

KURT WEILL NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, Number 2

Fall 1987



David Drew's *Handbook* Published in UK and US

Kurt Weill: A Handbook by David Drew was published in September by Faber and Faber in the United Kingdom and the University of California Press in the United States. The definitive catalogue section includes short synopses of every stage work and descriptions of the extant manuscripts. This central part of the book is preceded by the most extensive chronology of Weill's life yet published and followed by an account of his unfulfilled projects which breaks entirely new ground, not least in what the author has to say about such controversial topics as the composer's relations with Brecht and with radical politics. David Drew prefaces the book with an enthralling account of his personal involvement with Kurt Weill's music and its tangled fortunes since the composer's death in 1950.

Scholars, producers, performers, and aficionados alike will find valuable information and fascinating reading in this handsomely produced handbook, the result of Drew's twenty-five years of research. The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music is offering the book at a special price to *Newsletter* subscribers. Please see the order form on page 24 of this issue.

AMTF Receives Federal Grant for *Love Life*

The American Music Theater Festival recently received an \$80,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to support its 1988 planned production of *Love Life* and to assist in rehearsals of *Revelation of the Courthouse Park*, by the pioneering microtonal composer, Harry Partch. The AMTF production of the Weill-Lerner collaboration will mark the first professional revival of the work (a

university production is reviewed in this issue). The grant represents part of the NEA's six-million dollar effort to assist opera and musical theater companies throughout the United States. Other recipients include the Metropolitan and New York City Operas (in support of their free summer programs), the Houston Grand Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Opera Guild of Greater Miami, and the Washington, DC, National Institute for Music Theater.

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* CHANGE OF ADDRESS *

Foundation Moves to New Headquarters

On 29 September the Foundation moved to its new facility at Holtz House in New York's "Flatiron District." The Weill-Lenya Research Center and the Foundation offices share the handsome new space, which was designed by architect Michael Dodson, working in collaboration with David Farneth and Mario Mercado. All correspondence with the Foundation should be addressed to:

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NEWS IN BRIEF

A New Orpheus Wins Deems Taylor Award

Kim Kowalke, editor of *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill* (Yale University Press, 1986), will be presented the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award on 2 December in New York. 1987 marks the twentieth anniversary for the awards, given for outstanding books and articles on music. *A New Orpheus* is a collection of seventeen critical essays assessing various aspects of Weill's life and works. The majority of the essays evolved from papers presented at the first international conference on Weill held in New Haven, Connecticut, in November 1983 and co-sponsored by the John Herrick Jackson Music Library at Yale University and the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music. In addition to Kowalke, the contributors to the collection include: Christopher Hailey, Alexander L. Ringer, John Rockwell, Stephen Hinton, Susan C. Cook, Alan Chapman, Ian Kemp, Douglas Jarman, John Fuegi, Michael Morley, Ronald K. Shull, David Drew, Guy Stern, Matthew Scott, John Graziano, Larry Stempel, and David Farneth. The award, given by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, is named in honor of the late composer, music critic, and editor, who served as the President of ASCAP from 1942-48.

Three Broadway Shows Now Available in the UK

As a result of a new agreement between Chappell International Music Publishers Limited, London and the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *Street Scene*, and *Lost in the Stars* are now available for general licensing in all English-speaking countries outside of the United States and Canada. English-language productions throughout Europe are also included. For further information, please contact the Foundation or Chappell International at 129 Park Street, London W1Y 3FA, England.

Happy End at the Olympics

Happy End will open on 24 February at the Margaret Greenham Theatre of the Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada. The production will enjoy an extensive tour of Canada, including performances at the 1988 Winter Olympic Games at Calgary. Kelly Robinson will direct, and Craig Bohmler and Wyn Davies will share the conducting duties on the tour. *Happy End* initiates a cycle of Weill theater works, part of a new music theater program instituted at Banff under the guidance of John Metcalf, Artistic Director. *Johnny Johnson* will follow in 1989.

Street Scene Fights AIDS

Street Scene gained its first professional production in Great Britain on 26 April and earned over £20,000 to benefit London Lighthouse, the first AIDS hospice program in the UK. The one-time gala charity performance, forming part of International AIDS Day, was given at the Palace Theatre and profited from the talents of John Owen Edwards (conductor), Peter Walker (director), Tom Jobe (choreographer), Charles Maude (designer), and a large cast of Britain's leading actors and singers, including Meriel Dickinson, Elaine Paige, Hilary Western, Linda Brewer, Rosemary Ashe, Gay Soper, Tommy Körner, Paul Harphay, Christopher Blades, Yvonne Bachem, Rosie Ashe, Geoffrey Burridge, Janis Kelly, and Alec McCowen.

All participants and authors donated their services to this important cause.

Street Scene was a critical, as well as a popular success. Tom Sutcliffe, *The Guardian*, commented, "Why should theater audiences, fed recently on a diet of musicals devoid of music, not be allowed a work of this quality and passionate intensity? There was no dress rehearsal for Sunday's AIDS gala, but *Street Scene* was triumphantly vindicated. It works." And writing for *The Stage*, Frank Granville Barker commented, "The miracle of Weill's score is that it gives memorable life to each of the varied characters who long to escape from the pressures of poverty. The vitality of Elmer Rice's drama came across splendidly in Peter Walker's production despite inevitable restriction of rehearsal time, and the musical direction of John Owen Edwards was electrifying."

Street Scene on German Radio

Westdeutscher Rundfunk Köln will produce Kurt Weill's American Opera, *Street Scene* in May 1988. Donald Arthur will direct and Jan Latham-König will conduct the opera, which will be sung in English. Lys Symonette, who worked with Weill on the original 1946 production, will serve as music consultant and coach. Performances will be given at Duisberg and Recklinghausen in addition to Cologne. Recent WDR productions have included *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren*, *Der Lindberghflug*, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, and *The Ballad of Magna Carta*. *Street Scene* marks the first time that the radio station has produced one of Weill's Broadway works.

