

# KURT WEILL NEWSLETTER

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## Yale Press To Publish Essays

Yale University Press has accepted for publication a collection of essays on Kurt Weill scheduled for completion in 1985. *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill* evolved primarily from papers presented at the Kurt Weill Conference in 1983. It includes a contribution from virtually every active Weill scholar throughout the world. All of the papers have been expanded and revised and represent the most extensive critical survey of Weill's music and career to date. The collection, edited by Kim Kowalke, was accepted unanimously by the editorial board of this most prestigious of scholarly publishers. Among the highlights of the anthology are David Drew's definitive study of *Der Kuhhandel*, a key work in Weill's oeuvre that has remained unpublished and unperformed since 1935. The book will attract readers from diverse disciplines, since the essays tackle many issues central to twentieth-century culture. Because the authors had access for the first time to many primary sources, the book provides new insights concerning the Weill-Brecht relationship, the paradoxes of his career, and the major influences on his music. It is particularly fitting that the collection will be published by Yale Press since Yale holds the Weill/Lenya Archive and has a distinguished history of major performances of Weill's music.

## Venus Slated for Broadway

The heirs of S. J. Perelman, Ogden Nash, and Kurt Weill have signed an option by Lew Resseguie and Francis J. Vacca to present a revival of *One Touch of Venus* on Broadway next season. Paige O'Hara will return to the role of Venus, which she played in the 1983 concert production by the New Amsterdam Theatre Company at New York's Town Hall. The terms of the agreement require use of Weill's original orchestrations, and the production will utilize an orchestra of 28 players. Opening date, theater, artistic staff, and the remainder of the cast have not been announced. This will be the first revival on Broadway of the classic musical, which opened in 1943 and vaulted Mary Martin to fame in her first lead. The original production was directed by Elia Kazan, choreographed by Agnes de Mille, and conducted by Maurice Abravanel.

## Threepenny Opera at R & H

As of 11 December 1984, Rodgers & Hammerstein Theatre Library has added *The Threepenny Opera* to its catalogue of plays for stock and amateur licensing in the United States. The American version by Marc Blitzstein ran for seven years at New York's Theatre de Lys in the late Fifties and had been previously licensed by Tams-Witmark Music Library, Inc.

The Rodgers & Hammerstein Theatre Library is preparing new scripts and vocal scores which will be consistent with the high quality of their other publications. In addition to *Threepenny*, R & H also administers stock and amateur rights to *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *Lost in the Stars*, and *Street Scene*.

"We are thrilled and excited to announce the addition of *Threepenny* to our catalog," said Theodore Chapin, Managing Director of R & H. "As this work joins others by Weill, our company hopes to establish an identification as a centralized source of Weill's music. We want to be the first company that theaters call when they want to perform a show by Kurt Weill. Beyond this, we take special pride in acquiring a major property which has no prior connection to either Rodgers or Hammerstein."

"Rodgers & Hammerstein are the Rolls-Royce of the industry in terms of quality in rental materials and service to the theaters," said Kim Kowalke, President of the Weill Foundation. "The authors' heirs are delighted to assign this work to a first-rate agency and to have Weill's musicals among the classics of the repertoire."

Inquiries regarding *The Threepenny Opera* should be made to The Rodgers & Hammerstein Theatre Library, 598 Madison Ave., New York, New York 10022; telephone: (212) 486-7373.

## Weill Recordings Win Citations

When the "Best of the Year" awards were passed out for 1984 recordings, at least three major publications included Weill albums in their lists. *Newsweek* cited the Sequoia String Quartet's new recording of the string quartets [Nonesuch 79071-1] as among the year's ten best. The CBS reissue of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* [CBS Masterworks 77341; M3X 37874] captured first place in *Ovation's* "Vocal Reissues-Mono" category and was cited as an outstanding historical issue by *Opera News*.



Lenya stars as the scheming Contessa in "The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone,"

## 'Roman Spring' Released on Videotape

"The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone," the 1961 film for which Lotte Lenya won an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress, has been released on videotape by Warner Home Video [11183, color, 104 mins.], at a list price of \$59.95.

Based on a short novel by Tennessee Williams, "Roman Spring" is the story of a lonely, widowed American actress (played by Vivien Leigh), who becomes involved with Paolo, a young gigolo (Warren Beatty) while living in Italy. Lenya plays the Contessa, who arranges and then disrupts the assignation. In its recent review of the video, *The New York Times* likened Lenya's Contessa to "a poisonous macaw." Jose Quintero directed.

Also currently available on video are "Semi-Tough" [Magnetic Video/Twentieth-Century Fox 4517-30], a 1977 Burt Reynolds comedy featuring Lenya's last film appearance (as a sadistic masseuse); and "From Russia With Love" [Twentieth-Century Fox 4566], the 1963 James Bond thriller with Lenya in her most widely-known role: Rosa Kleb, the villainous SPECTRE agent with knives in her shoes.

# LETTERS

## To the Editor:

I just read the perceptive piece by Alan Rich, "Milva canta Brecht," in the latest issue of the Newsletter. It seemed to me factually accurate, but not very flattering to the singer. Since I grew up in Italy I can perhaps provide a few remarks to complete the picture with an Italian point of view.

Milva started out as a popular singer of no particular distinction. I remember how her encounter with Giorgio Strehler produced a metamorphosis in her singing style and acting. The Italian director was Milva's Pygmalion. Her performance in the Milan production of *The Threepenny Opera* was quite successful. Strehler has always been regarded as a faithful interpreter of Brecht. Brecht himself, as a matter of fact, once congratulated him for the effective staging of one of his works.

I did not attend Milva's performance in Los Angeles but I heard her several times and, I am convinced that neither Strehler nor Milva could ever approach Brecht and Weill quite the way a German would (and as Rich would want them to). They do not intend to do so, and it would be hazardous if they tried. It would be like Germans trying their hand at Italian opera or an Italian singing Schubert. What Strehler and Milva did was not to imitate a German production, but to provide a version of *The Threepenny Opera* to which an Italian audience could respond, and in doing so—in my opinion—they did not betray anything that the text or music tried to convey. Milva sings in Italian, of course, and we all know how difficult it is to translate a musical text (let us think of a Verdi opera sung in English). In Brecht-Weill, moreover, the spoken word is very carefully treated by the musician to create atmosphere. To be sure Milva's Italian could never sound as harsh (to an Italian ear at least, or American for that matter) as German. Milva, nevertheless, provides a variety of accents and often her intentionally uneducated pronunciation succeeds in giving the best possible interpretation of Brecht-Weill acceptable in a Latin country. Indeed in much of Weill a certain "ungeschult" voice production is required, and it naturally excludes opera singers. Italians like Milva, Laura Betti, and Milly naturally have that tone—but are lacking in register and technique. The case of Gisela May, Hilde Güden, and Lotte Lenya are after all quite uncommon even in the German-speaking countries. It would be unfair, therefore, to compare Milva's rendition to theirs.

In view of these considerations I would like to paraphrase Alan Rich. While he says, "That's about as close as it gets," I would reply, "That's as close as one can hope to get."

MARCELLO SORCE KELLER  
Urbana, Illinois

## ALAN RICH REPLIES:

I am grateful for the amount of information Mr. Keller has furnished. Most of it was in the program for Milva's concert last summer, but since that booklet was riddled with inaccuracies, it's nice to have at least part of its content reconfirmed. As to Milva's "Italian" Brecht/Weill, I think Mr. Keller might check out the stylistically honest recordings by the Italian Laura Betti, the French Catherine Sauvage, the Greek-Canadian-American Teresa Stratas, or the Australian Robyn Archer before deciding that performing attitudes are somehow imprisoned within national borders. Then he might go on to an even broader repertory: Sweden's Birgit Nilsson and Jussi Björling singing Verdi for starters, along with America's Leontyne Price; Brazil's Bidú Sayão in Mozart, etc.

One final point. Mr. Keller didn't hear the concert that I reviewed to his displeasure. I did.

A.R.  
Los Angeles

## To the Editor:

I would like to thank you and the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music for the very complimentary and well-considered review of the Arena Stage production of *Happy End*. It is rare (especially in the theater, regrettably) that the reviewer knows the material so thoroughly. Rarer still is the review where the music in a musical theater work draws scrutiny.

As music director for the production I was particularly delighted to hear your perceptions of the music. On one point, though, I should like to set the record straight: you spoke of the omission of the second trumpet for the two brief songs in which it is required, "In Our Childhood's Bright Endeavor," and "March Ahead." It was my great good fortune to have Stephen Crout, who played the piano and harmonium so superbly for the production, reveal that he played the trumpet as well. Because there is no keyboard in the orchestration for either of those Salvation Army hymns, Mr. Crout (or his very occasional "sub" David Kane, who is also more than competent on the trumpet) joined the rest of the ensemble under the stage for those songs at every single performance without exception. The only omission of second trumpet was its listing next to Mr. Crout's name in the program. But that's another story....

In any case, working on a score of this quality was a very rewarding and enjoyable experience for me. Not only are the orchestrations evocative but they are truly masterful as well, and they cannot be altered if they are to achieve their intended effect. Fortunately, I had the support of our brilliant director, Garland Wright, on this issue. I am also indebted to Arena Stage for its understanding of the musical needs of a work and never looking for any compromise of the musical integrity. With their assistance, I was able to create something of which I am still very proud. It means a great deal to me that you appreciated it.

ROBERT FISHER  
New York

## To the Editor:

In Deena Rosenberg's article on *Lady in the Dark* (Vol. II, No. 2), a mistake appears which I would like to correct. She claims that the first complete cast album was *Oklahoma!* in 1943. Not so. Marc Blitzstein's show *The Cradle Will Rock* appeared on Musicraft in the spring of 1938 with the original cast. And in 1941 Keynote released the complete cast recording of Blitzstein's opera/musical *No for an Answer*. In these recording projects, as in so much else, Blitzstein proved himself to be one of the great American originators. Needless to say to a Kurt Weill readership, he was strongly influenced by Weill and later went on to translate and adapt *The Threepenny Opera* for a seven-year-long run off-Broadway. Perhaps some readers of the Newsletter do not know that the *Cradle* is dedicated to Brecht.

ERIC GORDON  
New York

## From the Editor

1985 is a double anniversary year: Kurt Weill's 85th birthday and the 50th anniversary of Weill and Lenya's arrival in America. In commemoration, an article by Dr. Henry Marx in this issue focuses on the Americanization of Weill and Lenya. Dr. Marx, a longtime friend of Lenya's, is currently Editor of *Aufbau*. Also featured in this issue is the first publication of examples of the correspondence held in the archival collections at Yale University and at the Foundation's Weill-Lenya Research Center in New York. It is hoped that this survey will call attention to those collections and the wealth of valuable materials which are becoming available.

As the Newsletter concludes its second year of publication, I would like to express my gratitude to all of the authors who have contributed articles. Their unselfish efforts have assisted us in establishing an editorial policy which makes it possible to present a unique mix of the scholarly and the popular to a diverse public.

