

# KURT WEILL NEWSLETTER

Volume 4, Number 1

Spring 1986

## *Lost in the Stars* In Two Major Productions

Long Wharf Theatre, the nationally acclaimed regional theater company in New Haven, CT, will mount a fully-staged production of *Lost in the Stars* beginning 25 April and running through 1 June. Previews begin on 18 April. Directed by Arvin Brown and conducted by Thomas Fay, the remainder of the creative team consists of Michael Yeagan, sets; Jennifer Von Mayrhauser, costumes; and Ronald Wallace, lighting.

Michael V. Smartt, known to New York audiences for his recent performances of Porgy, plays the role of Kumalo. Other cast members include: William Swetland (James Jarvis), Ebony Jo-Anne (Linda), Michael Wright (Absalom), and Wendall Pierce (Matthew Kumalo).

Tickets may be ordered by contacting the theater's box office at (203) 787-4282.

In a semi-staged concert production with connecting narrative by Maurice Levine, the 92nd Street Y in New York will present *Lost in the Stars* as part of its "Lyrics and Lyricists" series on 31 May, 1, 2 June. Mr. Levine, the musical director of these performances, was also the original conductor of this "musical tragedy" when it opened on Broadway in 1949. The musical, with book and lyrics by Maxwell Anderson (adapted from the novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton), has attracted much current attention because of its setting in South Africa and its focus on issues of apartheid.

Tickets for this production may be arranged by calling (212) 427-6000.

## *Berlin to Broadway* continues success

The *Berlin to Broadway* production running at the Zephyr Theatre in Los Angeles since February 1985, was nominated for five L.A. Drama Critics Circle distinguished achievement awards: Best Production (Anna Giagni, Macheath Productions); Best Direction (Paul Hough); Best Ensemble Performance (cast); Best Musical Direction (John Boswell and Jack Elton). At the 7 April ceremonies *Berlin to Broadway* won the most awards, walking away with four and topping *Cats* which won three.



Linda sings "Who'll Buy" in Long Wharf Theatre's production of *Lost in the Stars*. Left to right: Wendell Pierce (Matthew Kumalo), Ebony Jo-Anne (Linda), Ellis Williams (Johannes Pafuri), and Michael Wright (Absalom Kumalo). Photo: T. Charles Erickson.

## New Editions

Three reprint editions have recently been issued by Universal Edition and may be obtained in the United States from European-American Music. "Sieben Stücke aus der Dreigroschenoper," a collection of concert pieces for violin and piano arranged by Stefan Frenkel, is again available in original and simplified versions (UE 9969 and 9969B). The operas *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* (UE 8964) and *Der Protagonist* (UE 8387) have been reissued in piano-vocal score with English translations by Lionel Salter as well as the original German text.

The Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation will publish later this year five volumes of songs in a series entitled *The Singer's Musical Theatre Anthology*. Available as part of a box set or individually, each volume will contain a variety of popular songs by Kurt Weill and others. The collections are designated for soprano, mezzo-soprano/alto, tenor, and baritone/bass. A fifth volume will consist of duets.

As announced in the previous *Newsletter*, also forthcoming are Weill's settings of four poems by Walt Whitman, published by European-American Music through an arrangement with TRO. EAM will also offer Weill's orchestrations for these songs through rental.

## David Drew Prepares *A Kurt Weill Handbook*

David Drew has completed work on *A Kurt Weill Handbook* to be published by Faber and Faber, London in late 1986 or early 1987. Of value to performers, producers, scholars, and aficionados alike, the major portion of the handbook will be dedicated to detailed entries on every work composed by Weill and will list title, cast, orchestrations, synopses, historical notes, sources, and major publications. Other chapters will contain discussions of Weill's library and unrealized projects. Watch for information on availability in the next issue.

## Delta to Release New Recordings

Delta Record Company in Frechen, West Germany has announced plans to release the recent WDR productions of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (see review in vol. 3, no. 2) and *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* (see review in vol. 3, no. 1). Both productions were conducted by Jan Latham-König. Delta is widely known for its label "Capriccio" and the recent "Edition Bach Leipzig." *Mahagonny* is scheduled for release in October 1986 and *Der Zar* in the spring of 1987.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## Yale Press Publishes Essays

This summer will mark the appearance of the first collection of essays assessing Weill's works and influence written expressly for publication in a single volume. *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, edited by Dr. Kim Kowalke, will be published by Yale University Press with the support of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc. Most of the essays are based on papers presented at the first international Kurt Weill Conference held at Yale University in November, 1983. It should be noted, however, that the volume does not represent a "proceedings" as all of the essays have been revised and expanded by the authors and editor expressly for this publication.

As is evident from the following table of contents, the subjects of the essays span Weill's European and American careers, investigate diverse cultural influences, and highlight some of Weill's generally unknown works.

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## Donald Spoto To Write Lenya Biography

Research has begun for a forthcoming biography of Lotte Lenya to be published in the United States by Little, Brown. The author, Donald Spoto, has garnered recent acclaim for his best selling biographies *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock* and *The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams*. Projected for completion in 1988, the biography will also be published in the United Kingdom by Penguin Books and in the German language by Scherz.

Mr. Spoto earned the Ph.D. degree in theological literature from Fordham University and currently teaches at the New School for Social Research in New York.

Any person with information to share with Mr. Spoto may contact him through the Kurt Weill Foundation.

10. Most Unpleasant Things with *The Threepenny Opera*: Weill, Brecht, and Money / *John Fuegi*
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17. *Street Scene* and the Enigma of Broadway Opera / *Larry Stempel*

Orders may be placed by contacting:

**In the United States:**  
Yale University Press  
92A Yale Station  
New Haven, Connecticut 06520  
Telephone: (203) 436-7582  
Telex: 963531 YUP NHV

**In Europe:**  
Yale University Press  
13 Bedford Square  
London WC1B 3JF  
England.

## Special Offer

The Kurt Weill Foundation is offering its subscribers a special prepublication price of \$28.50 per copy. Yale University Press anticipates a publication price of \$38.50. This offer represents a savings of \$10.00 per copy. All orders must be received by the Foundation along with the prepayment amount no later than 1 August 1986. Books will be shipped shortly thereafter. **PLEASE USE THE ORDER FORM FOUND ON THE BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE.**

## Street Scene in Boston Assembles Original Cast Members

The Boston Conservatory marked Weill's eighty-sixth birthday with a production of *Street Scene* on 27, 28 February and 1, 2 March. The final performance was distinguished by the attendance of members from the original cast: Ellen Repp, Randolph Symonette, Peggy Turnley Thomas, Anna Sokolow, choreographer for the 1947 production, and Lys Symonette, that production's rehearsal pianist. The aforementioned participated in a question-and-answer session with the student performers.

Neil Donohoe, of the Conservatory's Theatre Division faculty provided the stage direction for a cast of over sixty. Ken Stanton conducted, Peter DiMuro choreographed, and the set design was created by Steve O'Donnell.

