

KURT WEILL NEWSLETTER

Volume 3, Number 2

Fall 1985

Whitman Songs from TRO/ EAM

Kurt Weill's settings of four poems by Walt Whitman, unprinted for decades, will be published through an arrangement by The Richmond Organization (TRO) and European American Music Corp. Originally written for tenor with piano accompaniment, the Whitman Songs will be printed by European American Music in versions for both high and low voice and should be available by the end of 1986.

The songs, ("O, Captain! My Captain!", "Beat! Beat! Drums!", "Dirge for Two Veterans," and "Come Up From the Fields, Father") are among Weill's most classically-oriented American compositions, fusing a style not unlike *Lieder* with the highly patriotic poetry of Whitman. The poems are among Whitman's reflections on the Civil War. Intended for Paul Robeson, the first three of the songs were written during World War II (1942). The fourth song was added in 1947 for a complete recording by tenor William Horne. Weill orchestrated three songs, the fourth was scored by Carlos Surinach in 1957; the parts will be available for rental from EAM.



The first page of "Nichts ist die Welt mir," second song from Kurt Weill's *Ofrah's Lieder* (1916), recently acquired by the Library of Congress. See "From the Archives," this issue.

Rock and Jazz Stars Pay Tribute to Weill on New Recording

Kurt Weill's music has been interpreted by many different performers, from Louis Armstrong to David Bowie, but few if any recordings have offered the variety promised by "A Tribute to Kurt Weill," to be released in October on A&M Records. Rock and jazz artists have been assembled by producers Hal Willner and Paul Young for an unusual program of Weill favorites.

The most publicized cut is "Mack the Knife," as sung by Sting, lead singer of the rock group The Police, who is currently pursuing a solo career as both a singer and an actor. Sting's first solo album, released this summer, also reflects his interest in Brecht, if not Weill, with cuts such as "Children's Crusade" and "Moon Over Bourbon Street."

Targeted for "hit single" status is "September Song" as sung by Lou Reed, a New York rocker who first earned fame with the Velvet Underground and as a member of Andy Warhol's circle — whom he was to lampoon in his song "Walk on the Wild Side." One Reed album ("Metal Machine Music") contained four sides of static; others have featured such daring material as "Heroin," "Street Hassle," "I Wanna Be Black," and "Sally Can't Dance." Reed has associated himself philosophically with Weill's music for some time (See the Newsletter, Vol. III, No. 1).

Other highlights include "Youkali Tango" performed by the Armadillo String Quartet; "What Was Sent to the Soldier's Wife" by Marianne Faithfull, one of rock's first and foremost prima donnas; Tom Waits' rendition of "What Keeps a Man Alive?"; Carla Bley's "Lost in the Stars;" the Van Dyke Parks jazz combo in a mostly-instrumental medley from *Johnny Johnson*, and the Bower Brothers in "Army Song."

Berg, Weill Under Discussion in Dessau

"Alban Berg and Kurt Weill: Two Outstanding Composers of the Early Twentieth Century" was the topic for this year's Dessau Symposium, the 13th such symposium held annually in the famous Bauhaus. Musicologists from the Democratic Republic discussed the composers in honor of the 100th anniversary of Berg's birth and the 85th of Weill's, and in conjunction with an exhibition on Weill's life and work ("Kurt Weill: A Great Son of the City of Dessau") also on display at the Bauhaus.

TO ALL READERS!!

Beginning with our next issue (Spring 1986), the Newsletter will discontinue use of mailing lists purchased from other organizations. **If you are listed with the Music Library Association, College Music Society, or American Theatre Association, and if you suspect that you have been receiving the Newsletter on this basis, please return the response form on the back page to continue your subscription.** Subscriptions are free of charge.

Productions Slated for United Kingdom

The coming season in the United Kingdom will see a number of major performances of Kurt Weill's works. The Royal Shakespeare Company's *Happy End*, directed by Di Trevis and Stuart Hopps and conducted by Tony Castro, began a 15-city tour on 30 August. This production will visit small towns throughout England, with a stop in Belfast for three days in November, before arriving for a long run in Stratford from 9 December to 25 January. A further tour of Northeastern England is also under discussion.

David Atherton led the London Sinfonietta in *Das Berliner Requiem* 4 September as part of the BBC's Promenade Concert Series; Philip Langridge, Steven Roberts, and Michael Rippon were soloists. The Scottish Opera's production of *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* plays through March and early April, with performances in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. David Alden, who directed the controversial "Kurt Weill Evening" at the Israeli Festival in Jerusalem this summer (a review has been excerpted in this issue), will stage the opera, David Fielding is the designer, and Simon Ratle will conduct.

Ireland's Wexford Festival will also stage the *Mahagonny* opera in Wexford's Theatre Royal. Simon Jolly conducts and Declan Donnellan directs a cast including Sherri Zannoth (Jenny), Theodore Spencer (Jimmy), and Nuala Willis (Mrs. Begbick), with sets by Nick Ormerod in performances 25, 28, 31 October and 3 November of this year.

Also under consideration is a major production of *The Threepenny Opera* at the National Theatre in London this spring.

1986 GRANT GUIDELINES

Types of Grants

The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., is a not-for-profit corporation which promotes public understanding and appreciation of the musical works by Kurt Weill. To this end, the Foundation solicits proposals from individuals and non-profit organizations for funding of projects related to the perpetuation of Kurt Weill's artistic legacy. For the 1986 funding period, the Foundation is accepting proposals in one or more of the following categories:

1. Research Grants
2. Publication Assistance
3. Dissertation Fellowships
4. Travel Grants
5. College and University Performance and Production Grants
6. Professional and Regional Performance and Production Grants
7. Translations/Adaptations

Descriptions of Categories

Research and Travel Grants. Funding in this category may be requested to support specific research expenses. Applicants must be pursuing a topic directly related to Kurt Weill and/or Lotte Lenya and must submit a detailed outline of the proposed project. Travel grants should be requested to reimburse reasonable travel expenses to locations of primary source material.

Publication Assistance. Funding in this category may be requested to assist in expenses related to preparing manuscripts for publication in a recognized scholarly medium. Funds may be requested for, but not limited to, editing, indexing, design, and reproduction fees. (Publisher subventions may be requested directly from the Foundation at any time and will be evaluated separately from the grants program.)

Dissertation Fellowships. PhD. candidates may apply for dissertation fellowships to assist in research activities. The application must include a copy of the dissertation proposal and two letters of recommendation, one of which is from a faculty advisor.

College and University Performance and Production Grants. The Foundation will award up to 10 grants for \$2,000 each to colleges and universities in support of general production expenses for Kurt Weill's stage works. Awards will be made based upon the work to be performed, geographic distribution and the musical excellence demonstrated by the application. All works must be presented in fully staged versions using Weill's original orchestrations. Productions of *The Threepenny Opera* are not eligible for funding.

Assistance for performances of concert works is also available in grants of up to \$1,000 to cover expenses including but not limited to increased rehearsal time, guest soloist fees, royalty and rental costs, and promotion.

Professional and Regional Performance and Production Grants. In addition to the above considerations, proposals from professional and regional theater companies and concert groups should demonstrate that requested funds will be used to improve the musical qualities of the performance. Examples of recommended requests include funds for soloists, orchestra fees, and extra rehearsals.

Translations/Adaptations. Translation proposals will be accepted for projects which demonstrate an adequate need for a new translation. Priority will be given to projects which will culminate in a public performance of the translation. Adaptation projects will be considered only for works in cases where the original version is impossible to perform for reasons of incompleteness or justifiable practical and commercial considerations. The Foundation will assist the applicant in securing the necessary permissions from the authors (or their estates) of the original texts.

Funding Priorities

Although the Foundation does not have a long funding history from which to determine explicit funding priorities, a few general inclinations may be observed:

1. Performance proposals which demonstrate musical excellence and authenticity are encouraged.
2. Research proposals which demonstrate the promise of publishable results are encouraged.

3. Proposals for local productions or performances should demonstrate a previous record of artistic excellence, evidence of community support, and a potential for influence beyond the immediate area.
4. Stock and amateur productions of *The Threepenny Opera* and cabaret performances of Weill's songs are not eligible for funding.

Evaluation Procedures

After applications have been reviewed by the Foundation's staff, additional supporting materials (including recordings, recommendations, and samples of previous work) may be requested for consideration by the Advisory Panel on Grant Evaluations, which will make recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The Advisory Panel on Grant Evaluations shall be composed of independent, prominent members from the musical, theatrical and scholarly communities. Grants will be awarded on an objective and non-discriminatory basis. Grantee selection criteria will include: 1) relevance and value of the proposed project to the Foundation's purposes; 2) quality of the project; 3) evidence of the applicant's potential, motivation, and ability to carry out the project successfully; and 4) evidence of the applicant's prior record of achievement in the field covered by the project. Applicants will be informed of awards by February 1, 1986.

Application Information

Preliminary applications for the 1986 awards must be received by **15 November 1985**, and should contain the following information:

1. A detailed description of the project.
2. An up-to-date curriculum vita or resume for individuals; or a profile of purposes, activities, and past achievements, including a list of references, for organizations.
3. An itemized budget showing entire project expenses, income, and projected funding sources.
4. Performance Grant Fact Sheet (if applying for a performance grant).