The title of this publication is purposely *not* the "Kurt Weill Foundation Newsletter." Although it is published by the Foundation and includes news items and an occasional editorial, we strive for an editorial policy which promotes an open exchange of ideas, even if they are counter to the personal views of the Foundation's staff and advisors. Often by publishing negative reviews of publications and performances, the Foundation risks the positive relationships it attempts to foster in other areas. Even so, we feel that our primary goal is to foster a better understanding of Kurt Weill's music in scholarly arenas as well as in theaters and concert halls. The only way to establish a meaningful dialogue is to provide a forum which encourages an expression of new and revisionist thinking.

## The Kurt Weill Newsletter Volume 3, Number 1, Spring 1985

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# NEWS IN BRIEF

## 85th Birthday Celebrations

2 March marked the 85th anniversary of Weill's birth and a few of the special celebrations held worldwide were reported to the *Newsletter*. Throughout the month of March, a large exhibition entitled "Vom Schiffbauerdamm zum Broadway," featuring photos, documents, music, recordings, and posters, was on display

## Pina Bausch at BAM

Pina Bausch's Wuppertaler Tanztheater will open this year's "Next Wave Festival" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. On the program from 6 to 13 October will be six performances of Bausch's Weill double-bill, *Die sieben Todsünden* and "Fürchtet Euch Nicht," which incorporates music from several of Weill's German works.

Michael Tilson Thomas will conduct *Die sieben Todsünden* and "Fürchtet Euch Nicht" during the BAM engagement. Thomas, former assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, former music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, and frequent guest conductor with orchestras around the world, is known for his performances of works by 20th century composers.

"Tanztheater," as much a style as the name of the Wuppertal troupe, combines elements of classical and modern dance, speaking, singing, and chanting, and a fusion of theatrical forms. The company made its American debut at the Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles last June, followed by two weeks at BAM. *Die sieben Todsünden* is considered one of her most daring pieces, and Bausch asked that it be a part of her company's second sojourn with BAM.

Horst Koegler, music and dance critic for the *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, has remarked that, "This production leaves an indelible impression. The entire evening is a model of what is called *Dramaturgie* in the German theater—the dramatic concept that binds every element and every moment into a personal and powerful vision."

## West German Radio Produces Weill Operas

The Westdeutsche Rundfunk has begun a radio series devoted to the operas of Kurt Weill. Beginning last fall, the WDR will produce at least one opera each year for the next ten years, each work receiving two concert performances in Cologne prior to broadcast.

On 3 November 1984, *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren*, a one-act opera buffa satirizing love and politics, began the series. Jan-Latham König conducted, with Barry McDaniel, Carla Pohl, and Marita Napier in the leading roles. (A review of the performance appears in this issue.) On 5 June 1985, the WDR will broadcast *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, with Anja Silja as Jenny.

In addition, the WDR is investigating the possibility of releasing some of the performances on recordings. Works for the remainder of the series have not been announced.

at the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in East Berlin, and a smaller exhibition, "Kurt Weill: Ein grosser Sohn der Stadt Dessau," took place at the Landestheater Dessau. Two "cabaret" programs were also compiled in conjunction with these exhibitions. "Vom Schiffbauerdamm zum Broadway" opened 2 March at the Berliner Ensemble and featured Gisela May, vocalist, and Rainer Böhm, musical director. Beginning the same day at the Landestheater Dessau was "Unterwegs zu Weill," also featuring actors and singers in new arrangements of Weill's songs.

In New York, soprano Joy Bogen presented an all-Weill recital in Merkin Concert Hall on 3 March with a program of Weill's art songs and selections from *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Royal Palace*, *Der Kuhhandel*, *Marie galante*, *Davy Crockett*, and *Der Silbersee*.

Among the commemorative radio broadcasts taking place in the United States were special programs on KFAC (Los Angeles), KERA (Dallas), WQED (Pittsburgh), and KLEF (Houston). Dr. Jürgen Schebera wrote and narrated a three-part program to be aired on 11 March, 15 April, and 13 May for Radio DDR. The title is *Stationen des Kurt Weill*, and each segment will feature 30 minutes of introduction and 60 minutes of music.

## American Premiere: Pantomime I

"Pantomime I," a scene for wind ensemble and four voices from Weill's opera *Der Protagonist*, was given its American premiere in Philadelphia 1 February by students of the Curtis Institute of Music, and in New York 3 February at Carnegie Recital Hall.

Lisa White, Richard Zuch, Jeffrey Mosher, and Kevin Short made up the vocal ensemble; Ira Levin conducted, and the concert was supervised by Sol Schoenbach and Lys Symonette, faculty members at the Curtis Institute. Miss White, a mezzo-soprano, took the role of the Fraulein (written for countertenor), and offered Weill's "Klops-Lied" as an encore at both performances.

The Curtis students demonstrated that a concert performance of this set piece, excerpted but played exactly as Weill composed it, makes for a highly challenging and satisfying concert experience. The instrumentation (for 2 flutes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 trumpets along with four vocalists), makes for an exciting new addition to the standard wind ensemble repertoire.

## 1985 GRANTS AWARDED

On 11 January 1985 the Board of Trustees approved the Independent Grants Advisory Panel's recommendations to award grants for the following projects in the areas of research, travel, and performance.

### Research

**Christopher Hailey, New Haven, Connecticut:** To prepare a publishable edition of the correspondence between Weill and Universal Edition. The project includes translation, annotation, a complete inventory, and prose summary of the collection.

### Travel

**Jürgen Schebera, Leipzig, German Democratic Republic:** To assist in travel expenses for a research trip to the Weill-Lenya Research Center in New York and the Kurt Weill Archive at Yale University.

### Performance

**Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, New York:** Partial support of general production expenses for two performances of *Street Scene*, 9 and 12 August 1985.

**Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:** Partial support of general production expenses for two performances of *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren*, December 1985.

**Jacksonville University, Jacksonville, Florida:** Partial support of general production expenses for four performances of *Knickerbocker Holiday*, 25, 26 October and 1, 2 November 1985.

**National Radio Theatre, Chicago, Illinois:** Partial support for two live performances and a radio production of *Knickerbocker Holiday* to be distributed on the National Public Radio Network.

**Ruhfestspiele Recklinghausen, Recklinghausen, Federal Republic of Germany:** Support for orchestra fees and supplemental rehearsal expenses for the summer festival production of *Der Silbersee*, Summer 1985.

**Sequoia String Quartet, Los Angeles, California:** Support for 10 performances of the String Quartets in major concert series.

**University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado:** Support for a touring production of a Kurt Weill Evening to 20 high schools in different communities in Colorado. The performers will be students from the University.

**Weatherlane Community Playhouse, Akron, Ohio:** Partial support for a production of *Happy End*.

**Wilma Theatre, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:** Partial support for orchestral expenses, June 1985 production of *Happy End*.

Applications for 1986 awards must be received by 1 December 1985. Application forms and guidelines will be available from the Foundation after 1 May 1985.

# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Kim Kowalke

"TODSÜNDEN VERBOTEN" headlined a tiny article that appeared in several German newspapers last January. Almost certainly derived from a common press release, the cryptic clippings read: "Bremen. The Estate of Kurt Weill (Weill-Foundation, located in New York) have raised objections to Torsten Fischer's production of *Die sieben Todsünden der Kleinbürger*. On this basis, the licensing division of the publisher B. Schott's Söhne has forbidden further performances of this Bremen-version."

Within a week, the Foundation was receiving expressions of concern from contacts in Germany. "What were we doing? Didn't we understand that we were acquiring the reputation of arbitrarily halting productions by important theaters? Soon, no institution would risk a Weill piece, if the Foundation could intervene, apparently without justification." Coincidentally, American newspapers were reporting a controversy, apparently similar in substance, that was swirling around Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* at the American Repertory Theatre in Boston. Authors, or heirs of authors (in our case), were stifling creativity in the theater by insisting on purist interpretations.

The news release that apparently originated in the press office of the Bremer Schauspielhaus did not state any cause for the Weill Foundation's action. Unless the reader compared the news item with reviews of the opening from the previous month, he would undoubtedly have assumed that once again heirs were making trouble for the Brecht-Weill works in German theaters. The Foundation had acted on the basis of the reviews picked up by one of our clipping services. Most were as informative as this one:

Kurt Weill's ballet with singing from 1932 [sic], "*Die sieben Todsünden der Kleinbürger*," has been staged by Torsten Fischer as a *Schauspiel* with music...The weakest point of the production is the musical side: there's no way that a trio can replace Weill's precise and razor-sharp orchestral language, especially when the musicians continually proved that they weren't qualified to be Weill-interpreters. The family, four-voiced in the original, was sung here by Alexander Grill with more notes wrong than right. For the chorales, the piano player sang along weakly in a fatal attempt at economy.

From such reviews, we learned that 1) a ballet with no spoken dialogue originally was being presented as a play with music; 2) it was being produced under a spurious title ("der Kleinbürger" was added after Weill's death by Helene Weigel without Lenya's consent); 3) Weill's magnificent symphonic score had been reduced, without permission, for three instruments; 4) the four vocal parts of the family in Louisiana had miraculously been sung

by one person, with occasional harmony tentatively supplied by a singing piano player.

Explicitly entrusted by Lenya with the protection of the integrity of Weill's music, the Foundation had no choice but to protest to the publisher who had licensed the performance and to demand restoration of the piece to a recognizable approximation of Weill's score or cancellation of the production. We had intervened in the same way a year before when the prestigious theater in Bochum had produced the Berliner Ensemble's travesty of *Mahagonny*, even though Lenya had expressly forbidden Universal Edition to license that version. Last October, we also had to stop a production of *The Threepenny Opera* in Chicago because the theater had conflated three translations, re-written the score for a rock band, and failed to obtain a performing license from anyone.

Compelled by a moral imperative and bound by its contracts with agents and adaptors, the Foundation has no option in such matters. These are not whimsical decisions based upon some impractical notion of aesthetic taste or musical snobbery. Nor have we ever acted on political or personal biases. The situation in Bremen differs with that presented by the *Endgame* affair in Boston. There not one word of the author's text had been altered; only directorial interpretation of stage directions and setting was in question (although Beckett might well argue, were he so inclined, that this information is the "score" of his minimalist drama, a vital aspect of the text, and no less relevant than Weill's music for *Die sieben Todsünden*).

But in Bochum, Bremen, and Chicago, Weill's music had been mutilated beyond recognition. We have often heard the argument that, as a practical man of the theater and a composer committed to reaching a mass audience, Weill himself would have approved such modifications for the means of smaller theaters. Perhaps, but that is a prerogative of the creator only; copyright protection endows him with the right to accept or reject the alteration of his intellectual property. And although Weill often compromised his original intentions during the creative process because of the exigencies of the commercial theater in both Europe and America, the record of his attitude toward alteration of his compositions after the fact is unambiguous. He was especially adamant about his orchestrations; they were the substance of his art, the personal signature that could not be erased without losing the identity of the creator, the aspect of musical theater he could control most independently. Voices as persuasive as Brecht's and Adorno's could not entice Weill to allow alteration of the orchestrations for *Die Dreigroschenoper*, still the score most tantalizing for would-be revisionists. But Weill recognized clearly the difference between popular exploitation of individual "hit numbers" outside the theater—which he and Lenya encouraged in versions as different as her own and Louis Armstrong's—and "the real thing"—the production of the "art work" in its original format.

