

Mackie Messer: Eine Salzburger Dreigroschenoper

Salzburg Festival

Premiere: 11 August 2015

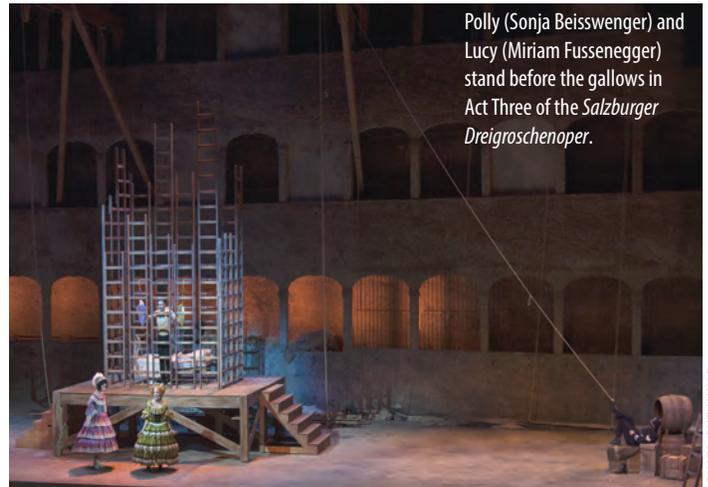
Billed as “a one-time experiment in the musical adaptation by Martin Lowe,” this production of *Die Dreigroschenoper* seems unlikely to be repeated anytime soon. The change of title to *Mackie Messer: Eine Salzburger Dreigroschenoper* serves to distinguish Lowe’s score from Weill’s original and, at the same time, identify the new version with the festival that commissioned it, and where it received just eight performances in August.

To judge by the press reaction, which ranged from non-committal to downright dismissive, the experiment did not succeed. Although Lowe stated in an interview with the Munich *Abendzeitung* that his aim was to “sharpen the character of each number,” many critics registered the opposite impression, several of them using laundry metaphors to convey the dulling effect of the new orchestration. Austria’s *Die Presse* declared that Weill’s original had been “treated with fabric softener.” The headline in the *New York Times* ran “Mack the Knife, with the edges softened.” And another Austrian paper, the *Kurier*, complained that “Lowe has put Weill into the ‘synth-pop’ washing machine and selected a cycle that is too hot.” As a result, the critic continued, “the treasured piece has shrunk to children’s size.”

Lowe’s is a “musical adaptation” in a twofold sense: he has rearranged Weill’s score to bring it nearer to the sound world of contemporary musical theater, from Sondheim to Lloyd Webber. “By adapting the immortal melodies of this wonderful composer afresh,” director Sven-Eric Bechtolf explained in publicity materials, “we will attempt to transport the sonic environment of his remarkable score from the dance band idioms of the Twenties of the last century to the sonorities of the second decade of our own.” Mission accomplished. Instead of the sharp and incisive edges of the work’s “sonic image” (its *Klangbild*, as Weill himself referred to it), Lowe offers a thicker, more blended sound. While largely retaining the original melodies, he utterly transforms the instrumental textures.

By way of emphasizing the temporal and cultural distance traveled, the production begins with a shellac recording of Weill’s overture played on a wind-up gramophone. The technologically reproduced original soon yields, however, to the live sounds of Lowe’s playful and richly percussive re-orchestration. The show concludes, some three hours later, with another nod to the Weimar era by having the cast reprise “Mack the Knife” to the words that Brecht supplied for G.W. Pabst’s film version, including the very last line “die im Dunkel sieht man nicht [one doesn’t see those in the dark].” The Pabst allusion seems incongruous, given that Bechtolf’s vision, which otherwise pursues an upbeat, showy agenda of unadulterated entertainment, ignores the sinister implications of that line and the film’s anticapitalist satire.

The show is a rich feast for the ears and the eyes, if not for the mind. The critic of *Der Spiegel*, who shared many of the reservations voiced by other critics, described the busy, hyperactive production as “optical and acoustic overkill,” an assessment that’s



Polly (Sonja Beisswenger) and Lucy (Miriam Fussenegger) stand before the gallows in Act Three of the *Salzburger Dreigroschenoper*.

PHOTO: RUTH WALZ

hard to disagree with. The optical opulence results no doubt in part from the challenge of filling the cavernous Felsenreitschule, with its wide but not especially deep stage, which one critic likened to a fashion-show runway, and its three-story-high fenestrated backdrop carved out of the rock used to build Salzburg Cathedral. Vast quantities of stage property come and go in rapid succession, just as the numerous wrap-around window openings of the rock wall serve as projection spaces for the striking images, both still and animated, used to illustrate the songs’ content.

Despite the shrinkage lamented by the *Kurier*’s critic, in several respects the work has been enlarged. *Die Dreigroschenoper* is a chamber piece. Here, however, much of it was inflated, not only the scoring and staging, but also the duration. The sprawling dialogue from the 1931 literary version remained essentially intact, and in spite of the busy stage action, the show seemed overlong. (The wedding scene, in particular, would have benefited from some judicious cutting.)

