

The Cradle Will Rock

New York City Center

10–13 July 2013

First things first: Congratulations to *Encores!* at New York's City Center for creating a new series called *Encores! Off-Center*, which aims to present semi-staged concert performances of off-Broadway musicals. The artistic director for this new series is Jeanine Tesori, one of the most compelling and visionary composers working in musical theater. She chose to start things off with Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock*, a testament to her all-encompassing view of the new series.

Blitzstein is best known as the translator of *The Threepenny Opera*, and perhaps also as the composer of two operas: *Regina*, based on Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes*, and *Cradle*. But alas, even these two works are only occasionally heard. He was part of a circle of legendary American artists including Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, John Houseman, and Orson Welles, very much in the thick of things in those heady days of American creativity and political passion. He was regarded by his fellow geniuses as their equal and even as a leader of the movement to find an American voice in music theater and link it with political action, something he felt was required of an artist, much in the line of Giuseppe Verdi or Kurt Weill. When Weill died in 1950, Blitzstein was the only American composer to attend the interment.

With songs and ensembles that stick in your ear for days on end and numbers that recall *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Blitzstein reaches deeply into the conscience of his audience. *The Cradle Will Rock* comes across as a wonderfully entertaining parable of power and corruption. It is a warning, more than anything else, as true today as it was in the 1930s. In 1938, he wrote, "Unions, unionism as a subject, are used as a symbol . . . of a solution of the plight of the middle class. I mean the intellectuals, professional, small shopkeepers, "little businessmen" in America today. What can they do . . . with big business, which is ready to engulf them, buy and sell them out exactly as it does labor, exploit and discard them at will?"

City Center has a long history with *Regina* and *Cradle*. The now-defunct New York City Opera presented both works there. A concert reading of *Cradle* that featured the world premiere of the original orchestrations was given there under Leonard Bernstein. The *Encores! Off-Center* concert version used a new scoring by Josh Clayton for smaller orchestra, neither a reduction nor a totally new orchestration. It was better not to perform the show with an upright piano, which would have been the easy and



Raúl Esparza as Larry Foreman

PHOTO: JOANN MARCUS



Judy Kuhn as Editor Daily

PHOTO: JOANN MARCUS

economical choice. Clayton's version sounds authentic and really works, despite instances in which his decisions seem almost gratuitously different from Blitzstein's original.

After twenty years, *Encores!* has established its own performing tradition in which the orchestra occupies the stage, behind the actors. The productions are therefore sonically backwards. Everything must be amplified, and singers can see the conductor only on a television monitor. The results are profound on every level. The 1938 cast album reveals that Blitzstein (at the piano) introduced a level of *rubato* that would be difficult to achieve with an orchestra in the pit and a conductor looking at, responding to, and leading actors onstage. Despite a set-up in which such give-and-take was impossible, conductor Chris Fenwick did a fine job of keeping everyone together, and his tempos were always well-judged.

Encores! Off-Center assembled an astounding cast for these semi-staged performances. Danny Burstein as Mr. Mister was perfectly balanced by Raúl Esparza, whose entrance was an electric shock, perfectly calibrated as a modern day *deus ex machina*. In truth, all the artists excelled. Director Sam Gold created a simple stage concept—the

bad guys sat audience left and the good guys were on the right. However, the flashback narrative puzzled my guests, both savvy theatergoers. In addition, Gold decided to be colorblind, gender-blind, and age-blind. This idea might have looked good on paper, but it confused the storytelling and compromised the power of the musical setting. If one did not know the score, perhaps this was just fun—the great Judy Kuhn with a cigar and a boater pretending to be a man, for example—but it felt capricious. Casting the dazzling 10-year-old Aidan Gemme as the cop was the most problematic director's decision of all. Gold threw a lot of ideas at this piece, which had to be readied in very few days, and not all of the seemingly random choices worked for the production.

All was redeemed, however, by the brilliant ending. As the company reprised the title song, members of the stagehands' union cleared the props and the music stands from the stage. The very unions Blitzstein hoped would protect the "little businessman" have gained so much power they could just shut down the show. And so, in the end, Gold and Blitzstein got to have their cake and eat it, too—something even Marie Antoinette never imagined.

John Mauceri
New York

The Firebrand of Florence

Staatsoperette Dresden

Premiere: 25 October 2013

Slowly but surely Weill's American works are gaining a foothold in Germany. *Street Scene* is poised to establish itself in the repertory; *Lady in the Dark* and *One Touch of Venus* have both seen recent stagings. Now the Staatsoperette Dresden has taken a stab at Weill's Broadway operetta about Benvenuto Cellini, *The Firebrand of Florence*, marking the work's European stage premiere. Adopting the pre-Broadway title ("Much Ado about Love"), Dresden presented the work as *Viel Lärm um Liebe*, translated by Roman Hinze, who has converted a number of musicals for the German stage (among them *Lady in the Dark*). He has a knack for rendering Ira Gershwin's lyrics, capturing their sometimes frothy high spirits, as in these lines from "A Rhyme for Angela": *Und hiefse sie Maria, / von mir aus auch Luzia, / so sagte ich Merci, a- / ber nein!* Gershwin's spoonerisms, however, can't help losing most of their wit in translation, but even they sometimes come across as funny: *Der Stinkel will*.