## Lost in the Stars Album Wins Critical Acclaim

The album *Lost in the Stars, A Tribute to the Music of Kurt Weill* has earned wide acclaim within the United States and throughout Europe. Produced by Hal Willner and Paul M. Young and issued by A & M Records, the recording combines the talents of pop, rock, classical, and jazz performers. Several domestic periodicals, including the *Village Voice* and *Billboard*, have named it to the list of best albums of 1985. The handsomely executed album benefits from a variety of contributions and efforts; the array of performers includes Sting, Lou Reed, Tom Waits, Marianne Faithfull, and the Armadillo String Quartet, among others, and liner notes are provided by Peter Keepnews, Terry Southern, Paul M. Young, and David L. Hamilton.

Ken Tucker, a widely-syndicated critic of rock music, made special mention of the collaborative efforts of the New Orleans rhythm and blues singers Aaron Neville and Johnny Adams and the guitarist Mark Bingham in their interpretation of "Oh Heavenly Salvation," describing it as "stirring," and Tucker added that the disc "grabs hold of your attention and doesn't let go."

The attention by the German press and musical community has been singular. In addition to being named to a list of the top five pop albums of 1985, the record has gained distinction in a variety of categories as reported in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. It is being credited with introducing a new generation to a range of Weill's works, from *Mahagonny* and *Threepenny Opera* to the traditionally lesser known works for the American stage. The response of the French and Italian press has been no less enthusiastic. As evidence of the popularity of the *Lost in the Stars* project, heavy demand for the compact disc (the CD contains four additional selections) in Europe had resulted in an initial lack of availability of the CD in the United States.

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# AROUND THE WORLD

## Weill in Great Britain

by Alan Rich

The British can be slow to forgive. The desecration wrought upon *The Beggar's Opera* (itself, of course, an act of some desecration) by the Weill/Brecht *Threepenny* — “as if deliberately written for cretins” fumed London's Eric Blom in 1931 — has rankled in some breasts all these years. Some green shoots here and there excepted — David Atherton's recordings with the London Sinfonietta and David Drew's scholarship — Weill awareness has until recently had but sparse growth in Britain.

Lately, however, matters have improved. Events this past winter, in fact, add up to a veritable flood of Weill activity, not all splendid, perhaps, but activity nonetheless. My itinerary that began just before Easter in London with the Abbey Opera's double-bill of *The Protagonist* and *The Czar Has His Photograph Taken* at the Camden Festival (both of them first-time-in-Britain stagings) looped northward to Aberdeen for the touring Scottish Opera's *Mahagonny* then back to London for the National Theatre's *Threepenny*. Under the circumstances, exhilaration easily overcame jetlag. (Arriving earlier, I might have added other entries to the list: the Royal Shakespeare's six-month tour of *Happy End*, not to mention Julie Wilson's stint at the Ritz, where her singing of “Surabaya-Johnny” had so upset diners that she was asked to drop it from her act.) Musically, at least, the Weill cause was well-served in Britain this past winter.

“Musically,” I said. The Scottish *Mahagonny* was so badly jinxed from the start as to be lucky to get on at all. During rehearsals it had lost both principals, along with its conductor, Simon Rattle, whose presence, on paper at least, had promised much. The vacancies were filled, however, and with reasonable success. Richard Cassilly, the Jimmy of the Metropolitan Opera performances, took on the role for the Scots; Kate Flowers was an acceptable Jenny, the conductor was Sian Edwards, 26, winner of the First Leeds Conductor's competition, in 1984, here conducting the first opera of her entire young life.

One more jinx remained unresolved, however, the staging by David Alden — one of New York-born twin directors, popularly thought of as the madder of the two. (After brother Christopher's *Seraglio* in California with the Long Beach Opera this season, wherein the Pasha is murdered at the end in a palace revolt led by Osmin, I'm not so sure.) Brother David's *Mahagonny* began, kindly believe, not in the prescribed American wilderness, but in Mrs. Begbick's spiffy-modern kitchen, with the lady (Felicity Palmer) con-

ducting a television cooking class (“Baking with Begbick”; I'm not making this up!) with Fatty the Bookkeeper throwing up (and why not?) into a sink in the background, and with, of course, Brecht's famous “culinary” quotation included in the printed program as if in justification. It went on in like fashion, the stage incessantly cluttered with visual trick-playing, mostly for its own sake and unrelated to any consistent reading of text or music: a tape recorder here, a gaggle of inflatable girlies there, the trial scene on a floor strewn with hundreds of shoes, the Alaska boys arriving on roller skates, another scene with the crowd stripped down as if for an underwear ad. If *Mahagonny*'s anticapitalist agitprop earned a round of applause even in Aberdeen, headquarters for North Sea oil drilling and thus capitalism's newest frontier, (delicious irony!) it was surely because of Alden's daft staging, in which the inherent message in the work lay obscured under a mass of unmotivated biz.

Still, there were musical rewards, and they were considerable. Above all there was the first-rate conducting job by the young Ms. Edwards, splendidly paced, marvelously balanced considering an undersized orchestra in

a theater (Aberdeen's Edwardian, gorgeously restored as His Majesty's) other than home base, spirited and sensible. Cassilly's Jimmy has never been a thrilling piece of vocalism but also never disgraceful, and so it was with the Scots. (As at the Met, he sang the Drew-Geliot translation, although everyone else in the cast had learned the Michael Feingold. Oh, well.) Flowers was a decent, if hardly compelling Jenny, and Palmer's Begbick (sung as a musical line, for once, without the usual vague barking) was best of all.

The problems at London's *Threepenny* were of similar coinage. For reasons that defy common sense or understanding, the National's management hit upon the cavernous Olivier Theatre as the proper venue for the piece, a decision that couldn't have been more wrong-headed. Most of the horror of the evening seemed to rise from Peter Wood's frenzied need to fill spaces too large for either *Threepenny* or its aura; once again, there was a constant parade of incongruous gadgets, most of them unexplained and/or unexplainable. Robert David MacDonald's humdrum new translation tries for a Brechtian populist vulgarity, but ends up merely graceless and clumsy; the lyrics sing rather badly besides.



Felicity Palmer (Begbick) surveys David Alden's Scottish Opera *Mahagonny*. (Left to right): Alexander Oliver (Fatty), Richard Cassilly (Jimmy), and Kate Flowers (Jenny). Photo: Eric Thorburn.

"Food is the first thing," runs the litany at the end of Act II in MacDonald wording; "morals follow on," a line almost impossible to articulate in the shape of Weill's musical setting.

But that stupendous scene, which should racket in the consciousness as we go out for intermission coffee, was vitiated anyhow in Wood's production, which had but a single intermission (after the weakish Jenny-Macheath duet and his arrest) and therefore dumped the "finale" midway into the second part, where it simply slid by. Even though the action was set in 1837 on the day of Queen Victoria's coronation, the props included such non-Victorian items as a telephone, a motor van (to deliver the wedding feast) and a flush toilet in Macheath's cell (which he actually got to use, O lordy).

The National's cast was pretty much a mixed blessing: actors not singers, most of them concurrently working with Wood in a generally more successful production of Congreve's *Love for Love* in repertory with *Threepenny*, and their work suggests that some of them had forgotten which night was which. The ditsy fop played by Tim Curry in the Congreve may have been reasonably in order, but the same approach turned Macheath into a prancing, epicene ninny with singing style to match: that watery, unsupported crooning that always seems to stamp the work of a redeemed one-time rock star. Sara Kestelman, the Mrs. Peachum, also looked and sounded alike in both plays, done up as that particular kind of red-wigged lady-baritone that suggests nothing so much as a drag queen doing Lenya. As such, come to think of it, she may have been the right match for Niall Buggy's sissified Tiger Brown, but not for anything dimly related to Weill/Brecht.