Copyright is the only assurance for a composer that his intangible property will be pro-

tected against theft, defacement, misrepresentation, and mutilation. Although there is no consistency in copyright protection internationally, almost every country recognizes the need to safeguard intellectual property. Ever since the gradual demise of the patronage system of support for composers around 1800, they have had to struggle, often unsuccessfully, to make a living for themselves and their dependents solely through composition. Mozart, as everyone who has seen *Amadeus* knows, failed; Beethoven was successful only by shrewd simultaneous publications in various countries that thwarted the publishing pirates who would have stolen his income by copying the first edition. Rossini couldn't prevent hacks from sitting in the audience at the first performance of his operas and jotting down approximations of his scores for illegitimate sale to competing theaters. Verdi withheld "*La donna è mobile*" from the first Duke of Mantua until the eleventh hour, knowing that without such precautions the catchy tune would be stolen before the curtain rose. As technology advanced, the need for copyright protection for both composers' and publishers' stakes became even more critical, with Wagner playing a crucial role in development of the concept of music as property just as "real" as real estate. Whether copyright endures for 70 years after the death of the creator (Germany and Austria), 75 years after the date of creation (United States), or 25 years after first performance (Berne Union), the contemporary composer has gained some legal basics to insure that his lifelong efforts cannot be usurped or distorted. Of course, the enforcement of copyright protection is never easy, especially since publishers are often reluctant to jeopardize ongoing relationships with theaters over composers' rights.

But copyright protection offers more than the hope that a composer will benefit equitably from exploitation of his music by others. It, along with the related notion of "droit moral" or moral right, represents the only possibility that an author will be able to control the parameters for public presentation of his artistic, often highly self-revelatory expression. This is especially crucial in Weill's case, since very few of his works have escaped tampering that has now become accepted "performance practice." Copyright statutes throughout the world are the sole insurance that a "child of creativity" can establish its identity indelibly enough to reflect accurately the intentions of its creators. Soon enough in any territory, that offspring enters the public domain to be re-interpreted, re-named, re-functioned, re-scored, re-worked, re-arranged.

The Kurt Weill Foundation has been entrusted with the care of Weill's artistic legacy. Chartered expressly to promote and protect, the Foundation will continue to support authentic productions and performances which illuminate his intentions. But until Weill's works enter the public domain, if theaters want to produce a play with music for three instruments, let them commission new pieces. Kurt Weill didn't write any. Rewriting his music, along with sloth and greed, will be considered *Verboten Todsünden*.



# 50 Years Later:

## The Americanization of Weill and Lenya

By Henry Marx

Almost 50 years ago—10 September 1935—Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya stepped off the ocean liner *U.S.S. Majestic* and onto New York's 57th Street pier. Weill had come to supervise his score for *The Eternal Road*, Franz Werfel's lavish Biblical drama, which was to begin rehearsals under Max Reinhardt almost immediately. None of the three creators could yet be considered émigrés, inasmuch as Austria still provided a haven for Werfel and Reinhardt, while Weill fully intended to return to France, where he had found asylum in 1933.

Weill's acceptance in France had been short-lived. He had arrived in Paris as the darling of the *avant-garde*, but within a year his star was on the descendant. Lenya had been in Paris, too, for performances of *Der Jasager*, *Mahagonny Songspiel*, and the world premiere of *Die sieben Todsünden*, then to Rome for another *Mahagonny* with Maurice Abravanel, and rejoined Weill in London in 1933 for *Anna-Anna* (the English version of *Die sieben Todsünden*). Lenya, extremely drawn to *The Eternal Road*, had expressed to Weill her interest in playing a part, no matter how small, and they had left it at that. She probably accompanied Weill to New York simply "for the ride" and for moral support, but with the thought of her casting in the backs of both of their minds. What was not generally known at the time—and remains unknown to most—is that Weill and Lenya had separated in the late Twenties, obtaining a formal divorce in 1932. They remained on friendly terms throughout the years of separation and divorce, but did not remarry for some time. As *The Eternal Road* was repeatedly postponed—not reaching the stage of the Manhattan Opera House until January 1937—it became clear to both Weill and Lenya that they would remain in the United States; they were remarried early in 1937.

Their return to married life was not the only major change in the early years of their American stay. They quickly began their assimilation of the American scene (going to a gangster movie the day they arrived) and got to know many of the artists who would figure so prominently in their careers. At the invitation of Ira Gershwin (whom they had met in Berlin during the run of *Die Dreigroschenoper*), they attended a rehearsal of *Porgy and Bess*, which had its premiere at New York's Alvin Theatre within a month of their arrival. Weill, influenced by American jazz as early as 1925, for the first time experienced this musical idiom on its native turf. Weill and Lenya embraced most aspects of American life readily, in stark contrast to their former collaborator, Bertolt Brecht (who landed in New York for a temporary stay five days after the *Porgy* premiere), and most of the other artists who sought in America a refuge from Hitler.



Lenya and Weill in California, ca. 1946.

By the time *The Eternal Road* was finally produced early in 1937, Weill had made the transition from visitor to resident of this country. America afforded him greater anonymity than had France: his European music was not known here and his reputation as Germany's "enfant-terrible" had reached probably only the cultural elite; *The Threepenny Opera* had premiered on Broadway in early 1933, but ran only 12 performances. He was given a fresh start, and even before *The Eternal Road* was finally mounted, Weill saw his first American musical produced: *Johnny Johnson*. A collaboration with Paul Green, *Johnny* earned Weill no more than a *succès d'estime*. His music was still strongly influenced by his European experiences (as was, of course, also the case with his music for *The Eternal Road*, which was actually composed in France), but the seeds were sown.

Weill perhaps analyzed the musical situation of America more pragmatically than some other refugee composers. To him it became clear early that he would have to enter Broadway, the mainstream of American musical theater. To do this, he might have been better equipped than most of the others: he was younger, had proven his mettle in many musical arenas already, and had an unflinching theatrical instinct.

Once he decided to stay in this country, he also made up his mind not to look back. In the first three or four years of his stay in America, he might still have condoned speaking German; after 1939 even his letters to Lenya were written in English and, although he

never lost his heavy German accent, he preferred English conversation. When I met Weill for the first time (I believe it was in 1947, during the run of *Street Scene*), I interviewed him for a German-language newspaper. I met him in the lobby of the Algonquin Hotel and greeted him in German (as I had done in all of my interviews with German- or Austrian-born artists); he cut me off without letting me finish my first sentence, and immediately switched to English!

After his first years in America, Weill reduced his contacts with refugee circles. On 24 August 1944, he wrote to Lenya about, "one of the worst gatherings of refugees I have ever gone through," a dinner party in Hollywood. "I begin to think that we are almost the only ones of all these people who have found American friends and really live in this country," he wrote. "They are still living in Europe. Well, t'hell with them."

Did Weill overdo the process of "Americanization"? Did he fit the category for whom the philosopher Ernst Bloch coined the phrase "Instant American" (*Schnellamerikaner*)? Bloch described such refugees with some distaste: The Instant American, he said,

wants to make a clean break with the other side. He even disdains speaking German; his hatred of Germany is sprouting into self-hate. Psychologically, such renunciation is understandable, particularly in the case of Jewish immigrants; what shock and horror lies behind them! They do not want to remember Germany any more.... But the door is locked a bit too fast, the arrival in America is announced a bit too sensationally. Moreover, these types

react as if they imagined Hitler to be capable of actually lasting a thousand years. As bankrupt bourgeois, they have drawn a line between them and Germany; they have written it off.

When, barely 18 months after his arrival, film producer Walter Wanger questioned his ability to write the music for a typically American movie because he was "not enough of an American," Weill answered him, as he told Lenya in a letter of 15 March 1937, "that the most American of all composers, Irving Berlin, is a Russian Jew, and I am a German Jew—that's the whole difference"—blithely ignoring the fact that Berlin had come here as a child.

The composer became indeed an "Instant American," but with few of the characteristics attributed them by Bloch. There seems to be little evidence of self-hate in any of Weill's utterances, no belief that Hitler either was riding the wave of the future or reflected the character of the people of Germany. According to Lenya, after *Die Bürgschaft* Weill outlined his compositional projects for many years. The unhappy events of 1933-35—the loss of his German bank account, the failure of *Marie galante* and *A Kingdom for a Cow*, the cancellation of his contract with Universal Edition, the poor reception of his Symphony—all but scrapped any previous plans long before he arrived in New York. "The events in Germany wounded him deeply," Lenya said in an interview, but Weill seems to have been more concerned with healing those wounds—through his American work—than with lamenting them.

Weill's adaptation to his new surroundings was noted by many. Among the important members of the theatrical community he met soon after his arrival was Harold Clurman, who with Cheryl Crawford and Lee Strasberg had founded the Group Theatre, which produced *Johnny Johnson*. Almost four decades later, Clurman was to write of Weill in his autobiography, *All People Are Famous*:

His powers of assimilation were extraordinary. He could write music in any country so that it would seem as if he were a native. He did in fact write some good "French" and "English" music during his stays in Paris and London. If he had landed among the Hottentots, he would have become the outstanding Hottentot composer of the Hottentot theater. Weill was all theater and all "mask."

In an aside during a Weill symposium in New York in 1977, I asked Clurman whether this often-quoted statement was meant to be a compliment or an implied criticism. He looked at me quizzically, and no answer was forthcoming—at least no verbal answer. But his facial expression seemed to say, "Let it stand as it is." Clurman seemed to enjoy such elliptical pronouncements, but when read in context with his subsequent high praise of Hanns Eisler's work, it becomes clear that Clurman disliked Weill's adaptability. It is ironic that Clurman's original statement is not really correct: much of Weill's "French" and "English" music, not to mention his first American scores and even "September Song" (1938), was either composed in Germany or based on his German music.

Criticism by Brecht and by many of the



Hollywood, 1938

playwright's apologists that Weill, by his surrender to Broadway, had more or less sacrificed his musical integrity, sounds a bit like sour grapes. In his biography of Brecht (1976), the German Klaus Völker hardly disguises his swipes at Weill: *The Seven Deadly Sins* did not have the accustomed success, and because of this Weill never again risked a collaboration with Brecht. The composer, he said

was going through a stage in which all music was anathema to him. He then did what Brecht himself tried to do later, but without success: he conquered Broadway. But it was a pyrrhic victory on Weill's part, because Broadway took him to itself and robbed his music of all its edge....Brecht, though anxious to find an American public, remained an outsider and a foreigner. He had no idea of jettisoning his principles as a writer. The examples of his friends Kurt Weill and George Grosz showed him what sacrifice one had to make as an artist in order to become an American.

Recent studies have conclusively demonstrated that Weill's reluctance to work with Brecht in America, despite the playwright's continual overtures, stemmed principally from Brecht's odious character and indefensible exploitation of Weill in their previous business dealings.

