects?

We invite the readers of the *Newsletter* to participate in this process, critiquing the Foundation's programs and policies during the previous quarter century and suggesting expansions, alternatives, and new approaches. (Feel free to do so anonymously, addressing your ideas to anyone on the staff or the Board.) Caring for the composer is our common bond.

Kurt Weill



Johnny Johnson at Theater des Westens
Silbersee in Dessau
Silbersee at the BBC Proms
Tamara Levitz's *Teaching New Classicality*
(on Busoni's master class) published
First volume of Kurt Weill Edition is published (*Dreigroschenoper* facsimile)

York Times "Notable Book of the Year," and *Financial Times* "Book of the Year"
One Touch of Venus (with Melissa Er-rico) at New York City Center's "Encores!"

1997

EMI release of *Kurt Weill on Broadway* (featuring Thomas Hampson; cond. John McGlinn)
Lady in the Dark at Royal National Theatre, London
Seven Deadly Sins at New York City Opera
Berlin Philharmonic records Symphony no. 2 and Violin Concerto (Frank Peter Zimmerman) for EMI
September Songs: The Music of Kurt Weill released (prod. Hal Willner)
Erato releases complete recording of *Johnny Johnson*

1998

First Lotte Lenya Competition for Singers
Lenya, the Legend: A Pictorial Autobiography

published (ed. Farneth)
Lenya's complete recordings released on an 11-CD set by Bear Family
Bürgschaft in Bielefeld
Aufstieg at Salzburg Festival
Jay Records/TER releases *Lady in the Dark* (London cast)



1999

Der Weg der Verheißung (cond. Mauceri) in Chemnitz, travels subsequently to New York, Hannover, Tel Aviv
Bürgschaft at Spoleto Festival USA (cond.

Books Produced by the Foundation (or with extensive Foundation participation)

A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill, ed. Kim H. Kowalke (Yale University Press, 1986)

Lenya: A Life by Donald Spoto (Little, Brown, 1989)

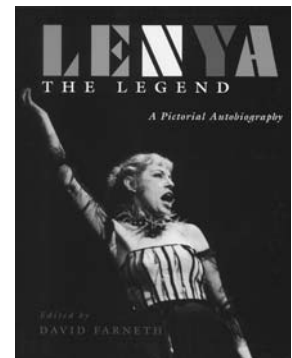
Kurt Weill: A Guide to his Works, 1st ed. (Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 1989; 3rd ed. 2002)

Kurt Weill: Musik und Theater: Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Stephen Hinton and Jürgen Schebera (Henschelverlag, 1990; revised and expanded edition: Schott, 2000)



Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya, ed. and trans. Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (University of California Press, 1996; German edition: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1998)

Lenya, the Legend: A Pictorial Autobiography, ed. David Farneth (Overlook, 1998; German edition: Könemann, 1999)



Kurt Weill: Auf dem Weg zum "Weg der Verheißung", ed. Guy Stern and Helmut Loos (Rombach, 1999)



Vom Kurfürstendamm zum Broadway: Kurt Weill (1900–1950), ed. Bernd Kortländer, Winrich Meiszies, and David Farneth (Droste, 1990)

A Stranger Here Myself: Kurt Weill Studien, ed. Kim H. Kowalke and Horst Edler (Olms, 1993)

A Guide to the Weill-Lenya Research Center, ed. David Farneth, John Andrus, and Dave Stein (Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 1995)



Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents, ed. David Farneth, Elmar Juchem, and Dave Stein (Overlook, 2000; German edition: Ullstein, 2000)

Briefe an die Familie (1914–1950) by Kurt Weill, ed. Lys Symonette and Elmar Juchem (Metzler, 2000)

Kurt Weill: Briefwechsel mit der Universal Edition, ed. Nils Grosch (Metzler, 2002)

Rudel, dir. Jonathan Eaton)



Firebrand of Florence at Ohio Light Opera
One Touch of Venus in Freiburg
Silbersee released on RCA
Warner Bros. publishes *Kurt Weill Songs: A Centennial Anthology* (2 vols.)

2000

Major Weill festivals in London, Berlin, and New York
BBC Symphony Orchestra's "Kurt Weill

Weekend"

Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents (eds. Farneth/Juchem/Stein) published in English and German (*Süddeutsche Zeitung's* "Book of the Month" award)
Concert *Firebrand of Florence* in Vienna
"Musical Stages": Weill exhibition at Berlin's Akademie der Künste
Die Dreigroschenoper (KWE Ser. 1, vol. 5) published; wins Paul Revere Award for Graphic Excellence
BMG releases *Dreigroschenoper* with HK Gruber and Ensemble Modern (following the text of the critical edition)
EMI releases *Bürgschaft* (cond. Rudel)
Gesammelte Schriften (eds. Hinton and Schebera), expanded and revised edition published

Pascal Huyhn's *Kurt Weill, ou, La conquête des masses* published
Juchem's *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson* published

2001

Lady in the Dark in Philadelphia and Palermo
Aufstieg at Hamburg Staatsoper (cond. Metzmacher, dir. Konwitschny)
Street Scene at Chicago Lyric Opera and Minnesota Opera
Weill's *Briefe an die Familie* (family correspondence) published (eds. Symonette and Juchem)



Complete Recordings of Weill's Stage Works

before 1983:

Die Dreigroschenoper
Happy End
Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny
Der Jasager

Die sieben Todsünden

Johnny Johnson
Lady in the Dark

since 1983:

Zaubernacht
Der Protagonist
Royal Palace
Der Zar lässt sich photographieren
Die Dreigroschenoper
Happy End
Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny
Der Jasager
Die Bürgschaft
Der Silbersee
Die sieben Todsünden
Der Kuhhandel
The Eternal Road
Johnny Johnson
Lady in the Dark
The Firebrand of Florence
Street Scene
Lost in the Stars



MGM recording of *Johnny Johnson*, released 1957



Erato recording of *Johnny Johnson*, released 1997

RCA Red Seal releases *Charming Weill* dance band arrangements (featuring Max Raabe and the Palast Orchester; cond. Gruber)
Decca Broadway reissues original cast album of *Lost in the Stars*

2002

Protagonist released on Capriccio (cond. Mauceri)
“Making Music Theater”: Weill exhibition at Lincoln Center
Les sept péchés capitaux at Paris Opera
Bürgschaft and *Johnny Johnson* in Dessau



Zaubernacht released on Capriccio
Weill-UE correspondence published (ed. Nils Grosch)
Foster Hirsch's *Kurt Weill on Stage* published

2003

Firebrand of Florence released on Capriccio (BBC Symphony Orchestra; cond. Davis), wins 2004 Echo Klassik award
Eternal Road (excerpts) released on Naxos
Dreigroschenoper in Hannover
Happy End at Shaw



Festival
Seven Deadly Sins in Cincinnati
Threepenny Opera in Williamstown and London's National Theatre
Zaubernacht in Dessau and Düsseldorf

2004

Bregenz Festival features *Protagonist*, *Royal Palace*, and *Kuhhandel*
Royal Palace and *Der neue Orpheus* released on Capriccio (cond. Davis)
Ricarda Wackers's *Dialog der Künste* (Weill/Goll collaboration) published



Dissertations on Weill

before 1983:

United States (2)
Austria (1)

Total: 3

since 1983:

Germany (10)
United States (9)
Austria (2)
France (2)
Canada (1)
Sweden (1)

Total: 25



Weill's fair copy of "The Good Earth," lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein

Autograph Music Manuscripts Discovered or Acquired Since 1983

The Ballad of Magna Carta, vocal score, donated by publisher in 1984

Der Protagonist, draft, purchased in 1985

"Surabaya-Johnny," draft, purchased in 1988

Hanns and Rita Weill Collection, purchased in 1989, early music manuscripts:

"Abendlied" and "Maikaterlied"

"Gebet"

"Ich weiß wofür"

Intermezzo

"Mi addir" and "Es blühen zwei flammende Rosen"

Ofrabs Lieder

"Sehnsucht"

Cello Sonata, first movement

"Die stille Stadt"

String Quartet in B minor

Suite for Orchestra in E Major

"Melodram" from *Die Dreigroschenoper*, sketch, purchased in 1992

Die Bürgschaft, full score, revisions of Act II, color copy donated by Universal Edition in 1993

String Quartet in B Minor, fair copy of full score, purchased in 1995

"Your Technique," vocal score, purchased in 1995

"The Good Earth," vocal score, donated by Carolyn Abravanel in 1995

Mann ist Mann, full score, two numbers from incidental music, purchased in 1996

"Das schöne Kind," vocal score, purchased in 1997

Die sieben Todsünden, fair copy vocal score, photocopy donated by private owner in 2005

Die sieben Todsünden, draft, color copy donated by Edward James Foundation in 2005

Dreigroschenoper in Hamburg with Ulrich Tukur (televised)

Aufstieg in Nuremberg

Unsung Weill: 22 Songs Cut from Broadway and Hollywood published

Chamber Music (KWE Ser. II, vol. 1) published; wins Paul Revere Award

2005

Weill's draft of *Die sieben Todsünden* surfaces

Aufstieg at Dresden Staatsoper, Darmstadt, and Bari

One Touch of Venus at Opera North



Concert *Firebrand of Florence* and *Happy End* in Dessau

Symphonies Nos. 1 & 2 released on Naxos (cond. Marin Alsop)

2006

Threepenny Opera revived on Broadway with Alan Cumming

Weill's lost orchestration of *Zaubernacht* surfaces

Aufstieg at Komische Oper Berlin

Dreigroschenoper at Berlin's Admiralspalast (dir. Brandauer)

First English-language recording of *Happy*



End released on Ghostlight Records

Lady in the Dark: Biography of a Musical by Bruce McClung published

2007

LoveMusik, a musical retelling of the story of Weill and Lenya, opens on Broadway (book Alfred Uhry, dir. Harold Prince)

Aufstieg at Los Angeles Opera, Opera Boston, and Spoleto Festival USA

Dreigroschenoper in Frankfurt (televised) *Dreigroschenoper* at Berliner Ensemble (dir. Wilson)

LA *Aufstieg* television broadcast, DVD release by EuroArts

LoveMusik cast album released on Ghostlight Records

Letters

I thought readers of the *Kurt Weill Newsletter* might be interested to learn that on 30 July 2007, a lavishly illustrated feature story of the German newspaper *die tageszeitung (taz)* announced a new claimant for the authorship of “Mack the Knife.” When just about every possible witness has passed away, the sensationalist report sported the headline, “And they keep it out of sight—The melody of ‘Mack the Knife’ is not by Kurt Weill after all, but by a composer from the Saarland. According to his daughter.”

Thus we have increased the number of pretenders rivaling Weill from two to three. One of them, obviously, has been the happy-go-whistle Brecht, but for many years the Berlin-based manufacturer of barrel organs, Giovanni Bacigalupo, has been a contender as well, albeit in the category of an improbable also-ran. These two have now been joined by Albert Niklaus from the small German state of Saarland. His daughter, the pianist Angelika Bronnec from the town of St. Ingbert, has opened the family archive and thrown her hat into the ring. If the accuracy of the *taz* article by Robert Ackermann is any indicator for the plausibility of her hypothesis, she ought to retrieve her headwear quickly, as too many factual errors appear in a few short paragraphs: In 1927, according to Bronnec, her father wrote a little advertising tune for a song contest held by the Bemberg company, a manufacturer of hosiery in Berlin. When Niklaus saw *Die Dreigroschenoper* two years later, more or less coincidentally, at Berlin’s Kroll-Oper, he recognized “his” melody in “Moritat.” How could Weill have known of his unpublished tune? Weill’s close confidant, Richard Tauber, who had chaired the jury of the contest, must have given Weill the manuscript. So Bronnec’s story goes.

But *Die Dreigroschenoper* was not performed at Berlin’s Kroll-Oper in 1929, in fact, it was never performed in that house. What *was* performed there was Weill’s suite of the stage work, *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, whose premiere was conducted by Otto Klemperer on 7 February 1929. It is absurd to state that the star tenor Richard Tauber had been a close friend of Weill’s. The two probably never met, at least no documentary evidence survives that they did. Could it be that the daughter (and her don’t-bother-with-fact-checking reporter) confused the operetta tenor with a man who

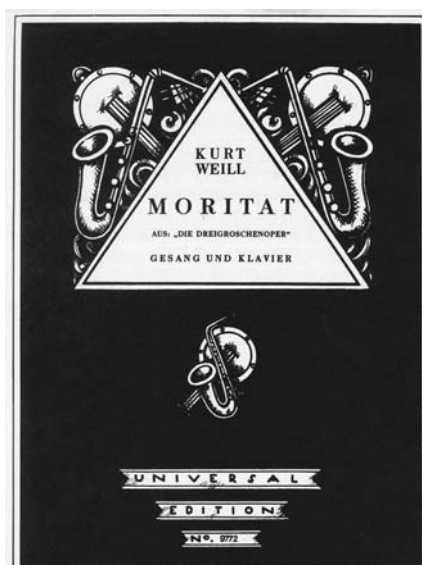
participated in the premiere of *Dreigroschenoper* and who would eventually carry the nickname “Barrikadentauber”—Ernst Busch? Brecht, by the way, didn’t think too highly of Tauber: when he worked with Fritz Kortner on a film version of *I Pagliacci*, he suggested the operetta star for the role of a deaf-mute.

What’s sickening, however, is the statement that Albert Niklaus and his daughter had to give up “their rights” to the song, because “the Weill family, now residing in the United States,” is “very influential” over there. Did it elude the *taz* that Weill and Lenya were driven out of Germany by Hitler and the Nazis? Did the paper not know that they had no children, and there is no immediate family in the U.S.? Were they led to believe that Sanford Weill, the former CEO and Chairman of Citigroup Inc., was somehow related to Kurt Weill? (He’s not.)

Just as wide of the mark must be the claim that the song by Niklaus was composed for a “Berlin hosiery company,” because there was no such company in Berlin that hosted a songwriter contest. The Bemberg AG, an internationally-known company for hosiery, was based in Wuppertal-Oberbarmen (more than five hundred kilometers west of Berlin) and enjoyed fame for a technological innovation in the fashion business: the production of rayon, or artificial silk. No less than Marlene Dietrich and her famous legs appeared in advertisements for the company.

But cutting to the chase, a musical analysis of the sketch, which the *taz* thankfully but uncritically printed in facsimile, makes any remaining basis for the claim crumble. Not even the intervals of the four-note opening motif are the same: Whereas Weill’s melody has a minor third followed by a whole step (e–g–a), Albert’s tune has a major third followed by a half step (c–e–f). Moreover, Weill’s third note a, falling on a downbeat, appears as his signature *sixte ajoutée* on a C-major chord; Albert’s f, on the other hand, falls on an an-minor chord. The rhythm also differs radically from Weill’s. Therefore, the *taz* didn’t unearth a case of plagiarism but gave voice to a spurious claim backed by nothing than faulty memory and “evidence” that proves the contrary. So who’s next? “Oh, the line forms on the right, dear . . .”