The Salzburg experiment runs directly counter to Weill’s own principle. Although he welcomed and promoted arrangements of individual numbers, he always insisted that staged performances of his works for the musical theater adhere to his own *Klangbild*. “Why now make an exception to a policy that extends back, with few exceptions and scant modification, to Weill’s own?” asks Kim H. Kowalke, President of the Kurt Weill Foundation, in a thoughtful essay included in the elegant program booklet. The question remains whether, as Kowalke ponders, “the Salzburg production will prompt a re-examination of longstanding policies.” In receiving approval for this one-time exception, the Festival management agreed to organize a performance of Weill’s 1928 score in the well-known concert version recorded and regularly toured by HK Gruber and the Ensemble Modern. Festival patrons were thus given the opportunity to compare original and experiment. (The outstanding Sona MacDonald played the role of Jenny in both.) The press has come down emphatically on the side of the original.

Stephen Hinton
Stanford University

Die Dreigroschenoper in Concert

Salzburg Festival

15 August 2015

After the techno-enhanced, percussion-heavy *Mackie Messer: Eine Salzburger Dreigroschenoper*, the new arrangement rescored by Martin Lowe and staged at Salzburg, the concert presentation of the original score made a convincing case for Weill's ingenious instrumentation and his insistence on a certain kind of singing actor. Aside from Hanna Schwarz as Frau Peachum and Ute Gfrerer as Polly, the evening brought together the same cast as HK Gruber's celebrated 1999 recording.

The giant wooden gallows from Julian Crouch's *Mackie Messer* set remained onstage, a reminder of the spectacle that had filled the Felsenreitschule. But *Die Dreigroschenoper* sprang to life through first-rate musicianship, the result of Gruber's close collaboration with the Ensemble Modern and his singers to cultivate an idiomatic Weill sound. Gruber maintained an elasticity of tempo that had been sorely missing in *Mackie Messer* under conductor Holger Kolodziej but also brought forth the precise dotted rhythms and excellent balance which are his trademark with the Ensemble Modern. The musicians emerged as stars in their own right in the "Kanonensong," saxophones and trumpets skipping along at a virtuosic pace. A suspenseful use of pauses drew close attention to the surreal effect of the Hawaiian guitar (Jürgen Rück). Small touches such as the sarcastic response of the trombone (Uwe Dierksen) to Polly's helpless plea in the "Barbara-Song" or the slide of the saxophone (Lutz Koppetsch) in the "Liebeslied" involved listeners in every detail of this intricate score.

The evening unfolded with a sense of spontaneity but also understatement thanks in large part to Gruber's leadership. Not content with conducting the score, he played Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum, the scheming owner of the company "Beggar's Friend," evoking everything from a decrepit priest in the "Morgenchoral" to a growling cynic in the "Erstes Dreigroschenfinale." The Salzburg Festival's interim Intendant Sven-Eric Bechtolf—the driving

force behind the experimental *Mackie Messer*—took the role of the narrator with immediacy and incisive diction, but his Viennese accent faded away in the course of the performance.

As Macheath, Max Raabe cuts a distinct profile which has remained consistent over the fifteen years since the recording. His cool tenor projects an insidious charm that one can't quite trust, making him the perfect "gentleman gangster," in Gruber's words. His gentle phrasing also blended expertly with the brass players, most conspicuously the trombone in both "Moritat vom Mackie Messer" and the "Liebeslied" with his spouse, Polly Peachum. In a nicely ironic moment, an audience member had to be escorted out of the hall mid-performance, prompting Raabe to jump offstage with a glass of water. ("Who doesn't want to be a good person?" as Peachum asks rhetorically.)

Raabe's detached nonchalance is both a virtue, in that it conjures up a certain type of ruthless criminal, and a flaw, in that the character of Macheath remains opaque, or worse, one-dimensional, particularly in the context of a concert staging. As Polly, Gfrerer connected with the audience more effectively with her expressive face and generous arm gestures. She brought an improvisatory feel to "Seeräuberjenny," her voice ranging freely from a sweet, high soprano to offhand spoken passages. And her youthful timbre formed a fine blend with Raabe in the "Liebeslied." In the "Eifersuchtsduett," she was at the height of her thespian powers, demonstrating the parodic nature of the quasi-operatic closing both vocally and physically.

As her rival, Lucy, Winnie Böwe was a delightful counterpart, matching Gfrerer's humor and vocal stamina. Sona MacDonald, who sang Polly on the recording, switched to Spelunkenjenny but was in no way limited by the smaller role of this sly prostitute. She gave a visceral, raw performance, expressing both lust and anguish in the tango-based "Zuhälterballade" with Macheath. The "Salomonsong" was impressive for its wide range of color, her voice trembling slightly in the high range, then blending seamlessly with the harmonium. Rounding out the cast was opera singer Hanna Schwarz, a lyrical Frau Peachum who nevertheless colored the "Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit" with a humorous dose of grandmotherly tone and diction, and the

veteran Tiger Brown of Hannes Hellmann, whose stuttering, cartoonish word painting in the "Drittes Dreigroschenfinale" brought the show to a vivid close.