Steve Reich Speaks Out on Weill and Eisler

"... I always like to think of people like Kurt Weill and Hanns Eisler. They both were good Germans in a bad time. They both were, perhaps, good socialists at a Fascist time. And as a Jew in Germany at the time, I would have been glad to have both of them on my side, helping me to live.

But, life is cruel and man uncouth. Alas, Eisler's music to me comes across as heavy-handed, dogged, and we have to give him an "E" for effort, but his music is a bore, I believe.

Kurt Weill is a musical genius. He has a lightness, he has an irony, and the music continues to live — whatever its political content."

From a video production, Steve Reich: A New Musical Language, produced by MJW Productions for the Arts Council of Great Britain in association with WNET/Thirteen, New York, 1987.

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The *Newsletter* is published to provide an open forum wherein interested readers may express a variety of ideas and opinions. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the publisher's official viewpoint. The editor encourages the submission of articles, reviews, and news items for inclusion in future issues. The submission deadline for the next issue is 15 January 1988.

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LETTERS

To the Editor:

A full year has passed since you published Richard Taruskin's review of *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, and I find it curious that something so challenging and, in certain respects, questionable has aroused no public response — not even so much as a word of congratulation to you for commissioning it.

As one of the contributors to *A New Orpheus*, I consider myself disqualified from venturing most of the comments that in principle strike me as no less necessary today than they were a year ago. But there is one area on which some light could perhaps be shed without introducing too many subjective factors.

During his discussion of Weill and the Schoenbergians, Professor Taruskin cites a passage from what he describes as Weill's "wicked little 'classroom lecture' concocted at the request of a Berlin newspaper" and notes that a respectful reference to Brecht is one of the two aspects that may render the lecture "uncongenial to Weill scholars of the new era" — the other aspect being the scorn heaped on it by Schoenberg. This is called in support of Professor Taruskin's contention that the "new era" of Weill criticism has inherited from the old a host of "demons," headed by Brecht and Schoenberg, and that all of them should swiftly be exorcised.

An excerpt from the "wicked little lecture" had already been included by Taruskin and Piero Weiss in their *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents* [New York, 1984; pp. 490-91]. Beginning with the words "I have just played you some music by Wagner and his followers," that excerpt — which was not identified as such — ended ten lines later with the words "if music cannot serve the interests of all, its existence is no longer justified" and was quoted from the notes for *Kurt Weill: Dreigroschenoper Selections* [Telefunken Records, LGX66053] — a ten-inch LP disc produced in England in 1955. Weiss and Taruskin follow the anonymous note-writer in remarking that the original source was the *Berliner Tageblatt*. It is clear that the note-writer was relying on a reference to and partial translation from Weill's "lecture" which appeared in *The Musical Times* [1 March 1929; p. 224] and achieved swift notoriety.

What is far from clear is how Weiss and Taruskin could have overlooked the publication in the *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* [vol. 4, no. 1 (June 1980)] of an essay by Alexander Ringer, "Schoenberg, Weill and Epic Theatre," which contained in facsimile the very copy of the original *Berliner Tageblatt* piece that Schoenberg had copiously and

angrily annotated. Professor Ringer had not, however, given the date of publication, which was Christmas Day 1928, nor had he explained that the *Tageblatt* had invited prominent figures from the arts and letters to present themselves and their work in a manner appropriate to a class of intelligent 12-year-olds who read newspapers, interested themselves in topics of the day, and had a keen appetite for facts. Among Weill's fellow contributors were Heinrich Mann, Annette Kolb, Hans Rehfisch, Otto Klemperer, and Alfred Kerr.

To read Weill's contribution complete and in its proper context is, of course, a basic requirement, and one that should obviate some of the misunderstandings bred by the original *Musical Times* quotation and its many successors. The fulfillment of that scholarly obligation does not, however, rescue Weill from some of the charges leveled against him by Schoenberg. It is not the sincerely meant and eminently justified tribute to Brecht that is "uncongenial," Weill's fatal attempt to emulate Brecht's success in manipulating the media in the interest of self-advertisement. If one knew nothing else of his writings and actions throughout the period, one might well conclude from the debacle that the success of *Die Dreigroschenoper* had gone to his head. Attempting a maneuver that Brecht might have devised but surely would never himself have risked, he seeks to win over his young readers by parodying the classroom tyrannies of a Prussian schoolmaster; yet the attitudes he is trying to make fun of merely accentuate the speciousness of his case against Wagner and the shameless salesmanship of his account of Epic Theatre in general and *Die Dreigroschenoper* in particular. Unlike Kerr and Klemperer — the two co-contributors to whom he would have felt closest — Weill not only misjudged the tone of the symposium, but also missed the point of it.

Schoenberg, too, may have missed the point; and for quite different reasons, Taruskin certainly has and not only here: with such impressive confidence and verve does he arrange and conduct his set of Mephisto waltzes that no one would believe this to be his first appearance on the platform had he not said so beforehand; and even the motley orchestra of "loyalist" Weillians pretends not to notice that in each number the maestro has begun by firmly grasping the wrong end of the stick.

Many of Taruskin's incidental observations about the role of Weill scholarship in the "new era" are timely and important, but their practical value is in my view greatly diminished by the fanciful device which links them together and

lends them a characteristic élan. Entertaining though it is, his game with the "demons" tends at each move to falsify, confuse, or make light of questions that belong to the real world and demand real answers. The questions that arise from the Brecht collaboration, for instance, begin at a quite humble everyday level but have immense ramifications which cannot, after half a century, be airily brushed aside. Taruskin's faith in the good sense of "musicians" does him credit; but as far as performances of Weill are concerned, it is hard to see the grounds for it.