Applications may be obtained by contacting: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., 142 West End Avenue, Suite 1-R, New York, New York 10023. Telephone: (212) 873-1465.

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LETTER

To the Editor:

In your most recent issue of the *Newsletter* there is a review of the AEI reissue of *Knickerbocker Holiday* (AEI 1148). I thought your readers might be interested in the various source recording materials used in compiling this reissue. The first issue of any of this radio material came from "Stars Over Broadway" (Star-Tone ST-214 mono), an anthology of various Broadway shows which contained a portion of the *Lady in the Dark* radio version (also released on AEI 1146, complete) and the following selections from the "Theatre Guild On The Air" version of *Knickerbocker Holiday*: "One Touch of Alchemy," "All Hail the Political Honeymoon," and "The Scars." Some time after these excerpts were issued, the album of the complete broadcast (Joey 7243 mono) came out. In 1973, Mark 56 Records issued an album of radio material from the old Rudy Vallee "Fleischmann's Hour" series. One half of side one is devoted to a mini-version of *Knickerbocker Holiday*. This is with Walter Huston, Jeanne Madden, and members of the original cast chorus and is conducted by Maurice Abravanel. This is announced prior to the recording by Vallee and he also states that the program is being broadcast during the run of the show. The AEI reissue uses all of the Joey album of the Theatre Guild version and

the missing portions from the Rudy Vallee program which adds "Clickety-Clack" and "To War!" The AEI liner notes are a little misleading in their credits because Jeanne Madden, who is featured in a bit of dialogue, sings only as part of the chorus in "Clickety-Clack"! The part of Tina on both the Joey and AEI releases is sung in full by Jean Darling except for that one chorus bit; Darling also performs almost all of the dialogue. The original Star-Tone issue of excerpts lists the year 1938 as the broadcast date while the AEI says 1945. The exact date of the Theatre Guild broadcast is unknown to me, but it is announced on the Rudy Vallee album that the show is currently running, so that would be the 1938 date Star-Tone uses.

DAVID HUMMEL
The Archives of the American Musical Theatre

EDITOR'S REPLY:

Norman Nadel's A Pictorial History of the Theatre Guild (New York, 1969) lists the air date of the "Theatre Guild On The Air" production of Knickerbocker Holiday as 30 December 1945.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Foundation and EAM Sign Comprehensive Agency/ Publishing Agreement

Following more than a year of negotiations, the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc. recently signed a comprehensive agency/publishing agreement with European American Music Corporation (Valley Forge, PA), and new agreements with Universal Edition, Weill's original European publisher. The Weill association with EAM began in 1981 when Lotte Lenya entered into a publishing agreement which subsequently, with assistance from members of the Foundation, led to the publication of "The Unknown Kurt Weill Songbook", the Cello Sonata, and *Recordare*.

Under the new agreement, EAM will continue to function as the Foundation's agent for all first-class stage productions in the United States, including Broadway, Off-Broadway, opera, cabarets, revues, films, videos, dance, television, and other grand rights uses, as well as represent those works published under the 1981 agreement. In addition, the Foundation has assigned to EAM its publishing rights for the British Commonwealth countries (United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa). EAM will also act as an international publisher on behalf of the Foundation for all newly discovered compositions.

European American Music has begun an ambitious 8-year printing schedule and both EAM and UE have agreed to keep all works in print and available for sale and rental. In the next three years we can expect the following new publications from EAM: *Happy End* (new parts and full score), String Quartet in B minor (score and parts), *Vom Tod im Wald* (full score), *Marie galante* (piano-vocal score), *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (full score and corrected rental parts), *Mahagonny Songspiel* (full score and corrected edition of the piano-vocal score), and a songbook of 10 to 15 unpublished German songs. New publications following these will include *Der Lindberghflug*, Orchestra Suite in 6 movements, and the full scores of *Der neue Orpheus*, *The Eternal Road*, *Der Silbersee* and *Die Bürgschaft*.

UE will offer reprint editions of the following: "Sieben Stücke aus der Dreigroschenoper" (UE 9969 and UE 9969-B, simplified version), *Frauentanz* (UE 7748 piano score), *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* (UE 8864, piano-vocal score with English text by Salter), *Der Protagonist* (UE 8387, piano-vocal score with English text by Salter), *Royal Palace* (UE 8690 piano-vocal score), *Die Bürgschaft* (UE 1525 piano-vocal score), and *Der Lindberghflug* (UE 9938 with new English text).

In spite of these recent changes, many former publishing agreements still remain in effect: for instance, all non-dramatic rights for the American works will stay with TRO, Inc.; Chappell will continue to represent the same works outside the U.S. Stock and amateur rights in the U.S. are represented as follows: *Threepenny Opera*, *Lady in the Dark*, *Street Scene*, *Knickerbocker Holiday* and *Lost in the Stars* with Rodgers & Hammerstein Music Library; *Happy End* and *Johnny Johnson* with Samuel French; *From Berlin to Broadway* with Music Theatre International. Most foreign publishing arrangements (Universal Edition, B. Schott Söhne, Heugel, etc.) are unchanged. EAM will publish a guide to the works of Kurt Weill which will for the first time clarify the diverse and confusing publishing arrangements associated with Weill's works. This guide will be an invaluable source for determining the applicable publisher for each work in the relevant territory.

Heretofore, American performers and scholars have had difficulty obtaining copies of scores since Universal Edition was not under contract to sell the music in this country. Continuing in its efforts to increase the availability of Weill's music throughout the world, the Kurt Weill Foundation is pleased to announce this new agreement which will serve to improve access to the music and insure that never again will these works be out-of-print or unavailable.

NEH Sponsors Research Travel

The National Endowment for the Humanities invites applications for the "Travel to Collections" Program enabling American scholars to travel to research collections such as the Weill/Lenya Archive at Yale and the Weill-Lenya Research Center in New York. The program provides grants of \$500 for consultation of materials essential to a scholar's research but not readily available near the scholar's home or regular place of work.

Applicants for these grants may be members of college and university faculties as well as other individuals who conduct advanced research in the humanities. Applicants need not be employed by an academic institution to be eligible. The research involved cannot be for work leading to an academic degree, and the grants cannot support travel to professional meetings or conferences.

Awards will be made to help defray travel costs, subsistence and lodging, reproduction and certain other associated research expenses. The grants cannot support salary replacement or released time from the applicant's regular employment. Applications for grants of less than \$500 are ineligible due to the disproportionately high administrative costs of processing such proposals.

The deadline for proposals for travel to begin after 1 December 1985 has passed, but more information about the program can be obtained by contacting:

Program Officer, Travel to Collections
Division of Fellowships and Seminars,
Room 316 FST
National Endowment for the Humanities
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20506
(202) 786-0464



Weill Rocks

Kurt Weill's participation in rock and roll continues unabated. Recent issues of the *Newsletter* have reported new recordings of "Mack the Knife" by the punk group King Kurt, and "September Song" by British singer Ian McCulloch; as noted in this issue, several major rock and jazz artists are featured on the new album, "A Tribute to Kurt Weill." A few further developments worthy of note:

According to recent news items, a new rock band has formed under the name of Gruppe Zebra in the German Democratic Republic. The young members of Zebra apparently devote the bulk of their program to rock versions of Weill standards from *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Happy End*, and *Mahagonny*. On the other side of the border, the popular West German singer Marius Müller-Westerhagen has released his own rendition of "Mack the Knife" to enthusiastic reviews.

Frankie Goes to Hollywood, who broke the charts in Britain with "Relax" and "Two Tribes," have developed "The Equation," a symbolic message too arcane to reprint here. This logo is emblazoned across everything from socks to shopping bags, available through their recording company, Island Records. Each product is named after a suitably outré artist: Edith Sitwell, Jean Genet, or André Gide, for example. Prominently featured is "The Kurt Weill Sweatshirt." One has to look at the brochure, however, to find out that it's a Kurt Weill Sweatshirt — neither his name nor his picture appears anywhere on the shirt — and Frankie do not perform any of Weill's songs (or Sitwell poetry). The Sweatshirt is modelled here by another trendsetting Weill-interpreter, actor Burgess Meredith.

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Everything's Coming Up OPERA

by Kim H. Kowalke

That perennial but unanswerable question, "But is it really an OPERA?", popped up again in the press last season with surprising regularity and vehemence. An uncut *Porgy and Bess* was finally mounted at the Met, Joseph Papp reduced *La Bohème* to Off-Broadway melodrama for Linda Ronstadt, Hal Prince restaged *Sweeney Todd* for City Opera, where Beverly Sills announced an annual spring season of classic musicals, and last — and surely least — DG released a grotesque recording of *West Side Story* with a cast conceivable only to a crazed marketing executive. In connection with each event, at least one notable commentator invoked the precedent of Kurt Weill, either to expose such projects as unworthy pretenders to the operatic pedigree or to authenticate the legitimacy of their claims by comparison with Weill's. The chief music critic of the *New York Times* sidestepped the debate over *Porgy's* qualifications as an opera by declaring that it is "at least as legitimately an opera as *Mahagonny* and *Street Scene*." A feature in *Opera News* suggested that the operatic recording of *West Side Story* would prompt reevaluation of that piece like "the theater works of Kurt Weill, which are more than they once seemed to be."