Stage director Holger Hauer has plenty of experience with musicals. He seems keenly aware of the work's potential problems and successfully avoids them. Musically speaking, *Firebrand* straddles two different styles, showing characteristics of both romantic and comic operetta and even some traces of *Künstleroper*. The opening leaves the audience in limbo; the curtain goes up to reveal stark metal scaffolding (set design by Christoph Weyers), from which the gallows is then assembled. The gloomy scene features subdued colors; soloists and choristers wear black, white, and red. Only when the villain Maffio (Elmar Andree) makes his entrance, clad in an outmoded operetta costume, does it become clear that the director intends to have some fun with the genre, indulging in its pleasures with a certain amount of tongue-in-cheek parody. Cellini's studio, in front of a backdrop showing old Florence, holds his great, unfinished work, the statue of a nymph (which we don't see in its final form until the end of the show). The work is literally great, in that

we can see only the statue's legs and posterior. While the sheer vastness of the artwork symbolizes Cellini's outsized ego, it also gives the director an opening to make fun of the *Künstleroper* aspects of the piece. The scaffolding that rises in front of the statue serves as an additional playground upon which the vain and foolish Duke (portrayed with great exuberance by Bryan Rothfuss) makes his entrance. With the Duke's appearance, the mood lightens for good, and the staging becomes decidedly more colorful and screwy. Dressed like a pop star—shiny silver pants, necklace, fedora, and fur coat—he rises from the pit and sweeps up Angela (sung expertly but acted with too much reserve by Olivia Delauré) in his long coattails.

At times, the director's vision spins into frenzied absurdity, as in "A Rhyme for Angela," where the designer breaks out a disco ball and female dancers in dirndls form a chorus line. There are many such amusing details, but they never overshadow the staging, which maintains consistent suspense until the end, thanks to a concept based on up-tempo, unceasing action. Even when a set change requires that the curtain come down, little scenes "in one" keep things moving. At one point, four figures in gaudy Renaissance robes are killing time playing musical chairs. When the curtain goes up again, we see that they are poets hired by the Duke to help him find a rhyme for Angela. With a bit of forest-fairy business, the tarantella in the Act I finale introduces a touch of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The dance sequences (choreographed by Christopher Tölle for the Staatsoperette's ballet) supplement and comment on the action. But the production doesn't rely only on the corps de ballet for movement; the two choruses (prepared by Thomas Runge) are also choreographed, and the soloists rarely get a break, either. When the Duchess (played winningly with man-eating laughter by Elke Kottmair) tries to seduce Cellini in her earthy way ("Sing Me Not a Ballad"), the curtain on her sedan chair opens repeatedly to offer a series of views of their acrobatics.

The entire cast, expertly accompanied by the Staatsoperette orchestra under the baton of Andreas Schüller, gave a spirited and inspired performance on opening night. Special kudos to Miljenko Turk (Cellini), who showed exceptional enthusiasm and sang magnificently even though he was sick. *The Firebrand of Florence* may have its problems, but the Dresden staging shows that they are by no means insurmountable. The audience offered its thanks with sustained, wholehearted applause.

**Gisela Maria Schubert
Hameln**



Bryan Rothfuss (center) as the Duke of Florence.

PHOTO: KAH-UWE SCHULTE-BÜNER



Miljenko Turk as Cellini and Olivia Delauré as Angela.

PHOTO: KAH-UWE SCHULTE-BÜNER

Baden-Baden 1927

Gotham Chamber Opera New York

23–29 October 2013

The Baden-Baden chamber music festival of July 1927 has gone down in music-theater history because of one-fourth of one program: a bill of four newly commissioned short operas that contained a so-called *Songspiel* entitled *Mahagonny*—the public's first encounter with the new composer-writer team of Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht. Though none of their librettists remain as influential as Brecht, *Mahagonny's* companions that evening were by no means negligible: Darius Milhaud's *Lenlèvement d'Europe* (text by Henri Hoppenot), Ernst Toch's *Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse* (Benno Elkan), and Paul Hindemith's *Hin und zurück* (Marcellus Schiffer). All were thoroughly enjoyable, inventively composed, and quintessentially contemporary in their impudent, nose-thumbing attitudes toward traditional operatic conventions. The bill was an unmistakable success, with the fragmented, skeletal *Mahagonny*, innovative in both form and tone, the evening's highlight. Its outgrowth, the three-act opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*—perhaps under discussion even before the Baden-Baden performance—now occupies a permanent place in the world repertoire.

That *Mahagonny* began its theatrical life as this short, sharp-toothed suite of individual numbers (differing in many respects from versions later composed for the larger score), and that its three companion pieces are all worth hearing gave two strong justifications for Gotham Chamber Opera's revival of the quadruple bill, under the omnibus title *Baden-Baden 1927*. Neal Goren, the company's artistic director, conducted the event's four performances in a production staged by Paul Curran, with sets designed by the noted painter Georg Baselitz. Ironically, the production turned out to be a case of (presumably unintentional) historical revisionism: Goren's passionate affinity for the more classically grounded scores combined with Curran's unfocused, seemingly aimless staging to make *Mahagonny*, with its now-familiar tunes, seem the flattest and least effective of the four pieces.