ULRICH FISCHER
Frankfurt am Main



“Moritat,” published
by Universal Edition
in June 1929

First page of sheet
music edition pub-
lished by Universal

Books

Ein Aпарter im Unaparten: Untersuchungen zum Songstil von Kurt Weill

Tobias Faßhauer

Saarbrücken: Pfau Verlag, 2007, 204 pp.
ISBN 978-3-89727-333-7

What makes Weill's music distinctive? The title of Tobias Faßhauer's published dissertation suggests an answer, albeit one that is hard to translate into English. Containing the substantivized form of the German word "apart" (an adjective that refers to a quality of singularity and/or attractiveness, whether in people or in things) as well as its somewhat unidiomatic opposite "unapart" (i.e., neither singular nor attractive), the phrase "Ein Aпарter im Unaparten" captures the paradoxical image of Weill as a composer whose music trades in the ordinary but nonetheless manages to stand out. To convey the gist with the English cognate of the German word, Weill could be described as being "a class apart." The title is in fact a quotation, taken from theater critic Alfred Kerr's review of the premiere of the "play with music" *Happy End*, though the reader unfamiliar with Kerr's piece will have to wait until the book's last page to discover the title's origin.

Faßhauer cites Kerr by way of summarizing the findings of his study, which pertains less to Weill's music as a whole than to his "song style" quite specifically, as the book's subtitle indicates. *Happy End* is accordingly celebrated as a work with some of the most distinctive exemplars of that style. Of the two numbers singled out for analysis in a separate chapter, "Surabaya Johnny" (from *Happy End*) and "Der Kanonensong" (from *Die Dreigroschenoper*), the former claims the most space. Faßhauer is hardly alone in expressing an evident preference for the music composed between 1927 and 1933, the years of Weill's collaborations with Bertolt Brecht. What is unprecedented in his account, however, is the extent of the analytical detail he supplies, detail that is both aesthetic and, above all, specifically musical.

Faßhauer's analysis of harmonic language, chiefly in the Weill-Brecht works, seems to pick up where Ian Kemp's 1973 article on "Harmony in Weill" (*Tempo* no. 104) left off. In the memorable conclusion to that article, which sought to identify salient features of the song style, Kemp alluded to Weill's distinctiveness as something manifested in the large rather than the small. "While it is relatively easy," Kemp asserted, "to devise a 4-bar *incipit* that could be mistaken for genuine Weill," he also warned that "any attempt to develop it into a complete musical form, however small, would reveal the absence of the qualities peculiar to his mastery." Imitators beware! Extending his warning to music theorists, Kemp continued: "Although certain of his technical secrets may seem to defy analysis, one can detect in his harmonic control of short and of extended forms a reflection of the characteristics found in the harmonic details." Such large-scale formal "secrets" are indeed things Faßhauer seeks to uncover in his definition of the song style, particularly in the extended analysis of "Surabaya Johnny," where he



writes, for example, about "the formula for alteration from major to minor [*Vermollung*]" as "the main motif" of the song "both in a structural and an affective-cum-gestic sense" (p. 177). Such elements combined with other local harmonic details not only contribute to the distinctiveness of the style, as Faßhauer understands it; they constitute, he argues, "a closed (if by no means hermetic) system" (p. 10).

Yet if Weill's song style constitutes such a closed system, why is it "by no means hermetic?" Because, Faßhauer emphasizes at several points, the compositional techniques are based on "rejuvenating used vernacular musical material" (e.g., p. 10, *passim*). The *Vermollungsformel* just described is a case in point; it "also contains the traditional topos of suffering conveyed by the falling half-tone." Hence the appropriateness of Kerr's remark about Weill as an "Aпарter im Unaparten," but also of Adorno's review of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, whose aesthetic values quite obviously inform Faßhauer's own. As one would expect in a published dissertation, Faßhauer builds his case for defining the song style in dialogue with previous writers. In this regard, Adorno is no more spared from scrupulous critical reception than are more recent authors. All major Weill scholars are there, their arguments closely scrutinized, and more often than not found wanting.

In what ways, however, does Faßhauer's desire for systematic rigor move the discourse forward? Not only, according to him, do Weill's compositional techniques constitute a closed musical system. The system exists "as something quite unique in Weill's oeuvre" (p. 10). Both of these assertions deserve scrutiny. The distinctiveness of the song style vis-à-vis the remainder of the oeuvre is, of course, an old theme of Weill reception. And Faßhauer would be the first to admit, indeed does admit, that his attempt to define the musical language of the song style relies on a conception of style that recent studies have tended to abandon. To that extent, his analyses may proceed from a premise similar to Kemp's, but they do so against the background of a scholarly landscape that has utterly changed in the intervening three or so decades. Where other writers have talked in recent years about Weill's musical language in terms of "theater style" and "genre style," Faßhauer claims validity for the concept of "personal style," if only for the six-year period in question. "We are dealing," he writes, "with an individual

structural characteristic that has been found wanting, whether rightly or not, in the ‘American Weill’” (p. 50). He refers to Weill-Brecht works, again drawing on Adorno, as belonging to the “surrealist period,” after which “the attitude toward vernacular musical material changes.” He believes the question of Weill’s putatively distinct artistic identities is relevant but only to the extent that Weill research tends to address it “by obstructing from view Weill’s compositional craft in the narrower sense [*Tonsatz im engeren Sinne*]” (p. 50). For this reason he mostly rejects the work of scholars who focus their attention on the composer’s appropriation of diverse idioms throughout his career, both during the six-year period in question and beyond, arguing that it leans too far in the direction of dramaturgical or even metadramatic justification. His approach also entails arguing on occasion against Weill himself, whose commentaries talk about style more in terms of dramaturgically informed options than as a matter of personal artistic identity. Rather than explore interpretively the interplay of dramatic context, verbal text, and the panoply of musical means employed, Faßhauer attempts to capture the distinctive features of Weill’s harmonic practice with music-theoretic terminology, for the most part with the vocabulary of tonal harmonic function, as if the system of the composer’s individual language codified in this way amounted to a kind of sonic DNA. Of course it doesn’t; musical analysis is not a scientific discourse but a critical one.

Unlike Beethoven with his traditional three periods, Weill is presented here as having only one (Faßhauer’s “surrealist period”) in which the concept of a personal style properly applies. The lessons of Beethoven research are nonetheless pertinent. Individual style periods serve a heuristic purpose; they are critical constructs, not unassailable facts. Analysis of individual works is unlikely to confirm the validity of the posited demarcations so much as qualify it. In Beethoven’s case, leading scholars were eventually compelled by reflecting on the evidence to add a fourth period. On various levels, the critical enterprise reflects the principle behind Faßhauer’s definition of the song style: the specific comes into tension with the general. Faßhauer’s concrete analysis of Weill’s harmony identifies “surreal” features, usually defined as tonally functional sonorities and perceived as at once traditional and innovative. Yet they are only features of the style, not the style itself, which would require other analytical parameters in order to be captured in all its individuality. One of those parameters, rarely brought to bear here, is voice-leading, which arguably both generates the harmonies singled out in Faßhauer’s stylistic taxonomy and is responsible for the kind of elusive large-scale coherence alluded to by Kemp in his 1973 article. Another parameter, again seldom part of the analyses, is what Weill called the *Klangbild* or “sonic image” of his music, namely instrumentation, an indispensable part of Weill’s stylistic individuality throughout his career. All of these things, not just the harmonic functions, belong to a discussion of material and its rejuvenation.