Compare Völker's statement with that of Brooks Atkinson, one of the most astute observers of the American theater, wrote in 1970:

Fourteen years after Weill had fled from Berlin, he was able to write *Street Scene*, a musical microcosm of Manhattan, conveying the violence, the misery, the sociability, the cautious hope, the blighted romance, and the immense vitality of Cosmopolis....With his insight, his modesty, and humanity, Weill composed a work of art that did not evade the truth of the corrosive city but also retained a certain wistful beauty. From the contemptuous satire of *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* to the affectionate portrait of *Street Scene* was the measure of Weill's happy experience in America.

As early as 1940, less than five years after his arrival in New York, Weill defined his artistic aims in a revealing interview with William G. King of the *New York Sun*:

I want to use whatever gifts I have for practical purposes, not waste them on things which have no life, or which have to be kept alive by artificial means. That's why I am in the theater, the commercial theater....

You hear a lot of talk about the American opera that's going to come along some day. It's my opinion that we can and will develop a musical dramatic form in this country, but I don't think it will be called "opera" or that it will grow out of the opera.... It will develop from and remain a part of the American theater—Broadway theater, if you like. More than anyone else, I want to have a part in that development.

These were the words of an artist who knew exactly where he was going. At the time of this interview, only *Johnny Johnson* and *Knickerbocker Holiday* had been produced. He had also composed *Railroads on Parade* for the New York World's Fair of 1939 and *The Ballad of Magna Carta*, first performed on the radio the day after the *Sun* interview. Neither the folk opera *Davy Crockett nor Ulysses Africanus* had proceeded beyond preliminary drafts; both projects were abandoned by the end of 1939. Many more such plans—incidentally all based on American themes—were never realized: a musical—*The Common Glory* for the WPA Theater; another, *Moby Dick*; and a musical adaptation of Herman Wouk's novel *Aurora Dawn*. He expressed often and eloquently his devotion to the American commercial theater as a forum for the dissemination of music, and as the cradle of "American opera."

At every turn Weill defended his work in America against all comers. In a letter to Lenya of 24 September 1942, he reported his rebuttal of a comment by Marlene Dietrich.

[She] started that old business about the different quality of music here in America. I cut it short by saying, "Never mind those old German songs—we are in America now and Broadway is tougher than the Kurfürstendamm." That stopped her.

When Theodore W. Adorno wrote to him a conciliatory letter on behalf of Brecht in the hope that he would sanction an all-black production of *The Threepenny Opera* in California, Weill told Lenya (in a letter of 8 April 1942) that he had flatly rejected Adorno's overtures—particularly in the critic's condemnation of Broadway and rose-tinting of Brecht. "Maybe the main difference between the German and American theater is the fact that there exist some rules of fair play in the American theater," Weill reported having written to Adorno. Here again, Weill demonstrates his utter involvement in—if not devotion to—the American theater. He showed little interest in promoting any of his European works: when *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* had its American premiere at Juilliard in 1949, Weill attended only under pressure from friends.

It is not generally known that Weill took an active part in the preparation of the librettos of his works, both in America and in Europe. Most of his collaborators in America had little or no experience with musicals. Instead of



"looking for partners among the steady practitioners," as one of them, Alan Jay Lerner, remarked in his autobiography, Weill often recruited his collaborators from the mainstream of contemporary American drama (Green, Maxwell Anderson, Elmer Rice and Edwin J. Mayer). On 12 August 1944, he wrote to Lenya:

I don't really know why, but it seems that I have become so sure of my craftsmanship, of my theater knowledge and of my taste that I could take a dominating position in almost any combination....Ira [Gershwin] and Eddie [Mayer] are following me blindly....As a matter of fact, I had an idea last night of writing a scene for *Firebrand of Florence* myself, which I might do.

Weill's interest in playwriting, whether serious or not, had come to the fore in an earlier letter to Lenya (12 December 1942):

There is no doubt in my mind that you can be a terrific success in this country if we only get the right play. I thought myself of sitting down and writing one. The only thing I couldn't do is write good dialogue—and then there are very few people who can do that. But the rest we could do ourselves.

Lenya's American career had never taken off, and by 1945, was drawing to a close—a temporary close, but a genuine one. She had been cast in *The Eternal Road*, but her performances as the Witch of Endor and Miriam (Moses' sister), had failed to attract much attention. Her European successes were unknown to Americans: she was fond of

recounting how George Gershwin, who knew *Dreigroschenoper* but did not know that Lotte Lenja was Mrs. Weill, complained to her about the "hillbilly singer" on the recording. Lenya was amused at the time, although she didn't know what "hillbilly" meant. In 1939, she had a six-week stint as a cabaret *chanteuse* at the Ruban Bleu, a New York nightclub; her publicity photograph resembles no one more than Marlene Dietrich. It is perhaps not inferring too much to say that she was struggling to find an image acceptable to Americans and to herself.

During the war, Lenya recorded "Wie lange noch?" and "Was bekam des Soldaten Weib?" for propaganda broadcasts by the Office of War Information—not a star-making engagement—and appeared on Broadway and on tour as a maid in *Candle in the Wind*, Maxwell Anderson's wartime drama (1942). And in 1945, Lenya played the sex-starved Duchess de Medici in *The Firebrand of Florence*. The musical flopped and so did Lenya—despite her lavish entrance (in a satin sedan borne by Nubian slaves) and her featured number ("Sing Me Not a Ballad"). Billy Rose went so far as to suggest that Lenya had been cast only because she was the composer's wife. After this debacle, Lenya retired to New City, to card games and neighbors, and only Weill's death in 1950 and the determination of her second husband, George Davis, convinced Lenya to return to the stage. (The result, her second American career, is a subject far too large to

be recounted in full in this article.) As she spearheaded the revival of Weill's German works, Lenya found her American audience and her new style: her voice was huskier now, the edges of Brecht's poetry were softened by Blitzstein. Yet she reached a far broader audience when she played James Bond's nemesis than when she played Macheath's mistress.

Weill was perhaps the only one of the European composers who came to this country during the Thirties and Forties, to make successfully the transition from European composer to American composer, and he has had a lasting influence on the most American of all theatrical forms, the musical. How else could he have done so without becoming completely Americanized, protesting "gently," as he put it, against *Life Magazine's* description of him as a "German composer"?

Although I was born in Germany," he told the magazine, "I do not consider myself a 'German composer.' The Nazis obviously did not consider me as such either, and I left their country (an arrangement which suited both me and my rulers admirably) in 1933. I am an American citizen, and during my dozen years in this country have composed exclusively for the American stage....I would appreciate your straightening out your readers on this matter.

Today, almost 40 years later, such a "straightening out" does not seem to be necessary anymore.



Early publicity photo in America  
Photo: George Platt Lynes

# I REMEMBER

## Lenya's Return to Berlin

By Andreas Meyer-Hanno

Translated by Lys Symonette

The legend of Brecht and Weill cast its shadow over my entire youth. I was born in Berlin in 1932, and was 13 years old at the end of the war. For the postwar generation, *Die Dreigroschenoper* had been something long-missed and almost regained. Our parents had told us about the wondrous world premiere in 1928—but how much the Holocaust and World War II had scarred the world's face in 17 years! Small wonder then that my first encounter with the work proved to be a disappointment. In Berlin's Hebbel Theater, spared by the bombs but surrounded by a landscape of ruins, *Die Dreigroschenoper* was the first work to be performed, and as Mr. Peachum might have said, "Die Verhältnisse sie waren nicht so"—circumstances wouldn't have it so. The play, written for a specific political situation, lacked relevance in postwar Berlin and seemed to be merely an anachronism which kindled no nostalgic charm.

However, the music retained its fascination. Carefully hidden behind bookshelves along with the works of Mann, Werfel, and Kafka, scratched 78's had survived the war. Then as ever, Lenya's style and voice, her soberly arresting yet simultaneously poetic interpretation—still unrivalled—bore the seal of authenticity. As youngsters, my friends and I were practically addicted to Lenya and played the few recordings that were available (two songs from *Happy End*, highlights from *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Mahagonny*) again and again.

In 1949, Brecht—only as a visitor—came to East Berlin to stage *Mother Courage* at Max Reinhardt's Deutsche Theater; my mother, musical coach for the theater, was assigned to the production. Every morning before rehearsals, she would meet Helene Weigel in the bomb-scarred Hotel Adlon. Weigel was having trouble with the complicated rhythm of Dessau's music, and would walk to the theater with my mother for a little impromptu coaching. I had graduated from college by this time and was beginning to study musicology and theater arts; frequently I was permitted to watch rehearsals. I was fascinated by Brecht's painstaking, softly insinuating, infinitely patient way of rehearsing. I'll never forget his remarks after auditioning one of many candidates for the role of Yvette, the "company whore." This particular singer, a product of "classical" training, tried to show off her vocal technique. But when she left the room, Brecht said to my mother, "Terrible! She has gone and learned how to sing, and now she can't sing any more."

By 1955, my dissertation was reaching its final stages; almost every day I crossed the borders to get to the State Library in East Berlin, where important research materials

were located. This presented no problems, since the Wall was not erected until 1961, permanently separating the two parts of the city. West Berliners still crossed in droves to enjoy Brecht's stagings, which were making history at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, home of the Berliner Ensemble.

One day, Hans Knudsen, my professor of theater arts, asked to see me. Lotte Lenya, Kurt Weill's widow, was staying in West Berlin and asking his advice. She needed a research assistant who might help her find documents concerning Weill. Would I like to help her?

What a question! A chance to meet the idol of my youth, to work with her, to see her transformed from legend to reality—I immediately accepted. The next day, my heart beating rapidly, I went to Wilmersdorf, where Lenya and her second husband, George Davis, had rented a nice, middle-class apartment.

After a few minutes, my uneasiness left me. Lenya—red-haired, fragile, with that jutting, determined chin, and the knowing eyes so full of wit—was not one of those home-comers speechless with pain over the loss of by-gone Berlin. Of course, she did not deny her emotions, but her practicality made her accept the city's rebirth. She, George, and I became friends from the start; indeed, it was as if we had known each other forever and a day. We became "Wahlverwandte," relatives by choice.

We began working intensely. Every morning the two of us took the subway to East Berlin, left our passports with the doorman of the German State Library, and rummaged through the gigantic tomes of newspapers and music journals of the 1920s and early 1930s for articles about Weill and his work. Since Lenya had a fairly accurate chronology of performances, we found an abundance of materials and copied them. In the late afternoon, when we were tired and our fingers were black from dusty papers, we returned to West Berlin.

Although I knew that Weill and Brecht's relationship had not been the best during the years of exile and artistic separation, I said to Lenya one day, "Brecht lives just one kilometer from here. Why don't you go to see him? You share a great past—why don't you just cut the Gordian Knot?"

She hesitated for a moment and then said decisively, "All right. But let's do it right away."

It was noon. I called the Berliner Ensemble, and was given Brecht's private number as soon as I said that Lenya wanted to contact him. We called the Dorotheenstrasse, and Helene Weigel answered the phone. Yes, we should come right away. Brecht was just taking a short nap.

Leaving the library, we walked over the Weidendamm Bridge (with the Schiffbauerdamm Theater to the left), along the Friedrichstrasse and finally to the old house where Brecht lived.