Such matters are familiar to readers of this newsletter. Altogether more novel and fragile is the Schoenberg question. In Taruskin's account it is epitomized by three quotations — one from Schoenberg himself, one from Webern, and one from Adorno. The Schoenberg and Webern had been quoted for the first time, and juxtaposed without comment, in the leaflet which I edited in 1968 for Bertini's recordings of Weill's two Symphonies. In that form they read as follows:

Schoenberg (1933) quoted by Virgil Thomson (1967)

Franz Lehár, yes; Weill, no. His is the only music in the world in which I can find no quality at all.

Webern [9 March 1942] reported by Dallapiccola [notebook entry]

Webern, who had said little that evening, suddenly exploded at the mention of Kurt Weill. Pointing his finger at me, he asked me the following question: "Where in Kurt Weill can you find anything of our great Austro-German tradition? Of that tradition," (and here he began to count on his fingers) "expressed by the names of Schubert, Brahms, Wolf, Mahler; Schoenberg, Berg — and Webern?"

Twenty years ago both quotations were in effect brand new: Schoenberg's remark had only recently been published by Virgil Thomson in his autobiography and Webern's had been conveyed to me personally by Dallapiccola prior to the publication in Italy of excerpts from his diaries and notebooks. At that time, and particularly in the context of the recording, both quotations seemed to me to be self-explanatory. Imagine my delight when an anonymous critic in *Der Spiegel* began his review of the recording by pilfering Schoenberg's remark, and continued approximately thus: "Schoenberg perhaps goes too far, and yet..."

Schoenberg's remark to Thomson dates from a meeting in Paris in 1933, when Weill's reputation in that city was

at its height. From my point of view in 1968, it was important because it confirmed and added weight to Walter Goehr's much earlier oral account of how Schoenberg, in one of his Berlin composition classes, had compared the Weill of *Die Dreigroschenoper* to the Lehár of *The Merry Widow*, much to Weill's disadvantage. While Schoenberg's anger with Weill at that time was wholly consistent with his lifelong attitude, and hence predictable even without the provocation of the *Berliner Tageblatt* piece, the fact that he was still expressing it in 1933, and doing so despite the tragic circumstances of that year, has always seemed to me to imply an unconscious recognition that Weill did, after all, amount to something. For that reason among others it has never occurred to me that Weill's standing — whatever that might be — is in any way threatened, let alone damaged, by Schoenberg's contemporaneous view of it. The distance is simply too great: in every musical respect the worlds of Weill and Schoenberg had been musically exclusive since 1928, and in all but the most transient moments had been equally so for the previous six years (notwithstanding Weill's remarks to the contrary apropos of his Violin Concerto — a work in which I, for one, can hear no Schoenberg at all).

Although Webern's explosion of 1942 springs from precisely the same musical

and intellectual background as Schoenberg's a decade earlier, I quoted it for quite different reasons: primarily, because the question he posed was directly relevant to the inherent problems and actual achievements of the two symphonies, and could well be taken word for word as the pretext for a full-scale dissertation on Weill in general; and secondly, because Webern's pre-ordained inclusion of two Jewish masters should not allow us to overlook the fact that the clouds arising from his "explosion" contain some particles of cultural politics that were entirely characteristic of post-*Anschluss* Austria and are not altogether irrelevant to Weill-reception in the German-speaking world since 1945.

For Taruskin's Adorno quotation I must again accept responsibility. But in this case there has been no time for it to become part of Weillian folklore, since my use of it in *A New Orpheus* does not, I believe, have any precedent other than the original publication of Adorno's Weill obituary in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (and not, as I carelessly let slip, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*). That obituary, as I observed in my essay and tried to explain, was Adorno's first published attempt to repudiate his pre-1933 view of Weill, but also his last. By selecting the most obviously destructive phrase from my quotation and ignoring not only Adorno's subsequent

atonement for the obituary as a whole — which I discussed in some detail later on — but also the entire body of his pre-1933 writings, Taruskin fathers on a complacent world another illegitimate demon. Certainly Adorno is no angel, either. But his contribution to Weill criticism is unique; and provided it is read with all due caution, it remains indispensable.

Much the same could be said of Taruskin's review, and should be. Once the reader has been alerted to the necessity of rigorously searching for marks of the cloven hoof in every summary of an argument and every gloss on a direct quotation, Taruskin's delinquent demonology can be seen for what it is — a price that has to be paid for his splendid freedom from conventional pieties. As the work of an avowed "outsider to Weill research" who had discovered and demonstrated a lively new interest in the subject, the review had already transcended its ephemeral purpose a year ago. Today it begins to look as if it were as much a part of the "new era" as is *A New Orpheus* itself.

DAVID DREW
London

Because of the late arrival of Mr. Drew's letter, Mr. Taruskin has been invited to reply in the next issue.

AROUND THE WORLD

Kurt Weill Festival in New York

The first major Weill Festival in the United States, at Merkin Concert Hall 17-30 September 1987, attracted international attention to five concerts, an all-day symposium, and an exhibition of Weilliana. Restricted by the size of both stage and hall, the festival, sponsored by the Hebrew Arts School, nevertheless attempted to highlight the full generic and chronological range of Weill's oeuvre. The five concerts included several American premieres, as well as the first performances of four excerpts from the German-language version of *The Eternal Road* (*Der Weg der Verheissung*). The second concert, the symposium, and exhibition focused on Weill's Jewish heritage, while the festival's opening coincided with the official publication and celebratory reception of David Drew's *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*. [See Allan Kozinn's review of the concerts in this issue.]

Discussion of Weill's creative response to his Jewish heritage drew an audience of several hundred to the all-day symposium on 20 September. Foundation

President Kim Kowalke, as co-chair of the program with David Farneth, introduced the morning session by suggesting both the opportunities for scholarly inquiry into the topic and the problems inherent in differentiating the "Jewish" from the German or American Weills. Alexander Ringer, senior musicologist at the University of Illinois, presented a portrait of "The Cantor's Son" and thereby traced the influence of Weill's heritage on his career. Especially intriguing was Ringer's consideration of Weill's social consciousness as a manifestation of his "religiosity" after abandonment of religion *per se* in 1923.