Defining musical material is no simple matter. Faßhauer’s ideas about the rejuvenation of vernacular material are indebted not only to Adorno’s interpretation of the song style as a form of “musical surrealism” but also to the more fundamental notion of a historical tendency of material. Accordingly the “surrealist” Weill is also the historically progressive Weill, however much Adorno may have distanced himself from his initial enthusiasm. But as Faßhauer writes in his concluding “Epilog”: “What can be learned from Weill is less the concrete compositional technique of material rejuvenation than a particular fundamental attitude manifested therein toward the situation of musical language [*musiksprachliche Wirklichkeit*]” (p. 196).

In other words, the song style needs to be understood in terms of innovative technical procedures and also as an underlying aesthetic. Ultimately the two are different, complementary faces of the same stylistic coin. Technical analysis of harmony remains too specific and necessarily partial: too specific, because harmony is only one of several sonic parameters that define Weill’s music, perhaps more signature than style; necessarily partial, because the “absolute” sonic forces embodied in the functional harmonic relations fail to capture the affective dimension of their significance as “language.” Of particular relevance here is Faßhauer’s discussion of Weill’s much-cited description of the music of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* as “composition according to purely musical laws [*Gestaltung nach rein musikalischen Gesetzen*].” The extent to which the laws invoked by that opera and other works of the period are amenable to the systematizing taxonomies yielded by harmonic and other technical analysis (Faßhauer’s “*Tonsatz im engeren Sinne*”) will define the ultimate success of studies such as this, not only of the song style but of Weill’s oeuvre as a whole. There will no doubt be readers for whom the “purely musical” embraces the symbolic and affective dimensions of music and who may find Faßhauer’s analytical approach too narrow. Yet they, too, stand to benefit from his spirited engagement with Weill scholarship, especially if they are inclined to accommodate the critical perspectives under discussion as complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

Stephen Hinton
Stanford University

Videos

The 3Penny Opera

Feature Film by G.W. Pabst
(1931)

The Criterion Collection 405

The special features on the Criterion Collection's first-rate double-disc presentation of G.W. Pabst's 1931 film of *The Threepenny Opera* emphasize the battles for creative control of highly slippery material. A 48-minute documentary, "Brecht vs. Pabst: The Transformation of *The Threepenny Opera*," sets playwright against filmmaker while also recalling the territorial wars between Brecht and Weill during their collaboration on the original 1928 musical. The audio commentary by Brecht scholar David Bathrick and Pabst specialist Eric Rentschler casts Brecht and Pabst as strong-willed adversaries who nonetheless had more in common than is usually recognized or than either would likely have been willing to admit.

But the most crucial match the commentaries reveal may be the one Brecht fought against himself. If the film betrays the original theatrical hit, as both Brecht and Weill claimed in their famous court case against Nero Films (filed as the film was in production), it is because Brecht



Odette Florelle (left) and Carola Neher, who played Polly Peachum in the French and German versions of the film, respectively. Photo: Casparius

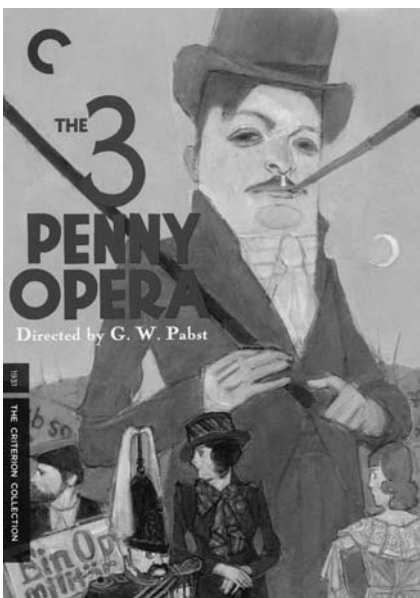
changed his mind about what he wanted the piece to say.

Dismissing the original as a bourgeois divertissement and enflamed by his recent conversion to Marxism, Brecht violated the terms of his contract with Nero—the company wanted a faithful recreation of the play—by radically altering the third act. Instead of being rescued from the gallows and rewarded with a knighthood, as in the play, Macheath, aided by Polly, who has become an ingenious capitalist, and in league with Tiger Brown, the corrupt chief of police, and Jonathan Peachum, the hypocritical beggar king, takes over a bank. And as a result the similarity between criminals and capitalists becomes the work's dominant theme.

While indeed their intention had been simply to reproduce the play on film, Pabst and his three screenwriters, Leo Lania, Ladislaus Vajda, and Béla Balázs, became seduced by Brecht's leftist politics. Though they were unable to work with Brecht as a collaborator, they incorporated many of the suggestions in his treatment, and their film is far more Brechtian than the contentious writer would ever have conceded. In all the special features Brecht emerges as a wily, unyielding, charismatic self-promoter, as tyrannical and as fearsome as his famous criminal anti-hero. Like Macheath he was clearly a commanding personality who could force others to bend to his will, whether they wanted to or not. (Consider the outrageous royalty contract he concoct-

ed for *The Threepenny Opera* under the terms of which he would receive 62.5% while Elisabeth Hauptmann, his ill-used translator who was almost certainly far more than that, got only 12.5% and Weill received a mere 25%.) Brecht's autocratic methods are recalled in the audio commentary in which Bathrick and Rentschler assess the ways in which the film conforms to or betrays the master's dictates.

A dispassionate viewing of Pabst's adaptation indicates, however, that by and large Brecht really had little to grumble about, ideologically speaking. But in converting a stylized play into an audience-friendly film that would have a chance of recouping its record-high cost, the director at almost every point violates Brecht's theories of alienation (which had hardly been developed by 1931 anyway). Where Brecht and Weill constructed their musical through a separation of elements, splitting the story into fragments, setting the musical numbers before a half-curtain, and devising ways to break or undermine the audience's desire to identify with the characters, Pabst favors unity and continuity. Where Brecht and Weill placed their scenes in semi-abstract settings, Pabst, one of the leading filmmakers in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement and a realist at heart, creates the illusion of a more or less real world. Fritz Arno Wagner's inquisitive, smoothly tracking camera, which achieves a kind of mobility rare for the early sound era, surveys the solid studio-built streets and inte-



riors of Victorian-era Soho. The warehouse where Macheath and Polly are married, filled with gleaming objects Macheath's gang has pilfered; the overstuffed brothel Macheath visits with obsessive regularity; Peachum's emporium stocked with costumes and props for his mob of beggars—each setting is rendered with a specificity and richness Brecht would have shunned. Underlining the film's leitmotifs of masquerade, illusion, and duplicity, visual signifiers such as mirrors, statues, windows, and staircases are given a prominence not attainable (and not sought) in the epic theater.

In transforming a deeply theatrical work into a fluid, realistic film, Pabst also strips the performers of Brechtian detachment and artifice. Rudolf Forster's Macheath, for instance, is less stylized than the usual stage interpreters of the role; he's more self-contained, less swaggering, but no less lethal. The anti-psychological flavor of Brechtian theater is by no means entirely abolished, but the actors, including Carola Neher as a fierce Polly and Lotte Lenya as a vengeful Jenny, seem to have more of an inner life and are more fully motivated than Brecht likely would have permitted.