Weigel and Lenya embraced, and Weigel signaled us to keep quiet because the *Meister* was still asleep. We tip-toed through the spa-



In a decaying railyard, Lenya surveys Berlin, 1955.



cious apartment, and Weigel served tea. I had never been in Brecht's apartment before. It was light and airy, furnished with only a few old, heavy wooden tables and chairs. There were hardly any pictures; the walls were decorated instead with a variety of old household utensils made of zinc and iron. It was all rather impersonal and surprisingly sparse for the home of the most financially successful German author of the day, but it had style and beauty. The entire house exuded serenity and security.

We heard a stirring in an adjoining room; Brecht had awakened. Weigel disappeared to tell him of the surprise. He came into the room and saw Lenya, who rose. They had not seen each other for many years, a slight hesitation, a brightening of his face, an approach, a cordial handshake, and—immediately—the question: "When will you be performing with us?"

After 30 years I can't recall the exact conversation. Brecht's manner was extremely reserved, but I remember most of all the quiet friendliness among them. There was much talk about theater, about *his* theater, and they never basked in memories of their shared past. All conversation centered on the here and now: and finally about tomorrow.

Since Lenya was preparing for the first of her German recordings for Philips in Hamburg (the "Berlin Theater Songs" album), Brecht immediately and spontaneously offered to assist her. Soon after, Lenya flew to Hamburg for rehearsals, but returned to East Berlin with my mother to work on the songs with Brecht.

I didn't attend these rehearsals, but my mother reported that, although colored by the psychological approach of the American theater (so far from Brecht's vision), Lenya's interpretations received Brecht's unreserved admiration just the same. The rehearsals must have been inspiring: it was during these sessions that the interpolations in the third verse of "Bilbao-Song" came into existence: "Wie ging das jetzt weiter? Ich weiss den Text nicht mehr, s'ist schon so lange her..." ("How did that go again? I don't know the words any more, it's been such a long time...") At these times Brecht often exclaimed delightedly: "This is good. Yes, this is very good!"

Lenya's recording—whose release some time later was celebrated by Philips with a pompous reception and buffet at West Berlin's Hotel Kempinski (which would have brought Brecht little joy)—introduced the Weill Revival to Germany and led to Lenya's recordings of the complete *Die sieben Todsünden*, *Mahagonny*, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, and *Happy End*. Lenya and Brecht didn't collaborate again (it wouldn't have been feasible during the Cold War anyway), and after Brecht's death the two widows fell into an unfortunate dispute over royalties from *Die sieben Todsünden*. (Dr. Grischa Barfuss, now General Manager of the Deutsche Oper am Rhein, would have loved to present the work in Wuppertal, that El Dorado of ballet. In despair, he said, "Each of them wants 60%. Why can't they both have it?")

# Mr. President

By Lys Symonette

Within the vast area of "the unknown Weill," it may come as a special surprise to many that in 1942 Weill provided melodramatic settings for speaker and orchestra of three patriotic American songs, commissioned by Helen Hayes and Victor Records for Fight for Freedom, Inc. During the war, Miss Hayes performed and recorded these settings, "The Star-Spangled Banner," "America," and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and an original piece, "Beat! Beat! Drums!" (to a poem by Walt Whitman).

Although I knew of the existence of these settings, I had never heard them performed until, on the occasion of the Kurt Weill Foundation's opening in November 1983, Miss Hayes graciously donated her only copy of the recording to the Foundation's archives, with the modest request of a single tape copy for her personal use. She had made the recording in Chicago for Victor in Weill's presence [Victor M 909], and it has been out of print for many years.

A first listening to this unique record was an unforgettably emotional experience for someone like myself, a refugee from Hitler's Germany. I don't know whether it was because of Miss Hayes' moving recitation of the words or because of Weill's incredibly sensitive treatment of the well-known melodies—most likely a combination of both—but I am not ashamed to admit that I had to fight hard to hold back the tears.

In January of this year, I watched the broadcast of the Inaugural Gala for President Reagan. As the evening drew to a close, the President thanked the many participating artists for their generous contributions to past and present events of this nature. He singled out one event which stood out in his memory as something quite extraordinary: Helen Hayes in Chicago reciting the words to "America." I felt an almost eerie sensation when he spoke about "this tiny woman, Helen Hayes," standing on the large stage, "reciting, not singing" the simple words: "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing." Miss Hayes had held the huge crowd absolutely spellbound, President Reagan remembered.

The next morning, I decided to send him a copy of the Hayes recording and a short letter explaining Weill's part in it. Exactly one week later, on 28 January, I was shocked and amazed to receive a call from the White House! Very politely, a secretary asked me how I spelled and pronounced my name; she repeated it correctly and then said, "Just a minute, I have the President on the phone for you." Before I could catch my breath, I heard the familiar voice speaking my name...and all I could muster to say was, "Oh, Mister President!!" In his personable way, he thanked me

for sending the tape. He said again how clearly he remembered the Chicago performance, how much the presentation had impressed him, and that he and Mrs. Reagan were looking forward to listening to the tape together. His easy manner helped me to collect myself somewhat, so I managed to tell him something about the Foundation, its function and goals—but mainly about Weill's motivation for and participation in the recording. I ended up by telling Mr. Reagan that the musical materials were available and that if he would ever care to perform the songs, we would be only too happy to make the necessary arrangements. He laughed, thanked me once more, and said, "It's been a pleasure talking to you."

It was a thrilling experience for me, but beyond the excitement, I realized the significance of these four songs, another important addition to the "unknown" Weill. They provide eloquent testimony to his love of his new home, his eagerness to participate in the war effort, and his experimentation with new forms—in this case, "spoken songs." For the Victor recording, Weill offered the following remarks:

For years I have been trying to work out a technique of composition which would make it possible to bring together poetry and music in a "perfect wedding." This is an old problem for composers, and has been solved in different ways. The song form, for instance, is a combination of poetry and music, but it gives the music predominance over the words. On the other hand, it has been tried many times to provide a "musical background" for the reading of poetry; but in most cases the music gives only the general atmosphere of the poem without really dramatizing the words. What I have been trying to do was to write musical settings for the spoken word which would allow both arts—poetry and music—to exist next to each other and to supplement each other into a perfect organism. In order to achieve this I treat the spoken word just like the vocal part of a song and with the same inner relation to the accompaniment as it exists in songs or in operas so that the music really "dramatizes" the meaning of the words. When I write down these "spoken songs" I indicate exactly the rhythm of the recitation, the value of each syllable, the dynamics (*piano* and *forte*), the expression, the rising and falling of the voice. In other words, I make the spoken word a part of my musical composition.

The perfect example of what I mean by calling it "spoken song" is the setting of Walt Whitman's poem "Beat! Beat! Drums!" In this case I was not bound to any original song and could create my own free composition. I wrote it exactly like a song for solo voice, chorus, and orchestra, and the spoken word gives not only the rhythmical but also the melodic line to the whole composition. I was inspired for this composition by the extraordinary timeliness of Whitman's poem which is a passionate "call to arms" to everybody in the nation.

# AROUND THE WORLD

By Michael Morley

*Question to all readers:* What piece of music would you choose as exit music for a production of *The Threepenny Opera*? (The practice of using "Mack the Knife" is probably so established by now that it does not qualify as an answer.) Something else by Weill, perhaps? Or maybe a few snatches from German or American popular songs of the period? All reasonable suggestions, though not necessarily to be commended.

Let me rephrase the question—and this is not simply a guessing game—what would be the crassest and most ill-advised number a musical (or unmusical) director might hit upon? After seeing the Melbourne Theatre Company's recent production of *The Threepenny Opera*, I put this question to a colleague with some familiarity with Weimar culture. His answer was: "The Horst-Wessel 'Lied'—but no company in the world could possibly choose *that*." Regrettably I had to disabuse him. After a clumsily knockabout, totally apolitical production, Melbourne audiences happily plodded out of the auditorium

bourne public and critics alike. For this production, in a city of 3½ million, was as ill-conceived, shapeless, and unprofessional as any I have ever seen. The critics loved it, hailing it as a tough and direct treatment and giving it the old Brechtian Seal of Approval. This is a double-faced medallion bearing the critic's own face on one side and the late Bertolt's on the other. It's a little like one of those Eastern Bloc awards that the President always makes to himself for good behavior or services rendered, and is always bestowed on those productions that the critic sees as Brechtian because he thinks he knows what to look for and to like: social comment coupled with a little bit of satire and a rough-edged theatricality (translated in this production into the random Nazi salute—for no reason—references to a local brand of dog food, and clumsy and unfocused performances).

David Atkins, the actor playing Macheath, had last played the Sergeant in *The Pirates of Penzance*—by all accounts a fluent and funny performance. He is a light-footed dancer

the sensuality which is also in the character. Apart from Macheath, she was the only singer who coped with the music, though here too one suspects she had been led astray by the direction. "Pirate Jenny" was, predictably, assigned to a baritone, gender-indeterminate Jenny, dressed like a middle-aged flapper in cloche hat and grey coat of military cut (why?), while the third verse of the "Barbara Song" was delivered in a suddenly tough, harsh voice which dinned the message of the text into the audience with all the subtlety of an ice pick. Surely the point *must* be that, if anything, the last verse needs to be even sweeter and more ironically cajoling than what has gone before—or, at the very least, with the same vocal coloring.

I have deliberately left detailed comments on the music till last—mainly because a definite "mea culpa" is unfortunately in order. The Weill Foundation, alerted to potential monkey business by suspicious press reports, asked me to investigate the production a few weeks before the opening. A long telephone conversation with the musical director (a former rock star) resulted in his giving an assurance that some of his more outlandish and bizarre notions on performance, transpositions, and the like, would be discarded. Maybe he thought I wouldn't get to see the production. But how about this for a start: the verse of the "Jealousy Duet" was transposed into one key, the chorus into another; "Mack the Knife" was sung in a key so remote and lowered in pitch that it sounded like the Grand Inquisitor's Aria from *Don Carlo*; "The Song of Solidarity" (not in Eisler's setting) was inserted to accompany the scene in which Polly takes over as bank manager (!); and for "The Ballad of Sexual Obsession" we were treated to the spectacle of said music director accompanying Mrs. Peachum on the guitar, wandering around the stage after her (two characters in search of an action?) and finally coming to rest flat on his back between her legs and strumming his chords up her skirts! I could go on, but I would rather spare the feelings of the readers.

The only conceivable morals to be drawn from all this are: never trust an Australian rock musician's verbal assurances, and don't allow the Melbourne Theatre Company to tackle Brecht/Weill without being certain that someone with musical knowledge sits in on the rehearsals. Apparently, the assistant musical director of the Victorian State Opera was asked in to sort things out and left after a day in a state of despair. We now breathlessly await a treatment of *The Threepenny Opera* which incorporates "Waltzing Matilda" and is set in Newport, Rhode Island, at the time of Australia's victory in the America's Cup. I am sure the Melbourne Theatre Company could be easily encouraged to engage the rock group "Men At Work" to jolly up Weill's otherwise clearly unsatisfactory score.

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## The Threepenny Opera. Melbourne Theatre Co., Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne. October-November 1984

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humming that cheerful Nazi anthem and no doubt thinking that dear old Kurt had a lovely line in up-tempo marching numbers.