I have yet to come across a viable definition or proscription for OPERA, a term that postdates by two generations the Florentine Camerata's initial attempts at "dramma per musica." It would be surprising, indeed, if a single generic term could universally encompass the varied national traditions of Western musical drama, spanning nearly four centuries. For any set of proposed criteria to weed out supposedly less venerable brands of lyric theater (such as operetta or musical comedy) from the operatic real thing, one can find enough counter-examples to confound the categories. The composers' or producers' original designation is often deceptive, whereas comparative musical complexity or vocal demands are even less reliable. Subject matter can't be restricted to the serious or lofty, and any arbitrary ratio of music to dialogue might throw out *Carmen* and *Die Zauberflöte* with the proverbial bathwater. In devoting a whole article in the *New York Post* to the "fuzzy line between B'way and opera," Clive Barnes set aside implicit hierarchical arguments by cannily submitting that "opera is something that takes place in an opera house."

At least such a circular definition of OPERA avoids the most insidious aspect of any debate over whether a given work is or isn't. Many critics, composers, and OPERA-goers still mistake a descriptive category that perpetuates elitist roots for an aesthetic or technical value judgment, as if OPERA on the label warranted the product. However, a much larger population continues to recoil from the box office whenever the term, with all its historical connotations, is invoked. I recall, for example, with no little delight Harold Schonberg's series of petulant articles in 1979 protesting that *Mahagonny* wasn't an OPERA, and didn't belong at the Met, where every performance sold out.

And now an ironic flood of the reverse: *Sweeney Todd* "deserves" to be called an OPERA, while some critics even swallowed whole the notion that *West Side Story* has now been revealed as the great American OPERA Bernstein has yet to write.

Nowhere are the fallacies and futility of using "opera" as a qualitative label more sadly demonstrated than in the new recording of the 1957 musical with a cast of international opera stars. In his commentary to the recording, Bernstein stated that he didn't think of the piece as an opera: "People are always telling me it is, and I'm very happy they think so." Why? Given the general level of performance on random evenings in the world's major opera houses, *West Side Story* would fare much better if it abandoned any aspirations to share a season with *Martha* and *La Rondine*. Presumably, however, Bernstein himself must have believed that this classic of American musical theater could survive the phony, bloated, and ultimately vulgar treatment it gets on the recording. I'm not referring merely to the miscasting, or to the neglect of virtually every dramatic element. It is on purely musical grounds where the recording sinks into a swamp of cruel self-parody. It is a collision of artists whose talents do not include the requisite naturalness, simplicity, or conviction of phrasing, tone quality, musical style, and vocal technique with a score of more symphonic sophistication and technical craft than a good portion of the standard operatic repertory. The famous OPERA singers destroy the material, not because they sing "too well" or sound "too trained," but because the amalgam of musical traditions manifest in the best of American musical theater can't withstand the self-indulgence of mere vocal opulence. But I doubt that even an opera house would allow Carreras and Te Kanawa to butcher da Ponte's Italian as badly as they mangle Sondheim's English. Troyanos' braying chest voice can substitute for Anita's "Broadway belt" no more than Streisand can sing Turandot. Granted, one cannot expect any singer to cope with the entire spectrum of musical style or vocal weight and color; the wise ones recognize early on the portions of the repertoire which fall within range of their own temperament, technique, and instrument. Ethel Merman didn't sing Brünnhilde, and Birgit Nilsson never played Mama Rose. Both were great singers.

If you scoff at that comparison, just listen to Renata Scotto try to sing "Over the Rainbow." If the opera house hopes to expand its repertory to include a wider range of musical theater than OPERA, then it must, as Clive Barnes states, "treat Broadway with the respect its traditions demand." *Porgy and Bess* and *Mahagonny* have troubles in the opera house today not because they're not OPERAS but because their extraordinary demands exceed the ability of our operatic institutions to accommodate them.

These issues are, of course, central to the present state of production and perception of Weill's works, since he continually assaulted

the artificial barriers erected upon the lyric stage in defense of what he dismissed as the "splendid isolation of opera." The dynamic tension arising from the dramatically pertinent co-existence of learned and popular musical idioms and Weill's obstinate refusal to sacrifice either dramatic or musical values make his works particularly vulnerable to the hazards of that no-man's land between the institutions dedicated exclusively to OPERA and those offering more populist brands of musical theater.

This ongoing problem was very apparent from performances I attended during my seven-week stay in Europe on matters-Weill last spring. I saw *Mahagonny* and the *Kurt Weill-Revue* in West Berlin at the Theater des Westens, whose repertory centers on operetta and American musical theater. *Der Silbersee* was produced by a Schauspielhaus in Karl-Marx-Stadt, while the Westdeutsche Rundfunk mounted a radio production of *Mahagonny*. (All are reviewed by others in this issue.) I was particularly struck by the fact that many of Weill's stage works seem to have no natural institutional home. The brilliant *Weill-Revue* succeeded at the Theater des Westens because it was tailored specifically to showcase the considerable strengths of the young resident company, but its *Mahagonny* and the East German *Silbersee* lacked the required vocal resources that are rarely available outside the major opera houses. It is hardly coincidental that the only two major stage productions of *Mahagonny* still in repertory, other than the Met's, are at the Theater des Westens and the Theater am Gärtnerplatz in Munich, both OPERETTA houses. No wonder that neither production is musically satisfying. Jon Vickers once said that he never sang the role of Jimmy because it is more demanding *vocally* than Tristram. Unlike *West Side Story*, inflated beyond recognition by opera singers on the recording, *Mahagonny* simply can't succeed without performers whose musical skills are equal to the kaleidoscopic demands of the material. Yet the majority of institutions mounting the work cannot attract singers of that caliber, much less conductors of international stature. Perhaps that is why the WDR studio production and its two concert performances of *Mahagonny* came as such a revelation to both critics and audiences. A stellar cast could be assembled under a very talented young conductor for a short period of intensive rehearsal without the additional drain on resources of a full staging. That the result was the most "dramatic" reading of the piece I've ever encountered should surprise no one who understands as well as Weill did the notion of "dramma per musica."

Bernstein's final word on *West Side Story* is that "it is what it is." Weill's works "are what they are," too. But unfortunately the same can be said for today's musical and theatrical institutions as well. Many of Weill's pieces simply transcend the traditional categories of repertory on which institutions tend to be structured. More debates about labels won't alter the harsh reality of the present situations. Weill's works "are what they are," but it will be a long time before they can be allowed to be just that within the present system of institutionalized theater.

Kurt Weill and European Dance Theater After World War II

A Critic's View

by Horst Koegler

Now, more than 50 years after its premiere at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, if *Die sieben Todsünden* has not become an actual classic of the contemporary ballet repertory, it has established itself among the ballets regularly mounted in new productions throughout Europe. After Balanchine's first post-war revival in 1958, the "Ballett mit Gesang," which had lain unpublished and unperformed for more than 20 years, quickly assumed its rightful position next to *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Mahagonny* within the Weill/Brecht canon. Over the next decade, at least 44 European companies mounted productions. Recently two new recordings of the ballet have been released, and Kenneth MacMillan, resident choreographer of the British Royal Ballet, mounted for Granada Television his third version of the ballet, the second production of *The Seven Deadly Sins* broadcast in England during the 1983-84 season. Although I do not have access to all of the relevant statistics, having followed European ballet performances I sense that performances of *Die sieben Todsünden* have outnumbered those of that other "ballet with singing," Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* — let alone his *Rénard*.

The German premiere of *Die sieben Todsünden* in Frankfurt during 1960 marked the first staging of a Weill ballet in Europe after World War II. Although the Hamburg State Opera had announced a production for the 1957-58 season, it was cancelled when Helene Weigel, Brecht's widow, and Lenya could not agree on contractual terms. Lenya had privately published a vocal score in 1955 in a piano reduction by Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg, who transposed the score downward and (for the 1956 recording) altered the orchestration to accommodate the lower range of the 57-year-old Le-

nya. Until then Brecht had, in effect, "disowned" the work; the text was not included among his collected works. After his death, Weigel and Lenya warred over numerous copyright issues including publication rights and royalty division for the ballet. Their fight became a juicy topic for German journalists, and the ensuing uproar dissuaded any reputable *Intendant* from mounting the ballet, since the courts might be called upon to intervene at any time. Thus Hamburg abandoned its plans and the first revival of the staged work took place under Balanchine at the New York City Ballet on 4 December 1958, with Lenya as Anna I.