Brechtian performance style is nonetheless honored in the musical numbers, in which actors talk-sing the lyrics with wry objectivity. But Weill's incomparably jaunty, abrasive, insinuating score is used so sparingly and intermittently that it does not play a central role. The few remaining musical numbers—fully half of the score is sacrificed—are knitted into the fabric of the story world rather than, as in the original, providing almost continuous interruption and comment. And in the few instances where music does cut across the narrative grain, as in the street singer's brief, direct-address interpolations, it seems like a conceptual discard, left over from another version of the material. Pabst's *Threepenny Opera*, shimmering with menace and invective, is a great film, but it is far from being a full-blown musical. Weill may have won his case against Nero (the court decreed that every note in the film's scoring would be his), but in the kind of ironic turnabout that is at heart of the fabled show itself, the composer's original status as the work's co-author has been seriously compromised.

An added and valuable feature of the Criterion offering is the inclusion of Pabst's French version, *L'opéra de quat'*

sous, shot at the same time on the same sets with a different cast. (An 18-minute video essay by film historian Charles O'Brien points out the differences between the two versions.) The French actors perform in a notably lighter vein; the images are consistently brighter; and in French, Brecht and Weill lose something of their Berlin bark. The material doesn't land with the same weight. Clearly, more is at stake in the German version. Containing elements of both *Neue Sachlichkeit* and Expressionism (there are reminiscences in the mise-en-scène of *Joyless Street* as well as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*), the film takes its place in a distinguished national cinema tradition. But it is also laced with eerie premonitions of the coming apocalypse. In particular, the image of the gullible, unruly beggars marching angrily on Queen Victoria's coronation and then disappearing into the shadows has chilling implications.

This celebrated 1931 film comes near the end of many things: the first era of great German filmmaking; the Weimar Republic, hurtling nonstop toward Nazi takeover; and Pabst's status as a major director. Only two important films, *Kameradschaft* and *L'Atlantide*, were to follow before the Nazi eclipse. Pabst's prestige as well as his artistry—after brief periods in France and America, the filmmaker returned to Nazi Austria—seemed to evaporate into the darkness that engulfs his mob of masquerading beggars.

Given the historical fact that when they banned the film in 1933 the Nazis also destroyed the negative, the clarity and crispness of the DVD that Criterion presents, mastered from surviving archival materials at the Bundesarchiv in Germany, is astonishing. The faint hiss on the sound track, however, reminds us of the age of this landmark film that in the end is truer, more generous, to Brecht than to Weill.

Foster Hirsch
New York



Director Pabst (second from left) with sound engineer Adolf Jansen (far left), Rudolf Forster as Macheath (center), Reinhold Schünzel as Tiger Brown, and Carola Neher as Polly. Photo: Casparius

Foster Hirsch is the author of *Kurt Weill on Stage: From Berlin to Broadway*. His biography, *Otto Preminger: The Man Who Would Be King*, has just been published by Knopf.

Recordings

LoveMusik

Original Cast Recording

Ghostlight Records 8-4425

On Saturday, 12 May 2007 I joined the crowd milling in front of Manhattan's Biltmore Theatre. They were there in hopes of seeing *LoveMusik*, but their hopes had been dashed. Not only was Donna Murphy—star of the show, cast in the indispensable role of Lotte Lenya—indisposed that night, so was another cast member; therefore no show. Sadness filled the air, also frustration; I was due on a home-ward-bound plane the next morning. The crowd was there to get its money back; I, who had been offered freebies, couldn't even demand such amenity.

Now, at least, there is the inevitable original-cast disc, nicely annotated, with a full synopsis for those like (alas!) myself denied memories of the show itself. It joins a considerable heritage of "Berlin to Broadway" programs of varied provenance; the lives and loves of Kurt and Lenya make for glowing copy, with terrific music to match. My own memories are set aglow: Lenya in one such show at the Theater de Lys, cheered by the audience on a birthday occasion—75? 80? ageless?—taking a fall headfirst into the cake; at the other end, a pathetic attempt at a similar revue, when the Foundation had denied access to the actual music, with ersatz, pseudo-Weill songs by a certain Rhonda Kess at the Los Angeles County Museum, that played a single night.

Interestingly the new show and, therefore, the new disc, becomes a mix of chronologies. Its story line, in Alfred Uhry's script drawn from *Speak Low (When You Speak Love)*, the treasury of Kurt and Lenya's letters, does tell their story reasonably straight: Kurt and Lenya meet, love, split, regroup, etc., and there is enough dialogue linking the songs on the disc to create the illusion of the ongoing stage play. For the choice of songs, however, collaborators Uhry and Harold Prince chose another path, a gathering from across nearly a quarter-century of Kurt Weill's musical genius, shuffled into the plotline with no regard for date or locale of compo-

sition, the "Alabama-Song" of 1928 paired with a 1941 number from *Lady in the Dark*.

Does it work? For the most part, the contrast between "their" Weill and "ours" isn't all that bad; the one shock is to find "Surabaya Johnny" between a couple of jokey American numbers, but that song has the power to annihilate anything within earshot anyway, and Murphy does deliver it mightily.

What we have here is a Berlin-to-Broadway—and-Beyond odyssey, superior of its kind (vastly so, in fact), set forth with loving verisimilitude. If you know the voice of Kurt Weill from the old discs—the *Where Do We Go from Here?* promo disc most notably (released on LP and CD as *Tryout*)—you'll recognize that tremulous quaver instantly in the Weill of Michael Cerveris and instantly wonder: can this be the overpowering perpetrator, greedy for his next meaty stew, of last year's *Sweeney Todd* bloodbath? To verify the rightness of Donna Murphy's Lenya you may need to think back past the "several octaves below laryngitis" (her words) of the very *very* last years. Come to think of it, the quaver in Cerveris' nicely controlled tremolo today is spectacularly close to the unsupported vibrato in the sound of Lenya—and most of her *Threepenny* and *Mahagonny* colleagues—on those old discs. (Unthinkable



thought: will Cerveris become the next Lenya?)

David Pittu as a snarling Brecht, and John Scherer as Lenya's suave significant other George Davis, fill their space adequately; Judith Blazer as one of Brecht's "women" manages the haunting "Nannas Lied" without dimming memories of Teresa Stratas (as who could?).

Not a single owner of this splendid disc but will regret something or other of Weill's not included or included to excess. Having been denied access to the show itself (see above), I'm not sure how I feel about an omnium-gatherum number called "The Illusion Wedding Show," or whether I understand how anyone could countenance the omission of "What Good Would the Moon Be?" that belongs attached to the seduction number ("Wouldn't You Like to Be on Broadway?") in *Street Scene*. But that is a condition endemic to all incurable Weillians, and we rejoice in the lack of cure. Enough of metaphor; this is a disc to cherish. So, I hear (sob!), was the show.

Alan Rich
Los Angeles

Recordings

Concerto for Violin and Wind Instruments, op. 12

Régis Pasquier, violin
Orchestre de Picardie
Edmon Colomer, conductor

Calliope CAL 9392



Calliope's release presents the twentieth recording of Kurt Weill's Violin Concerto—the fourth since 2000—and contains another well-executed performance. Together with more frequent performances of the work and a growing interest in all of Weill's music, these recordings are gradually ensuring the piece a more prominent place in the violin repertoire than it has enjoyed in past decades.