This came about partly through a misplaced earnestness that started every segment of the evening on precisely the wrong foot. Before each opera, a different cast member attempted simultaneously to jolly up the audience—with what sounded like a mish-mash of scripted text and ad libs—and to convince us that the four composers, in writing these slight, diverting pieces, aimed to rephrase for the modern era the question, "What is Art?" Obnoxious enough in itself, this blend of coy condescension and pedantic abstraction entirely misunderstood the four operas, each a miniature designed to amuse and provoke in its own way, striving for immediacy and shoving questions of theory aside.

Weighed down by the chatty approach, the works had their energy further dissipated by Baselitz's sets, which provided decor rather than visual focus. The Milhaud was done as an art-



The ensemble of *Mahagonny Songspiel* sings "Benares Song" on treadmills. L to R: Daniel Montenegro, Matthew Tuell, John Cheek, Helen Donath, Jennifer Rivera, and Michael Mayes.

PHOTO: RICHARD TERMINE

gallery opening, with the white bull into which Jupiter (tenor Daniel Montenegro) has transformed himself represented by the painter in a fancy white suit. (Court Watson's costumes matched Baselitz's sets in their attractive but ineffectual randomness.) The vapid, self-centered court of Toch's sardonic fairy tale was turned into a media-hungry celebrity clan, with live video constantly projected onto Baselitz's multicolored pastel set pieces. This made for some amusing moments—the hyper-fussy Princess (the stunning-voiced soprano Maeve Höglund) tossing restlessly in bed while the handheld cameras supplied giant closeups of her backside, the spotlight-hogging Queen (Helen Donath) shoving the King out of her camera moment—but the overall impression onstage was of rudderless clutter and distraction. It belied the clear-lined cartoon wit of Toch's score, with its sardonic, Shostakovich-like intrusions from brass and winds. Both here and in the Milhaud, Goren's orchestra gave a lively, musically astute account of the piece. The vocal ensemble work in both was excellent; even the bovine mating calls in the Milhaud sounded lush and delicate.

Höglund reaffirmed her status as the evening's vocal standout after intermission, in the Hindemith, essentially a tart vaudeville sketch, badly damaged in its overall effect by Curran's imprecise and humorless staging. All the fun came from the singers' throats—Matthew Tuell, as Höglund's frantic husband, did particularly well here—and from Goren's brash, comically mock-hearty orchestral sound.

Sadly, the same couldn't be said for his *Mahagonny*. At least on opening night, the instrumental forces overpowered the vocalists. Goren's tempi, slow and steady, made this tough-edged but essentially somber piece seem leaden, lacking the suppleness demanded by Weill's complex merging of classical and pop idioms. Music that can sound electrifying under other batons came off dim and sluggish here, and the empty, superficial posturing onstage (with more cutesy-poo audience interaction) brought it no impetus. Except for bass John Cheek and mezzo-soprano Jennifer Rivera, the singing here fell below the evening's otherwise high vocal standard, with Donath, late in her career, an unsatisfactory match for a role created in 1927 by the young and eerily vibrant Lotte Lenya.

Michael Feingold
New York

Zaubernacht

Arte Ensemble

CPO 777 767-2

The history of Weill's first stage work has been well documented in previous editions of the *Newsletter* (see vol. 24, no. 2), and it is comprehensively retold in Elmar Juchem's liner notes for this first recording of the critical edition he prepared with Andrew Kuster from a set of original parts unearthed in a forgotten safe at Yale University. Detailed comparison of the new CD with Capriccio's 2002 recording of Meirion Bowen's skilled but necessarily speculative reconstruction would doubtless be interesting in some ways, but odious in others. Suffice it to say that given the far greater knowledge of the composer's intentions afforded by the new Kurt Weill Edition score, the discrepancies in interpretation between the two discs are obvious but not surprising. Listeners familiar with the earlier recording will detect them from the opening bars—not just differences in instrumentation but in tempo as well. The *Sostenuto* given in Bowen's source, an autograph piano score, is supplanted by *Andante non troppo* from the rediscovered parts (a slightly ambiguous marking which the Arte players interpret as "not too slow").

The Ensemble's lack of a conductor is no obstacle to unanimity; a few minor imprecisions merely enhance the feel of a continuous performance. Well-disciplined *tuttis* confirm the players' skill and experience as both orchestral and chamber musicians, and there is clear rapport within smaller groups—the practiced cohesion of flute and bassoon, for instance, fully justifies Weill's choice of this potentially tricky combination. Save for occasional superfluous noise, the Hannover Großer Sendesaal lends generous acoustic support; the percussion comes rightly to the fore (this being a Pantomime, after all)—although a harder, crisper timpani attack might have been more appropriate on occasion. Intonation is uniformly secure, articulation well-focused, and the rhythmic underpinning (crucial to any Weill performance) is



given its full due. Ania Vegry's soprano boasts purity of tone and security of pitch in the Toy Fairy's aria; more zest in delivering the text, particularly when describing the toys coming to life, would render it ideal.