Lenya's recording and the success of Balanchine's production stimulated much interest in Europe; hardly anyone still remembered the few performances in Paris and London in 1933 or in Copenhagen in 1936. When *Die sieben Todsünden* reached the stage of the Frankfurt Opera House on 5 April 1960, it capped an all-Weill triple bill. While the one-act operas *Der Protagonist* and *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* were tepidly received, the ballet was unanimously acclaimed. Lenya's personal appearance — her first in any stage production in Europe since 1935 — assured the success of the premiere. But another decisive factor was the Anna I of Karin von Arolingen, an 18-year-old newcomer of striking beauty and racy attraction. (Two years later she joined the New York City Ballet.) Tatyana Gsovsky, Germany's leading choreographer, whose home base was the ballet company of West Berlin's Städtische Oper, staged *Die sieben Todsünden* for Frankfurt. The production featured not only Lenya, a living link with the theatrical traditions of the Weimar Republic, but another hotline-connection, designer Hein Heckroth. Celebrated as the designer of Kurt Jooss's *Der grüne Tisch*,

Heckroth furnished a modernistic skeletal set which added little to, if it did not actually detract from, the atmosphere accentuated by the period costumes. Compared to Ter-Arutunian's designs for Balanchine's New York production — spectacular, glittery, even "kitschy" — Heckroth's looked shabby and very "petit bourgeois."

At the time, I found Gsovsky's production very mimetic, offering little dance. I had imagined a more ballet-oriented staging and therefore was surprised when Lenya told me that Balanchine's 1958 production relied even more heavily on mime as its basic substance. In my review I hailed the Frankfurt production as a perfectly realized panoptical view of the American "playboy" bourgeoisie — a marvelous piece of modern theater with biting characterizations. While most German critics shared my opinion, Edmund Tracey declared in the *London Observer*: "Tatyana Gsovsky's choreography was a not altogether happy mixture of the naturalistic, the gymnastic, and the sexy. What is so precise and sharply etched in the words and music became, in the sets and in some — not all — of the movements, vague."

The numerous productions that followed in rapid succession proved the validity of a variety of approaches; no production emerged as a model or standard. These productions also demonstrated the difficulty of escaping Lenya's seemingly definitive portrayal of Anna I. With Lenya's performances, her recording, and the printed score offering only an inauthentic, transposed version (without any note to that effect), the role was predominantly claimed by European singers with jazz or cabaret leanings: Cleo Laine, Georgia Brown, Annie Ross, Helen Vita, Gisela May, and Milva. None of them made one forget Lenya's husky performance but all adopted Lenya's lower version. I did not see MacMillan's first production (for the Edinburgh Festival in 1961, with dancers from the Western Theatre Ballet), but it horrified Lenya so much that she withdrew from the cast during rehearsals. MacMillan replaced her with Cleo Laine, whom Clive Barnes found "much too warm-hearted a personality for the coldly calculating Anna. The lovable Cleo — thank God! — just ain't that kind of girl." Peter Heyworth liked the work and especially Weill's music but had little sympathy for MacMillan's "cozy little charade" that "reduces satire to sentiment."

By that time, however, the ballet had enjoyed a remarkable production by Maurice Béjart in Brussels, where it was staged on one of the first programs of his recently founded Ballet of the Twentieth Century. Béjart and his designer, Rudolf Küfner, evoked the Berlin of the Twenties in staging the work as a series of "morality-emblems," allegorical pictures with moralistic inscriptions popular in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Brecht himself



Allegra Kent in Balanchine's *The Seven Deadly Sins*. New York City Ballet, 1958.

published a number of analogous "photographs," modern-day emblems that combined topical photographs with precise and often satiric epigrams. Each of Béjart's scenes began and ended in a photographic freeze; *Die sieben Todsünden* thereby became almost a ballet-ballet, taking its cue from the "Moritat" that opens *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Although I found Ursula Kübler too "cultivated" a singer for Anna I, Janine Charrat, well-known as a choreographer, was sensational as Anna II. In moth-green taffeta, her hair like a ginger mop above her night-shadowed eyes, Charrat danced the role as if she were just another piece of merchandise to reveal the disparity between her bourgeois longings and her resignation to the rules of the marketplace. Whatever she pretended to be, she always remained the exploited and miserable creature who would have much preferred to stay with her family back in Louisiana — or in her Berlin tenement, for that matter.

Within three years of its European revival, the ballet had been staged in Karlsruhe, Braunschweig, Dresden, Stockholm, Paris, Rome, Lucerne, and in both Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. In 1963-64 the German State Opera in East Berlin challenged its counterpart in West Berlin as each mounted its own version of *Die sieben Todsünden*. The aesthetic, if not political, battle was clearly won by the East. The first East German production fell to Grita Kraetke at the Staatsoper unter den Linden, where Erich Kleiber had premiered Weill's ballet-opera *Royal Palace* in 1927. On the enlightened double-bill with Stravinsky's *Histoire du soldat*, this production of the "Sins" featured Gisela May of the Berliner Ensemble, who later recorded the work for Deutsche Grammophon in the lower version, as Anna I. At the time this raised questions about the failure of Brecht's own theater company to include the work in its repertory. Apparently, after Brecht's death, the Berliner Ensemble adopted the attitude that he'd expressed toward the ballet in 1933: "really not very significant." Ilse Hurlig, a vivacious dancing actress with strong balletic technique, gave Anna II much poignancy although, astonishing for East Berlin, little social-critical sting. Kraetke obviously relished delineating the depravity and corruption of the "petit bourgeoisie," but the posters and photograph montages used to cover long costume changes slowed the pace unbearably. The production remained in the repertory until 1974 and toured to Vienna, Warsaw, Budapest, Copenhagen, and Helsinki.

The production in West Berlin, again directed and choreographed by Gsovsky, created a scandal. It was supposed to be a "landmark" production, since none of Brecht's works had previously been mounted in the city's state-subsidized theaters after the war. Gsovsky chose for her designer the painter Hubert Aratym, who had virtually no previous theatrical experience. Using the large stage of the opera house as a huge canvas, Aratym drowned the production in an onslaught of shrieking colors. Those who had not seen Gsovsky's production in Frankfurt could not fathom her considerable success on the earlier occasion. Hanne Wieder had the dubious distinction of introducing the microphone to the role of Anna I as her con-



Members of the Wuppertaler Tanztheater in a scene from Pina Bausch's staging of *Die sieben Todsünden*. The production has its American premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival in October, 1985.

stant prop, but even amplified she could not be understood. Judith Dornys was too classical a ballerina to be a convincing Anna II. The production as a whole was so ill-received that some critics suggested that the opera house had purposely undermined the whole project to protect decent Berliners from "communist infiltration." One journalist accused Gsovsky of committing the eighth deadly sin: boredom.

By the mid-Sixties, like the two Annas on their journey through the big cities, *Die sieben Todsünden* had made the rounds to major theaters throughout Europe. None of the productions, however, restored either Weill's original orchestration to the pit or a soprano to the role of Anna I. In fact, the first performance since 1936 of the original version did not occur until 1968, when Colin Davis conducted Evelyn Lear and the BBC Symphony in a concert setting in London. All of the staged productions seemed to be rather short-lived, including Kenneth MacMillan's second go at the piece for Covent Garden in 1973. The critics generally liked it no better than his first attempt, and again Anna I was sung by a husky pop singer, Georgia Brown, with Anna II danced by Jennifer Penney. Today MacMillan's production is remembered mainly by virtue of Andrew Porter's ringing attack in *The Financial Times*, which exposed the continued corruption of Weill's score. He argued that the purity and innocence of Lenya's bright soprano voice in 1933 was central to the dramatic texture in that it contrasted so dramatically with the weary cynicism of the text. What this meant, of course, was that everyone who had come to know *Die sieben Todsünden* through the available recordings or previous staged productions had a misconception of the authentic work. It wasn't until 1983 that the original score was released on recording.

That so few productions of *Die sieben Todsünden* have enjoyed a lengthy lifespan may be attributable to its idiosyncratic demands for five singers in addition to a cast of dancers and or-

chestra. But more likely, the work has rarely, if ever, found its appropriate choreographer/director who can match the hybrid nature of the piece itself. Such a choreographer would most probably not emerge from the "academic" background of a Balanchine or a Gsovsky but from the modern dance camp, where a social-critical, perhaps even Marxist slant might mesh with the work's special characteristics. The younger Hanya Holm or Anna Sokolow might fit that description, but so far I have encountered only one staging of this kind: Pina Bausch's 1976 staging in Wuppertal. Of all the performances of Weill's theatrical works to cross my path in the past 30 years — including all those *Mahagonnys* and *Dreigroschenopers* — this production of *Die sieben Todsünden* left the most indelible impression. It was paired on the Weill double-bill with *Fürchtet Euch nicht* (Don't Be Afraid), a pastiche concocted from portions of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, *Das Berliner Requiem*, *Mahagonny*, and *Happy End* that might be more succinctly described as a Weill hit-parade. The entire evening was 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.

Bausch attacked a world dominated by males and ordered according to their needs. Females functioned as disposable products, non-returnable and not to be returned to. Both ballets emerged as revue-ballets, but very differently from Balanchine's approach. Instead of showing the audience the gaudy and glittering front-side, Bausch took us backstage to the staleness of unfulfilled desires and dreams, to the squalor of human misery. As if sketched by the choreographic pencil of a Georg Grosz, these were matching pieces of acidic social criticism pleading desperately for pity on those "poor and wretched creatures known as women." The two ballets provided large roles for two very different types of dancers. As

Anna II Josephine Anne Endicott looked like a double-size Lynn Seymour, while the lead in *Fürchtet Euch nicht* (the title, of course, is that of a Salvation Army chorus in *Happy End*) was danced by Marlis Alt, so skinny, vulnerable, and transparent that one looked twice to see her at all. This was by no means a beautiful "Balletabend," but one left the theater touched to one's innermost by the combination of Hollywood drive and Wuppertal tristesse.