Régis Pasquier, violin, with the Orchestre de Picardie under the baton of Edmon Colomer, pairs the Weill concerto with Leonard Bernstein's *Serenade for Violin, String Orchestra, Harp, and Percussion*. It is the second time that these two works have appeared on the same disc, curiously both times with French violinists and orchestras. One violin concerto with wind ensemble and another with string orchestra make an appealing coupling, as the combination brings out different tonal colors and also neatly utilizes the entire orchestra. The pairing of Weill and Bernstein works extremely well for a number of reasons: both composers worked in "serious" instrumental genres while also having prominent careers on Broadway. Their music is influenced by multiple genres, bridging gaps between classical and popular music by including aspects of jazz, for example. Weill effectively abandoned absolute music when he arrived in America and embraced his new home and its theater wholeheartedly. He saw the future of a new American operatic genre taking shape on Broadway, not in opera houses, more like musical theater than 19th-century European traditions. On the other hand, Leonard Bernstein was frustrated that his success as a theater composer overshadowed his symphonic music. Even though the two concerti cannot be easily compared stylistically, both of them exemplify traits of their composers' idiosyncratic writing.

Pasquier's rendition of Weill's concerto is clean and brilliant but lacks passion. The tempi in all movements are well chosen but adhere too strictly to a metronomic beat, and the conductor does not leave enough room for natural fluctuation. Some of the fast passages in the first and third movements sound rushed, but this lends an urgency that adds excitement. However, in many places where the music could relax and breathe more, the musicians do not take their time. Only one place stands out where too much time is taken: after the trill that ends the first phrase with which the two clarinets begin the first movement, the musicians pause for an additional beat before starting the next phrase. I cannot find a logical reason to delay this entrance for longer than a breath. Another passage in the first movement is puzzling, when Pasquier hardly changes dynamics between two passages, one supposed to end *fortissimo*, the next to start *pianissimo*. Thus, the accompanying figures of the solo violin overwhelm the *piano* and *mezzo-forte* wind melodies. Aside from this passage, though, the violin does not overshadow the orchestra. Many recordings tend to present the soloist's sound sailing over the orchestra in a way that would never be heard in a live concert, but luckily the recording engineer avoided such an unnatural balance on this disc. The sound of the violin and orchestra is direct and clear; the upper register is emphasized. The violin, winds and percussion blend very well throughout the piece.

Nevertheless, there are balance issues in this recording. The double basses suffer either because of their position in the hall or because of microphone placement; the problem may simply be that there are only two of them. The score calls for *contrabassi*, and while only one passage in the first movement calls for a *divisi* by three, multiple passages are divided by two. To balance

both registers, it would make sense to use four double basses, as suggested by Kim Kowalke in *Kurt Weill in Europe*, even though fewer are often used in concert or on recordings. Weill knew that it would be hard for the double basses to project above the winds, so he allowed for more than two and made their dynamics stronger than those of the winds in key passages. For some reason, many recordings share the problem that the double basses are not distinct and audible enough, and unfortunately, this disc is no exception. Turning up the bass frequencies on the amplifier brings the double basses out but makes them boomy and less clearly defined.

None of the fine players in the Orchestre de Picardie exhibits any technical difficulties. The xylophone and trumpet playing, particularly in the second movement, are spectacular. The timpani helps to shape the right character in the third movement and ends the piece with two precisely placed and beautifully sounding *fortissimo* eighth notes. Régis Pasquier's sound is beautiful throughout, and he displays outstanding technique; his *spiccato* is particularly noteworthy.

The CD has attractive cover art and good liner notes by Stéphane Friédérich. However, they state incorrectly that Weill's concerto was performed by its dedicatee, Joseph Szigeti; there is no evidence that Szigeti ever played the concerto. Stefan Frenkel is correctly credited with championing the piece all over Europe after its premiere.

Annegret Klaua
Brandeis University

Performances

Der Silbersee

Wexford Festival

Premiere: 31 May 2007

The new Artistic Director of the Wexford Festival, Ireland's most prestigious operatic jamboree, is the Canadian conductor David Agler. He chose to launch his first full season with *Der Silbersee*, an ambitious, rash, even provocative choice. The traditional Wexford audience is hedonistic in character, and was even more so this year given that the Festival was held not in the fall in Wexford proper but, owing to rebuilding of the opera house, in the summer in a temporary theater erected at Johnstown Castle, some five miles out in the country. Johnstown is a spectacular 19th-century Gothic revival mansion set in extensive parkland—the atmosphere was very much that of Glyndebourne, or Glimmerglass. Overheard remarks or conversations with those who had already attended—this was the last performance of the run—suggested that audiences had failed to respond to so serious, historically important, and challenging a work

(Stephen Hinton's program essay was exemplary). That is sad, but perhaps understandable, given that the staging was in many respects misguided, to say the very least.

The production used Rory Bremner's translation, originally unveiled by Broomhill Opera at Wilton's Music Hall in London in 1999. This uses much more of Kaiser's play than was the case at the British premiere (Bloomsbury Theatre, London, 1987) and gives a fair impression of the work's form. The lyrics go well, but Bremner doesn't quite render the poetic and epic qualities of the spoken passages—a very hard task, admittedly. It makes for a long evening in the theater, well over three hours with only one intermission, and if the audience isn't responding, that is a very long evening indeed.

Musically there was much to admire. The conductor Timothy Redmond was plainly in sympathy with the idiom, and drew crisp, clear playing from the ad hoc Festival Orchestra. For a work that was devised for the sort of municipal ensembles of singers and actors common at the time and just surviving, it seems, in former East Germany—by far the best performance I have seen was at Dessau in 1996—the casting was canny, drawn mainly from the world of musical theater. Simon Gleeson took the supremely testing role of Severin; he is an alumnus of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Australia's (if not the Southern hemisphere's) leading

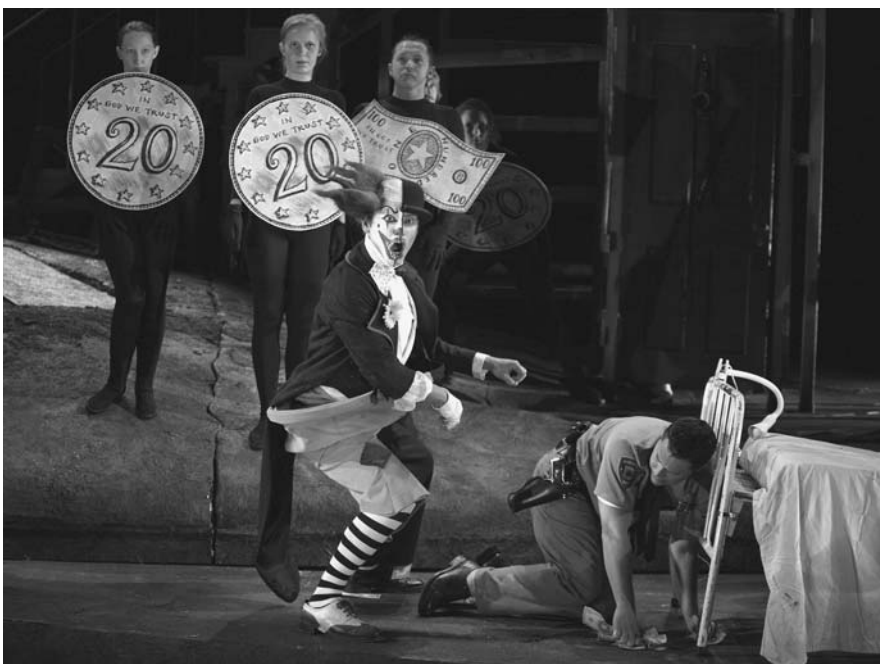
postgraduate training facility. His tenor is on the shallow side, but true and athletic—no problems with any of the notes—and he is a very good actor. Nigel Richards (Olim) is primarily an actor, but could certainly manage what comparatively little he has to sing.