Again, however, there were mitigating qualities: Sally Dexter's wonderfully pert, musically responsive Polly (who got her "Pirate Jenny" song back in Dominic Muldowney's scrupulously accurate return to the 1928 Urtext); Stephen Moore's nicely swaggering Peachum; Michael Bryant in an exquisite cameo as one of Macheath's gang, and, above all, the bright, sassy sound of Weill's great original orchestration under Muldowney. This is the musical version — all the right songs done by the right characters, ending with the chorale and not with the "happy ending" reprise of the "Moritat" later added — with which the *Threepenny Opera* should make its way in the world; more is the pity, therefore, that so much else was botched in this bloated, unfocused, misconceived staging.

The best for last: the two one-acters to Georg Kaiser texts, operatic writing bursting with a young man's railing against the musical conventions of his time, marvelous, varied, terse pieces of stagecraft mastery. The one (*The Protagonist* of 1925), which Weill worked on with Kaiser while also courting the Kaisers' house guest (Lotte Lenya), is a murky drama encrusted with double meaning; the other, (*The Czar* of 1927 created concurrently with work on the *Mahagonny Songspiel*) a dizzying political farce about an attempted assassination by terrorists, antique, artificial, and suddenly, disconcertingly timely. Both works cry out to be better known. (A recording of



**The Threepenny Opera, National Theatre, London. (Left to right): Edna Dore (Betty), Michael Bryant (Crookfinger Jake), Eve Adam (Jenny), Lois Baxter (Nelly), Judith Coke (Vixen), Roz Clifton (Dolly). Photo: Zoe Dominic.**

*The Czar*, the first, is due out on a small German label later this year; of *The Protagonist*, there is so far only the tantalizing single excerpt in Atherton's DG album.)

The festival at Camden (that newly enfranchised area of London that unites Bloomsbury, Hampstead, and the former Camden Town) is now 33 years old; one of its major enterprises since birth has been to present small professional local companies (of which England now has many) in out-of-the-ordinary operas; its list of productions thus far is staggering. The Weill/Kaiser bill got four performances in the smallish (300-or-so seats) and dowdy Bloomsbury Theatre: exciting stuff, nicely, modestly produced and generously received. *The Protagonist* presents problems; it raises peculiarly expressionistic questions about sexuality that probably never occurred to Kaiser, but which challenge any director today: what is this bond between brother and sister that brings about the jealousy-motivated murder of sister's lover, and what does all this tell us about brother himself? John Eaton, who translated and directed the Abbey Opera's performance, made the easy choice: overt physicality between brother and sister, and between brother and almost everybody else in his acting company as well. It didn't quite work; there is too much else in Kaiser's text that *wants* to be left undefined; to come to it as Freudian "Pagliacci" strikes me as a cop-out. There is too much in Weill's dazzling, coruscating score (those glistening, menacing, obsessive triplets! That stupendously growling orchestra!) to allow such pat resolution. Yet there were great moments in Eaton's staging; more, there was at least the sense of an honorable attempt to come to grips with the material, not to bury it in gadgets. Most of

it happened on a stage nearly bare, filled with stage smoke slashed into by spotlights: ten cents worth of visual effects that told far more than all of *Mahagonny's* or *Threepenny's* pricey paraphernalia. And there were greater moments still in performance: Nigel Robson's stark, terrifying work in the name role, Elizabeth Byrne no less terrifying as the Sister.

*The Czar* presents fewer interpretive problems, perhaps, than its one-act companion, but it's still not what you'd call a self-performing opera. Using a Lionel Salter translation, and with a deliciously funny Fred-and-Ginger set by Lez Brotherston — all black, white, and mylar, a deco dream that included a marvelous period wind-up gramophone for the "Tango Angèle," Eaton's staging was a cockeyed delight. The direction was all Deco, too; photographers real and impostor oozed around the stage in elegant spinal curvature, with flunkies and flunkettes whizzing by like Keystone Kops. Phillip O'Reilly's Czar nicely caught both the absurdity and the genuine streak of humanness in the character; between splendidly forthright, yet insinuating performances by Elaine Padmore's Angèle and Helen Kucharek as her counterfeiter, I would be hard-pressed to choose.

Expertly supported by Antony Shelley's vivid, alert musical direction of an almost-expert small orchestra, Camden's double-bill was the unquestioned triumph of Weill's brief jaunt under the British sun. A marvelous evening, this, in which the sense most apparent was that of dedication to musical theater still too little known, and of the intelligence to deal with it properly. With all the positive aspects of Weill's return to worldwide favor, those qualities are still, quite obviously, in short supply.



# GRANTS

## 1986 GRANTS AWARDED

In January 1986 the Board of Trustees of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc. approved the Independent Grants Advisory Panel's recommendations to award grants for the following projects in the areas of research and performance.

### RESEARCH

Geoffrey Abbott, Giessen, West Germany: To support research of the original version of *Die Dreigroschenoper* and subsequent performance practice.

Dr. Stephen Hinton, West Berlin, West Germany: Research and travel in support of a forthcoming opera handbook on *The Threepenny Opera* to be published by Cambridge University Press.

### PERFORMANCE

Center for Contemporary Opera, New York, New York. *Der Jasager* and *Mahagonny Songspiel*

Downtown Music Productions, New York, New York. *Mahagonny Songspiel*

Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia. *Lost in the Stars*

Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven, Connecticut. *Lost in the Stars*

Milwaukee Chamber Music Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. *Violin Concerto*

92nd St. Y, New York, New York. *Lost in the Stars*

Opera DC, Washington, DC. *Lost in the Stars*

Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. *Street Scene*

*Applications for 1987 awards must be received by 1 November 1986. Application forms and guidelines are now available from the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music.*

## Yale Register Available

The register of the Weill/Lenya Archive at Yale University may be obtained by sending a check made payable to "Yale University Library" for \$18.00 plus \$1.35 domestic postage (\$1.89 foreign postage). The register is 299 pages in length and will be sent unbound. Requests for the register, along with prepayment should be sent to:

Publications Office  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 1603A Yale Station  
New Haven, CT 06520  
U.S.A.

## 1987 GRANT GUIDELINES APPLICATION DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 1, 1986

### 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 1987 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

### 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.** Ph.D. 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 the faculty advisor.

**College and University Performance and Production Grants.**

#### Stage Works

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 *Threepenny Opera* are not eligible for funding.

#### Concert Works

Assistance for performances of concert works is 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, orchestras fees, and extra rehearsals.

### 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. Research proposals which demonstrate the promise of publishable results are encouraged.
2. Performance proposals which demonstrate musical excellence and authenticity are encouraged.
3. For stage productions, performances of complete works in their original versions have priority over new compilation properties which simply use Weill's songs.
4. 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.
5. Stock and amateur productions of *The Threepenny Opera* are not eligible for funding.
6. Proposals for script translations and musical adaptations are not eligible for funding.

### Evaluation Procedures

After applications have been reviewed by the Foundation 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 Applications 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;
- 4) evidence of the applicant's prior record of achievement in the field covered by the project.

Applicants will be informed of awards by 1 February 1987.