Aside from a 3/8 section placed relatively early (and neatly turned here), truly extended "numbers" occur only in the latter part of the score. The Arte players give them plenty of point and impetus, with a lively March and Can-Can, a suitably ungainly Waltz, and the Foxtrot taken at a front-footed clip (a world away from its 1921 incarnation as the "Algi-Song"). The crowning "chase" sequence with its keening piccolo combines real energy with internal clarity in

the dense climactic *stretto*. Indeed, throughout the performance, well-chosen tempi seem designed to highlight Weill's already well-developed ear for harmonic and contrapuntal subtlety.

Perhaps for some performers, the home stretch of consecutive set pieces arrives with a sense of release, for the first half of the work involves the exposition and interplay of much shorter episodes and ideas. There the issue becomes not only one of tempo but also tempi in relation to each other. Almost inevitably (especially given the absence of a comprehensive original scenario) the way these episodes are characterized both in themselves and in reaction to each other implies more contentious interpretive decisions. Two quick examples: for a passage near the end of the clockwork doll's dance, marked *poco rallentando*, the Ensemble opts instead for half-tempo, which is a bit of a shock but leads naturally to doubling the tempo again for the ensuing *Tranquillo*. Shortly after that, the return of the rolling quintuplet "ball" figure is interrupted by the livelier dotted rhythm originally associated with the jumping jack; here, the players remain in tempo—which negates the need for the *Etwas breiter* twelve bars later. Listeners may decide for themselves whether at such moments the gain in structural unity offsets any loss in variety or spontaneity. Though I find the whole interpretation well thought out, sometimes it feels too much so. While the pacing always serves the interest of clarity, it can seem a shade too safe—the entrance of the horse, for example—or even (as with the *Misterioso* timpani ostinato at the Bear's entrance) a little lacking in tension. One last significant interpretive decision comes at the end, where in order to match the little Gavotte reprise to its earlier appearance, the existing *Tranquillo* tempo would require doubling, which is not indicated in the score. Bravely, the Arte players choose to play what's written, keeping the passage at half its previous speed and giving a touching account of the final bars, full of warmth and humanity.

Speaking for myself, sometimes the magic goes missing from this recording, but by no means always. That certainly should not deter anyone from exploring an account that does admirable justice both to the piece and to the Kurt Weill Edition score.

James Holmes
London



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ALBERT SOMMER

Railroads on Parade

New York World's Fair 1939–1940

Transcription Recordings

An exciting new release on the independent label Transcription Recordings makes available for the first time a historical recording of music Kurt Weill composed for the 1939–1940 New York World's Fair. Conceived on a grand scale by railroad enthusiast Edward Hungerford, with approximately forty-five minutes of music by Weill, *Railroads on Parade* was an hour-long open-air pageant celebrating the history of American railroads, performed at the Fair four times daily. With a cast of hundreds that included actors, dancers, and live animals, the pageant also featured well over a dozen vintage and modern trains, which crossed the expansive three-tiered stage on specially constructed tracks. The music and dialogue were performed live in a room under the grandstand by a 25-piece orchestra, eighteen singers, and five “sound actors”; the result was piped to the audience through loudspeakers.

The Americana Weill produced for *Railroads on Parade*, well received at the time by audiences and critics, reveals the emigré composer's ability to appeal to a mass audience in a musical style surprisingly similar to the one he had cultivated on the European modernist stage. Recognizably Weillian from the first notes of the prologue, the score is also very cinematic in nature. In fact, Weill composed much of the music in 1938 in Los Angeles, where he was supervising recording sessions for the Fritz Lang film *You and Me*. Borrowing a technique common in film underscoring, Weill makes frequent allusions to familiar tunes, many of which he took from the same published folk song collections favored by his American-born contemporaries, including Virgil Thomson and Aaron Copland, who were then producing their own populist film scores and concert works. Prior to the Fair's second season, Weill revised the *Railroads* score, adding yet more traditional American songs. This recording, which preserves an abridged version of the revised score, includes quotations and vocal arrangements of “She'll Be Comin' 'round the Mountain,” “Nancy Lee,” “Old Bill,” “The Erie Canal,” “I've Been Working on the Railroad,” “This Train,” “O California,” “Snagtooth Sal,” and “Clementine,” among other recognizable tunes.

Until recently, Weill's *Railroads* music was thought to have been preserved only in the memories of those who attended the pageant, accessible to scholars only in the form of unpublished—and incomplete—orchestral and piano-vocal scores. In 2007, a set of four twelve-inch acetate discs (eight sides) made in 1940 at the Champion Recording transcription studio in Manhattan was discovered by record collector Guy Walker. Walker soon sold the discs to the Stanford Archive of Recorded Sound and released the recording as a CD last year. Now available online through amazon.com, the awkwardly titled *The Recording Lost from the Pageant Railroads on Parade* offers listeners roughly two-thirds of Weill's score, ending after the first scene of the third act. Listening to the score nearly three-quarters of a century after it was recorded is thrilling for those of us who have been researching the



The *Railroads on Parade* CD packaging with a color facsimile of the original program book.

pageant. For scholars and fans of Weill's music, and those with interest in American music of the 1930s and '40s more generally, these recordings provide a fascinating sonic trip into the past.