The nicely incisive Austrian soprano Nina Bernstein sang both of Fennimore's numbers very capably, though her English diction momentarily faltered in the "Poor Relation" song. There was some strong casting lower down, with Paul Carey Jones and Julian Tovey as the leading Burschen, and Jeremy Finch as both the Doctor and Baron Laur, though cuts in the last act somewhat diminished the latter's role.

Such musical strengths were virtually set to naught by Keith Warner's direction, in a serviceable permanent set by Jason Southgate. So dense a text demands the clearest of heads, not the sort of panic-stricken hyperactivity for which Warner settled. Severin and Olim were played as a pair of hysterics, with no hint of the poetry at the heart of their relationship. There was one piece of serious miscasting, the television soap-opera star Anita Dobson, who was allowed, or encouraged, to play Frau von Luber as a grotesque, campy comic character as if in a West End farce—simply a gross misrepresentation of Kaiser. I had always thought the Lottery Agent's Tango indestructible, but not so: there was little that David Curry could do with it given Southgate's insanely over-elaborate costume and Warner's over-direction. Similarly, Fennimore's bread-roll dance, which usually stops the show, went for nothing. The Salesgirls (Heather Hunter and Elizabeth Rose-Browne) were so busy with "funny" voices and postures that their important duet simply failed to register. The beautiful "Silbersee" duet for Fennimore and Severin was not helped by being performed on a rickety revolve.

In short, Warner seemed determined that there should never be a moment of stillness on stage, as though the music and words were so tedious that the audience needed visual distraction. But such hyperactivity is no substitute for sympathetic clarity of thought, and it was tragic to witness so poetic and elusive a work being sledge-hammered into submission. Poor Weill, poor Kaiser.

Rodney Milnes
London



David Curry sings the "Lottery Agent's Tango" to Olim (Nigel Richards) at right. Photo: Derek Speirs

Performances

Die Dreigroschenoper

Berliner Ensemble

Premiere: 27 September 2007

Robert Wilson has staged *Dreigroschenoper* at the Berliner Ensemble. Almost exactly 79 years after its world premiere, the piece makes a triumphal return to the stage at Schiffbauerdamm in an utterly ingenious production! Most skeptics (this reviewer included) rolled their eyes when the director was announced, as the Texan has worn out audiences and critics alike in recent years with his endless self-indulgent extravaganzas of lighting and choreography. But we were proven wrong by Wilson at his best: at the final curtain the applause lasted twenty minutes, which hasn't occurred for a long time at the "BE." So what happened?

With full confidence in his skills and the means at his disposal—not to mention the strength of the Weill/Brecht classic—Wilson deliberately approaches the work with a light touch, delivering a concentrated view in black and white in which he uses few playful elements or lighting effects; when they do appear, adeptly deployed,

their effect is striking. The set is pared down to a clever arrangement of steel pipes that, outfitted with a number of neon lights, constantly transforms itself—now dimmed, now bright, now grouped into squares, now suggesting walls, opening or closing at the top. It turns into the headquarters of Peachum's company, into the stable in Soho, and eventually into a prison cell at the Old Bailey. During the more elaborate numbers the protagonists operate in the foreground; to the rear, a dark cyclorama rises, opening into a rectangular screen lit in pale yellow, in front of which members of the remaining ensemble move rhythmically in profile—a tip of the hat to Lotte Reiniger's famous silhouettes from 1928. Black curtains frame the scenes, and the active cast members appear one after the other in a pinpoint white spotlight. The black-and-white scenery persists for over an hour, not changing color until it turns a golden red for the whorehouse in Turnbridge. With this grand, simple lighting scheme, Wilson places the actors squarely in the forefront. He stylizes the characters with the help of costumes and *maquillage*: the faces are covered in stark white make-up (except for Macheath and Polly), the gang members all wear similar costumes, distinguished only by different-colored wigs (ranging from black to bright red, with Münzmatthias sporting a daring hairdo); the hookers, too, wear identical black lingerie. In addition, Wilson's soft spot for the early cinema makes itself felt: Tiger Brown wears a shabby frock coat and

a scruffy demi top hat; slightly hunched over and nearly limping, he appears to have leaped off the screen of *Nosferatu*, F. W. Murnau's 1922 expressionist horror film. And it's surely no coincidence that Brown's sidekick, Constable Smith, in his looks, costume, and manners, resembles Erich von Stroheim. The two protagonists are no different: Macheath, in a 1920s look, with an elegant, double-breasted suit and a dark blond, wavy wig plus lipstick, could pose for Hollywood stills of that era, just like Polly, who frequently evokes Mary Pickford with her bright red pouting lips and fluttering eyelashes. Aside from such playful associations, however, the consistent stylization of roles and scenes and the artful artificiality of the entire production make the audience experience the piece (with some intelligent cuts) as if it were new—and even after eighty years, our eyes are still glued to the stage.

This is not solely Wilson's achievement; credit goes also, in equal measure, to his musical director Hans-Jörg Brandenburg (who collaborated with Wilson as early as 1989 in Hamburg on *The Black Rider*, and later at the BE with Büchner's *Leonce and Lena* in 2003 and Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* in 2005) and the musical preparation by Stefan Rager (who worked with Wilson and Lou Reed in Hamburg on *Timerocker* and *POEtry* in 2001, and with Wilson again in 2003 at the BE on *Leonce and Lena*). The two musicians have studied Weill's score thoroughly and double as members of the eight-piece band, for which the BE, in an unusual step, has created a pit. Just as the Lewis Ruth Band did in 1928, the versatile musicians all play several instruments. From the first notes of the overture it is clear that the composer's intentions have been fully grasped (unlike recent musically pedestrian or poor productions at the Maxim-Gorki-Theater and Admiralspalast) and are executed accordingly: exact tempos, carefully nuanced dynamics, crisp winds, and precise ensemble playing create eager anticipation and at the same time a kind of "walls of Jericho" shudder implicit in the score. The same goes for the three finales, not heard to such gripping effect in a long time. The operatic parodies, too, are successful, especially the "Jealousy Duet"; thus it is a pity that Lucy's delicious aria had to be cut—just as in the 1928 premiere—because of the actress's limited vocal abilities.

Here, we encounter again a familiar flaw of the German repertory system with a house ensemble. Even the famous BE, with



Mrs. Peachum (Traute Hoess) and Mr. Peachum (Jürgen Holtz). Photo: Lesley Leslie-Spinks

its pool of splendid actors, quickly hits a wall when it comes to singing, and despite electronic amplification of each cast member the situation doesn't improve. Polly, for instance, simply cannot manage Weill's soaring melodies in the refrains of "Pirate Jenny" and "Barbara Song" and is frequently forced to resort to *Sprechgesang*. Jenny whispers rather than sings "Solomon Song," and her share of "Tango Ballad" is a letdown. At times, though, the vice of amplification becomes a virtue, as when Polly gives out entrancing little sighs during "Love Song" or the last strophe of "Barbara Song," for example, or when Jenny whispers rather than speaks some of her lines and the audience can still hear her.

At the very beginning, Wilson presents the entire cast. While Macheath, his back to the audience, sings "Moritat," the individual members appear from the wings and cross in front of the black curtain; their faces are briefly lit, one by one, until Jenny announces after the last bar of music, "That was Mack the Knife," and the games can begin. Which brings us to the ensemble.