But the tale of horror does not end there. I saw the production in its last week of a lengthy run. Some ten days previously, the actor playing Mr. Peachum had gashed himself so badly on the awkward set (perpendicular, slippery steps everywhere) that he was hospitalized and the director stepped into the part. (Understudies are, strangely, not provided by a company which is the largest and most heavily subsidized theater company in Australia.) Now, it has always been an assumption of mine that any director worth his salt would actually know at least 50% of the play from memory when the first-night curtain goes up—more, if he had acting experience himself, as had Graeme Blundell, the director of this production. Not so. Ten days after the accident, Blundell, playing Peachum, was still "on book" and managed to get it wrong even with script in hand.

These anecdotes would be trivial, even irrelevant if they did not say something about the production and its reception by the Mel-

bourne public and critics alike. For this production, in a city of 3½ million, was as ill-conceived, shapeless, and unprofessional as any I have ever seen. The critics loved it, hailing it as a tough and direct treatment and giving it the old Brechtian Seal of Approval. This is a double-faced medallion bearing the critic's own face on one side and the late Bertolt's on the other. It's a little like one of those Eastern Bloc awards that the President always makes to himself for good behavior or services rendered, and is always bestowed on those productions that the critic sees as Brechtian because he thinks he knows what to look for and to like: social comment coupled with a little bit of satire and a rough-edged theatricality (translated in this production into the random Nazi salute—for no reason—references to a local brand of dog food, and clumsy and unfocused performances).

The only performances worth noting were an outstanding Polly from Janet Andrewartha and a suitably lugubrious Tiger Brown from Peter Cummins who balanced bursts of energy with moments of tired reflection on what might have been. Polly in particular was a delight—clear-voiced and managing to be naive without sliding into coy naiveté, direct when the part called for it and adept at suggesting



# MEMORABLE SELECTIONS FROM CURRENT REVIEWS CULLED FROM OUR CLIPPING SERVICES German-to-English Translations by Lys Symonette

## THE THREEPENNY OPERA, WELSH NATIONAL OPERA TOUR

There is also much monkeying with a text that is, for heaven's sake, still in copyright. The *Moritat* does not launch the proceedings, but is shoved into the second act. One's spirits were temporarily raised when Polly rightly got "Pirate Jenny," but sunk again in sheer disbelief when Jenny got it too, *in toto*. The single interval is inserted arbitrarily in the middle of Brecht's Act 2, after dialogue. The whole *Fidelio*-parody finale is cut (but the WNO already has its own *Fidelio*-parody in Kupfer's production) and in its place we get the hitherto missing second-act finale, with Macheath hanged and the whore Jenny transformed into a leather-jacketed revolutioniste waving a red flag.... In the right circumstances Roger Bryson could be a formidable Peachum; at first I thought the notion of dressing this arch-exploiter of the poor as Karl Marx might be a pleasantly acid, new-Right joke, but alas it was not intended to be.... This was a truly dreadful evening in the theatre. How was it allowed to happen?

Rodney Milnes  
The Financial Times, London  
3 January 1985

## MARTHA MÖDL IN BREMEN MAHAGONNY

In the Fifties her name was practically synonymous with the images of Kundry, Isolde, Brünnhilde. With these roles Martha Mödl enjoyed triumphs in Bayreuth, in Vienna, in New York. While these have become memories—happy ones—the phenomenon of one of the most radiant stage personalities of our time is by no means a thing of the past: Martha Mödl, who will soon be 75 ("Go ahead and print it!") is still active in the theater. In the Bremen premiere of Brecht/Weill's opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* on January 6, she will take on the role of Leocadia Begbick.

It will be the thirteenth staging of the work for her, ever since Buckwitz first cast the erstwhile dramatic soprano in the complex role of the lusty whorehouse madame. Do such frequent interpretations of the same role result in monotony? The answer is a decisive NO. Because every time, new aspects of the character open themselves up to fresh and surprising possibilities.

Gerhart Asche  
Kurier am Sonntag, Bremen  
30 December 1984

## "TRASH FROM CHAOS"

Enter one Ms. Jayne County—a person so manifestly due the title of Queen of Trash that she doesn't even have to bother to stake her claim to it.

"So now I've also formed a band; they're all northern boys, and they play a really hard, dirty sound. The guitar player is very young (he's only 17), and he's a trained classical guitar player, too. They're a great band, and all they need is someone to give them some direction, which is where I come in."

She slips on a song from Brecht and Weill's "Threepenny Opera," the perfect addition to the atmosphere. Ever thought of covering any of their music?

"Oh, I'd just love to do one; King Kurt did a version of "Mack the Knife," but I didn't reckon much to that. I'd like to do one much more in the vein of the original song. Half in English, half in German, like Bowie did with "Heroes," and give it a sort of "Heroes" feel.

Tibet  
Sounds, London  
12 January 1985

## "LOU REED: Now that he's 40, he's one happy singer"

... "I want to be the rock 'n' roll Kurt Weill," said Reed.... "My interest has been in one really simple guiding light idea: Take rock 'n' roll, the pop format, and make it for adults, with subject matter for adults written so adults, like myself, could listen to it."

Gary Graff  
Knight-Ridder Newspapers  
2 November 1984

## MAHAGONNY IN TOKYO

The Fujiwara Opera can boast a remarkable production of one of the rarely performed operatic treasures of our century: the Brecht-Weill *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. I attended the first of four performances on October 14 at Toshi Centre Hall. Makoto Sato, setting the work in the Thirties—part period Berlin, part American megalopolis, and part Tokyo of our day—paced well with vignettes which depicted the irony and the sinister background without over-emphasizing either. The deeply committed actor-singers, intelligently costumed by Kikuko Ogata, blended well with Nobuyuki Abe's clever sets. Among the members of the first of the two alternative casts I admired the Leokadia of Aiko Kori, the Jenny of Kimika Higoshi, the Fatty of Tohitaka Mori and the Trinity Moses of Yoshiaki Takezawa.

Jason Roussos  
Opera Magazine, London  
Oct. 1984

## DER SILBERSEE IN GERA, GDR PREMIERE

For these songs and *Lieder* duets, marches and choruses Weill takes up the style of *The Threepenny Opera* and—under the influence of Busoni's classicism—develops it further. With great mastery and superb melodic inspiration he makes use of established forms—social dances and most of all marches—and changes them into something of his own. The final goal is illumination. In 1929 Weill had described "gestic music" as a forceful way of composing the rhythm of language and this is how he works here as well. He is writing for singing actors; however he now demands a full symphony orchestra (strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion, piano, harp). The Finale is formed like a cantata, taking up two motives from the play (Fennimore's song) but stylistically sets itself far apart—as abstract as a picture of hope at a time without hope could possibly be.

Musik und Gesellschaft, Berlin (East)  
January 1985

## DER SILBERSEE IN RECKLINGHAUSEN, FRG

"A play with music by Kaiser and Weill." This is how *Der Silbersee* was first announced by Universal Edition in Vienna. The solid ensemble of the Ruhrfestspiele has taken this work of 16 complete musical numbers with spoken text in between and, after an intermission of 32 years, returned it to the consciousness of the Federal Republic.

Weill conceived the work with a full-grown overture. Like the songs, it contains all of the characteristic elements of his style since 1919 [sic]: rhythms of the Charleston, Tango and Foxtrot turn up—although perhaps not so consistently as in *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Elements of jazz are just as unmistakable as Weill's polyphonic strength. The music is inseparably merged with the metaphoric, great beauty of Georg Kaiser's language.... Wolfgang Florey led the Westphalian Symphony Orchestra securely through a successful performance."

Westdeutsche Allgemeine, Dortmund  
18 February 1985

"Ensemble Lifts Up a Treasure with "Silbersee"

Headline  
Recklinghauser Zeitung, Recklinghausen  
2 February 1985

## HISTORY OF OPERA: MUSICAL THEATER IN ITS DIVERSITY

by Werner Oehlmann

Headline: "A Champion for the Cause of Kurt Weill." Oehlmann's plea in the defense of Kurt Weill (1900-1950) amounts to a virtual vindication of his honor. He declares him to be "the creator of a uniquely American form of opera, developed from elements of the popular theater." He confirms this thesis convincingly through analysis of his most important works, of which only *Street Scene*, also of literary importance, has become known here. Clearly, an initiative has been taken, which strongly suggests a follow-up.

Alfons Neukirchen  
Rheinische Post, Düsseldorf  
12 January 1985

# Correspondence from the Archives

By David Farneth

The correspondence collection of any manuscript repository holds valuable treasures which can be a source of inspiration for scholars and researchers. Constantly on the prowl for a previously unknown fact or connection, the historian uses the information gleaned from letters as a "looking-glass" into the past. In addition to clarifying details concerning known information, letters often provide insights into unrealized projects, relationships among collaborators, private thoughts, and philosophical attitudes.

Studying any body of correspondence often raises more questions than are answered. What is missing? What is the date? Who are the people mentioned? Where are the envelopes? Was this letter actually sent? Was it received? Where did it come from? When did the archive receive it? Did the author really mean what he wrote? etc, etc. It is these questions that make a body of correspondence seem almost as alive as the person who created it.

The Weill/Lenya Archive at Yale University and the Weill-Lenya Research Center of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music hold originals and photocopies of numerous letters which have never been thoroughly investigated. This article offers a brief sampling of the primary sources which are now open and available for study. Due to space limitations, only letters written to or from Weill have been included, even though both repositories hold a wealth of documents created after Weill's death.

In publishing many of these letters for the first time, I have not attempted to provide comprehensive annotations, as the archivist's responsibility is to organize the resources and make them available for study and the scholar's responsibility is to analyze and interpret the contents. The resources now available are vast enough to support many years of study. There are over 1,500 letters between Weill and Universal Edition, documenting a remarkable period in the development of 20th century music. The collection at Yale University includes over 2,500 pages of correspondence with colleagues and collaborators such as Maurice Abravanel, Maxwell Anderson, Ernst Josef Aufrecht, Marc Blitzstein, Bertolt Brecht, Agnes DeMille, Marlene Dietrich, Max

Dreyfus, Albert Einstein, Ira Gershwin, Hans Heinsheimer, Serge Koussevitzky, Gertrude Lawrence, Arthur Lyons, Darius Milhaud, Max Reinhardt, Leah Salisbury, Alma Maria Werfel, Bruno Walter, and Herman Wouk. There are 400 letters between Weill and Lenya, Lenya's personal correspondence, large files of letters regarding specific productions, and voluminous publisher correspondence.

Again we must ask: *What is missing?* Obviously, much of the early correspondence has not yet found its way to the archives. Virtually the only extant correspondence between 1900 and 1933 is the Weill-U.E. and the Weill-Lenya groupings. The Foundation currently is administering an active acquisitions effort and several important items have already come to light. Copies of some early family letters were made available by the late Alicia Bing, and most recently, the Foundation acquired photocopies of photocopies of early letters which are held by the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. From this last acquisition, we learned that Weill really had composed a symphonic poem based on a text by Rainer Maria Rilke. The poem text has now been identified and Weill provides a complete synopsis of the programmatic elements. Previously, the work's existence had been known only by a mention in an essay by Strobel, but no musical materials have yet been discovered. In addition, the letters give insights into major influences during his educational years. Among the letters was a copy of a recital program, probably dating from 1918, showing the premiere performances of two "duets" by Weill: "Abendlied" and "Maikater." Weill also served as accompanist for the entire recital.