During encores of the "Zuhälterballade für Orchester" and "Kanonensong," the musicians jammed with even more freedom than during the performance. And if that wasn't an unusual enough sight (or sound) for the glossy Salzburg Festival, Gruber invited the tuxedo- and dirndl-clad audience to sing along to the "Moritat von Mackie Messer" before going home. They did so with gusto and then sustained cheers.



Winnie Böwe, HK Gruber, Ute Gfrerer, Hannes Hellmann, Ensemble Modern, and Salzburger Bachchor

PHOTO: MARCO BORRELLI

Rebecca Schmid
Berlin

The Threepenny Opera

New Line Theatre
St. Louis

Premiere: 28 May 2015

This non-profit company founded in 1991 bills itself as “the bad boy of musical theatre,” but they staged a surprisingly solid, traditional production of the Blitzstein adaptation of Weill and Brecht’s *The Threepenny Opera* in May and June 2015 (twelve performances in all). Staged in an intimate black box theatre, divided diagonally between stage and audience, the production featured a cast of sixteen and a band of seven. Costumes and settings generally evoked the eighteenth century—*Oliver!* could have been staged on the set—and none of Blitzstein’s text was altered for local or contemporary topical laughs.

Indeed, the production treated *Threepenny* as a “classic.” New Line’s field has always been edgy little shows; their website insists that they don’t put on “your grandparents’ musicals” (although the audience was composed almost entirely of patrons who looked like grand—or even great-grand—parents). For *Threepenny*, director Scott Miller kept added business and staging to a minimum. Excellent diction from all members of the cast delivered the text in a completely comprehensible style, aided by some static staging choices. (The trio finale to Act One, for example, would have improved with some movement.)

The show’s opening number and greatest hit, “Mack the Knife,” was staged in a spare but effective manner that promised an energetic production. A few loud foot stamps from the entire company, never predictably placed in the tune, conveyed an air of menace at the outset, amplified by having the entire cast whisper Macheath’s name along with the singer every time it appeared in the lyrics. But after that, there were few such moments in this long, dialogue-heavy show—two hours, forty minutes with one fifteen-minute intermission—which often feels like more Brecht

than Weill. “Mack the Knife” augured an angrier, more intense production than the company delivered. A sharper, punchier attack from the band, generally on the quiet side throughout, would have been welcome. Weill’s score would have benefited from a more acidic and angular aggressiveness.

Centered on the clear delivery of Brecht’s words as rendered by Blitzstein, and thus dependent on the quality of individual performances, New Line’s production made a strong case for *Threepenny* as a women’s show. Polly (Cherlynn Alvarez), Jenny (Nikki Glenn), and Lucy (Christina Rios) each turned in compelling if differently inflected performances, easily outshining other members of the cast. Alvarez’s Polly was mercurial and petulant, reacting moment by moment to everything around her. She also showed a comic hardness when asked to take over Macheath’s crime business, and her “Pirate Jenny” suitably scared Macheath’s gang. One wished the role provided further opportunities for Polly to display her tough side.

Glenn’s Jenny was all about stillness and unexpressed subtext, well matched to the role’s featured number, “Solomon Song,” which was among the most effective of the many moral-giving moments. It made perfect sense for Jenny to refuse to dance despite Macheath’s (Todd Schaefer) invitation during their duet, “Tango Ballad,” for the text conspires against such expression—even if a short dance might fill out the relationship between the two. There’s little room for fun in *Threepenny* and that moment felt like an opportunity lost. Indeed, the businesslike score—with almost no extended introductions, no dance breaks, and little musical punctuation for the ends of songs—works against audience engagement, even with high-quality performances. Weill and Brecht ended the musical numbers in a perhaps deliberately unpolished manner that, in a faithful production such as this, feels abrupt. The dazzlingly clever lyrics of Sondheim’s *Sweeney Todd* and the razzle-dazzle of Kander and Ebb’s *Chicago*, both obvious descendants of *Threepenny*, are just not there in this show created far from Broadway. New Line’s audience of seasoned theatergoers seemed unsure when to applaud. A less faithful production might have smoothed the way towards more appreciation of the work.

Macheath’s third woman, Lucy, has but one substantial scene. Rios made the most of it; her “Barbara Song” was the production’s highlight. Delivering the three verses in a mix of spoken patter and full-voiced, trained soprano—in other numbers she revealed a strong belting register as well—Rios both acted and sang the song’s saga of a good woman fallen to a bad man. Her nuanced performance built effectively to the third verse of “Barbara Song,” which, unlike almost any other moment in a score devoted to simulated emotion and/or cynical statement-making, reveals something close to a real broken heart.