Pride of place goes to Jürgen Holtz as Peachum (he played the role in the mid-1990s in Frankfurt's first production featuring the Ensemble Modern led by HK Gruber). His sometimes devilish intensity—in his threats towards Brown—lends the beggars' king the features of a crafty businessman as well as an unscrupulous power broker. A master of diction, Holtz delivers his lines with marvelous rhythm, and during his songs he hits the Weillian tone dead on. Just as good an actor and singer was Traute Hoess (Mrs. Peachum); she, too, is a woman to be reckoned with, not a boozing airhead as too many directors have conceived the role (Brandauer being the latest example). A particularly outstanding turn for the pair: during "Barbara Song," Wilson places the Peachums "in one," their faces lit by a bright spot. Words



Macheath (Stefan Kurt) on the gallows, as Polly (Christina Drechsler) looks on.

Photo: Lesley Leslie-Spinks

cannot describe how Hoess and Holtz comment in pantomime on the news of their daughter's "dirty deeds"—one simply must see it!

Stefan Kurt plays Macheath. Wilson had cast him as Valerio in his 2003 production of *Leonce and Lena*; he's a suave actor with a good voice; his strongest musical number is the "Epitaph." He's an absolutely convincing boss when he manages the gang. Just as good is his portrayal of Tiger Brown's old buddy. But despite his dapper looks, the second layer of his role is lost: the bon vivant and heartthrob who makes the ladies melt. Did Wilson shy away from such a Don Juan-type? It certainly seems so. How else can one explain Polly's resistance at the beginning of the wedding scene, when Macheath has to drag her bodily into the horses' stable, considering that

she—like so many before and after her—had already thrown herself at him?

Despite her vocal limitations, the young and good-looking Christina Drechsler makes a convincing Polly: self-confident and rebelling against her parents, she carries a torch for "her" Mack until the end. But here again—is Wilson to blame?—the second dimension of this relationship is missing: no trace of tongue-in-cheek, no ruptures in the "Love Song," whose text drips idyllic clichés for a reason. The two sing it with full conviction, without a trace of irony.

Jenny is portrayed by Angela Winkler, a German acting icon since the 1970s, widely known for playing the title role in the film version of Heinrich Böll's *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* (1979) and for many years a favorite of the great stage director Peter Zadek. Winkler portrays Jenny as a thoroughly tragic figure, a human wreck at the end of her career as a prostitute, chewed up and spit out by life, who betrays the very last thing that remains to her, her relationship with Macheath. Winkler performs admirably, but her

inadequate vocal skills force us to ask whether she is indeed a good choice for the role. I would say no. Axel Werner plays Tiger Brown with military terseness. He almost barks his lines, thereby forestalling any fake weepy sentiment directed toward Macheath (encountered in many a production). Excellent!

The smaller roles—Gitte Repin as Lucy and Uli Pleßmann as Smith—are acted beautifully, the gang members showing nuance as well as gusto. The remarkably well-sung choruses reveal careful musical preparation; the "Third Finale" especially is simply breathtaking. This latest Wilson production should enjoy a very long run.

Jürgen Schebera
Berlin

Performances

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny

*Spoletto Festival USA
Charleston*

Premiere: 25 May 2007

The centerpiece of this year's Spoleto Festival USA was a deeply satisfying series of performances of a seminal work by two outstanding geniuses of the early twentieth century. Weill and Brecht had definite ideas of what they wanted their work to be: an anti-opera of sorts in which the primary objective was to instruct or challenge rather than to entertain. To make us, the audience, take a cold, hard look at ourselves in a harshly lit mirror. The musicians and the directors in Charleston all fused their efforts seamlessly into a performance that left many thoughtful people gasping. The excitement and enthusiasm of all involved in the production was palpable and infected those lucky enough to be in the audience.

Like Magritte's well-known realistic painting of a smoking pipe, jarringly titled "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (This is not a pipe), Weill and Brecht used signs, placards, and other devices such as drops and curtains and the ropes and wires that controlled them to emphasize that this was not a true-to-life experience. Thus, throughout the performance, we were constantly reminded that we were witnessing art, not life. A painting is not a pipe, and this is not a traditional opera presented for our enjoyment, but a work which was intended to effect a change in our perceptions of ourselves in particular and society in general. Stark contrasts coupled with black humor were used to keep the audience continually unsettled. At the opening, the three founders of the city arrive in a rickety cartoon "truck" propelled by their frantically shuffling feet, a comic, almost slapstick, device. The destruction of a city by a hurricane was played for laughs. When offstage narration informs us that the city

of Atsena had been utterly destroyed, the symbol for it on the large map projected on a screen went up in a puff of smoke; we laughed, uncomfortably.

Skillful musical manipulation was also used to the same effect. The ugly or horrible could be accompanied by light, even sweet, music. Prostitute Jenny Hill (sung beautifully, sometimes operatically, but always with a kind of biting Weimar cynicism by Tammy Hensrud) sings a bitter song to a surly, callous Jakob Schmidt, explaining that her ruined mother, a prostitute in Cuba, told her never to let herself be sold cheaply. This truly sad and shocking moment is accompanied by a sighing Hawaiian guitar. As the prostitutes arrive at the outskirts of Mahagonny, lurching and vamping slowly, almost painfully, across the stage, they sing the luscious "Alabama Song," a tune so beautiful that countless



Trinity Moses (Timothy Nolen), Begbick (Karen Huffstodt), and Fatty (Beau Palmer) judge Jimmy Mahoney (Richard Brunner). Photo: William Struhs

musicians have covered it. This memorable melody also returns, at devastating moments, throughout the opera.

In the 1920s in Germany, such a work would probably have been done "in black and white," with many shades of gray and somber hues. This production, though, used lights and costumes that almost screamed with dazzling colors, replete with loud yellows, greens, reds and purples and other garish combinations in jarring juxtapositions. No realism here either. The effect was startling.

Conductor Emmanuel Villaume, as much fun to watch as to listen to, whipped the young Spoleto orchestra and chorus into frenzies of biting satire; his furious momentum kept the dramatic tide surging throughout. The final stro-

phic chorus, "Nothing you can do will help a dead man," in which each verse is answered by snarling brass punctuation, grew to an almost unbearable intensity right up until the release of the last shattering, brassy chord, as the stage goes dark and bright lights are turned upon the audience.

The strong cast was more than equal to the opera's demands. Most outstanding was Richard Brunner singing Jimmy Mahoney with power and splendor throughout. John Fanning as Moneybags Billy showed talent and vocal beauty that foretell a promising career indeed. Karen Huffstodt as Begbick developed a powerful but world-weary persona that beautifully fit the role. Timothy Nolen as Trinity Moses and later, God, was a striking presence throughout.

Amazing how current this work still is.

Timeless music. And even the strident conflicting slogans on the placards in the last scene might as well have been protesting G-8 meetings or globalization. Money is the root of evil, yet poverty is a sin, do it now, etc. But it is not politics or philosophy that keep this opera in its increasing ascendancy, it is the music—the sheer joy in contemplating the monumental musical technique that Weill employed in the service of his white-hot inspiration. Nature out of control (the hurricane) is musically defined by that most controlled musical form, the fugue. Crystalline orchestration, leaning heavily toward brass and jazz-inspired saxophones and percussion, underlined every emotion. Operatic duos, trios, choruses, and marches of magnificent scope make for a thrilling counterpoint to the onstage action. The most compelling music is the series of choruses, reminiscent of oratorio, culminating in the shattering full ensemble that ends the opera.

And yet there is a philosophical message that one takes away from this performance: enjoy your life now, protect and cultivate your friends while they are here, alive. Because as we are told over and over, "Nothing you can do will help a dead man." This was a production that will be remembered with the kind of wonder and awe that only great art can inspire.

David W. Maves
College of Charleston (emeritus)

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