If *Fürchtet Euch nicht* is a posthumous ballet that Weill did not live to see, it's uncertain that Weill ever witnessed Antony Tudor's and Hugh Laing's *Judgment of Paris* either. Created in 1938 for the London Ballet and in the repertory of the Ballet Rambert since 1940, it was danced to an arrangement of music from *Die Dreigroschenoper* compiled by Tudor himself. At first only an unauthorized arrangement for two pianos, the score was orchestrated for pit orchestra by the time of its American premiere by the American Ballet Theatre in 1940. Frequently revived by the Ballet Rambert and also occasionally mounted by other companies, *The Judgment of Paris* is a sardonic piece set in a sordid nightclub in the Thirties. In an obvious update of the legend of Paris and his judgment of the beauty contest among Venus, Juno, and Minerva, a drunken customer chooses among three tatty showgirls, each of whom dances to convince him of her charms. In the end, the women rob him of all his possessions. Although the ballet oozes with period charm, it is not surprising that Weill politely dissociated himself from the project. Neither the music nor the sleazy scenario fit the new image he was mustering for Broadway. But if he did attend a performance in 1940, he saw Agnes de Mille dance the role of Venus; three years later de Mille played a role in another "Venus" — as choreographer of Weill's two ballets in *One Touch of Venus*.

Maybe it was *The Judgment of Paris* that inspired Christopher Bruce, a longtime member of the Ballet Rambert (first as a dancer, then as a choreographer), to embark upon his *Berlin Requiem*. Having grown up as an artist with Tudor's ballet derived from the music for *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Bruce choreographed his two-part ballet to the *Mahagonny Songspiel* and *Das Berliner Requiem*. In his program note for the premiere in London on 11 March 1982, Bruce wrote:

Although stylistically very different, it seemed to me a good idea to put the *Mahagonny Songspiel* and *Das Berliner Requiem* together to form the score for my ballet *Berlin Requiem*. Both pieces were an assault on contemporary values and behavior. I feel that the situation has changed little since they were written, and the conclusions drawn are still pertinent. *Mahagonny Songspiel* is an attack on a decadent bourgeoisie, and following Brecht and Weill's philosophy that art should reach a wider audience, it is a deliberate piece of low-brow fun with its bite cloaked in a sardonic smile....

For *Das Berliner Requiem* the tone is starker, the irony even more bitter. The work is concerned with the First World War, with its climax in the legend of *The Unknown Soldier Beneath the Triumphal Arch* and the murder in 1919 of left wing pacifist leader, Rosa Luxemburg, whose decomposed body was discovered in a Berlin canal. However, I see it

pointing prophetically into the 1930's and the holocaust of the Second World War when, finally, Berlin was left in ruins. "Mahagonny's earthquake" had truly arrived.

Bruce staged the *Mahagonny Songspiel* as a racy burlesque very much in the style of *Cabaret*. The central figure of a master of ceremonies recalls Joel Grey in the musical and film, even if Bruce's creation had a different look and fiber. Each of the songs introduces a new set of seedy characters costumed by Pamela Marre as if they had just stepped out of one of Georg Grosz's caricatures or Otto Dix's paintings. At the end, a white-suited God-figure preaches in vain against the vicious events. If that part of the ballet, as John Percival lamented in the *London Times*, "trots out every fading cliché of Brecht-Weill staging," Bruce was more successful with the brooding despair and approaching doom of the second part. (The company presented only the second part during its American and French tours in 1983.) The nightmare of the *Songspiel* faded into the harsh reality of the *Requiem*, the aftermath of war. A fierce double duet to the "Great Hymn of Thanksgiving" opens and closes this part. An infinitely touching funeral adagio for the drowned girl goes beyond specific association with Rosa Luxemburg to the universal. "The Ballad of the Unknown Soldier" is staged as a quartet for war-bruised soldiers, a dance of raw muscularity and dogged determination. It lingers in one's mind as a haunting indictment of the evil of war, more than holding its own with Jooss's *Green Table*.

In the past season alone, choreographers have continued to discover Weill's music as source material. The recent *Kurt Weill-Revue* at Berlin's Theater des Westens made headlines with a "getanzte" *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* (a piece to which small American groups have been dancing for a number of years); in Gelsenkirchen, a ballet adaptation of Schnitzler's *Der Reigen* has employed songs from the "Unknown Kurt Weill" album. Bausch's *Die sieben Todsünden* and *Fürchtet Euch nicht* will reach the United States this fall at the Next Wave Festival of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, having enjoyed a successful tour of Italy this summer. In Osnabrück, *Der Lindberghflug* was grouped with such all-American pieces as Bernstein's *Fancy Free* in a dance evening entitled "I Love New York."

Although Weill's first completed work for the stage, *Die Zaubernacht*, was a children's "ballet with singing," he would be very surprised to learn that his music has claimed a significant role in contemporary dance during the past quarter-century. Although ballet and/or pantomime played a central role in several of his German operas and dance figured prominently in most of his Broadway musicals, at the time of his death Weill was as intentionally far removed from "serious" contemporary dance as he was from "serious" contemporary music. Yet dance idioms play a decisive structural and stylistic role in many of his most memorable theatrical works. With the growing awareness of the potential of both music and dance to illuminate social and political issues, Weill's future as a "ballet composer" may be brighter now than ever before. European dance theater seems finally to have discovered the rich vein in Weill's musical mine.

"Lost in the Stars":

Conflict and Compromise

by Bennett Oberstein

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Lost in the Stars*, Kurt Weill and Maxwell Anderson's adaptation of Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*, was Weill's last completed work. Socially far ahead of its time, the play concerns Stephen Kumalo, an "Umfundisi," or spiritual leader, whose son accidentally kills a white man. Sadly, the issue of Apartheid in South Africa is more topical today than it was when Anderson wrote his play. *Lost in the Stars*, with Todd Duncan as Kumalo, opened in New York 30 October 1949, and was directed by Rouben Mamoulian, now 88 and living in Beverly Hills. Mamoulian's prior Broadway credits included *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*; *DuBose Heyward's Porgy and George Gershwin's Porgy and Bess*; *St. Louis Woman with Pearl Bailey and the Nicholas Brothers*; in *Hollywood*, Mamoulian directed *Becky Sharp*, the first Technicolor feature, *Queen Christina*, *Silk Stockings*, and many others. The following article, excerpted from Mr. Oberstein's doctoral dissertation on the acclaimed director, is based on the author's interviews with Mamoulian and with Duncan in 1973-74. All quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are those of Mr. Mamoulian.

Kurt Weill and Maxwell Anderson knew Rouben Mamoulian, at least by reputation, full well when they invited him to lunch at the Plaza Oak Room in New York one day in 1949. Having completed *Lost in the Stars*, Weill and Anderson were looking for sound professional advice. Mamoulian's credentials and the special qualities he possessed — his proven ability to handle large, racially mixed casts, and to fuse music, comedy, and drama — made him a natural source for first-hand information on the still-novel concept of black theater on Broadway. But composer and dramatist had more than advice on their minds.

Mamoulian had just returned from a vacation in Haiti and the Bahamas, and each time he mentioned his appreciation for Caribbean black culture, Anderson and Weill nudged each other. At length, Weill and Anderson confessed that they had arranged the meeting to ask Mamoulian to stage *Lost in the Stars*. They were probably unaware that he was already slated to direct Lawrence Langner's *Arms and the Girl*, a musical about the American Revolution.

Nevertheless, he agreed to read the new script and to offer constructive criticism. When Mamoulian presented his views at Weill's apartment, Weill "smiled and beamed," while Anderson "sat there, poker-faced, like Rodin's *Le penseur*." "Finally," Mamoulian recalls, "Anderson stood up, all six-foot-two of him. (As he was) walking over to me, I thought he was going to hit me." Anderson grabbed Mamoulian's

lapels and said, "We cannot do this show without you. We will be wonderful pupils. Just tell us what you want us to do and we will do it." The evidently intimidated Mamoulian shook Anderson's hand "like a fool," agreeing to direct the show if Weill and Anderson would implement specific suggestions.

Langner, producer of the Theatre Guild and Mamoulian's friend, urged him to forget the day he set eyes on Anderson, whom he dismissed as "thoroughly uncooperative." He predicted that Anderson would be "unwilling to change even a comma" of his work, warned of financial disaster, but granted that *Lost in the Stars* seemed "ideologically superior" to and "more substantial" than most of the prevailing Broadway fare. Despite some doubts, Mamoulian postponed *Arms and the Girl*, already budgeted and contracted. "If you insist on doing Weill and Anderson's play now," said Langner, "I'm going to have to pay my people eight week's salary, just waiting for you to become available." "Then that's what you'll have to do," countered Mamoulian, convinced that *Arms* should quite properly be relegated secondary status on his production schedule.