Todd Decker
Washington University of St. Louis



In the foreground, from left: Polly (Cherlynn Alvarez), Jenny (Nikki Glenn), and Lucy (Christina Rios). Photo: Jill Ritter Lindberg

Swept Away: Music of a Lost Generation

The Continuum Ensemble London

19–21 June 2015

Thanks largely to the efforts of some enterprising record companies, our knowledge of the rich variety of music composed during the Weimar Republic has expanded immeasurably in recent years. Yet no complementary surge of interest in and enthusiasm for this repertoire has thus far been displayed by those planning concert programs in the United Kingdom. This contrast was thrown into relief during an unusually stimulating weekend of events, including several concerts and lectures on the cultural scene that took up not only music but also the visual, literary, and cinematic arts. These were all brought together under the eye-catching title “Swept Away”—a celebration of the manifold achievements of a variety of creative artists who were forced, because of politics or ethnicity, to leave Germany after Hitler came to power in 1933, and who with some notable exceptions found it difficult to sustain their careers in the countries to which they emigrated. Enterprisingly put together by two leading Canadian musicians, conductor Philip Headlam and pianist Douglas Finch, the packed program took place in King’s Place, one of London’s newest concert halls. It included no less than eleven works which had never been performed before in the UK and many others that are at best infrequently encountered here.

The opening concert was undoubtedly one of the most ambitious, offering three short music-theater pieces dating from the late 1920s, two of which are closely related to *Zeitoper*. Included in the program were two works specially composed for the 1927 Baden-Baden Festival, Hindemith’s *Hin und zurück* and Weill’s *Mahagonny Songspiel*, the latter piece projected here with energy and tremendous exuberance. In between these items were Ernst Toch’s satirical anti-Romantic operatic parody *Egon und Emilie*, first performed in Mannheim in 1928, and Weill’s dark and menacing setting of Brecht’s poem, *Vom Tod im Wald*. Although Headlam had assembled an excellent cast of singers and finely honed instrumental players to tackle these pieces, the cramped concert platform in King’s Place provided little opportunity for significant stage movement in the Hindemith and Toch. Furthermore, the constraints of placing a wide variety of instrumental ensembles of different sizes in close proximity to the singers inevitably played havoc with the balance, and some vital words were not always audible. Despite these disadvantages, the Hindemith in particular came across as a most effective, amusing, and entertaining piece. The Toch, on the other hand, had less immediate impact because the satirical exposé of a bourgeois marriage seemed a bit heavy-handed, both in terms of the text and the relentlessly acerbic music. True, a similar harshness of timbre permeates Weill’s *Vom Tod im Wald*, powerfully sung here by bass Barnaby Rea, but this seems appropriate given the chilling scene depicted in Brecht’s poetry.

During the next evening, the focus shifted to chamber and piano music, introducing two substantial duo sonatas composed



Philip Headlam

PHOTO: SUSANA SHANROMAN

by Toch. Of these, the slightly earlier Violin Sonata of 1928, exploiting an idiom that juxtaposes moments of heightened atonal expressionism with passages of more objective neo-classicism, seemed the stronger work, partly because violinist Hugo Ticciati, partnered by Douglas Finch, appeared more engaged by the musical argument and delivered a strongly characterized interpretation. By comparison, soloist Joseph Spooner’s reticent delivery served only to emphasize the rather gray colors of the Cello Sonata composed a year later. Preferable to either work were two sets of piano miniatures, *Capriccetti* (1925) and *Burlesken* (1923), which demonstrated Toch’s consummate and imaginative mastery of the instrument. In particular, the relentless *moto perpetuo* third movement of the *Burlesques*, “Der Jongleur,” was dispatched by Finch with wonderful clarity and great showmanship. But arguably the most clearly defined musical impression in the entire concert was created in the epigrammatic and sharply contrasting *Eight Pieces* for solo flute by Hindemith. Lisa Nelsen performed these atmospheric miniatures with grace and imagination, though her tendency to leave an unduly long period of silence between each piece ultimately worked against sustaining the audience’s interest.

The final day’s program provided a roller coaster of three brilliantly conceived concerts for very different musical forces, starting with works for chorus and ending, perhaps appropriately, with a late evening sequence of cabaret and theater songs from Mischa Spoliansky, Wilhelm Grosz, Friedrich Holländer, Weill, and Herbert Zipper, performed by charismatic singers Anna Dennis and Lucy Schauer accompanied by the indefatigable Philip Headlam. For the choral concert, Headlam was wise to have engaged the highly experienced BBC Singers, who tackled an extremely challenging program with verve and aplomb. They opened with Ernst Krenek’s *Die Jahreszeiten* (1925), a cycle of *a cappella* settings of poems by Hölderlin that demonstrate the composer’s capacity for vivid word painting in a contrapuntal idiom that owes much to the Renaissance. In contrast, Krenek’s slightly earlier *Drei Stücke* for *a cappella* chorus (1923), with texts by Matthias Claudius, was less obviously mellifluous, featuring some dissonant four- and six-part chords and a more fluid, almost experimental, approach to rhythmic motion. Even more

Conductor Philip Headlam (left) leads the Continuum Ensemble and vocal soloists in *Das Berliner Requiem*.



PHOTO: SUSANA SANROMAN

searching in its exploitation of the sounds of texts, to the point that words and phonetics become percussive elements in their own right, was the first complete UK performance of a collection of three pieces by Toch known as *Gesprochene Musik* (1930), of which the third, “Fuge aus der Geographie,” became the composer’s most frequently performed work. The BBC Singers were in their element here, projecting the wit and humor of these brilliantly imaginative miniatures with tremendous virtuosity. After acknowledging extremely enthusiastic applause, they treated us to an unexpected and delicious encore, the equally diverting and resourceful *Valse* for speaking chorus and optional percussion composed by Toch in the USA in 1961.