The compact disc comes in a thin plastic sleeve with a double-sided color insert that lists descriptive titles of the 26 tracks and provides two accompanying notes: one providing historical context by Weill scholar Bruce D. McClung, who is currently writing a monograph about music at the New York World's Fair, and one discussing technical details of the restoration by Aaron Z. Snyder, who restored and equalized the recording. The audio quality is impressive given the source material. It is certainly a rare treat to have access to the original sounds of a production that was thought for so long to be undocumented.

The recording is packaged with a full-size color facsimile of the original 1939 program book. A deluxe “collectors” edition includes the slightly revised 1940 program. Both programs abound in information and imagery, including a “Bill of the Play,” excerpts from the script, a narrative about the railroads, and detailed drawings of historic locomotives featured in the show, as well as a description of the other parts of the railroad exhibition, including reproductions of murals. The facsimile programs go a long way toward contextualizing the music for the present-day listener; some short film clips of the pageant available on YouTube and in various World's Fair documentaries are also helpful. Together with these documents, this audio recording of *Railroads on Parade* brings to life a work originally conceived as a spectacle for all the senses, one that epitomizes Weill's mastery of, and contributions to, the traditions of American music.

Erica Scheinberg
Appleton, WI

The Threepenny Opera

**From Leonard Bernstein:
Historical Recordings 1941–1961**

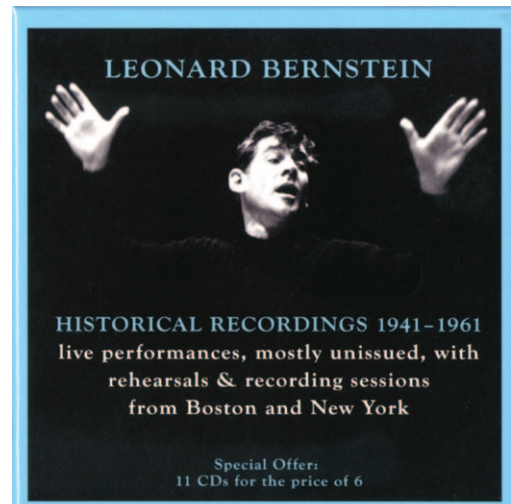
**West Hill Radio Archives WHRA-6048
(12 CDs)**

In 1949, composer-librettist Marc Blitzstein prepared an English version of “Pirate Jenny” so that he could perform the song in both German and English for an upcoming lecture. With Weill’s encouragement, he proceeded to translate the entire musical play and completed a rough draft the following year. He continued to revise his adaptation right up to its stage premiere on 10 March 1954, at the Theater de Lys in Greenwich Village, where the piece settled in (aside from an interval when it became necessary to vacate the theater) for a remarkably long run: the show closed in December 1961, after more than 2,500 performances. This adaptation not only established *The Threepenny Opera* in the English-speaking world, but thanks to such artists as Louis Armstrong, Bobby Darin, and Ella Fitzgerald, it made “Mack the Knife” an international hit as well.

When Blitzstein went to work on this “labor of love,” he had no real prospects for a staged production, although he quickly won the endorsement of Weill’s widow, Lotte Lenya. In early 1952, as plans for a production foundered, Leonard Bernstein, a friend and disciple of Blitzstein’s, arranged for a concert reading of the translated score to be presented at Brandeis University, where the work debuted under Bernstein’s baton on 14 June 1952, at the university’s new Adolph Ullman Amphitheatre. Blitzstein helped convince Lenya to assume the role of Jenny, a part she had originated over twenty years earlier. Other cast members included David Brooks (Macheath), David Thomas (Peachum), Mary Krete (Mrs. Peachum), Jo Sullivan (Polly), George Matthews (Street Singer and Tiger Brown), and Anita Ellis (Lucy), with the Brandeis University Glee Club prepared by Irving Fine, and a small band that closely approximated Weill’s original instrumentation. This concert version did not include any dialogue, so Blitzstein devised and delivered a connective narration.

At this point, Blitzstein’s adaptation was still in some flux. He had set the action in New York in 1870 on the occasion of the mayor’s inauguration, whereas he finally reverted to the original British setting for the off-Broadway premiere. But the Brandeis performance, preserved on tape, shows at least the lyrics by this time largely in place. Incidentally, Blitzstein restored two songs cut for the work’s world premiere, namely, “Solomon Song” and “Ballad of Dependency,” although for some reason, the Brandeis performance omitted the latter number.

A recording of this concert performance, running slightly over an hour, now has been released commercially by West Hill Radio Archives as part of an 11-CD set, *Leonard Bernstein: Historical Recordings, 1941-1961*. Described as consisting of “live performances, mostly unissued, with rehearsals & recording sessions from Boston and New York,” this boxed set features mostly twentieth-century music, including some real rarities. A



twelfth (data) CD contains liner notes—not the most convenient format, perhaps, for those who like to read notes while they listen to music.

The most significant drawback of the *Threepenny Opera* disc remains the level of surface noise, apparently the result of poor recording conditions. At times, Blitzstein’s narration and some of the singing become virtually inaudible, and the placement of microphones in general seems somewhat haphazard; it’s hard to say whether Bernstein intentionally highlighted the trombone part, or whether that instrument happened to be closest to a microphone. In any case, one has to be prepared for a fair amount of aural straining. (This does not pose as much of a challenge for the other recordings in this set.)