Obviously it is impossible to summarize the importance of any correspondence collection in a few short paragraphs. The examples reprinted here do not represent adequately the depth of the material that is being uncovered, and only in superficial ways do they elude to the importance of their collective meaning. One thing is certain: the essence of Kurt Weill, the man and composer, has not yet been fully captured in the published literature and many secrets are waiting to be discovered in these documents.

To: Kurt Weill, [Paris]  
From: Jean Cocteau, [Paris]  
Date: June 1933

Original unaddressed postcard located in the Weill/Lenya Archive, Yale University. Translation by David Farneth.

9 rue Vignon June 1933

My very dear Weill. You must have felt how much I suffered last night from the tragic frivolity of that hall. But you got him. You cheated him and you won. It is superb, in some ways, the conflict between this comfort—this egoism, and discomfort and altruism of your work. The two women are astonishing, stirring up a superhuman air around themselves. Tender and cruel, that is the tempo of your work in which I have dwelt for the last two days. I embrace you.

Jean\*

Now I should work for once.



Obverse of postcard to Weill from Jean Cocteau, June 1933

Reproduced with the permission of the Yale University Music Library.



To: Ira Gershwin, Los Angeles  
From: Kurt Weill, Suffern, New York  
Date: 8 March 1941  
Original letter located in the Library of Congress.

Kurt Weill  
Suffern, N.Y.

March 8, 1941

Dear Ira,

I guess you got my letter the same day that I got yours and you will have found the answer to most of your questions in my letter. It was awfully nice to hear from you, but I am sorry that you didn't feel [sic] well. I had a lot of troubles with Lenya's health. Her pains in the back got worse and worse and we finally had to take her to a sanatorium to get regular treatments. It is a muscular rheumatism and very painful and hard to cure. She is back home now, but she has to stay in bed most of the time. Also the weather has been terrible here and since yesterday we are completely snowed in. All this I just mention to show you that life is not pure fun.

But on the other hand it is lots of fun to have a smash hit. The show is doing wonderful business (as you know from your statements). We have between 20 and 100 standees in every performance and the audience reaction is wonderful. Even "My Ship" gets a good hand, probably because the song is getting a little more popular. I go about twice a week to check on music and lyrics. It is in very good shape. I guess you've got most of the records (Benny Goodman excellent!, Reisman good, Sammy Kay not so good, Hildegard very good). I haven't heard the Duchin record yet. It came out yesterday. The Lawrence album is musically very good, but her voice sounds a little shaky. I hear Danny Kaye's records are wonderful, but it seems he has changed quite a lot; they'll probably go very big with the jitterbugs. I like very much the way Hildegard sings the songs. She takes them very relaxed and that is good for the lyrics and the music. All the record shops have big signs in the windows "The song hits from Lady in the Dark". Max Dreyfus says the sale of records (especially Hildegard) is far above average.

The piano score is just finished printing and I am reading the proofs of the first dream (or is it "proves"? today. You will get the first dream. Please correct them carefully and as quickly as possible!!!! Moss will write a preface to the piano score. He asked me if I would rather have a musician write the preface, but I think it is better when he writes it and explains what we have tried to do. I didn't see much of Moss' [sic]. He is completely relaxed and very busy enjoying life, going to parties and nightclubs and in wonderful spirits. You've probably read his very witty article, "The Saga of Gertie". He will write some more theatre anecdotes like that and publish them in a book. He doesn't want to talk about a new show yet.—

To: [Hanns Weill, Halberstadt]  
From: Kurt Weill, [Berlin]  
Date: [Spring 1919]  
Copy lacking initial pages located in the Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York. Translation by Lys Symonette.

To think about working productively is, of course, impossible. Not even a little *Lied* is taking shape. Today I had a very beautiful idea for the beginning of a Cello Sonata and I wrote it down right away. But right now I already feel like tearing it up. I had already come to the definite conclusion of giving up this scribbling [Schreiberei] altogether and throw myself totally into the conducting business [Kappellmeisterei]. Now suddenly, we Jews are simply not creative, and when we are, we are destructive rather than constructive. And if the young movement in music views the Mahler-Schoenberg tendency as being constructive and heralding the future (as I, alas, do too!) then [the movement] consists really of Jews or of shoemakers with Jewish accents. No Jew could ever write a work like the Moonlight Sonata. Just the pursuit of this train of thought is enough to force the pen out of one's hand. I want to accomplish this much—and only through Schoenberg could I do it—that I write only when I have to, when it comes most honestly from the depths of my heart. Otherwise it will merely turn out to be music of the intellect, and I hate that. The "Weise" comes to me from the heart; I really live in this music; but—I am also ashamed of it! I need poetry to set my imagination into motion; and my imagination is not a bird, it is an airplane. Only a small consolation is the fact that the young composers around me are no better, often even worse. However, they do not aspire to such heights as I do; they set their goals lower and reach them immediately. I got to know one of them, who is already farther along than I am, but also four years older. He writes chamber music—in a totally modern, Regerian style, but with a depth and seriousness that is quite impressive. Yet, he too is not truly productive because he is—at least I think he is—a Jew. By way of his example I have once more realized, how wonderful it is to be marrying as early as possible, if only one can find the suitable creature. His is a brand-new marriage to a beautiful girl—who

We had quite a shock on Wednesday when we heard that Sam Harris got very sick. He was taken to the hospital for an appendix operation, but they found some complications and it seems the doctors were not sure if it is cancer or not. Thank God, since Wednesday the reports are very encouraging and we hope he will pull through.

The lawyers are still working out the contracts for the picture sale. You know that Moss wants us to take the entire first payment (60,000) and Reinheimer told me it's okay with you.—I had a letter from Arthur Lyons. He writes that you haven't seen Sidney Franklin yet, but that he is trying to work out a deal for us to do the score for "The Play's the Thing" with the Spewacks. That would be a very nice job.

William King, musical editor of the "Sun" wrote me, he saw the show and thought it was "one of the most delightful evenings in the theatre" he's ever had and that the score has an "immeasurable" part in the success. Virgil Thomson wrote a violent attack against me. It was all very personal and his main point was that I am no good any more since I stopped working with Brecht and that I am "constantly avoiding" collaborating with "major poets" (a rather bold statement, don't you think so?). Well, I am used to this kind of attacks from the part of jealous composers. In some form or another it happens every time I do a new show.

We bought a Buick convertible to-day and it seems pretty sure now that we will buy the house we told you about.

That's all for this time. A kiss for Lee and love to you two from Lenya and me.

KURT

#### [IRA GERSHWIN'S NOTES TO THE ABOVE LETTER]

"Please correct them [the proofs] carefully..." I did correct them (and the later proofs) carefully. In fact to such a degree that I sent a special letter to my good friend, Dr. Sirmay, the Chappell editor, telling him to be sure to see that the Ringmaster (3rd dream, p. 112, Vocal Score) sings:

"This is all immaterial and irrelevant! What do you think this is—Gilbert and Sellivant?"

(The good doctor hadn't dug the rhyme at first hearing.) But my carefulness got nowhere in this instance. The vocal score still appears with:

"This is all immaterial and irrelevant! What do you think this is—Gilbert and Sellivant?"

works in commercial art and to a high degree combines a liberally refined education with truly feminine charm. Human beings such as we, who dangle between two worlds, need a support of this kind, otherwise we run the danger of sinking into an abyss. Just once I would like to fall madly in love so I could forget about everything else. It would be a true blessing. But there is something else that has a similar effect on me as I think to myself about love: Beethoven. Recently I heard the Kreutzer Sonata at the Hochschule. This music brings me to tears; this piece alone—if I were bad—could turn me into a good person.—

Now you must not think that I sit around all day feeling sorry for myself. No, the orchestration makes me very happy. I also practice piano diligently, play the Partitur of *Wälschüre* and go to the University. Of course, a lot of mistakes creep into the orchestration [of the "Weise"], because I am reckless enough to be working on it all on my own. Still, it would be great to be able to go through it bar by bar with Wetzler. Also, I have been to the theater twice. I laughed idiotically over Pallenberg in an idiotic play. They say that no laugh is healthier than the one over a stupid joke. Then I went to see in the Berlin [indcipherable], where the "Vorwärts" ["Onward," a left-wing paper] has its new office, a social drama "Das Gesetz" [The Law]. It is a very suspenseful play about the time of socialist persecution, reminding me somewhat of [indcipherable] (which by the way I cannot stand anymore!) because of its rigidly drawn tendencies; but in comparison to other social dramas, which still thrill me—first of all Else Lasker-Schüler's "Wupper" it fades out completely. However, it was exciting to learn that there is still something different for which the public (and I mean the simplest of Sunday audiences) indicates an interest and that this audience was following with understanding, giving voice to its approval so enthusiastically that it removed my doubts about the German people to some degree.

When are you going on your next trip and where to? How about your vacation? By the way, the Berlioz is serving me splendidly and I am very grateful to you. My bed awaits me longingly so as to cradle me into soothing sleep, toward a new morning, a new hope—a new disappointment.... Good night!

Kurt.

To: Dr. [Hans Heinsheimer, Universal-Edition, Vienna]  
From: Kurt Weill, Berlin  
Date: 14 October 1929  
Photocopies of the Weill-Universal Edition correspondence are located at the Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York. Translation by Christopher Hailey.

Berlin, 14 October 1929

Dear Herr Dr.,

Thank you very much for your lengthy letter. I was extremely pleased that you wrote to me about my present situation with such understanding, with such care and genuine friendship, and what you say is so true and so in keeping with my own views, that, primarily on the strength of your letter, I have decided to withdraw from the planned *Volksstück* after all. How I will do that without offending a man as powerful as Stefan Grossman, that is something I will discuss in detail with Herr Director Hertzka. Although these 4 little songs would in no way have distracted me in my more important work, I realize that from the standpoint of tactics and above all prestige it is better for me to keep my distance from this project.

Since your letter is kept along such fundamental lines and since I am in such complete agreement with your position, you will also allow me to add something to these statements of principle. Above all, I was pleased that you recognized the nature of the stylistic transformation I am undergoing. (For there are not many who notice it). But one must date the beginning of this stylistic transformation much earlier than you do. By far the greater part of *Mahagonny* is already entirely free of the song style and reveals this new style which in seriousness, "stature," and expressive power surpasses everything I have written to date. Almost everything that was added to the Baden-Baden version is written in a completely pure, thoroughly responsible style, which I am convinced will endure longer than most of what is produced today. *Happy End*, too, has been completely misunderstood in this regard. Pieces like the big "Heilsarmee-marsch" and the "Matrosenlied" go far beyond the song character and the music as a whole is such a clear formal, instrumental, and melodic development beyond *Die Dreigroschenoper*, that only helpless ignoramus like the German critics could miss it. At issue here is a major evolution which hasn't stood still for one moment, and which, as you recognize correctly, has made another new advance in the new *Mahagonny* scene and in *Der Lindberghflug*. We must not be misled into trivializing what was achieved through *Die Dreigroschenoper*—achieved not only for music, but for musical life in general—just because some of my new works happen to be badly mounted in a bad play. From our standpoint the fact that my *Dreigroschenoper* music has been commercialized doesn't speak against it, but for it, and we would be falling back into our old mistakes if we were to deny some music its importance and artistic value simply because it found its way to the masses. You are right—I cannot copy this song style indefinitely, and with the works since *Mahagonny* have demonstrated that I have no inten-

tion of copying it. But we cannot deny that this style has set a precedent and that today more than half of the young composers from the most diverse backgrounds are making their living from it. That's why it's very easy for the general public to overlook the fact that I myself, who defined this style only a year ago, have in the meantime quietly continued on my own path. So you see that your arguments are essentially in complete agreement with my own views.