### Application Information

Preliminary applications for the 1987 awards must be received by 1 November 1986, 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. A detailed and itemized budget showing *entire project expenses, including income*, and other projected funding sources.
4. Performance Grant Fact Sheet (if applying for a performance grant)

All applications and correspondence should be addressed to:

Mr. David Farneth, Director of Programs  
Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc.  
142 West End Avenue, Suite 1R  
New York, NY 10023  
Telephone: (212) 873-1465

# Kurt Weill's Early Recordings: 1928-1933

by Jürgen Schebera

It is always a difficult task to assemble a comprehensive discography of pre-LP recordings in Germany. Most libraries lack comprehensive collections, and original record company and dealer catalogs are scarce. Even for libraries which have large collections, the cataloging is often incomplete or nonexistent. One of the best ways to begin assembling information is by contacting radio stations and private collectors. Two of the largest private collections of Weill recordings in the German states provided the basis for the information in this article. Therefore, my special thanks go to Bernd Meyer-Rähnitz (Dresden) and Klaus Hohn (Nürnberg). This article represents a beginning effort to assemble the complex puzzle that, when finished, will serve to document every recording of Weill's music made between 1928 and 1933. I hope that it encourages others to fill in the gaps.

So far I have located 37 shellac recordings issued by 15 different companies in Germany, Austria, and France, not counting the identical versions which were commonly marketed and sold in countries other than that of the original release. Each of these recordings provides an important document of either the "authentic" Weill sound of his European years, or they trace the remarkable beginning of the dilution of Weill's music in popular arrangements, a practice that continues even more strongly today.

The first recorded example listed here is "Tango Angèle," produced in January 1928 for use in stage productions of *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren*. Weill conceived the music to be played on stage by a gramophone. (Weill's manuscript full score merely indicates the gramophone music in piano-vocal reduction.) Universal Edition produced a recording which was made available as part of the performance material. The dance band version listed in this discography was commercially distributed by the Beka company, performed by the Saxophon-Orchester Dobbri, and was available when the opera premiered on 18 February 1928 in Leipzig (as evidenced by an advertisement in the program).

## Die Dreigroschenoper

Weill's important record career began with *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Of course, many companies wanted to cash in on the enormous success of the work and, as a result, no less than eight different labels released songs in Germany. The most important of them bear the initials of Theo Mackeben, the musical director of the premiere performances, and the

Lewis Ruth Band which also performed under the alternative names of "Dreigroschenband" or "Dreigroschenoperband."

Most readers of this *Newsletter* are familiar with four of the recordings which have appeared throughout the years in several commercial re-issues, released by Telefunken under the heading "Aus der 3-Groschen-Oper" with Lotte Lenya, Erika Helmke, Kurt Geron, Willy Trenk-Trebitsch, and Erich Ponto. Although often promoted as the "original" recordings, they were made two years after the premiere. And, incidentally, Brecht provided special liner notes.

Earlier in 1930, Electrola produced its "Die Songs der Dreigroschenoper" with Carola Neher, Kurt Geron and Arthur Schroeder. Additional recordings include four songs by Harald Paulsen (the first Mackie Messer) on Homocord, Brecht himself singing two songs for Orchestrola, and two songs performed by Carola Neher, also on Orchestrola. Parlophon presented concert singer Beate Roos-Reuter with renditions of "Barbarasong" and "Seeräuberjenny."

Two instrumental recordings may be found to represent "authentic" versions. The first was released in 1930 when Odeon issued two songs performed by the Lewis Ruth Band with Theo Mackeben conducting. In 1931, the same team performed "Tangoballade" for Clangor, a record club then considered the most important of the Weimar Republic (the "Schallplatten-Volksverband").

Shortly after the Paris premiere of the Pabst film in September 1930, three recordings were produced in France. Two of them featured the famous singer Florelle and the Orchestra Jean Lenoir, and one was made by Lys Gauty and the Orchestra Pierre Chagnon. (Both of these singers were subsequently to record songs from *Marie Galante*, a bawdy play with music composed by Weill in 1934.)

## Arrangements

By 1930, the "Threepenny wave" had consumed Europe, and arrangements of the songs were in great demand for performance in the ballrooms of luxury hotels, in local pubs, and as entertainment in Berlin's revue theaters. The most fashionable band in Berlin, Marek Weber and his Orchestra, played every afternoon in the "Tanztee" room of the formidable hotel Adlon. Electrola issued two recordings of this orchestra: "Dancing Potpourri" in 1930, and "dancing versions" of "Tango Angèle" and "Alabama-Song" in 1931. Next to the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, the Haller-Revue performed every evening at the Admiralspalast. The Haller-Re-

vue's arrangements of "Moritat" and "Barbarasong" as issued by Parlophon in 1930 are the most "popular" dancing versions thus far discovered. Their rhythms and harmonies must be heard to be believed! Grammophon (His Master's Voice) also rode in on the wave with two songs played by Paul Godwin and his Jazz-Symphonists (1931) and even Pathé in France produced a dancing version of the "Moritat" with Tom Waltham et son Jazz.

## Kleine Dreigroschenmusik

Weill made his own serious instrumental arrangement of songs from *Die Dreigroschenoper* in 1929 under the title of *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*. Two interesting, but incomplete, recordings of this work exist, both dating from 1929. Grammophon produced two discs with the ensemble that presented the premiere performance on 7 February 1929: the orchestra of the Berlin Staatsoper conducted by Otto Klemperer. This release included only numbers 2, 4, 5a and 6 of the suite. At the same time, Audiphon Electro presented Theo Mackeben conducting a wind orchestra in a recording that combined shortened versions of numbers 2 with 7 and numbers 5a with 6. It is interesting to note the differences in tempi between the interpretations of the "theater-man" Mackeben and the "serious" concert-oriented Klemperer.

## Surprise Discoveries

One of the most surprising discoveries of my explorations has been the unearthing of a recording produced by Paloma in 1930 as a tribute to the Berlin theater work of Erwin Piscator: songs from his staging of Leo Lania's *Konjunktur* (1928) and Walter Mehring's *Der Kaufmann von Berlin* (1929). Here we find Weill ("Die Muschel von Margate") and Eisler ("Lied vom Trockenbrot") on the same record! Both are vocal and feature Otto Pasetti, tenor, and Alfred Schlee, a man who was later to become a leading force at Universal Edition. The same company also produced "Vorstellung des Fliegers" (with piano accompaniment) from *Der Lindberghflug*, a recording which was completely unknown to me until recently.

## Happy End

Only a few of Weill's great songs were recorded after the hasty close of *Happy End* at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm in the autumn of 1929. Lotte Lenya sang "Surabaya-Johnny" and "Bilbaosong" probably for Homocord, but thus far I have been unable to locate the original recording (only a reissue has surfaced in the Federal Republic of Germany without information regarding its original release). Four instrumental arrangements ("Matrosensong," "Surabaya-Johnny,"

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"Bilbao-Song" and "Song von Mandelay") appeared on two Electrola discs, again performed by the Lewis Ruth Band under Theo Mackeben. Here is a chance to hear what must be the authentic tempi and dynamics of these wonderful songs.