A second problem with the *Threepenny* disc arises from the fact that the singers and band do not always stay together, not surprising in a live performance in a large amphitheater. Nor are all the performances themselves at the highest level, although David Thomas makes a fabulous Peachum and Lotte Lenya brings the house down with a shattering “Pirate Jenny.”

That said, the opportunity to hear Bernstein conduct the work more than compensates for any disadvantages. His interpretation, always intelligent and musical, turns at times sharply ironic, at other times deeply poignant. The phrasing is well-shaped and insightful, of course, and the command of Weill’s counterpoint consummate. One can only regret that Bernstein did not perform and record Weill more often, as he plainly had a temperament suited to the music, even if, as usual, he imposed his own towering personality on the score. Blitzstein’s witty narration affords its own delights. The Brandeis audience certainly had a good time, to judge from the laughter that greeted both narration and lyrics and the enthusiastic ovations accorded nearly every number. Blitzstein no doubt realized that he had a hit on his hands, and not surprisingly, several Broadway producers subsequently approached him about the work, although he and Lenya ultimately decided on an off-Broadway venue.

Many view Weill, Blitzstein, and Bernstein as a lineage of sorts, and this moment when their great talents converged remains both artistically intriguing and historically significant.

**Howard Pollack
Houston**

Lotte Lenya Competition News

Coming Soon! A New Documentary

To cap a year-long celebration of the Lotte Lenya Competition's 15th anniversary, we are thrilled to announce the impending online release of a documentary about the Competition. Commissioned by the Kurt Weill Foundation, the short film takes you on a journey through the 2013 Competition, on stage and off, as well as the *Kurt Weill on Broadway* concert at Symphony Space on 7 October, which featured eight past winners (see report on pp. 13–14). Experience the Competition up close as several exceptionally talented young performers make their way through the semi-finals and finals, aiming to win a top prize with compelling performances of a wide range of theater repertoire, from opera to Broadway, including works by Kurt Weill. Past judges Ted Chapin, Jim Holmes, Patricia Racette, Victoria Clark, Rebecca Luker, and Rob Berman explain why the Competition is unique and important in the field; past winners discuss the powerful impact the Competition has had on their careers and their craft.

The film is being produced by Léa Khayata and Elettra Fiumi of Granny Cart Productions. At press time, our team is still putting the final touches on the film; we invite you to visit our website in early January to view the documentary at kwf.org/LLC.

2014 Lenya Competition Now Open



Repertoire inquiries and applications are already coming in from young hopefuls for the 2014 Lenya Competition, open to singer-actors, ages 19–32, of any nation. First prize is \$15,000; total prizes will exceed \$50,000. Repertoire guidelines remain the same as last year; all contestants are required to present four selections: one from the opera or operetta repertoire; two from the American musical theater repertoire (one pre-1968 and one from 1968 or later); and a theatrical selection by Kurt Weill. They will be judged on ability to interpret text and portray a character, along with stage presence, beauty of voice, and vocal technique. For more information and guidelines, visit kwf.org/LLC.

For more information and guidelines, visit kwf.org/LLC.

Lenya Winners On Stage

Kyle Scatliffe (Lys Symonette Award, 2010) is starring as Haywood Patterson in the U.K. premiere of *The Scottsboro Boys*, directed by Susan Stroman, at the Young Vic in London.

“The cast is dominated by the outstanding Kyle Scatliffe as Haywood Patterson—tall, commanding and with a hotline-to-heaven of a voice” (*The Guardian*); “Kander and Ebb’s *The Scottsboro Boys* is an admirable work, well sung, authentically danced. In Kyle Scatliffe it has a muscular, charismatic star ... His songs ‘Go Back Home’ and ‘You Can’t Do Me’ are among the best of the numbers” (*Daily Mail*); “The stand-out performance comes from the imposing Kyle Scatliffe as Haywood Patterson, the most defiant of the accused” (*Evening Standard*).



Kyle Scatliffe (standing) with members of the ensemble

PHOTO: RICHARD HUBERT SMITH

Lauren Worsham (2nd Prize, 2010) is making her Broadway debut as Phoebe D’Ysquith in the new musical *A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder*.



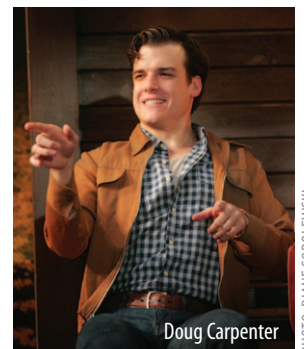
Lauren Worsham (left) with Bryce Plnkham and Lisa O’Hare

PHOTO: JOAN MARCUS

“The wonderful Lauren Worsham ... plays Phoebe D’Ysquith ... with a demure sweetness that never cloys” (*New York Times*); “Worsham in particular is in gorgeous lyric voice” (*New York Post*); “adorably perky and also lovely sopranoed” (*Broadway World*); a “crystalline soprano with sharp comic instincts” (*Hollywood Reporter*).

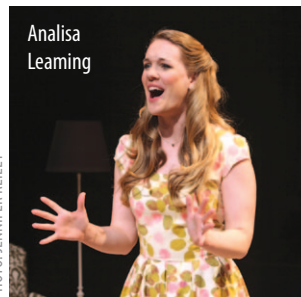
Doug Carpenter (1st Prize, 2013) played Joey in *The Most Happy Fella* at Goodspeed Opera House.