Jack Gottlieb summarized characteristics of Jewish liturgical music and identified its echoes in the curious stylistic amalgam of Weill's *Kiddush*. David Drew traced the musical and dramatic outlines of *Der Weg der Verheissung* and placed the monumental work in the *Linie* of *Mahagonny*, *Der Jasager*, and *Die Bürgschaft*. Atay Citron presented a richly illustrated description of Weill's *The Eternal Road*, *We Will Never Die*,

and *A Flag is Born* in the context of other Jewish propagandistic pageants of the time. The symposium culminated with brief but hitherto unknown newsreel clips from *The Eternal Road*, followed by vivid and animated commentary by the production's choreographer, Benjamin Zemach.

Throughout the festival, an exhibit entitled "Kurt Weill and his Jewish Heritage" attracted many visitors to Merkin's gallery. Curated by David Farneth and Mario Mercado, the exhibit featured correspondence between Weill and his family, the Weill family's genealogy, photographs and memorabilia, Max Reinhardt's *Regiebuch* for *The Eternal Road*, and autograph facsimiles.

Standing-room only audiences for all of the concerts and widespread critical attention reflected the phenomenal interest generated by the Festival. Supported in part by a grant from the Kurt Weill Foundation, it demonstrated, without the aid of a single fully-staged theatrical production, the continuing impact of Weill's still-emerging musical identity.

I REMEMBER

Your Place, Or Mine?: An "un-German" Affair

By Felix Jackson

Editor's note: The following reminiscence is taken from an unpublished biography, Portrait of a Quiet Man: Kurt Weill, His Life and His Times, written by Felix Jackson in the early 1970's. Mr. Jackson, a close friend in Berlin during the 1920's, wrote music criticism under Oskar Bie for the Berliner Börsen-Courier. Then named Joachim-son, he wrote the libretto to Weill's lost comic opera Na und? (1926). After emigrating to the United States in February 1937, Jackson had a successful career working in Hollywood for Universal Studios.

The party started in the evening and lasted until the early morning hours. It was a large crowd, a variegated international mixture of celebrities and eccentrics: actors, directors, diplomats, young athletes in sweatshirts, bankers, scientists, musicians, girls in tennis outfits, writers, and sophisticated matronly socialites with their muscular escorts.

It took place late in the summer of 1932 at Eleanora von Mendelssohn's and her brother Francesco's villa in Grunewald, a fashionable suburb of Berlin. Both were in their twenties, the highly attractive children of Robert von Mendelssohn, owner of the banking empire and his Italian wife, Guilietta; both were direct descendants of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and eighteenth-century philosopher Moses Mendelssohn.

Eleanora, tall and slim, blue-eyes and dark, gentle and vulnerable, was easily moved to tears. Eleanora Duse had been her godmother, and this hint of destiny, combined with a genuine passion for the theater, had started her on a successful acting career. Francesco was a warm-hearted extrovert, sophisticated, flashy and eccentric, often on the brink of scandal. But he shared his sister's love for the theater and its people. Both were deeply devoted to each other.

People were moving in and out of the magnificent rooms — the walls covered with priceless original paintings. The conversation was partly in Italian and French, but mostly in German.

Among the guests were Cardinal Pacelli, the papal nuncio in Berlin and the future Pope Pius XII, most outspoken in his support for the Weimar Republic

and his dislike for Hitler; the French ambassador, André François-Poncet, attending the guest of honor, author and fellow diplomat Jean Giraudoux; Breitscheid, the oversized urban German Independent Socialist, expressing his contempt for the incumbent Chancellor, Franz von Papen; Bruno Walter; the Swiss painter Paul Klee; from London, Noel Coward and a friend; Kurt Weill; Erich Engel; Thomas Mann's children Erika and Klaus; and with Jean Cocteau, Max Schmeling, the fighter, idol of movie queens and intellectuals.

Some people were seated at the table in the large dining room; some were grouped at the buffet. The theater was discussed. Someone was raving about Elisabeth Bergner, then at the height of her popularity. A stout man in his forties, president of an industrial concern, was listening with a sullen face. He held a glass of champagne in his hand. Next to him his attractive wife and their teen-aged daughter, an aspiring actress, were filling their plates.

When the Bergner enthusiast stopped, the industrialist shrugged. "She doesn't do a thing to me," he said. "I'm sick and tired of those un-German types in German theaters."

There was a sudden silence. The man's wife continued busily loading her plate. The daughter stared at her father aghast.

Kurt Weill's quiet voice asked, "What do you mean by 'un-German'?"

"Exactly what I said," the man said. He was towering above Kurt Weill.

"He means Jewish," the girl said firmly.

The man turned to her furiously. "Shut up!"

Kurt Weill said politely, "You know, you must be careful. You're eating Jewish food. It might be poisoned."

The man looked disturbed. "This is a gentile house," he said with uncertainty.

The von Mendelssohns had been Christians for many generations. Francesco, who had been listening to the exchange, took the man's glass out of his hand and threw it on the floor. The thick carpet kept it from breaking. Francesco stepped on it with his delicate patent leather shoes. His face was white.

"To you, this is a Jewish house," he said. "You'd better get out of here!"

The man seized his wife's arm. She dropped her plate and the food spilled all over the buffet. She didn't raise her head and did not look at her husband when he pulled her out of the room.

The daughter had not moved. "May I please stay?" she asked Francesco in a small voice.

He put his arm around her. "Stay as long as you like."

Kurt Weill said to Mendelssohn, "I know you're not Jewish, but I couldn't help myself. That guy was too obnoxious." Francesco laughed. Weill added, "I guess it's time to leave."

"Don't be an ass!" Francesco said angrily.