Composer, author, and director shared belief in the play's power. In creating an American musical from foreign source material, the authors sought to dramatize a problem-centered novel in a way that would penetrate American thought; to cut across the ideological barriers between South Africa and the United States; to inspire audiences to condemn Apartheid in the most passionate terms. "We can only stand so much," Mamoulian told an interviewer for the *New York Herald-Tribune*. "Inside we hunger for truth, beauty, love, romance, and faith, although outwardly we deny it. People are ashamed of feelings that run so deep."

The search for financial backing was particularly arduous. Even producers known for their support of socially conscious drama shied away from *Lost in the Stars*. At last Anderson persuaded the financially strapped Playwrights' Company, in which he held charter membership (Weill, admitted in 1946, was the only composer on the board), to sponsor the play as their first offering of the 1949-50 season.

Todd Duncan was chosen to play Kumalo. A successful concert singer who had created the role of Gerishwin's Porgy, Duncan had also become the first black to sing "non-black" leading roles with a major American opera company (the fledgling New York City Opera). Duncan possessed a combination of dramatic and musical talent and experience unrivalled by any other black actor.

Early conviviality among the production staff, Mamoulian recalls, soon dissolved into disputes over nearly every aspect of dramaturgy and production. The most important controversy swirled around the character of Stephen Kumalo. Anderson wanted to make explicit Kumalo's protest against injustice, and found himself in conflict with both Mamoulian and Duncan, who shared a belief in the validity of a non-violent, Ghandi-like interpretation. Duncan remembers Anderson's charging that his concept was being distorted by the omission of vengeful gestures such as "raised and clenched fists, which he wanted me to slam down in vows of eventual triumph."

To Duncan, Anderson conveyed the impression that he had written "a protest play." But how, the actor wondered, would fist-slaming and shouting do any good? Duncan and Mamoulian agreed that an intelligent black man in Kumalo's circumstances would probably recognize the futility in lashing out, and react instead with seeming humility and subservience. Even the play's title, according to Duncan, implies a reach beyond temporal concerns for ultimate truth. "The message of *Lost in the Stars* is that there's really no room for hatred. Kumalo is really not capable of wasting his energies on such self-destructive emotions," Duncan observes. "Mamoulian guided us away from the sword's edge to a more artistically rewarding path."

"Remember that we carried no signs in those days," Duncan cautions. "Our scars were our signs. Had I allowed myself to be swayed by Anderson, I would have gotten off-track with a character as difficult as Kumalo had it not been for Mamoulian's understanding, patience, and forbearing."

The differing interpretations of Kumalo point to a conflict which was vividly personified in the Sixties. Martin Luther King, Jr., reached a broader section of the public through a non-violent, unthreatening approach; Malcolm X, levelling charges of "Uncle Tom-ism" at King, took a decidedly un-pacifistic stance and reached a smaller, primarily black, audience. In the years since *Lost in the Stars* was created, the racial climate in the United States has changed to such a degree that Anderson's social protest might now seem dated; Duncan and Mamoulian's restraint almost certainly would. But Duncan, a fine actor and no stranger to discrimination, and Mamoulian, a shrewd theatrical craftsman, no doubt judged the climate of 1949 well: a Broadway audience was more likely to accept the message of *Lost in the Stars* if that message was presented with an open hand of friendship and not a clenched fist of vengeance.

To *Lost in the Stars*, Mamoulian applied the kind of "show doctoring" expertise that had brought him fame. A Shakespearean scholar with *Hamlet* never far from his mind, he re-



Kumalo's "seeming humility": Todd Duncan in *Lost in the Stars* (1949).

quested a musical soliloquy in which Kumalo could sort his troubled thoughts. Anderson and Weill responded by writing "O Tixo, Tixo, Help Me," one of the show's most effective moments and a showcase for Duncan. In staging the play, Mamoulian employed a choreographic treatment of the show's two "Greek" choruses, one white and one black, each of which flanked one side of the proscenium. George Jenkins' flexible set facilitated the "pictorial groupings" that had won Mamoulian praise since his debut. For the "Train to Johannesburg" number, the chorus sat on benches, their bodies bouncing to reflect the jolting rhythms of a train ride; at other times they tip-toed, advanced, retreated, and froze in semi-circular upstage crosses.

The project deeply involved all who participated in it, binding authors, actors, technicians, and management into an intensely emotional, loyal team. Patrons caught the spirit: Mamoulian noted that many audience members wept openly each night. He recalls offering his house seats to Irving Berlin and his wife, and, after five successive performances, delicately mentioning that he'd like the seats back. "Why don't you and Azadia take in *Miss Liberty*, right around the corner?" Berlin asked. "We can't get enough of this show."

For Mamoulian, the integrity and heart-rending emotional intensity of *Lost in the Stars* separated audience wheat from chaff. Seekers of escapist entertainment might as well stay home, he advised the readers of the *Herald-Tribune*. For those capable of opening themselves to the experience, the play illustrated the dialogue and reconciliation lacking in the world. The director praised Anderson and Weill for "daring to dream of racial brotherhood," and hoped at the time that the show might be instrumental in bringing about an end to Apartheid.

Opening to mixed reviews, the show ran for 281 performances at the Music Box on Broadway, and closed on the road in Chicago. According to the original plan, after stops in Los Angeles and San Francisco, the play was, at Weill's insistence, to re-open on Broadway in October 1950. Weill died 3 April and *Lost in the Stars* did not return to New York. Tellingly, the tour was made all the more difficult by the impossibility of finding adequate lodgings for the cast.

Not long after opening night, Weill, Anderson, and Mamoulian decided to renew their collaboration, this time in a musical version of *Huckleberry Finn*, tentatively entitled *Raft on the River*. Weill wrote only five songs for the play before his death, and the project was abandoned.

Whatever its artistic and commercial shortcomings, *Lost in the Stars* helped to create a healthier climate for black performers in America. The work has been revived successfully at the New York City Opera and at Kennedy Center; it is performed at colleges across the country and has been filmed. Although "color blind" casting and racial equality in the performing arts are far from universal, much of the progress in the past 35 years can be traced to Mamoulian's innovative black musicals of the 1930s and 1940s, few of which gave him as much satisfaction as did *Lost in the Stars*.

AROUND THE WORLD

Classic or Myth?

Weill in Berlin

by Stephen Hinton

Kurt Weill was a product of that glorious, unique, never-to-return metropolis Berlin prior to the Hitler era; indeed he was, in many respects, its incarnation.

— Heinrich Strobel, "Erinnerung an Kurt Weill," 1950

Towards the end of his obituary, Heinrich Strobel (albeit not without a little "Golden Twenties" nostalgia) declared Weill the incarnation of pre-Nazi Berlin. But, nowadays, to nominate candidates who could similarly represent the Berlin of the 1980s would appear unthinkable. The city is, after all, politically and culturally divided, with two very distinct halves. And it is more, not less, cosmopolitan than it was during the Weimar Republic. Who could ever hope to embody such diversity, even with the aid of transfiguring hindsight? Under greatly changed circumstances, such a question is surely unfair. It is not so much a case of finding the contemporary equivalents of *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Mahagonny* (works Strobel doubtless had uppermost in his mind) but of acknowledging that the search is a vain one. Yet it is only half of the story to describe Weimar Berlin as "unique." The adjective applies equally to Weill himself, whose memory and works, on both sides of the Berlin wall, are still very much alive, especially in 1985, the 85th anniversary of his birth. There were four major Weill productions in all, two on each side. In the West, a new production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* was launched on 28 April at the Theater des Westens; at the same theater a *Kurt-Weill-Revue* received its premiere on 10 April. In the East, the Berliner Ensemble had its own revue, a *Kurt Weill Abend*, which opened on 19 January, and the same troupe continued to give performances of what must inevitably be an essential work in its repertoire: *Die Dreigroschenoper*, this particular production having had its premiere on 2 October 1981.

The music has outlived the milieu it originally symbolized so gloriously. That much is obvious from the works' continued presence. But the process of transcendence has occurred in two very different ways. And that presents problems. Kurt Weill can now be — and is — regarded as a composer of classic stature. At the same time, however, his popularity has turned him into a myth; and both of these aspects taken together — Weill as classic as well as myth — can appear mutually exclusive. As a classic, he commands the respect of serious musicians; his works have acquired an absolute quality; and the scores deserve the punctilious attention of the philologist, from producers, conductors, and performers alike. As a myth,

on the other hand, Weill's music survives ubiquitously, its creator forgotten — or never known ("Was it really Weill who composed 'Mack the Knife' and 'September Song'?" etc.). For the serious composer, the latter honor is partly a dubious one. Though it was Weill himself — when celebrating Schubert's bicentenary, shortly after the premiere of *Die Dreigroschenoper* — who defined the phenomenon of "melodies having entered the hearts of the people" as "perhaps the highest thing an artist can achieve." Weill's melodies, like Schubert's, have achieved just that. And so for him, the union of real popularity with the highest artistic perfection by no means presented an intolerable contradiction. It was his artistic program, which he fulfilled in a manner that was at once individual, urbane and so widely successful that he can be said to symbolize his age, as Strobel suggested. Which is not to say that the danger of contradiction does not prevail. On the contrary, it is an abiding threat and hazard. Thus it is, above all, this aspect of the composer's personal challenge — and its attendant problems — that prompts and informs the following discussion. How, then, is Weill's music being perpetuated in the light of his own almost Olympian criteria and standards?