“As Joe, Doug Carpenter has a stunning voice that does full justice to his great maverick aria, ‘Joey, Joey, Joey’” (*Hartford Courant*); “When Doug Carpenter as Tony’s foreman, Joe, begins to sing the anthem to his restlessness ‘Joey, Joey, Joey’ we are left breathless by the beauty of his vocal power and delivery” (*Examiner.com*).



Doug Carpenter

PHOTO: DIANE SOBOLEWSKI



Analisa Leaming

PHOTO: JENNIFER REILEY

Analisa Leaming (2nd Prize, 2007) stars as Sara Jane in *Polly Pen’s Arlington* at the Magic Theatre, San Francisco, opening 20 November.

Foundation News

2013 Kurt Weill Prizes Awarded to Stephen Hinton and Christopher Chowrimootoo

The 2013 Kurt Weill Book Prize for outstanding scholarship in music theater since 1900, carrying a cash prize of \$5,000, has been awarded to **Stephen Hinton**, Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Music at Stanford University, for his book *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of Reform*. Published

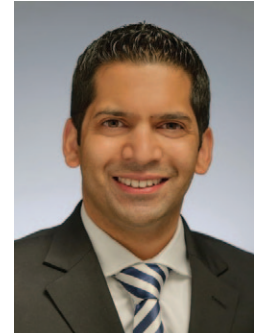


Stephen Hinton

in 2012 by the University of California Press, Hinton's musicological study offers the most comprehensive overview yet of Weill's output for the stage. In tracing Weill's extraordinary journey as a theatrical composer, comparing his works to each other while situating them within larger contexts, Hinton demonstrates how Weill's experiments with a range of genres, forms, and styles constitute a continuously innovative and coherent development, from his first children's pantomime and early operas through his final

Broadway musical. Hinton's long-term engagement with Weill has resulted in several other essential volumes, including *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera* for the Cambridge Opera Handbooks series and the critical edition of the score and text of *Die Dreigroschenoper* for the Kurt Weill Edition.

In addition to the book prize, a \$2,000 Kurt Weill Prize for outstanding article has been awarded to **Christopher Chowrimootoo** for his article "Bourgeois Opera: *Death in Venice* and the Aesthetics of Sublimation," published in the *Cambridge Opera Journal* in 2011. The prize panel commended the essay for taking on "a work, a composer, a defined period in the history of a genre, and a larger critical approach and attitude towards musical style and meaning that potentially touches all scholars of 20th-century music." Chowrimootoo, an Assistant Professor of Musicology and Liberal Studies at the University of Notre Dame, also received the Royal Musical Association's Jerome Roche Prize for his article.



Christopher Chowrimootoo

Awarded biennially by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, the Kurt Weill Prize recognizes distinguished scholarship in music theater since 1900, including opera and dance. Books and articles published in 2011-2012 were eligible for the 2013 prize; nominations were reviewed by a panel of music and theater experts. The next round will be in 2015.

Critical Edition of *Johnny Johnson* Wins 2013 Claude V. Palisca Award

The Kurt Weill Edition has won more than its share of prizes over the years; the latest volume, *Johnny Johnson* (Series I, Volume 13), has won the Paul Revere Award (the twelfth for the Edition) and has also taken a most prestigious honor, the **Claude V. Palisca Award**. Bestowed by the American Musicological Society, the Palisca Award is given annually to an outstanding scholarly edition or translation published in the previous year. *Johnny Johnson* was edited by Distinguished Professor **Tim Carter** of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and published by the Kurt Weill Foundation and European American Music in 2012. The volume contains the complete score and text (including dialogue) of the play with music, written for the Group Theatre in 1936 by Weill and Paul Green. It was Weill's first Broadway show. It is also the first edition of a musical to win the Palisca Award, a result of growing scholarly attention directed to Broadway musicals and a harbinger of changes in the field, as more and more definitive editions of musicals are in the works.

The Palisca Award honors a score or scholarly text that "best exemplifies the highest qualities of originality, interpretation, logic and clarity of thought, and communication." With hundreds of new scores and musicology texts published each year, the com-



Tim Carter

"Masterful in its command of an extraordinarily complicated creative process and revision history, engagingly written, and beautifully presented, it exemplifies the best of what editors strive to do."

— Professor Laura Youens of the award committee

petition is fierce. Broadway shows are notoriously difficult to edit due to scattered sources, multiple collaborators, and the absence of definitive texts because of frequent changes during rehearsals and inconsistent publishing practices. Carter has written about Monteverdi, Mozart, and *Oklahoma!*, so he is no stranger to musical theater. His work on *Johnny Johnson* was distinguished by extensive original research and meticulous attention to detail, along with rigorous application of the highest critical standards to a Broadway musical. Obviously, the AMS panel noticed. In presenting the award