Two compositions of a much more serious nature also figured in this program, both responding in their different ways to the inhumanities of war. First came Stefan Wolpe’s *Zwei chinesische Grabschriften* (1937) for choir and percussion, a typically forthright expression of outrage at the atrocities committed by the fascist armies that bombed the city of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. But it was the final work, Weill’s *Das Berliner Requiem*, which made the most powerful impact. Headlam chose David Drew’s later version (2000) with Walter Goehr’s orchestration of “Zu Potsdam unter den Eichen.” The Continuum Ensemble’s wind and brass players secured exactly the ideal level of menace in the sustained chords and punctuated staccato accents of the “Grosser Dankchoral,” and baritone Michael Bundy was particularly moving in his declamation of the disturbing text in the “Zweiter Bericht über den unbekanntenen Soldaten.”

In Sunday’s second program, devoted exclusively to music for chamber orchestra, the only familiar item was Weill’s *Violin Concerto*. Once again, Headlam faced considerable challenges in accommodating a relatively large number of instruments on a small concert platform. As with the stage works from Friday evening, it was difficult under these conditions to achieve an ideal balance between the solo violinist (Hugo Ticciati) and the rest of the ensemble, let alone project as wide a dynamic range as prescribed by the composer. Although some of the quieter passages, particularly at the opening of the *Andante con moto* and the *Notturmo*, could have been more atmospheric, the Finale was exciting, as both soloist and conductor pushed the music towards a frenzied and exhilarating conclusion.

Preceding the Weill were three works by Toch, all of them receiving their UK premieres. The *Fünf Stücke für Kammerorchester* of 1924 demonstrated the composer’s acute ear for color and

subtle scoring. These terse pieces sounded as if they could have been studies to accompany a silent film, and in this respect they looked forward to Toch’s later if somewhat protracted career in writing music for Hollywood. There were also perhaps proto-cinematic elements of a more slapstick variety in the scampering passagework of *Miniatur Ouvertüre* (1932) for woodwinds and brass. The phenomenally difficult writing in this work would have benefited from more sharply defined ensemble playing, though it was nonetheless entertaining. More emotionally affecting was a short song-cycle, *Die Chinesische Flöte* (1922), inspired by the same

collection of poetry used by Mahler in *Das Lied von der Erde*. Sarah Tynan sang the three Bethge settings with great intensity and Headlam inspired the Continuum Ensemble to produce some wonderfully nuanced playing in the instrumental interludes, of which the central march was especially hypnotic.

Philip Headlam and Douglas Finch should be congratulated for devising such an absorbing program. The opportunity to experience the music of Toch, a composer all too frequently overlooked and undervalued in the context of 1920s German music, was particularly welcome, even if not all of the works made the strongest impact on first acquaintance. Nonetheless, other producers and ensembles should waste no time organizing events conceived along similar lines, for there is little doubt that more repertory from this fascinatingly varied era deserves a chance at far wider dissemination.

Erik Levi

Royal Holloway, University of London

In addition to the five concerts reviewed by Professor Levi, the Swept Away festival offered five talks and readings:

Martin Anderson, “Unjustly Neglected: How Music Was Banned and Forgotten”

Erik Levi, “Music in the Weimar Republic”

Deborah Holmes, “Art, Film, and Literature in Berlin and Vienna during the Interwar Years”

Annabel Arden, Neil Bartlett, and Rosalind Parker, “In Their Own Words: German Poetry, Drama, and Fiction of the 1920s”

Mary Mitchell, George Szirtes, and Maya Youssef, “Refugee Artists in Europe Today.”

A documentary film about composer Herbert Zipper (featured in the final concert) was screened in May, and the Austrian Cultural Forum offered a related film series throughout June.

Lotte Lenya Competition News

2016 Competition Now Open



2016 Lotte Lenya COMPETITION
A Program of The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

First Prize \$15,000 | Total Prizes \$60,000+

"No other vocal contest better targets today's total package talents!"

The Lotte Lenya Competition is a unique international theater singing contest that emphasizes versatility, energy, repertoire and the acting of songs and arias within a dramatic context. The competition recognizes talented young singers/actors who use dramatically and musically compelling repertoire ranging from contemporary Broadway scores, including the works of Kurt Weill.

THREE AUDITION ROUNDS:

PRELIMINARY AUDITIONS
Each contestant must appear at a preliminary audio audition in person. The video audition will be held in person. Auditions will include all four required selections.

SEMI-FINALS
Thursday, March 10 or Friday, March 11, 2016
Eastman School of Music
Rochester, NY USA

FINALS
Saturday, April 16, 2016
Eastman School of Music
Rochester, NY USA

APPLICATION & ELIGIBILITY:
Complete the online application at www.kwf.org and bring this to attention of all contestants. (Start 10-12)

Application Deadline: January 23, 2016

MORE INFO:
See show information, competition rules and show documents at [www.kwf.org/LLC](http://www.kwf.org)

Travel stipends are available to participants. Accommodations will be provided.