That Weill's criteria were not necessarily Brecht's is a fact that can — and should — call into question the mythical formula "Brecht-Weill." The implied unity of purpose is fictitious, no more so than for the opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. It is generally held that this is, by any standards, a difficult work — a judgment that can, however, be understood in

two distinct ways. Either the work's creators have presented prospective producers, in a positive sense, with a substantial challenge, or the work, as such, is beset with intrinsic problems, is a flawed conception. Barbara Karp's production at the Theater des Westens left it open which is the case; and I was left with nagging doubts about the rifts in the Brecht-Weill partnership being partly responsible for some of the unresolved difficulties — the principal, overriding one being the question: what sort of opera is this anti-opera *Mahagonny*? This may sound either trivial or sophistic; but there are grounds to believe that Brecht's attack on the "culinary" of art — whereby the very possibility of opera as a truly epic form (in the Brechtian senses) seems precluded — not only underpins his polemical theory but actually undermines his conception of *Mahagonny*, which considerably diverged from Weill's. It is not simply a question of intent but of what constitutes the precepts and principles of the genre: in short, of the difference between singing and speaking.

If W.H. Auden's observation applies, according to which "every high C accurately struck demolishes the theory that we are the irresponsible puppets of fate or chance," then the very notion of opera is at loggerheads with Brecht's central idea behind both the plot of *Mahagonny* and the theory of epic theater, namely to demonstrate that we are puppets and prisoners of corrupt social forces. Either Jimmy Mahoney sings himself out of the plot, or the plot demolishes his music. It can go either way, depending on the production. At the Theater des Westens, it went very much in



Nicole Heesters, "The Girl of the Moment," revels with Eric Lee Johnson in the Theater des Westens' *Kurt-Weill-Revue*.

Brecht's — the librettist's — favor, not least because of the added part of a *Conférencier*, played by Günter Bothur, who for the most part dressed up — with black leather jacket, matching flat cap, and cigar — as Brecht himself; when, that is, he was not administering a further "alienation effect" by invading the stage and action — this time with baggy trousers, bowler hat, and cane — as Charlie Chaplin. *Mahagonny* thus became, as it were, Brecht's answer to *The Gold Rush*. Moreover, Weill's florid arrangement of "The Maiden's Prayer" in Act I served here to accompany the showing of a short remake (expressly for this production) of the boot-eating scene from that film. All this betrays Barbara Karp as a purveyor of director's theater. Yet it would be wrong to maintain that she had one overall concept to impose on the work. She had several. The Brecht-Chaplin interpolations (apart from being supplemented by the floating globe scene from *The Great Dictator*) were thus complemented and overlapped by the clumsily realized notion of *Mahagonny* as an updated medieval mystery play, with Jimmy even being given a life-size cross to bear and drag across the stage and certain quotations from the Old Testament in large gothic letters being lowered into view as epigraphs for each scene.

The director's mind on display in all this seemed as cluttered as the stage was with extraneous bits of property. And while such a permissive, eclectic, and wide-ranging interpretation would probably fit the bill in the context of an undergraduate essay on the work, this kind of fertile thinking does not make for satisfying theater. Such ingenuity has its price, which in this case was a loss of purpose and definition. The music was not so much an obedient daughter, as a very distant relative, rendered perhaps more insignificant than even Brecht could have wished, let alone Weill. The tendency to crowd the stage with people and property while retaining the same basic backdrop, and thus realizing the intended random impression of a marketplace, blurred the overall "stringing together of situations" which, as Weill maintained, "facilitates a structuring according to purely musical laws." This shortcoming was only compounded by the insensitive approach of the conductor, Peter Keuschig. Not only did he favor very fast tempi, which in the course of each number got even faster, but he seemed to conceive of the music as being constructed in accord with the neo-baroque ideal of a unified basic pulse, the Stravinskian and Hindemithian motor rhythm or "sewing machine" effect. This is to overlook completely the essential classicism of Weill's periodic design, which is often thoroughly Schubertian.

Up against such odds — the work's inherent opposition to singing protagonists and this production's corroboration of Brecht's destructive tendencies — the lead roles had an extremely hard time of it. Besides, nothing but complete accuracy, confidence, and conviction will do. Of the cast, only James Brookes (who alternated with Hermin Esser) as Jimmy Mahoney gave a performance that was not surreal for the wrong reasons. For, if the work is to succeed, it must be cast with charismatic acting-singers, and all concerned must display this standard of profes-



Jimmy Mahoney (James Brookes) stands trial in Barbara Karp's staging of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* at the Theater des Westens. (Stage design by Allen Charles Klein)

sionalism. Anything less evokes the operatic parody that *Mahagonny* can easily turn into. This is the uncompromising truth of Weill's challenge at its most extreme.

If these shortcomings thereby offer a negative demonstration of the demands made by Weill's music theater, then the *Kurt-Weill-Revue*, also at the Theater des Westens, on the whole furnished evidence of a more positive kind. To judge by the audience reaction, the evening proved an unqualified success. But this was not because producer Helmut Baumann had merely strung together a selection of Weill's greatest hits. Some of the hits were to be heard, of course. They were, however, integrated into a simple and very effective tripartite structure: Berlin-Paris-New York. It was an impressive reminder that if one is to speak of Weill in the plural, the three Weills seem more appropriate than two. As Teresa Stratas' "Unknown Weill" revealed, Weill adapted himself to his Parisian surroundings of the mid-1930s by effortlessly adopting a distinctly French idiom. And some of the theater songs in this idiom were included in the second part of the revue.

While the rest of the ensemble sat still in this part, waiting around like destitute and forlorn refugees, the two stars of the show — Nicole Heesters and Steve Barton — came into their own. As a singer, Miss Heesters knows how to turn her limitations into her strengths; she is a first-rate diseuse, an actress with a wealth of presence and slightly sleazy sensuality, persuasive delivery, absolute clarity of diction, and a voice that was nurtured more on cigarettes than scales and arpeggios. Her counterpart, Steve Barton, embraces with rare exuberance all the qualities ideally required by an actor-singer wishing to perform Weill: he is at home delivering German, French, and English texts,

has a voice quality that is neither overtly operatic nor artlessly popular but somewhere in between, uses that instrument with the intelligence of a born actor; and, what is more, he can dance. Although an American, his preferred country of residence is Germany; yet Broadway would surely welcome him with open arms. He and Miss Heesters were supported by a superb ensemble. F. Dion Davis and Eric Lee Johnson deserve special mention for their remarkable combinations of singing and dancing ability. The choreographer was Jürg Burth.

The first part — "Berlin" — contained five songs from *Happy End* (some of Weill's finest, albeit written for a slight piece of theater), others from *Silbersee*, the *Berliner Requiem*, and *Mahagonny* (both opera and "Songspiel"). The finale to this part took the form of a short ballet to the music of *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, the Deutsche Oper lending support here with members of its corps de ballet. The scenario seemed, on one level, to mirror the plot of the original opera; on another, it introduced a futuristic element: large two-dimensional shapes which looked as though they had been lifted from a painting by Paul Klee and which were eventually mutilated as a tall, blond, Teutonic man in a leather trenchcoat brought the performance to a close with a Nazi salute. A vulgar, cliché gesture, perhaps; yet one that clearly fitted into the immediate context of non-figurative, "degenerate" art being censured; and it fitted, too, into the broader context of the conclusion of the Berlin section, as an upbeat to the melancholic scene of desolation in Part Two.

Part Three also had a story to relate. By juxtaposing songs mainly from *Lady in the Dark*, Baumann and Burth had constructed a miniature musical on the female American dream of

becoming Woman of the Year, or, as the song title has it, "Girl of the Moment." Irony and satire were never far away; and the culmination was an outsize double of Ronald Reagan officiating before an under-sized replica of the White House. This kind of reworking could easily have jarred, if not offended. Yet the whole was executed with such precision and obvious pleasure, and the score was such a feast of glorious sonorities and invention (Peter Keuschig's direction benefitting here from the discipline of the dancers, perhaps), that any reservations paled before the impact of the spectacle. This part of the revue may also be seen as experimental preparation for this house's plan to stage full-length American musicals. On this showing, expectations of success deserve to be high.

The Berliner Ensemble's *Kurt Weill Abend* bore the subtitle "From Schiffbauerdamm to Broadway" and was superficially more biographical than the Theater des Westens revue. The Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, where *Die Dreigroschenoper* received its premiere in 1928, is now the Ensemble's own home and thus where this revue was staged. However, the subtitle — though pinpointing as it were the two spiritual centers of Weill's music theater as well as drawing attention to connection with the Ensemble's present location — is, strictly speaking, inaccurate. Directed by Jochen Ziller with "dramaturgical assistance" from Jürgen Schebera, the show was arranged as a more or less chronological review of Weill's career, presided over by a *Conférencier* (Peter Tepper), who supplied the connecting narrative between the various numbers. Over half of these were taken, not surprisingly, from the collaborations with Brecht — the Ensemble's natural bias and, presumably strength.