Kurt shook his head. "I don't mean here — now. I mean it's time to leave Germany." His lips were trembling. For a moment, the sudden realization that the inevitable might happen seemed overwhelming.

Say No to Mediocrity!

The Crisis of Musical Interpretation

By Kurt Weill

Translated by Stephen Hinton

Introduction by Joachim Lucchesi

While doing research for an article on the organization of German artists "Die Novembergruppe," I chanced upon this largely unknown article by Kurt Weill in the Berliner Börsen-Courier of 20 August 1925. The composer, who months earlier had commenced his extensive duties as a critic for the weekly magazine *Der deutsche Rundfunk*, shows himself to be an extremely critical observer of the musical life of the Weimar Republic. In spite of a glitteringly representative concert establishment, international virtuosos and top-class orchestras, which lent Berlin the status of the then most significant European musical metropolis, Weill detects alarming sociological shifts in this area. He observes the

"impoverishment of those circles interested in musical life," which before inflation and war had turned every concert into — as he later wrote ironically — a "rendezvous for the elegant world." In contrast, he calls attention to the emergence of a new mass public with quite different musical needs as well as to the threat that the new, alluring medium of radio poses for concert life. Moreover, an "army of unfledged instrumentalists" with a glut of artistically "mediocre" performances flooded the concert halls, having a negative effect on public taste. Weill's fundamental criticism, pertinent still today, evinces the enduring influence of his highly esteemed teacher, Ferruccio Busoni. A number of key ideas about the public and musical interpretation, as formulated by Busoni in his *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst* and other writings, acquire a lasting resonance in the work of his pupil.

The intolerable state of affairs in the musical establishment — hitherto anxiously kept secret by those involved and accepted with indifference by the masses — has suddenly become the subject of public discussion. What was in the offing for years has, all of a sudden, been shown by the past season to be an undeniable fact: the concert life of our cities, which owes its emergence to a bygone epoch of bourgeois prosperity, is nowadays pointless, useless, and out-of-date. The music business has become unprofitable. Every evening distinguished virtuosos appear before empty auditoriums. The most established names have lost their appeal, and the rising stars have their work cut out seeing that their relations make use of the free tickets sent to them. (Rumor has it that for a Battistini concert in Vienna only five tickets were sold.) The reasons for this decline naturally lie in the changed economic conditions as compared with the pre-war years: in the impoverishment of those circles interested in musical life, in the glut of artistic performances, and in the enterprise of radio, which through convenience, cheapness, and the appeal of novelty manages to attract the masses. Yet beside these more external symptoms, we must also detect an increasing apathy on the part of the public towards the events of concert life — and that increasingly causes us to suspect that it is not purely economic but also artistic shortcomings that are to blame for this concert fatigue.

It cannot have anything to do with recent musical production, which is as lively and resourceful as ever; and a wealth of talent enjoys the recognition and performance statistics that in earlier times one could only achieve, if at all, after one's 60th anniversary. If we identify the state of musical interpretation as partly to blame for this state of affairs, then it is not the performing artist so much as the public that is responsible. The assumptions that inform our judgment of a performance are fundamentally different from those in other countries. Our concert-going public does not come along to admire, it comes to scrutinize and compare. It does not wish to be overwhelmed, but it does wish to swoon. It mistrusts anything new in an interpretation; it wishes to hear the music in accordance with its own experience of it; it is afraid of the unfathomable; it shies away from the outstanding personality until it has received confirmation a hundred times over in black and white. All this is the consequence of an extremely highly developed musical dilettantism. The individual listener does not sense the distance from the performing artist. He has his own conception of how to present a musical work of art. This, though, is the same conception that every concert-goer considers his own — it is the so-called traditional interpretation of the musical work, and artistic performance is all the more highly esteemed, the further it distances itself from personal

idiosyncrasy, the closer it is to conventional rendition, to tradition. One does not like it when an artist displays all too original traits. One wishes to hear music one knows, and one wishes to hear it in the way one is used to. An artistic act, however, comes about only when the listener is transported beyond the long-established tried-and-tested impression of the work into a new, extraordinary experience which comes solely from the personality of the performer. The rendition must be a part of composition. Performance must become productive. This requires two things: the demonic power to shape, a power which fills the space between the notes with music — and the technical facility that provides the artist with the means of carrying out all his intentions. The first of these is purely a question of natural talent. Such musical obsession in itself can suffice to produce that atmosphere between auditorium and stage that causes us to shiver. But it can only rouse us to genuine admiration when musical talent is accompanied by virtuosity. Anyone who loves music is capable of heightened feeling. He is only an artist when he is capable — creatively or interpretatively — of expressing this feeling completely and freely.

It is for this reason that the underestimation of technical facility, which often extends among our audiences to contempt, necessarily had a disastrous influence on the development of concert life. One considered oneself particularly musical if one shrugged one's shoulders at the very word "virtuoso." Supply matches demand: a remarkable decline

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in technical proficiency can be observed. It would be false arrogance to think that the artist of today has superior ability to his nineteenth-century counterpart. No, it is just that average ability has increased — and therein lies the danger. The whole musical establishment formerly functioned within more intimate bounds; the relatively small [musical] public was able to form its own opinion, which is why it demanded musical originality and technical skill to such a degree that it required a quite extraordinary talent and effort to elicit from this public any enthusiasm. Expectations have declined. The step from musical dilettante to artist has become so small that all too many succumb to the temptation. An army of unfledged instrumentalists flood our concert halls, and an easily satisfied public helps them to undeserved eminence which, in addition, robs them of any capacity for development. The economic consequences? See above. The artistic ones? A general slide towards mediocrity. When we maintain that the performing artist of today is capable of too little, then we naturally understand this ability in the broadest sense. It should be first of all the obvious prerequisite of every musical interpretation that the technical basis is available for an objective representation of the work of art. This objectivity is completely dependent upon a mastery of the technical apparatus: the pianist's manual dexterity and touch; the complete training of the violinist's right and left hands; the highest cultivation of the singer's voice and word-delivery; the conductor's suggestive, both rhythmically and dynamically expressive baton technique. There ought to be no limits. The omission of a performance ought not to be excused by any technical deficiencies on the part of the interpreter. To be able to play everything must be the goal. "La Campanella" by Liszt ought not to be the insatiable longing of pianists. Nor are physical shortcomings any excuse. Whoever weighs two tons cannot become a tight-rope artist. Busoni formulated the idea that every pianist should demonstrate before appearing in public that he commands a minimum of technical facility, and he placed expectations very high when he required for this examination Bach's Goldberg Variations, Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata and Busoni's "[Fantasia] Contrappuntistica." Technical mastery, however, should only be the foundation upon which talent can then thrive. For it is only here that the activity begins that raises the great artist above the average: the shaping of the work, the expression of one's personality, the recreation of what lies behind the notes, what cannot be notated. Yet just as mediocrity has brought about