Travel stipends are available to finalists. Accommodations will be provided.

www.kwf.org

After one of the most successful years ever, we are hoping for still greater things in 2016. The Lotte Lenya Competition seeks exceptionally talented young singer/actors who excel in a wide range of musical theater styles. Applications for the 2016 contest are being accepted now. Contestants will compete for top prizes of \$15,000, \$10,000 and \$7,500; total prizes awarded will exceed \$60,000.

The 2016 Lotte Lenya Competition is open to singer/actors of

all nationalities, ages 19-32. Applicants will compete in the preliminary round of auditions by submitting an application and uploading a video; there will be no live auditions. Travel stipends will be offered to contestants in the semi-final and final rounds.

Contestants must prepare a program of four selections: one theatrical selection by Kurt Weill (any genre); two songs from the American musical theater repertoire (one pre-1968 and one from 1968 or later); and one aria from the opera or operetta repertoire. They will be judged not only on their vocal talent, but on their ability to create believable characters in a variety of dramatic situations.

To enter the 2016 Competition, contestants must submit an online application and audition video by **25 January 2016**. Semi-finalists will be invited to audition in New York City on 10 or 11 March 2016. All finalists will receive an award of \$1,000 and compete for top prizes at the Finals on 16 April 2016 at the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York, USA.



Lauren Worsham dances with Vanessa Williams in *Show Boat*. Photo: Chris Lee

Application and more information at
www.kwf.org/llc

Lenya Competition Past Winners On Stage

Here is just a handful of highlights of recent, current, and forthcoming performances by previous winners:

Lauren Michelle (1st Prize, 2015): Selections from *Porgy and Bess* at the Ravinia Festival, July 2015, with **Nicole Cabell** (Lys Symonette Award, 2002) and Brian Stokes Mitchell; Irina in *Lost in the Stars* at Washington National Opera, February 2016.



PHOTO: PATRICK GIPSON/RAVINIA

David Arnsperger (2nd Prize, 2010): Title role in *Sweeney Todd* at Welsh National Opera, through 29 November 2015.

Kyle Scatliffe (Lys Symonette Award, 2010): Harpo in the Broadway revival of *The Color Purple*; previews begin 10 November 2015.

Analisa Leaming (2nd Prize, 2007): Anna (cover for Kelli O'Hara) in *The King and I* at Lincoln Center Theater, New York.

Jonathan Michie (1st Prize, 2005): Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* at Oper Leipzig, November–December 2015 and at LA Opera, February–March 2016.

Robert Ariza (Lys Symonette Award, 2014): Chorus member in the Broadway revival of *Spring Awakening*; opened 26 September 2015.

Lauren Worsham (2nd Prize, 2009): Magnolia in PBS Live from Lincoln Center broadcast of *Show Boat* in concert with the New York Philharmonic, 16–17 October 2015.

Ben Edquist (1st Prize, 2014): Papageno in *The Magic Flute* at Glimmerglass Festival, summer 2015.

Megan Marino (3rd Prize, 2012): Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Florida Grand Opera, November 2015 and at Fort Worth Opera, April–May, 2016.

Matthew Grills (1st Prize, 2012): Tobias in *Sweeney Todd* at San Francisco Opera, with **Brian Mulligan** (1998), September 2015. SFO will also showcase **Lucas Meachem** (Lys Symonette Award, 2002) as Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, November–December 2015.

Foundation News

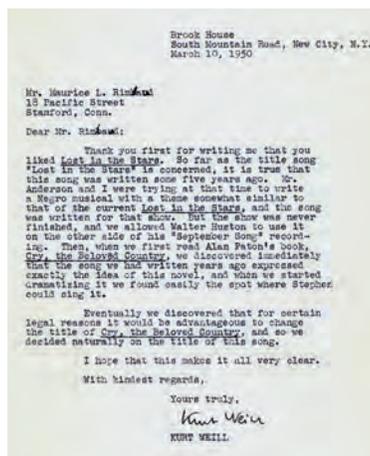
Mahagonny: Ein Songspiel Up Next

The next volume of the Kurt Weill Edition, *Mahagonny: Ein Songspiel*, edited by Giselher Schubert, will appear in February 2016. The *sui generis* work, the first collaboration of Weill, Bertolt Brecht, Caspar Neher, and Lotte Lenya, marked a definitive turn for Weill and inaugurated a style of composition and performance now universally identified with the Weimar Republic.

The main volume includes the complete score and text of the Songspiel, along with an introductory essay and facsimiles of important source material. The accompanying Critical Report describes the sources and explains the editors' decisions.

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.

Research Center Acquisitions



Over the summer, the Foundation added to the collections of the Weill-Lenya Research Center eight original letters of Kurt Weill, dating from 1936 to 1950, including a letter written shortly before his death (reproduced at left) which Lenya found among his effects and mailed months later. As part of the same transaction, the Research Center also acquired two original Lotte Lenya letters. In

September, the Research Center continued its lucky streak with the purchase of three of Lenya's letters to Ann Ronell.