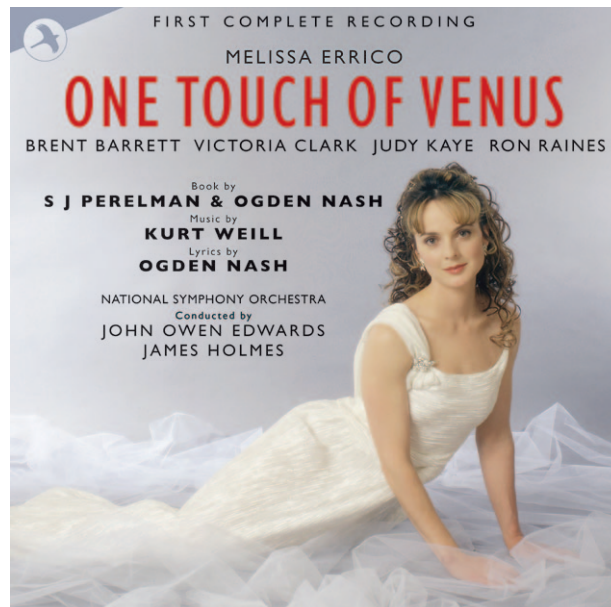
to *Johnny Johnson*, committee chair Professor Laura Youens remarked, "Masterful in its command of an extraordinarily complicated creative process and revision history, engagingly written, and beautifully presented, it exemplifies the best of what editors strive to do."

The Kurt Weill Edition is a long-term publishing project, the goal of which is to present all of Kurt Weill's completed musical works in new critical editions. Each of the composer's completed and performable works will be presented in a form realizing the highest editorial standards and dedicated to use both by performers seeking accurate editions and scholars seeking authoritative texts.

Complete Recording of *One Touch of Venus* Finally Available!

After Melissa Errico lit up the stage in the *Encores!* production of *One Touch of Venus* in 1996, JAY Records began preparations for a complete recording of the show. Broadway luminaries Brent Barrett and Ron Raines were recruited to sing the roles of Rodney Hatch and Whitelaw Savory, respectively. After a long hiatus, the final sessions are done, and the recording of the complete score, including ballet music and three cut songs, is already available on iTunes, with the 2-CD set to follow early in the new year. The three leads are joined by Tony Award winners Victoria Clark (Molly Grant) and Judy Kaye (Mrs. Kramer); Lenya Competition winners Lauren Worsham, Michael (“Tuba”) McKinsey, and Jacob Lewis Smith round out the cast. The National Symphony Orchestra is conducted by John Owen Edwards and James Holmes, using Weill’s own orchestrations as heard on Broadway.

The iTunes release coincided with an auspicious day, 7 October 2013, the seventieth anniversary of the premiere of *Venus* on Broadway. Symphony Space marked the anniversary with a concert evening, *Kurt Weill on Broadway*, featuring Errico, Barrett, Raines, and conductor James Holmes from the record-



ing, performing numbers from *Venus* and other Weill Broadway shows (see report on pp. 13–14). Weill’s most successful American musical emerged from a collaboration with Ogden Nash (book and lyrics) and S.J. Perelman (book), two of America’s greatest humorists. It enjoyed a run of 567 performances in 1943–45 but has left few recorded traces until now. Aside from a few standards, notably “Speak Low” and “I’m a Stranger Here Myself,” most of the songs from the show have been recorded here and there, generally in arrangements by others. Assembling all of the numbers has been impossible, and Broadway aficionados have long been clamoring for a recording of the entire show. For decades, the closest you could get was the original cast recording, featuring Mary Martin and Kenny Baker, which included the best-known songs but only about a quarter of the score. It was released on CD in 1996, but that has become a collector’s item, actually harder to find and more expensive than the original 78s issued by Decca in 1944 as one of the earliest cast recordings. No more waiting. Here, at last, is a recording of the entire score (and then some).

Dreigroschenoper Going Strong at 85

Die Dreigroschenoper marked its eighty-fifth anniversary in 2013. The show that the conventional wisdom doomed to failure in 1928 remains one of the world’s best-loved and most popular works of musical theater. Already this year, *Die Dreigroschenoper* has entertained audiences all over Europe and the U.S.; a short list includes Chemnitz, Marburg, Mannheim, Duisburg, Cincinnati, Hjørring, Koblenz, Rochester, Middlebury, Hagen, Providence, Saarbrücken, Munich, and Indianapolis. The Berliner Ensemble staging from 2007 continues to draw spectators in Berlin, and the production toured to Perth in February. Major concert performances in Paris and London (both conducted by Vladimir Jurowski) and Amsterdam (HK Gruber) have made their mark this year. Most recently, the run at the Gate Theatre in Dublin had to be extended more than a month due to unprecedented demand.



Ruth McGill, David Ganly and Charlotte McCurry
in *The Threepenny Opera* at the Gate Theatre

PHOTO: MATTHEW THOMPSON

The rest of 2013–14 season will see another wave of important productions of the Weill-Brecht classic:

Schauspiel Leipzig

31 December – 13 May (10 performances, in repertory)

Graeae Theatre Company (U.K.)

21 February – 12 April (over 25 performances at four venues)

Atlantic Theatre Company (New York)

12 March – 4 May (61 performances)

Nordharzer Städtebund Theater

14 March – 6 June (11 performances, touring production)

Salzburger Landestheater

4 April – 15 June (12 performances, in repertory)

Signature Theatre (Arlington, VA)

22 April – 1 June (42 performances)

We will continue to post performances as we learn of them on kwf.org and threepennyopera.org.

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