technical limitations, so it is apt to place restrictions on the free unfolding of the performing artist's creativity.

One seeks to compare the events of a musical work with the events of life, literature, philosophy — yet music has its own content which can only be formed and comprehended with the senses of music. One demands an absolute representation such as the composer imagined — yet the significant production in the last sense is also abstract, it is unbounded by time and space, and hence offers the performing artist inexhaustible possibilities for his own unfolding. One feels obliged to emphasize feeling, one underlines the emotional content with musical and theatrical means: one sighs at a gentle melody, one smiles coquettishly at pretty timbres, one defiantly tosses one's mane at sturdy chords — yet music is, after all, a language of the soul, it speaks to us with its own words, and feeling illuminates it as the clear silver moon does the nocturnal forest. And one talks much too much about conception. One discusses whether this or that tempo is "correct." One frequently sees the interpreter's

merit neither in terms of ability nor in the rousing momentum of the presentation but in extramusical concomitants, in philosophical or ethical tendencies. One wishes to exhaust the "profound content" of a work of art — and forgets the music in the process. One thinks one is giving a composition a new significance by changing a metronome marking here, a dynamic marking there. The conception is a private (probably superfluous) matter of the artist. Performance, however, is only one form of making music; for the artist, it is one of many possibilities for allowing his humanity to express itself.

A complete interpretation takes place, then, when an important personality combines a musician's obsession with virtuosity. It sets about the task in hand with accomplished fidelity and allows the new experience of the work of art to arise from the utmost objectivity. That is no unreachable zenith. We have in our midst enough artists who have reached it, enough talents who will reach it. Yet it must be the goal of all who elect musical performance as their profession. Otherwise we shall suffocate in mediocrity.



The Darmstadt Staatstheater production of *Mahagonny-Songspiel*. Premiere March 1987. Directed by Ludwig Baum and conducted by Alexander Rumpf. Photo by Günter Schreckenberg.

Love Life Begins at Forty

By Terry Miller

This past spring, the 1948 Weill-Lerner *Love Life* emerged from four decades of obscurity, from a neglect only recently tempered by a growing sense of its role as progenitor of modern concept musicals. Yet doubts persisted about the viability of the show for contemporary audiences, its perceived reliance on theatrical effects and magic, and its presumed anti-marriage thesis. Was *Love Life* ahead of its time, or was its obscurity deserved?

Any show burdened with such doubts may be ill-served if its first revival is a commercial production, in which inherent constraints and concerns can force cutting of corners and make any fair appraisal of the work impossible. But fortunately, *Love Life* returned to the stage in a highly accurate and fully-mounted, non-commercial production by the Musical Theater Program of the University of Michigan's School of Music. Under the able stewardship of director Brent Wagner, musical director Jerry DePuit, and their creative staff, this all-student production rang cheers from an audience less concerned with the viability of an obscure work than in seeing a good show. Viewers with a more critical eye and ear were no less satisfied. Striding confidently beyond mere viability, *Love Life* reveals itself to be a masterwork of musical theater from the Golden Era spanning *Oklahoma!* and *My Fair Lady*.

Although experiments in form and content were not unusual during that era, *Love Life* was one of the bolder experiments. For starters, most traditional book shows traced a romance and ended with the lovers happily married or at least happily affianced. *Love Life* begins with its lovers, Sam and Susan Cooper, already married and traces their increasing unhappiness over time — considerable time, for, after a prologue set in the present, the story starts in 1791 and continues over some 150 years — without aging the Coopers. Unlike other musicals which invoked fantasy to explain the fantastic (*Finian's Rainbow*, *Brigadoon*), *Love Life* is not a fantasy; nor is it a realistic musical. Rather, it might be called "expressionist," portraying neither a realistic, specific place nor realistic, specific characters. The force opposing Sam and Susan, the source of their increasing unhappiness, is equally unconventional: the changing economic pressures of the disruption known as Progress. The play's fractured structure alternates book scenes with variety acts, in the manner of a vaudeville bill, staged without particular relation to place and time, while commenting on the action without specific reference to it.

Apparently some in the audience of the original production in 1948 could not keep up with these freewheeling elements of *Love Life*, all of which were presented during the first act. Act Two keeps to the present-day, as the Coopers' troubled marriage disintegrates into a mock Punch-and-Judy ballet, where even divorce is a function of money. *Love Life* concludes with a twenty-minute, through-composed sequence ("Minstrel Show of Illusion"), ending with the suggestion that illusory romance (the customary resolution of traditional musicals) must itself be shattered before two people can share their lives in the modern world.