In May, the Research Center obtained color photocopies of thirteen letters and postcards written by Weill to Darius and/or Madeleine Milhaud between 1933 and 1948 from the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel, home to the papers of many twentieth-century composers. Both were close friends of Weill, and the letters offer substantial insight into his activities at crucial points in his life—just before he made his journey to the U.S., during preparations for *The Eternal Road*, in the aftermath of the success of *Lady in the Dark*, etc. In 1935 Weill wrote to Darius: “You are one of very few people whose judgment of my work pleases me when it is favorable and makes me reconsider when it is not. That sounds strange coming from me, but you know how few people—and still fewer composers—understand or even try to understand what I’m doing.”

2015 Kurt Weill Prize

The Kurt Weill Foundation marked the twentieth anniversary of the Kurt Weill Prize this year by recognizing two exemplary scholarly works on music theater. Alisa Solomon took the Book Prize for *Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof* (Metropolitan Books, 2013). Emily Abrams Ansari won the Article Prize for “‘Vindication, Cleansing, Catharsis, Hope’: Interracial Reconciliation and the Dilemmas of Multiculturalism in Kay and Dorr’s *Jubilee* (1976),” published in *American Music* (Winter 2013). The authors received cash awards of \$5,000 and \$2,000, respectively.

A panel of distinguished scholars chose the two winners from a strong group of nominees. The panelists hailed Solomon: “Every page of her prose is an object lesson proving that research skills and engaging expository writing are not mutually exclusive. *Wonder of Wonders* is the kind of sorely needed book that can both appeal to academic audiences and recruit new readers interested in legitimate theater.” The panel was equally impressed with Ansari’s work, which “forces some profound—if at times uncomfortable—questions about art and politics in a difficult decade, and also about just what it might mean to write an ‘American’ opera. Ansari grounds her work deep in the archives, and also supports it with careful critical thinking. This is a truly impressive article that has already made a significant impact on the field.”

Awarded biennially, the Kurt Weill Prize was created in 1994 at the suggestion of Harold Prince, then a member of the Foundation’s Board of Trustees, as a means of recognizing excellence in the scholarly domain of music theater in the broadest sense. Since 1995, we have honored many prominent or up-and-coming musicologists and theater historians, including Stephen Banfield (1995), Richard Taruskin (1997), Lisa Barg (2001), W. Anthony Sheppard (2003), Andrea Most (2005), Bruce D. McClung (2007), Larry Stempel (2011), and Stephen Hinton (2013).

Books and articles published in 2015 and 2016 are eligible for the 2017 Prize. Media may include not only print (book, major scholarly article in a journal, chapter or essay, critical edition), but also audio recording, video recording, multi-media project, and on-line publication, provided there is a significant scholarly component. Works addressing the American music theater are particularly encouraged. See kwf.org for further details.

Alisa Solomon



PHOTO: DAVID M. BARREDA

Emily Abrams Ansari



Inauguration of Julius Rudel/Kurt Weill Conducting Fellowship

The Foundation has named the first Julius Rudel/Kurt Weill Conducting Fellow. The new fellowship carries forward Rudel's legacy, honoring his exceptional career as opera and symphony conductor and his advocacy of Weill's music. This annual award enables a young conductor in the early stages of a career to assist an experienced maestro in the preparation and performance of a work by Weill or Marc Blitzstein and expand his or her knowledge of their works. The fellowship carries a stipend of up to \$10,000.

The first winner is Adam Turner, Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor at Virginia Opera. Turner will serve as cover conductor under John DeMain for *Lost in the Stars* at Washington National Opera in February 2016 (see pp. 4–11). The connection is truly fitting because Rudel himself mentored DeMain as his career was getting underway. DeMain noted, "Adam Turner is a brilliant young conductor, with one foot in opera and another in musical theater. His involvement with



Lost in the Stars at this level will allow him to bring all his talents to the production and encourage him to take on the stylistic complexities of other Weill works in the future." Turner is no less enthusiastic: "To be closely associated with the enduring legacies of Julius Rudel and Kurt Weill is an exceptional distinction for which I am deeply honored. I look forward to the opportunities of the year ahead." After *Lost in the Stars*, Turner's opportunities will continue when he conducts *The Seven Deadly Sins* at Virginia Opera in September 2016.

Foundation President Kim H. Kowalke says of the award, "This fellowship has been established in recognition of Julius's enormous contributions to musical theater in its broadest definition and in particular to the development of American opera for more than fifty years. It is so fitting that Turner will serve as cover conductor for *Lost in the Stars*, a work which Rudel introduced to the New York City Opera repertoire in 1958 and subsequently recorded. Fifty years later, it was the last work by Weill that Rudel conducted."

2016 Mid-Year Grant Awards

Every year the Foundation offers an opportunity for educational institutions to apply for grants to assist with performances during the next academic year. The deadline is 1 June. For the 2015–16 school year, the following grants were awarded:

American University, Washington, DC. *The Threepenny Opera*.
The New School, New York, NY. *Happy End*.
The Peabody Institute, Baltimore, MD. *Street Scene*.
Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, UK. *Street Scene*.