### Mahagonny

The first recording of a song from *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* was produced by Telefunken before the premiere. Lotte Lenya sang "Denn wie man sich bettet" and "Alabama Song" with Theo Mackeben in an arrangement not using Weill's orchestration. The record is advertised in the program of the Leipzig premiere, 9 March 1930. Both songs were recorded by Lenya later in 1932 by Homocord with Weill credited as conductor, thus making his only recording appearance in Germany thus far discovered. The Berlin production which ran from 21 December 1931 until the spring of 1932 stimulated two further records. Ernst Josef Aufricht produced a special cardboard recording for distribution in the theater which featured impressive artwork covering both sides of the disc. This recording contained instrumental versions of "Alabama Song" and "Denn wie man sich bettet" played by Emil Roosz and his Künstlerorchester and was later commercially distributed by Kristall. More important, however, was a release by Electrola in 1932 entitled "Querschnitt aus der Oper Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny" which featured Lenya, the Ensemble and Orchestra of the Theater am Kurfürstendamm, and Hans Sommer, conductor. This recording gives what probably is a much more authentic rendering of how the Berlin production actually sounded.

### Der Silbersee

To complete the summary of Weill's commercial recordings in Germany, we find a recording of two songs from *Der Silbersee* sung by Ernst Busch and issued by Gloria only a short time before all performances of the work were banned by the Nazis. Maurice Abravanel was the conductor.

### Non-commercial Recordings

So far this discography includes only one non-commercial recording but it is important: the original radio version of *Der Lindberghflug* which Weill composed in tandem with Hindemith. The three discs were recorded at the Berlin Deutschlandsender on 18 March 1930 with Hermann Scherchen conducting. Upon hearing these invaluable documents, it is easy to understand why Weill withdrew the composition and later went on to compose a revised version using only his music.

In summary, the accompanying list represents only the first step in compiling an early Weill discography. No doubt there are other recordings, especially non-commercial, yet to be discovered. In addition, documentation must be compiled about foreign issues of the recordings listed here. I urge all readers of the *Newsletter* to send any additional information to the Editor, so that it may be printed as a later addendum to this beginning effort.

## DISCOGRAPHY

Given the information currently available, it is impossible to construct an exact chronological listing. Therefore, I present a rough chronology showing all songs from a larger work under a main heading. All titles and spellings reflect the information as given on the record labels.

<i>Der Zar lässt sich photographieren</i>			
1928	Instrumental	Beka B 6313	1: Tango delirico (Edith Lorand) 2: Tango Angèle Saxophon-Orchester Dobbri
1930	Dancing Arrangement	Electrola E.H. 853	1: Tango Angèle Marek Weber und sein Orchester
<i>Die Dreigroschenoper</i>			
1929	Vocal	Homocord H 3747	1: Moritat 2: Kanonensong Harald Paulsen mit Orchesterbegleitung
	Vocal	Homocord H 3748	1: Ballade vom angenehmen Leben 2: Der Mensch lebt nur von Missetat Harald Paulsen mit Orchesterbegleitung
	Vocal	Orchestrola 2131	1: Die Moritat vom Mackie Messer 2: Die Ballade von der Unzulänglichkeit Bertolt Brecht mit Orchester
	Vocal	Orchestrola 2132	1: Barbara-Song 2: Die Seeräuberjenny Carola Neher mit Orchester
1930	Vocal	Telefunken A 752 Telefunken A 753 Telefunken A 754 Telefunken A 755	Aus der "3-Groschen-Oper" Verbindende Worte: Kurt Gerron Lotte Lenja, Erika Helmke, Kurt Gerron, Willy Trenk- Trebitsch, Erich Ponto, Lewis Ruth Band Dirigent: Theo Mackeben
	Vocal	Electrola E.H. 301	Die Songs der "Dreigroschenoper" Carola Neher, Kurt Gerron, Arthur Schroeder und die Dreigroschenband
	Vocal	Parlophon B 12053	1: Barbarasong 2: Seeräuberjenny Beate Roos-Reuter mit Orchesterbegleitung Kapellmeister: Hans Schindler
1930	Instrumental	Odeon 2703	1: Kanonensong 2: Zuhälterballade Dreigroschenoper-Band (Lewis Ruth-Theo Mackeben)



	Dancing Arrangement	Parlophon B 12039 (France: Parlophon 22399, 1931)	1: Barbarasong 2: Moritat Haller-Revue-Jazz-Orchester Kapellmeister: Hans Schindler
	Dancing Arrangement	Electrola E.G. 1281 (France: Gramophone K-6406, 1931)	Tanzpotpourri aus "Die Dreigroschenoper" Marek Weber und sein Orchester
	Instrumental	Grammophon 21943	1: Kanonensong 2: Tango-Ballade Paul Godwin mit seinen Jazz-Symphonikern
1931	Vocal	Polydor 522171 (France)	1: Complainte de Mackie 2: Le chant de Barbara Floreille, Orchestre Jean Lenoir
	Vocal	Polydor 522172 (France)	1: La fiancée du pirate 2: Chant des canons Floreille, Orchestre Jean Lenoir
	Instrumental	Clangor 4177	1: Tangoballade 2: Tango Donna Vatra (not Weill) Lewis Ruth Band
1932	Vocal	Columbia L 3680 (France)	1: La fiancée du pirate 2: Chant de Barbara Lys Gauty, Orchestre Pierre Chagnon
	Instrumental	Pathé X 96106 (France)	1: Complainte de Mackie 2: (not Weill) Tom Waltham et son Jazz
1929	Instrumental	<i>Kleine Dreigroschenmusik</i> Audiphon Electro 5007	1: Moritat und Choral 2: Tango-Ballade und Kanonensong Blas-Orchester, Dirigent: Theo Mackeben
1930	Instrumental	Grammophon 24172 (France: Polydor 24172, 1931)	1: no. 2 Moritat von Mackie Messer 2: no. 4 Ballade vom angenehmen Leben Mitglieder der Kapelle der Staatsoper Berlin, Dirigent: Otto Klemperer
	Instrumental	Grammophon 24173 (France: Polydor 24173, 1931)	1: no. 5a Tango-Ballade 2: no. 6 Kanonensong Mitglieder der Kapelle der Staatsoper Berlin, Dirigent: Otto Klemperer
1929	Instrumental	<i>Happy End</i> Electrola E.G. 1569	1: Bilbão-Song 2: Der Song von Mandelay Lewis Ruth Band
	Instrumental	Electrola E.G. 1590	1: Surabaya Johnny 2: Matrosensong Lewis Ruth Band