As an experiment, *Love Life* did not lack antecedents. At least one quasi-expressionist musical, *The Day Before Spring* (1945), written by Lerner in collaboration with Frederick Loewe, had preceded it. Nor did *Love Life* introduce comment songs, though previously their function had been chiefly comic and incidental to the subject of the book (a rare exception, on both counts, was "Ol' Man River" in *Show Boat*). Weill, of course, was hardly a stranger to comment songs, as they dominate his European plays with music (a stunning example being his "Cäsar's Tod" from *Der Silbersee* (1933)). The structure of *Love Life* recalled earlier concept revues, which had proved so popular on Broadway during the Depression, when financial constraints prompted creators of revues to replace sheer lavishness with the intelligent (and inexpensive) alternative of unifying themes. In *As Thousands Cheer* (1933), for example, sketches and numbers each represented sections of a daily newspaper; *At Home Abroad* (1935) explored a theme of world travel. *Love Life* may not have invented its components, but it joined them in a unique manner similar to that of later "concept" musicals (*Cabaret*,



Act I, Scene 2: The Coopers meet the townsfolk of Mayville with the song "Who is Samuel Cooper?"



Act I, Scene 3: A male octet sings "Progress" as the second vaudeville number.



Act I, Scene 4: The women of Mayville dance to "Green-Up Time."



Act I, Scene 5: The vaudevillians inform the audience that good "Economics" is bad for love.

Photos by David Smith, Ann Arbor, Michigan.



Act I, Scene 6: Susan (Sharon Rosin) and Sam (Doug La Brecque) disagree on the strategies of family planning.



Act I, 8: Susan leads the suffragettes in "Women's Club Blues."



Act II, Scene 1: Prim and proper choristers open Act II with a bawdy "Madrigal."



Act II, Scene 8: Mr. Progress (Matt Chellis) and Mr. Cynic (Ty Hreben) work their magic on the Misses Horoscope and Mysticism during "The Illusion Minstrel Show."

Hallelujah, Baby!, *Company*, *Follies*, *Chicago*, etc.). Whereas songs in recent concept musicals comment on the action of the preceding scene, *Love Life*'s comment songs ("Progress," "Economics," "Love Song," etc.) precede the action — the scene plays out what has been stated in the song. No instance of this approach in another concept musical quickly comes to mind (though there may well be some).

Because the production at the University of Michigan attempted to adhere to and realize its authors' intent, one can reliably evaluate the effectiveness of the show, as well as this production. Offering a smoother "through-line" and a good deal more inherent humor than expected, Lerner's book certainly plays better on its feet than it reads on the page. The production departed from Lerner's original book in a few respects, principally the combination of several small roles (the Magician, Mr. Interlocutor, and others) into two running characters representing the forces driving Sam and Susan apart. Primarily a matter of casting, this required no newly invented dialogue and, though technically inauthentic, proved a highly effective unifying device. On the other hand, another departure from the Broadway text was the restoration of the cut "Locker Room" sequence, and this proved unwise. Lerner's lyrics for it give his characters a self-awareness out of keeping with the rest of the show. Had the lyrics for the sequence been changed to remove this quality, the point of the scene would then be undercut. It may best remain on the cutting room floor, where Weill and Lerner put it. However, another song, "Susan's Dream," cut from the show prior to the Broadway premiere, might well deserve restoration, although some question evidently remains as to its original placement. One possibility might be the final scene of Act One, after Susan has declined the adulterous advances of Bill Taylor only to discover that her husband is preoccupied with his business cronies and indifferent to her loyalty. The nightclub singer who opened this scene — prevailed upon now to sing again — might offer "Susan's Dream" as a number sung in Susan's hearing and prompting her to reconsider her refusal as Sam disappears with his buddies and the act curtain falls. This solution, however, would necessitate an arrangement of Weill's original version intended for a black, male quartet.

With or without these two numbers, Weill's score is a delight, wonderfully varied, inventive, and effective. Even those songs which have acquired some familiarity emerge crisp and rich in arrangements and orchestrations by their composer, as beautifully crafted and colored as any Weill created. Any concerns that so disparate a roster of musical styles could coalesce into a cohesive score simply vanish, not because these styles are minimized, or because the last refrain of "Here I'll Stay," sung in a 1791 scene, occurs later as a rumba, or because the "Women's Club Blues," sung in an 1894 scene, is a modified 1940s swing. The score sets its own terms and triumphs.

In addition to its songs, the score sports two major dance sequences, both of which are musically impressive. The "Green-Up Time Dance" sounds like every Michael Kidd muscular dance number rolled into one, no doubt because Mr. Kidd devised the choreography in 1948 and the composer knew what was needed. (Tim Millett set the choreography for the University of Michigan production.) The second act "Punch and Judy Get a Divorce Ballet" cleverly recycles themes already heard in the score, putting them to different and sometimes ironic purpose and incorporating them within new musical material. Particularly effective is the ballet's use of the "Green-Up Time" melody line at half-tempo, played as harmonics by the strings and sounding like a wind-up music box eerily running down. Though the ASCAP recording ban prevented a recording of the score with its original cast, it probably would have been subjected to extensive cuts. This is a score which deserves to be recorded and heard in its full 115-minute length, an event which may one day come to pass.

When a work is labelled "ahead of its time," you can be sure 20/20 hindsight is close at hand. A theatrically effective production of *Love Life* may involve a large cast, but most musicals of that period do. It does involve special stage effects, and they can be cut without harm no more than flying effects can be cut from any theatrically viable *Peter Pan*. *Love Life* is clearly not a simple show to mount, but it is also clear, thanks to the University of Michigan production, that the rewards it offers are considerable. At last, the future for *Love Life* looks bright.

Terry Miller, author of the novel Standing By, is currently preparing a history of Greenwich Village for Crown Press.

The Seven Deadly Sins at Brighton

by Jane Pritchard

"Two girls under a single brown cape"—that was the image retained in the minds of the critics and members of the Parisian audience who wrote about the first performances of *Les sept péchés capitaux* by Les Ballets 1933 in June 1933 (the ballet was presented one month later in London under the title *Anna-Anna*). The production of the ballet by Weill and Brecht was designed by Caspar Neher, with choreography by George Balanchine. The image is reinforced by a photograph of Tilly Losch and Lotte Lenya as the two Annas—the most frequently reproduced illustration from the original production of *The Seven Deadly Sins*. But what shade of brown was that cape and of what fabric was it made? The answers to these and other questions about the ballet can be answered by reference to the collection of material from Les Ballets 1933 now housed at the Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museum, Brighton, England.