On one point, however, I cannot concur with you: concerning what you say about Berlin and the German provinces. I know the German provinces. I grew up there, these days I often travel to provincial cities and I read the papers. The "Spirit of the German Provinces" as portrayed in the papers is deeply reactionary and it is absolutely inconceivable that a new, future-oriented artistic movement could emerge from one of these cities. In any case opposition to Berlin's theater life cannot be so strong when the *Dreigroschenoper*, the most daring and revolutionary product of this much-maligned Berlin spirit, is enjoying full houses everywhere. No, dear friend Heinsheimer, the battle against Berlin being waged in certain well-known provincial circles is a part of that great offensive which reactionary forces have launched in recent years, by which means they also hope to exert influence over the artistic sphere. The provincial intellectuals of which you speak have no more ardent a desire than to come to Berlin. The developments within the German theater over the last decade have come exclusively from Berlin, from Brahm, from Reinhardt, from Jessner and Piscator, and finally from the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. Do you really believe one can dismiss the achievements which make Berlin today's unrivalled theater capital of Europe with the expression "commercialized artistic creativity"? And do you really believe one can apply this description to what I do? I am the only creative musician who for years has worked consistently and uncompromisingly in the face of opposition from the snobs and the aesthetes toward the creation of fundamental forms of a new, simple, popular musical theater. Even my least significant music theater works during this time have been written with this sense of responsibility, and out of a constant effort to further a development which I consider the only one possible. Is that commercialized artistic activity? Wouldn't it be much easier (and commercially much more profitable) if, like most of the others, I were to carry on and vary the traditional opera style a little further and adapt myself from the outset to the taste and mentality of the provincial opera-goer. No one knows the dangers of Berlin's literary scene as well as I do. But I have demonstrated that as long as one doesn't fall victim to its pitfalls, the most substantial and purest artistic achievements are possible in precisely this atmosphere. It is quite friendly and justified of you to call my attention to these dangers whenever you have any concrete fears. And that is how I interpret your lines. Nonetheless I wanted to let you know my differing opinions, because I value your opinion and because there are so few people with whom I can debate these things calmly and objectively.

For today with the best regards, also from Lenja

Sincerely your Weill

## NOTES

### 1. Kurt Weill to Hanns Weill (?), Spring 1919.

The "Weise" referred to in the first paragraph is a symphonic poem inspired by a Rilke poem, "Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke." Weill gives a more complete description of the work in a 27 March 1919 letter to Hanns. The only previously known reference to it was in an essay by Heinrich Strobel who likened it to Schoenberg's *Pelleas und Melisande*. Wetzler was a conductor and composer, 1870-1943.

The "Berlioz" referred to is almost certainly the *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* (op. 10, 1843).

### 2. Kurt Weill to Hans Heinsheimer, 14 October 1929.

Weill had been considering a lucrative offer from Stefan Grossman to write four songs for a *Volksstück* which Grossman was producing. In a 10 October 1929 letter, Heinsheimer tried to dissuade him from the project, saying that his song style should serve "as a springboard for your return to more profound and substantial musical creations."

### 3. Jean Cocteau to Kurt Weill, June 1933.

This postcard is Cocteau's congratulatory note upon attending the premiere of *Die sieben Todsünden* in Paris. The postcard is not addressed.

### 4. Kurt Weill to Ira Gershwin, 8 March 1941.

The annotations printed at the end of this letter were supplied by Ira Gershwin when he deposited his correspondence at the Library of Congress.

### 5. Darius Milhaud to Kurt Weill, 1942.

Producer Russell Lewis had approached Weill to reorchestrate Offenbach's *La belle Hélène* for a production to star Grace Moore. Weill subsequently recommended Milhaud to undertake the commission.

### 6. Kurt Weill to Max and Mab Anderson, 22 June 1947.

Anderson was in Hollywood working on "Joan of Arc," a film adaptation of his *Joan of Lorraine* which starred Ingrid Bergman. Names in the text are: Walter "Wanger," producer; Victor "Fleming," co-director of "Gone With the Wind" and "The Wizard of Oz;" "Harold" Freedman, Anderson's agent and employed by Brandt & Brandt; "Bob" Sherwood, President of the Dramatists Guild in 1937 and a founding member of Playwrights' Company.



To: Max and Mab Anderson, Hollywood  
From: Kurt Weill, New York  
Date: 22 June 1947  
Copies of original letter located in the Weill/Lenya Archive at Yale University and the Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York.

June 22, 1947

Dear Max and Mab,

Judging from your letter, you really seem to have the Hollywood blues and I wished you could pack up and come home. The Road is absolutely lovely this year (or it seems so to me after 6 weeks absence)—but it isn't quite real without you around. I got mad when I heard that your contracts aren't signed yet. That's the worst case of Hollywood trickery I've ever heard and I cannot understand how Wanger and Fleming can lend their hands to such machinations. I hear that Harold is out there now, and I hope he will straighten it out (he'd better—because that's what we pay agents for!) You are certainly right to stop working until they sign the papers.

Under the circumstances it doesn't seem to make too much sense for Lenya and me to come out—much as we would love to see you. But I'm sure you couldn't really concentrate on our musical as long as your mind is on that picture. So lets [sic] hope you can finish up out there during the month of July and be back here around August 1st. If you have to stay much longer than that, we might reconsider the situation.

I would have loved to see you and to give you a fresh account of everything I have seen—and I have seen a great deal in those few weeks. On the way back I spent a night in Rome—poor and shabby between all that splendor of a lost empire, a day in Geneva—a little reminder of pre-war Europe, rich and merciless [sic] and somehow unreal, then 2 days in Paris, even more depressing than the first visit, more restless and torn apart by the coming railroad strike which just had started when I got on the plane to London. I spent a weekend in the English country site [sic], in a 12th Century farmhouse which would make a perfect set for Falstaff. There was a marked bitterness about American criticism of the English Palestine policy and Ben Hecht's silly one-man campaign against the English empire, but somehow they seem to be beyond anger. The flight from London to New York was lovely (7 hours across the Atlantic), and coming home to this country had some of the same emotion as arriving here 12 years ago. With all its faults (and partly because of them), this is still the most decent place to live in, and strangely enough, wherever I found decency and humanity in the world it reminded me of America, because, to me, Americanism is (or ought to be) the most advanced attempt to fill the gap between the individual and the technical progress. Countries like France and Italy seem too far removed from this form of Americanism, while England, at the moment, seems to get a little ahead of us—and I have a suspicion that Russia could become, in this sense, "Americanized"—if we want it.

It took me about a week to catch up on my sleep after the trip, but now I'm feeling fine and getting a little fed-up with doing nothing. So I'll write a few more Whitman songs (which will be recorded) and a symphonic piece from *Street Scene*. I hope very much that we start our musical when we get together. I'm sure we can do a very good one this time (possibly without Danny Kaye who is a lot of nuisance).—I saw Irving Lazar who will tell you about our conversations. I doubt if Bob [Sherwood] would do what Lazar wants, but I think Bob would go along

in any attempt to strengthen the Playwrights Company. "Joan" is the big thing—in in all summer theatres. I saw Aufricht's friend in Paris who made a very excellent adaptation and seems pretty sure that Hedwige Feuillère (who is a great actress!) will play it.—We walked over to your place. Everything looks lovely, including the new "cabin" (some cabin!!). Now it is raining—perfect weather for you. So: come back. We miss you all.

Love— Kurt



Self-portrait by Milhaud.

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To: Kurt Weill, New York  
From: Darius Milhaud [Paris]  
Date: [1942]  
Original letter located in the Weill/Lenya Archive, Yale University

My dear Kurt

I am very excited about the Offenbach business and I am going to accept to make this orchestration.

But as I have no experience of BROADWAY—please tell me exactly what they expect of me.

- 1.) Must I change the harmonies—put "pep" in it.
- 2.) What kind of orchestra can I use? What instruments?

Give me all sort of good advices.

I can come (as Lewis asked me) for December but I must be here on January 11th.

I should like to know if this "affaire" has *already* a good financial backing. As I will have a awfully long job to do—I should like very much to have an advance of royalties as a *guarantee*. I wrote to Lewis about that but I should like to have your advice—You're *king of business*! I did not mentionned any amount in my letter to Lewis.

If I could have \$1,000 in advance it would be "swell" and I could take Madeleine and Daniel with me in N.Y. You can talk to Russel Lewis of this question.

yoo pee!

Milhaud

I hope you will help me for the contract as I am a dumkopf

To: Bertolt Brecht, East Berlin  
From: Kurt Weill, New City  
Date: 7 January 1950  
Copy of original letter located in the Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York  
New City, Jan. 7, 1950

Bert Brecht  
Deutsches Theater  
Schumannstrasse  
Berlin

Dear Brecht,

I have not heard from you in a very long time. The last time you wrote to me was when you told me that the contract with Felix Bloch Erben has been dissolved and that you intended to hand over the stage representation of *Dreigroschenoper* to the Suhrkamp Verlag. I answered you at the time that I would be satisfied with such a solution, provided that I could come to terms with Suhrkamp about the conditions of the contract. I had asked you to see to it that the Suhrkamp Verlag send me the draft of the contract. Unfortunately, I have heard nothing at all from either you or the Suhrkamp Verlag. Now I think that we cannot let this situation drag on any longer. The entire legal situation of *Dreigroschenoper* remains unsolved, because I have given orders to Universal Edition not to license any further musical performances until the question of stage representation has been cleared; and therefore any further performances of this work are illegal. Dr. Kurt Hirschfeld, who was here this fall, asked me for the rights for Zürich and I told him that the Zürich Schauspielhaus would have to make a contract with me personally. However this could only happen concerning performances outside Germany, whereas performances in Germany have been put on ice altogether until we have contractually agreed upon a stage representative.

At the time I had also asked you to let me know whatever happened to my royalties from München, and—in case it still is being given there—to whom these royalties are being paid in my behalf. I have never received an answer to this either.

How are you? Have you recuperated from your illness and what are you working on? Lenya and I are talking about going to Europe in the spring, but it is as yet quite uncertain whether I can get away from here. My new musical drama, "Lost in the Stars," is a big success (with Maxwell Anderson), and now we are thinking about writing a musical version of Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn."

Please let me hear from you soon and accept best wishes for 1950 from Lenya and myself.

Always your KW