1930	Vocal	[Homocord?] [Electrola?]	1: Bilbao-Song 2: Surabaya Johnny Lotte Lenja mit Orchester (Dirigent: Theo Mackeben)
1930	Vocal	<i>Der Lindberghflug</i> Non-commercial 3 records	Complete recording Weill and Hindemith Betty Mergler, Erik Wirl, Herbert Janssen, Radio-Chor Berlin, Berliner Funk-Orchester, Dirigent: Hermann Scherchen
1931	Vocal	Paloma 3502 (Austria)	1: Vorstellung des Fliegers 2: (not Weill) Otto Pasetti Klavier: Alfred Schlee
1931	Vocal	<i>Konjunktur</i> Paloma 3501 (Austria)	1: Die Muschel von Margate (Petroleumsong) 2: (Lied vom Trockenbrot: Eisler/Mehring) Otto Pasetti, Klavier: Alfred Schlee
1930	Dancing Arrangement	<i>Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny</i> Electrola E.H. 853	2: Alabama-Song Marek Weber und sein Orchester
	Vocal	Telefunken A 371	1: Alabama-Song 2: Denn wie man sich bettet Lotte Lenja, The Three Admirals, Theo Mackeben und sein Jazz-Orchester
1931	Instrumental	Aufricht- Production	1: Alabama-Song 2: Wie man sich bettet Emil Roósz und sein Künstlerorchester
1932	Instrumental	Kristall 3236	[same as above]
	Vocal	Electrola E.H. 736	Querschnitt aus der Oper "Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny" Lotte Lenja mit grossem Ensemble und Orchester des Theaters am Kurfürstendamm, Leitung: Hans Sommer
	Vocal	Homocord H 3671	1: Alabama Song 2: Denn wie man sich bettet Lotte Lenja mit Orchester, Dirigent: Kurt Weill
1933	Vocal	<i>Der Silbersee</i> Gloria GO 10713	1: Der Bäcker bäckt ums Morgenrot 2: Das Lied vom Schlaraffenland Ernst Busch mit Orchester, Leitung: Kapellmeister Maurice de Abravanel



# The Firebrand of Florence: A Musical Inventory

by Joseph Smith

*The Firebrand of Florence* (1945) reunited Weill with lyricist Ira Gershwin after their big hit of 1941, *Lady in the Dark*, and their engaging contributions to the movie *Where Do We Go From Here?* *Firebrand's* libretto (adapted by Edwin Justus Mayer from his own play, *The Firebrand*) is based on incidents from the memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini. Cellini, the renowned goldsmith and sculptor, was also a fascinating, megalomaniacal raconteur — his stories of intrigue in the sixteenth-century court of the Medici seethe with theatrical extravagance. The libretto focuses on the conflict between Cellini, armed with wit, daring, and his reputation as a great artist, and Alessandro, Duke of Florence, possessed of absolute political power. Given these circumstances, it is highly inconvenient that the Duke develops a mad crush on Cellini's girlfriend and that the Duchess cherishes an overwhelming desire for Cellini himself.

Although announced as a musical comedy, *The Firebrand of Florence* is actually an operetta. Unlike Weill's other American shows, it has a distant, exotic setting — sixteenth-century Florence. (Although set in South Africa, the magnificent musical tragedy *Lost in the Stars* is not exotic in tone. Its black characters elicited from Weill songs in the most American of idioms; "Thousands of Miles" is in the style of a spiritual; "Trouble Man," a blues.) The extent of sheer vocal display in *Firebrand* is atypical of its composer outside of parodistic uses. The emotional peaks of *Street Scene* may climax in high notes, but the lovers in *Firebrand* flaunt their high notes for decorative effect. The influence of Gilbert and Sullivan is obvious the minute the curtain rises. Gilbert found the professions of torturer and executioner irresistibly droll (*The Mikado*, *Yeomen of the Guard*). *Firebrand* opens with a hangman, gallows-builders, and vendors preparing for a gala execution. The trial scene in the second act and several other numbers also recall the style of the Savoy operas, not to mention the common model of Offenbach. The least characteristic of Weill's American shows, it is also the least known (excluding *The Eternal Road*, produced in New York but written primarily in Europe). His only Broadway flop — hostilely received by the press and closed after only 43 performances — *Firebrand* remains unrecorded and unpublished, and little has been written about it in the standard sources.

Cellini's three solos illustrate the many sides of this rich central character: dedicated artist, impulsive quarreler, adept con-man, manipulator, daredevil, and boaster. About to be hanged in the opening scene, he nevertheless bursts out undaunted in the sweeping

"There Was Life, There Was Love, There Was Laughter." Although introduced by a recitative, this is in the standard 32-bar song form and will be reprised as a love duet, "There'll Be Life..." The robust, extrovert tune, climaxing in an octave leap to a high F, has the wide melodic range favored by Sigmund Romberg, who, incidentally, had once considered composing a show based on the same property. Harmonically, however, it is not the least Rombergian, built as it is on a variety of chords with added sevenths. These unresolved dissonances lend the tune its distinctive poignancy.

In musical theater, the simplest way to be heroic is to sing heroically. After all, producing a glorious sound which can surge (unamplified!) over an orchestra is a genuine physical feat. Cellini's music lies in the range commonly called "bari-tenor" or "Broadway baritone" (high E's, F's, and F sharps abound), but the sound must be a full, "legitimate" one. (The classic Viennese operetta composers would have cast such a role as a tenor. Around the Twenties, American taste began to find the baritone to be the more "virile" sonority.)

In the next scene (oh, yes — his execution is put off!), Cellini the braggart turns a scuffle with his enemy, Maffio, into a pat little narrative of heroism in the face of overwhelming odds. The strophic form of this "arietta" is cannily chosen. He tells the same story to each of two girls, but by the second telling, the alleged number of his adversaries has escalated from three to five (when in fact there was only one). At the same gory moment in the narrative, each girl shrieks, and the orchestra continues with a suitably dismayed interlude. The orchestra's short phrase before his final "and that's my story" is like a musical shrug of the shoulders. The exact repetition of the verses reflects Cellini's habit of courting different women with the identical impressive turns of phrase.

The protagonist's madcap streak is given full rein in the second act trial scene which inevitably recalls both the Circus Trial from *Lady in the Dark*, as well as Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*. His flamboyant defense for (supposedly) killing Maffio, "You Have To Do What You Do Do," is based on the "Zodiac" number cut from *Lady in the Dark* (which was replaced by the celebrated "Saga of Jenny"). That insanely persistent lyrical phrase, "you have to do what you do do," boasts an equally catchy musical phrase. Whereas "There Was Life," (Cellini's first song) features seventh chords, the spooky harmonies of his last song are predominantly

chords of the ninth. The best nonsense, however, exhibits the beguiling appearance of sense, and it is here that the song falls short.

Edwin's defense in *Trial by Jury* may not satisfy everyone's idea of morality, but its internal logic is unassailable. Liza Elliott's "Jenny" parable corroborates its premise with verse after verse after verse of evidence. In contrast, "You Have To Do" merely asserts its convenient premise. As a "tipsy gypsy" once explained to Cellini, all is predestined by fate; therefore, no one is responsible for his actions. Cellini's catalogue of examples, if delightfully ear-catching ("Is Plato to blame for being platonic? Or Babylon for being babylonian?"), fail to prove his point — they merely restate it.

The show's heroine is not as well served musically, and understandably so. Cellini's memoirs are rich in adventure and humor, but the task of trying to extract a love story from them is highly unenviable. The book teems with references to "satisfying his appetite" with some model or "enjoying" another in bed, but otherwise he does not seem to regard any woman with even friendly interest. The historical Cellini was an insensitive, brutish user of women. (The memoirs contain an incident involving a certain Caterina which shows how low he could sink; only Mozart and da Ponte could have successfully portrayed the real Cellini!)

*Firebrand's* librettist came up with the following story: just when Cellini and his model Angela have avowed their love, the Duke enters the sculptor's studio. The Duke finds Angela irresistibly charming and carries her off. Cellini manages to abduct her, but the next morning, their affair having been consummated, the real trouble begins. Jealous of his zeal for work, she demands that he will never work without her permission. His solution is to abandon her when political circumstances force him to flee to France. He then "discovers" that he can't work without her, and they are eventually and somewhat arbitrarily reunited. Cellini's coming to value her love happens between scenes — it is totally undramatized. Nor is there any reason to believe that she has come to respect his devotion to art. After the final curtain, we can imagine her renewing her selfish demands, and his discarding her all over again. It is hard to feel involved in this casual story.