The narrative, consisting mainly of press cuttings, in fact began in 1923. Not Schiffbauerdamm and *Dreigroschenoper*, then, but String Quartet No. 1 and *Frauentanz*. The intention was undoubtedly honorable: to shed light on the little-known "serious," "avant-garde" side of Weill's output, thereby bringing the above-mentioned plural to four. The result, however, was disastrous. If the String Quartet is so-called "serious" art music, which it is, then it deserves to be treated as such. An extract of "guess-what-this-is" length, which is what we got, may be enough to show off Weill's facility in the medium and persuade the uninitiated of his "modernist" credentials. But its appearance as part of such an anthology suggests that the various Weills can happily coexist alongside one another in a common aesthetic context. This is a fundamental error. A work of chamber music quite simply belongs in a chamber music concert, not in a variety show. It demands to be heard as a constructed whole, rather than having sections extracted to form a part of a medley of highlights. Plays with music obviously come off better when subjected to such treatment. There are different aesthetic principles at work: the composer caters for different groups of listeners and modes of listening, just as he envisages different types of performers. The Berliner Ensemble also ignored this second distinction and thus completely misunderstood the quotation from Weill printed on the first page of the program booklet: "It was a

question of writing music that can be sung by actors, that is, musical amateurs." This is certainly true for *Die Dreigroschenoper* but not for *Das Berliner Requiem*, for example, part of which was included in the program. The latter music requires professional singers, as the Ensemble's performers seemed to sense by reacting to their inadequate, out-of-tune delivery with self-parody — something they also did at the beginning of the *Mahagonny Songspiel*. And by quoting a passage from Adorno's review of the opera *Mahagonny*, expressed as that analysis is in the author's characteristically arcane prose style, the *Conférencier* only elicited further mirth from the audience, who were clearly under the impression that this was a parody, too. (Nor did it seem at all fair to the struggling singers that the star of the show, Gisela May, was undemocratically "miked up.")

At one point, an intentional joke was introduced. "Must everything always be explained in this house?" one of the actors asked the *Conférencier* unmistakably alluding to Brechtian didacticism, among other things. "Yes, it must," was the curt answer. But it needed far more than this kind of ironic and resigned self-criticism to do justice to Brecht's much misrepresented collaborator. Some of the cobwebs of slipshod routine and habit were frankly acknowledged and exposed, it is true, though they should really have been blown away altogether.

It was therefore with great relief that on returning to Schiffbauerdamm for the Ensemble's *Dreigroschenoper* I found the house — as it patently should be with such a work — in wonderful order. This collective production originally appeared as a last-minute replacement, follow-

ing a managerial decision to take off an updated version of the work which was being prepared under the direction of Dario Fo. In itself, the thinking behind the decision can scarcely be condoned, the danger being to turn such institutionalized theater into a sterile museum. In this particular case, however, the basic principle did not apply, and caution and conservatism ended up serving the work very well indeed. After all of the abominable distortions that unavoidably accompany the process of popularization, it is both welcome and refreshing to have the *Dreigroschenoper* performed according to the *Urtext* — the music as well, apart from some disturbingly fast tempi — and also to have the set designers going back to Caspar Neher's originals for inspiration.

But one was not left with the feeling of having apprehended a museum piece. The freshness and wit of the acting prevented that from happening, most notably Corinna Harfouch, who played Polly. She managed superbly to personify the ambiguity of her role: the mix of the young girl's romantic yearning and her innate resilience (so typical of Brecht's women) in the face of a world that is decidedly unromantic. She also negotiated the potentially hazardous melodrama of, for instance, the prison scenes with exemplary skill. Anything Miss Harfouch does would, I'm sure, be epic enough for Brecht. Both Christine Gloger (as a shrewd and worldly Jenny) and Renate Richter (a deliciously raunchy Frau Peachum) give fine displays of the singer-actor's craft. Their example should be followed. For it is in performances and productions like this, which properly respect *Die Dreigroschenoper* as a classic, that the chance lies to eliminate the more undesirable facets of the Brecht-Weill myth.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Recent Acquisitions



Annelies von Molnar, née Jolowiecz (center), as Jenny with other members of the cast of *Mahagonny*, Kassel, 1930.

by David Farneth

During the past year, the collections of the Weill/Lenya Research Center have increased significantly through purchases and donations. We have added 130 books, 33 commercial recordings, 41 non-commercial recordings, and many articles, programs, posters, and photographs. Although space limitations preclude listing every donor and donation, the following list describes some of the highlights of recent acquisitions.

1. *Ofrah's Lieder*. On 9 May, the Library of Congress purchased at auction from Sotheby's London Weill's autograph of *Ofrah's Lieder*. A photocopy is available for study at the Foundation. This manuscript represents the only complete extant version of a setting of five poems by the medieval Hebrew poet Jehuda Halevi. The songs, for voice and piano, are notated on 12 pages in blue ink; there are four systems per page, each comprised of three staves. The cover bears the inscription: "Ofrah's Lieder. Ein Liederzyklus nach Gedichten des Jehuda Halevi von Kurt Julian Weill September 1916." The manuscript had once belonged to Emilie Feuge, a singer who premiered many of Weill's early songs from 1918-1920.

2. *Peter Bing Materials*. The Foundation recently concluded negotiation for the purchase of Weill manuscripts which were held by the estate of Peter Bing, son of Weill's teacher, Albert Bing. Most important in the collection are the complete sketches to *Der Protagonist* (53 pages), representing the most complete extant sketches for any of Weill's stage works. Also acquired were four letters, six postcards, a list of publisher complaints, and one printed announcement.

3. *Ballad of Magna Carta*. The Rodgers & Hammerstein Music Library donated Weill's piano-vocal score manuscript of the dra-

matic cantata (written in 1940 to a libretto by Maxwell Anderson), recently found in their warehouse. Also found were a copyist's manuscript of the vocal score and negative copies of the orchestral materials.

4. *Der Jasager*. American composer Ned Rorem recently contributed memorabilia from a production of *Der Jasager* at the University of Buffalo in 1960. Mr. Rorem used his own English translation, directed the performance and conducted from the piano. Copies of correspondence with Lenya, a program, recording, and score (with Mr. Rorem's translation) were among the materials donated.

5. *Mahagonny, Kassel, 1930*. Annelies von Molnar, who portrayed Jenny in a production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* in Kassel, Germany, in 1930, paid a welcome visit to the Foundation to participate in the Oral History Program and to donate photos, programs, press clippings, and correspondence from the production.

6. *Correspondence*. Eric Bentley, Ted Mitchell, and Felix Jackson donated photocopies of their correspondence from Lotte Lenya.

7. *Photographs*. Valuable early photographs from archives in the German Democratic Republic have been sent by Dr. Jürgen Schebera; Ted Mitchell has donated many of his candid portraits of Lenya.

8. *BOST Records*. Paul Young has donated a copy of the 1943 BOST recording of six songs by Weill, sung by Lenya with Weill on piano. This is the Foundation's only copy of this recording.

9. *Oral History*. Interviews with Dr. Marta Feuchtwanger, Margot Aufricht, Felix Jackson, Robert Vambéry, Maurice Abravanel, Annelies von Molnar, Herbert Borchardt, Norbert Gingold, and Andreas Meyer-Hanno were added to the collection.

10. *Tapes*. In an exchange program arranged by David Berger of the Association of German

Broadcasters, the Foundation received copies of broadcast tapes from the Südwestfunk, Hessischer Rundfunk, and Süddeutscher Rundfunk Stuttgart. Tape copies were also donated from the private collections of Alan Rich and Kim Kowalke. With the generous assistance of Victor Symonette, the Foundation has purchased from Radio France a copy of *La Grande Complainte de Fantômas*, a modern adaptation of the ballad originally written in 1933.

11. *The Institute of the American Musical*. Copies of all materials related to Kurt Weill in the collections of the Institute of the American Musical have been donated to the Foundation. Included are tapes of early recordings of *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Mahagonny*, tapes of popular arrangements of songs from the American works, and photocopies of scripts, programs, sheet music, and articles. Photocopies of materials were also obtained from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the American Film Institute.

12. *Videotapes*. The Foundation has obtained videotapes of the 1984 production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* at the Theater am Gärtnerplatz, Munich; a 1985 recital by soprano Joy Bogen in New York's Merkin Concert Hall; *The Seven Deadly Sins* in a 1983 production by Kenneth MacMillan for Granada Television; a 1979 production of *Mahagonny Songspiel* for Schweizer Fernsehen; *StrataspHERE*, a Canadian documentary featuring soprano Teresa Stratas' discussions of Weill's music and her relationship with Lenya; and Paul Salsini has contributed tapes with a variety of material, including an interview with Lenya (including excerpts from a British television special directed by Ken Russell), an appearance by Martha Schlamme and Alvin Epstein on the Dick Cavett program, Ginger Rogers' film of *Lady in the Dark* as well as numbers from that show performed by Lynn Redgrave, Danny Kaye, Julie Andrews, and Diahann Carroll.