Other Fellowship News

In collaboration with the Glimmerglass Festival in Cooperstown, NY, the Foundation sponsors a position in the Young Artists Program every year for a prizewinner from the Lotte Lenya Competition. Maren Weinberger (2nd Prize, 2013) was this year's Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Young Artist, and she performed in *Candide* and covered Papagena in *The Magic Flute*, in addition to receiving the full benefit of Glimmerglass's highly regarded Young Artists Program. Last year's Young Artist, Ben Edquist (1st Prize, 2014), went on to play Papageno in 2015; his star continues to rise.

As the Foundation prepares for a third year of working with the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation in sponsoring an observer to assist an experienced stage director or choreographer with a Weill or Blitzstein production, we have confirmed that the SDCF will send an observer to the Washington National Opera's staging of *Lost in the Stars* in February 2016. The observer, yet to be named, will assist director Tazewell Thompson. Last spring, the Foundation sponsored SDCF observer Shaun Patrick Tubbs, who was involved with the Royal Opera House production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* in London under director John Fulljames (see Spring 2015 Newsletter).

New Markers at Mount Repose

Recently, the Foundation arranged for improvements in appearance and access to the graves of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya in Mount Repose Cemetery in Haverstraw, New York, near their home in New City. Both headstones were cleaned for the first time in over thirty years, and Lenya's headstone was re-engraved to eliminate a spelling error that dated back to the original placement of the stone. The gravesite was newly landscaped; dead plantings were removed, and the plot was seeded with vinca (periwinkle), a glossy ground cover that is easily maintained and looks good year-round, and painted fern.

The Foundation has also added a directional sign pointing to the site within the cemetery and sponsored a historical marker just outside the main entrance on Westside Avenue off of Route 9W. The marker, erected by the Historical Society of Rockland County, recounts Weill's and Lenya's achievements and notes that they are buried in Mount Repose.

Many admirers of Weill and Lenya wish to pay homage at their graves, and we are pleased to have made the site more attractive and easier to find. We encourage visitors to make the most of the new amenities at Mount Repose Cemetery.



PHOTO: KATE CHISHOLM

THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC, INC.

7 East 20th Street
New York, NY 10003-1106
USA

THE KURT WEILL EDITION

Making available to performers and scholars the works of one of the most frequently performed, fascinating, and provocative composers of the 20th Century.

Series I – STAGE

(24 volumes)

Series II – CONCERT

(9 volumes)

Series III – SCREEN

(1 volume)

Series IV – MISCELLANEA

(2+ volumes)

AVAILABLE VOLUMES

Zaubernacht (I/0)

eds. Elmar Juchem and Andrew Kuster

Der Protagonist, op. 15 (I/1)

eds. Gunther Diehl and Jürgen Selk

Die Dreigroschenoper (I/5)

eds. Stephen Hinton and Edward Harsh

Johnny Johnson (I/13)

ed. Tim Carter

The Firebrand of Florence (I/18)

ed. Joel Galand

Chamber Music (II/1)

eds. Wolfgang Rathert and Jürgen Selk

Music with Solo Violin (II/2)

ed. Andreas Eichhorn

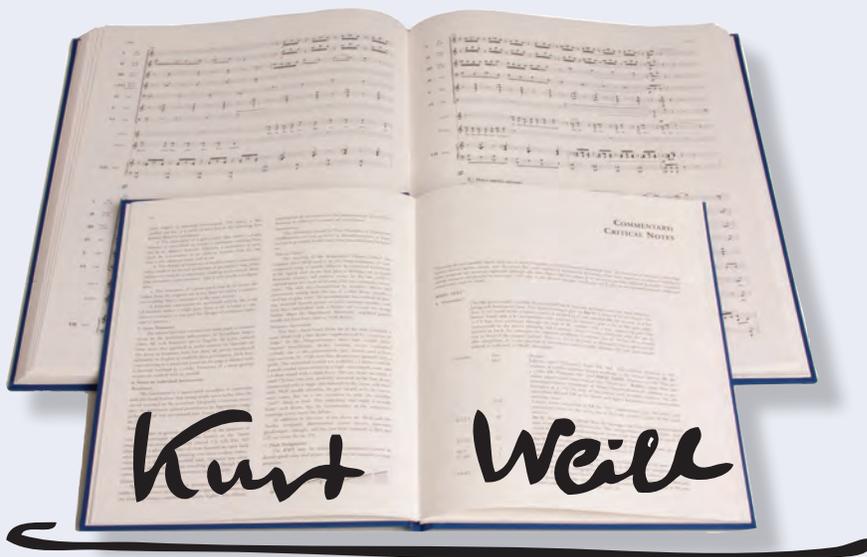
Die Dreigroschenoper:

Full-color facsimile of the holograph full score (IV/1)

ed. Edward Harsh

Popular Adaptations, 1927–1950 (IV/2)

eds. Charles Hamm, Elmar Juchem and Kim H. Kowalke



FORTHCOMING VOLUMES

Mahagonny Songspiel (I/3)

ed. Giselher Schubert

Happy End (I/6)

ed. Stephen Hinton

Die sieben Todsünden (I/10)

ed. Kim H. Kowalke

Lady in the Dark (I/16)

ed. Bruce McClung

One Touch of Venus (I/17)

ed. Jon Alan Conrad

Love Life (I/21)

ed. Joel Galand

For prices and subscription information, go to: www.kwf.org/kwe