Some composers seem able to compose a great love song outside of a specific context. Gershwin, for example, wrote glorious melodies to such general texts as "Love Walked In" and "Soon." Weill, however, was a musical dramatist who did his best work only when inspired by an interesting character or dramatic situation. For instance, "It Never Was You" from *Knickerbocker Holiday* is a very at-

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tractive song, but "September Song," from the same score, is unforgettable. The one is to an all-purpose text, the other is specifically the song of an aging man aware of his mortality. The comparative weakness of the numbers involving *Firebrand's* love story was inevitable; the shallow relationship could hardly inspire Weill to write his most memorable music.

The lovers' two duets, as well as a song for the secondary character, Emilia, are waltzes; the waltz was, after all, an operetta inevitability, whether the locale be Heidelberg or Hawaii. Generally, though, Weill used the waltz in his Broadway shows only for parody; perhaps he thought that the idiom itself had become a cliché. (He rarely used three-four meter even outside of the waltz genre — the "Lilac Duet" from *Street Scene* being a notable exception.) The first duet, "I'm Afraid You're Far Too Near Me," is reprised several times, suggesting that the authors hoped that it would prove a hit. The first eight-bar phrase ends with a promising harmonic turn, the result of the melody's chromatic descent, but the answering phrase is a disappointment; it is too harmonically bland for its context, and is rhythmically a waltz commonplace. "Love Is My Enemy," the duet of parting, is a much more ambitious and distinctive tune. Quite dense harmonically, its abundant seventh and ninth chords relate it to Cellini's big solos; there is, moreover, a pleasing variety of melodic shape.

Angela is also given the principal part in a charming quartet with chorus, "I Was Happy Here." First she sings a short, plaintive solo, which is then taken up by Emilia while Cellini and Angela add countermelodies. In the second repeat, Angela soars over the chorus and other soloists, with a new high, sustained counterpoint. Her aria, "How Wonderfully Fortunate," is a dull, shapeless few pages, but like the quartet, it requires refined vocalism. Angela must be a true soprano with easy top notes, both soft and loud.

The comic lead, Alessandro, Duke of Florence, embodies a virtual catalogue of human failings: he is vain, self-centered, cowardly, and pompous — yet he is likable. He is totally guileless — he probably lacks the intelligence for deceit — and therefore rather disarming. When his wife asks him indignantly, "Have you forgotten what happened three years ago?" he replies impatiently, "Of course I have! You know very well I can't remember five minutes back."

Composing a patter song such as the Duke sings for his entrance must be a tricky business. The importance and rapidity of the words require the music to be simple. It must be negotiable by a non-voice of limited range, and its unsustained style of singing dictates a light accompaniment. Despite these restrictions, some tunefulness must emerge; however slight on its own terms, it is the melody which helps to interpret the words and fixes them in the audience's memory.

The Duke's entrance song, "Alessandro the Wise," is preceded by a chorus praising him. The prelude of this chorus, its martial rhythms weakened to a loping six-eight, will supply the song's first strain. In the chorus,

the important phrase, "Hail the man you subsidize," is underlined by a sudden modulation a tone down. At the end of each of the songs' verses, minor chords leeringly emphasize the rhymes, "I sponsor the celestial, but I don't run down the bestial," and "By action I embellish both the heavenly and the hellish." A whole-tone scale tinges the chorus' cry of "Alessandro the Wise" with justified equivocation.



### One of four songs from *Firebrand of Florence* published in sheet music by Chappell.

"A Rhyme for Angela" is the payoff of an elaborate running gag. As part of his attempt to seduce Angela in the first act, the dilettante Duke vows to write a poem in her honor. Henceforth, he is frequently observed affixing letters to the front of her name, in the vain hope of finding a rhyme for "Angela." Midway through the second act, he proudly sings his effort for the admiration of the court poets. Our knowledge of the Duke leads us to expect a ludicrous travesty, but instead we are given a neutral pop song — here, worse would have been better! (To fill a similar dramatic need in *Kiss Me, Kate*, Cole Porter came up with a masterful evocation of flagrant, enthusiastic badness — "Bianca.")

His mismatched consort, the duchess, is a highly intriguing lady. Throughout the evening, this witty and sophisticated woman tries to seduce our hero; to achieve his own ends, he continually feigns interest and leads her on but always escapes her. In their battle of wits, it seems by no means clear that the best man has won. In fact, I wonder whether she doesn't deserve to be rewarded with the night of love with Cellini that she so craves! She is given only one song, but it is extraordinarily haunting and subtle: "Sing Me Not a Ballad."

The unusual harmonic coloring of the piece is the result of its being based on another of

the show's tunes. The Duchess is always preceded by a little Moorish servant boy singing an exotic melodic fragment, "Make Way for the Duchess," to the accompaniment of a high-pitched, jangling, but delicate orchestration. Ira Gershwin suggested that Weill use this thematic idea as a source for "Sing Me Not a Ballad." But the lyricist's remark that the first six melodic notes are identical is an understatement: in fact, the first twenty-two notes are identical. The salient feature of the first phrase of the song is the sharpened fourth degree of the major scale — a touch of the Lydian mode from its original "Moorish" source. Although the harmonic setting is not actually in this mode, its modulations follow the direction suggested by this raised tone, i.e., towards the sharp keys. The third phrase, "I require no ballad," moves from the rich D-flat major of the song's tonic to brighter harmonic areas, starting with a C seventh chord. This contrast of harmonic colors gives the tune its special ambiance. At the song's close, the phrase, "Spare me your advances" is first set with harmonies within the scale, then repeated with chromatically raised notes which increase its urgency. The repetition not only of a line, but of a word within the line, "Just, oh, just make love!" adds to the pleading intensity of the song's closing. This song expresses more than just the impatient sexual desire of the words — the musical setting adds a subtext of world-weary disillusionment, especially apparent in the orchestra's drooping, bluesy "licks" at the ends of phrases. (Unfortunately, Lenya's recording [Columbia Masterworks M6 30087], of a reorchestrated pop arrangement, does not begin to suggest the song's potential as a piece of characterization.)

Casting the Duchess properly would be crucial to making the show work. The audience is clearly supposed to enjoy seeing her thwarted in her attempts on Cellini's honor. Were we to sympathize with her too much, his manipulative use of her desire would seem cruel. If, on the other hand, she is a grotesque, whose pretensions to desirability are laughable (like one of Gilbert's gargoyles, such as Katisha or Ruth), it would vitiate the erotic tension which animates the long, important scenes between her and Cellini. Most important, it would sabotage the score's best number. For the right actress, though, this is the role of a lifetime. Vocally, the part demands only that this one song, of limited range, be sung with seductive beauty.

Among the score's assets are three choral numbers: "Come to Florence," "The Night-time Is No Time for Thinking" (a tarantella), and the soldier's chorus, "Just in Case." "Come to Florence" is introduced in the show's opening scene. Despite its apparent simplicity, its variety of rhythmic stress as well as the fine lyrics account for its appeal. The repeated eighth notes of its first motive, "If you're bent on viewing something doing, come to Florence," pushes the stress to the third measure of the four-bar phrase (the first syllable of "Florence"). The next motive, "Everything warrants our singing of Florence," has a series of quarter notes, giving a vertical, heavy accentuation to each bar. The

next section, "In all of Italy," falls clearly into two-bar phrases, and its stepwise movement has a contrasting legato flow.

The tarantella is an intentionally loony choice for a big vocal ensemble ("The Night-time Is No Time for Thinking"). The frantic speed of this dance idiom has rarely allowed its use in vocal music. In Rossini's song, "La Danza," the only familiar example, the composer does not assign a new syllable to each note, and some of the text is "la, la, la." An intelligible rendition of the *Firebrand* tarantella, with its hailstorm of syllables, would be an entertaining *tour de force*. The dance supposedly originated as a cure for tarantula bites. This tarantella is enhanced, therefore, by the text's ludicrous assumption that the dance is conventionally "romantic" ("Heaven, you quickly discover .... never too far from your lover"), as well as by the euphonious rhymes: "Dreamily, dreamily, peaches and creamily."

The soldiers' chorus, "Just in Case," is, naturally, a march, but the weirdly jangling chords of the verse, "We're soldiers of the Duchy, whose Duke is very touchy," already convey less than unshakable patriotism. The chorus begins with apparent militaristic fervor, "On to Pisa! — On to Verona!" but at the phrase, "on to, on to, on to ..." the repetition of two notes, increasing in speed two measures later, expresses the soldiers' genuine sentiment: petulant reluctance. The text continues: "We don't want to, want to, want to." Surely this piece would be fun on stage.

The *Firebrand of Florence* is an uneven work. Because the score is so different from any other Weill, the expedient of "pastiche" a revival version is out of the question. Advantageous cuts, however, could certainly be made. Granting the libretto's weaknesses, it still has much to recommend it. (Edwin Justus Mayer was not an insignificant figure; he wrote the screen play for *To Be or Not to Be*, that brilliantly original 1942 comedy, directed by Lubitsch.) Three of the principals are vivid, and the plot, although loose, is not burdened with digressions. The love interest does not engage the emotions (nor, I suspect, could it be rewritten to do so), but at least its treatment is breezy in tone; it is neither pretentious nor maudlin.

Since amplification has become universal in Broadway theaters, show singing has changed so much that the commercial theater has become a poor custodian of its own musical classics, as numerous unsatisfactory revivals testify. Conversely, opera houses are achieving increasing success with those classic musicals that demand "legitimate" singing. *Firebrand* might well find a home in the opera house, possibly with a non-operatic star as the Duchess. Ironically, some of the operetta conventions which made the show seem so old-fashioned in 1945 might be a strong recommendation for its revival in the Eighties.

## Gestus und Verfremdung: Studien zum Musiktheater bei Strawinsky und Brecht/ Weill. By Jürgen Engelhardt.

München-Salzburg: Musikverlag  
Emil Katzschler, 1984. 269 pages.

Writing in the fifties in the volume *Theaterarbeit*, Brecht commented, not without a touch of weary asperity: "...a lot of my remarks about the theater are wrongly understood. I conclude this above all from those letters and articles which agree with me. I then feel as a mathematician might if he reads: 'Dear Sir, I am wholly of your opinion that two and two make five...'"

One wonders how he would have felt about the present volume which presents as indigestible a mixture of musicological, proto-Marxist, pseudo-structuralist, and plain muddle-headed critical jargon as this reader has plowed through in many a long day. What is one to make, for instance, of the following sentence which sets out to sum up the 'gestic' approach to composing:

...Gestic composing therefore means that the composer consciously deals with the fact that in the musical fabric pre-provided elements (a musical 'framework of attitude,' a situation of societally formed patterns of behavior as a complex associative structure of material ideological and musico-cultural conditions) and the specific social and musical consciousness of the compositional subject constitute themselves in an organized tonal framework. (p 57)

There are whole pages of this study which appear to have been constructed according to a scheme which notes down adjectives on the left-hand side of the page, nouns on the right, and runs linking arrows back and forth between the two, bearing in mind that suitably limp and non-denotative verbs like 'is,' 'refers to,' 'has described,' etc. need to be inserted occasionally to help the alphabet soup slide across the page.

There is no doubt that Brecht — or rather his painstaking elucidators — is partly to blame for this, but only partly. Throughout this study one senses the chill hands of Adorno and Hegel grasping a half-formed thought and ensuring it emerges frozen and unyielding. This is not, of course, to imply that either writer has nothing to contribute to any study of the philosophy and aesthetics of music in the twentieth century. But in this case, Weill's own observations and theoretical statements receive only cursory attention and even lead the author to declare — speaking of the composer's statements from the late twenties — "...In Weill's writings of this per-

iod almost all theoretical opinions either go back to Busoni or derive from Brecht" (p. 105). Although I have cautiously argued elsewhere that Brecht was more of a theorizer than Weill, this particular assertion did cause some frowning of the brows.

It is all the more unfortunate that the author chooses to adopt the Brechtian/structuralist/Hegelian manner for much of his study, since scattered through the pages are some sharp, intelligent, and persuasive analyses of individual works, some helpful theoretical commentary, and a good grasp of the links between Brecht/Weill's and Stravinsky's notions of the aesthetics of performance and theater. (Cf. in particular the remarks on "expression" and its theatrical rendering on p. 35; the discussion of the Busoni *Schlagwort* and its relation to *Gestus* on p. 104; and a clear, concise presentation of the relationships between cantata, oratorio, *Lehrstück* and Stravinsky's music-theater on pp. 142-3). But the work's overall structure militates against any intelligible treatment of the topic.

It is divided into three sections: Historic-philosophical conditions; Cubism; and Dialectical music-theater. While there is ample evidence of the author's extensive study of Brecht's writings and of an otherwise impressively wide reading, his attempt to define a fairly familiar technique and structure by resorting to derivations of the terms "cubism" ("cubistic music," "cubizing of the theater," and the — to me — appalling neologism "*Kubierung*" and its v.tr. "*kubieren*") inevitably occasions reflections like: "Must be a variation on what you do to vegetables (dicing); or 'Well, I suppose it's a squared version of theater-in-the-round.'"

One wishes that, rather than indulging in this fondness for abstractions, the author had concentrated instead on other, more immediately relevant and substantial matters which he either touches on briefly or ignores altogether. There may be much that is unfairly excluded by Brecht's commitment to "rational" music, but the fact that it abhors the Wagnerian *Rausch* — a view for which Weill had some sympathy — might have prompted Dr. Engelhardt to look a little further for traces of similar attitudes and their origins in Stravinsky. The latter's caustic comments on the Bayreuth religious ceremony are familiar from his *Autobiography* as are his remarks on his meeting with Busoni. Surely something on the shared outlooks might have found its place in the study? Often one feels the author is more concerned with — as Brecht puts it in a poem: "...[Making] obscurity more obscure and [preferring] to believe the absurd rather than to seek for a sufficient cause." At times both Weill's and Brecht's pronouncements on *Gestus* and *gestische Musik* are puzzling enough without the researcher seeking to make them even more abstruse.

And while I should not like to argue in favor of a rigidly historico-empiricist approach to in-