This collection, which includes sets, props, and costumes from five of the six ballets created for Les Ballets 1933, was given to Brighton Museum by Edward James, the patron who funded the company established by Boris Kochno and George Balanchine. After the company's season had ended at the Savoy Theatre, London, the sets and costumes were packed up, and the majority of productions were taken in their entirety to James' West Dean estate. Here they

remained for years in the motor shed, untouched except by damp, moths, and rats, until the early 1970s when much of the collection was given to Brighton Museum. A few remaining items were auctioned by Christie's at the West Dean sale in June 1986.

It is only recently, however, that the collection at Brighton has been fully sorted. The costumes are currently being catalogued in preparation for an exhibition on Les Ballets 1933 to be held at the Museum from 19 December 1987 to 31 January 1988. Much of the material is in a fragile condition and selected items are undergoing conservation. Some of the material is in too poor a state to go on display, but at least the costumes that have survived will be fully documented.

The range of costumes for this production is fascinating. It extends from a padded bodice, presumably for the male singer taking the role of Anna's mother, to a collection of hats which includes grey felt bowler-shaped hats, a cream-colored top hat (for rich "Edward"), and two grey, crochet raffia hats. There are items of men's evening dress; two black wool crepe skirts, one with a slit side to make movement easier for the dancing Anna; and a collection of variously colored court shoes for the corps de ballet. All the costumes are designed in a contemporary 1930s style and contrast with the more fantastic creations made for the company's other ballets.

The famous knee-length brown cape, made of wool, cut with a wide neckline to accommodate the two Annas, is a muted shade of pinkish brown. Muted shades of fabric are also used in the scene portraying the first sin, Sloth; here, the cape doubles in use as the camera cloth. For this scene of blackmail in the park, the Brighton collection includes the flannel jackets, in shades of pink-grey, blue-grey, and brown-grey, of the compromised men.

By way of contrast, the dresses of the cabaret dancers in the Pride scene are a bright shade of pink. Expertly cut, these sleeveless, full-skirted dresses have yellow silk lining with frills of lace and matching yellow frilly knickers, which allowed the dancers to perform "a sort of can-can." Accessories of pink velvet belts, pink elbow-length gloves, and pink satin boots laced with pink ribbons complete the outfits. The dresses are labelled for the dancers who wore them: Kyra Blank, Galina Sidorenko, and Tamara Tchinanova.

For the scene portraying Anger, Tilly Losch appeared on horseback. The papier-mâché horse, supported in the ballet by Serge Ismailoff and Ludovic Matlinsky, was sold, without its trimmings, at the West Dean auction on 5 June 1986 (lot 1736). Losch's costume comprised a leotard covered in grey sequins with pink chiffon frills onto which clusters of three grey sequins were sewn.



Tilly Losch on horseback and Roman Jasinsky in the "Anger" scene. Photo: Hoyningen-Huene from *Vogue* magazine, 1933, courtesy of Jane Pritchard.



Tilly Losch surrounded by dancers in masks in the final scene of the ballet. Photo: Hoyningen-Huene from *Vogue* magazine, 1933, courtesy of Jane Pritchard.

A pink twill tailcoat worn by Roman Jansky as the cruel "ringmaster" who arouses Anna's anger is also part of the collection. (Tilly Losch's costume and one of the cabaret dancers' dresses are among those from this ballet that will be on display in the exhibition.)

Tom Tit's cartoon of Lotte Lenya, which appeared in *The Tatler* of 19 July 1933, shows her keeping her "sister's" greed at bay by the point of a revolver. From this scene, representing Gluttony, the Brighton collection contains Lenya's skirt which was worn with a matching blouse. The skirt is of grey sateen worn with the dull (reverse) face on the outside and painted with large crimson polka-dots. The front is decorated with bias-cut flounces of a similarly painted sateen. This is one of the costumes that was found in poor condition.

Towards the end of *Les sept péchés capitaux*, masked figures in cloaks emerge from the arc of doorways, which are covered with paper and on which the names of the sins are inscribed. The Brighton collection has a number of the molded cloth masks, which were held to the face by elastic, and a collection of twenty-one cloaks! These cloaks have black net foundations onto which large scalloped layers of fabric, mostly rough-cut cotton, are stitched. The cloaks fasten at the neck with a draw-string. Surprisingly for a production remembered for its somber nature, these cloaks are all colors of the rainbow except indigo and violet. In addition to the masks worn over the dancers' faces, there are a number of masks on hand-held poles, comparable to the ones which were sold at the West Dean auction (lot 1738).

Little of the constructed set for this ballet has survived. However, the seven painted banners that hung over the stage were rediscovered in time for four to be loaned to the Caspar Neher exhibition mounted by The Arts Council of Great Britain last year (although they were not all shown at each of the venues to which the exhibition travelled). These banners were described variously in reviews as "cautionary pictures" or "rather ugly illustrations of the sins." Executed by brush on unstretched canvas, they are painted sepia and grey on a yellow ground and a few have touches of red. The banner for Sloth depicts a woman stretched out, surrounded by men. Pride is represented by a woman, sprouting wings with clawed feet, who dances before a crowd; the design for this scene is reproduced in *Les Ballets 1933*'s souvenir program. Anger is shown as a solo figure of an irate working man. Gluttony is illustrated by a man force-feeding his fat friend; wine is poured into the obese man's open mouth through a funnel. A



Costumes for *Les sept péchés capitaux*, *Les Ballets 1933*, designed by Caspar Neher and executed by Karinska. Left: Pink dress lined with yellow silk and lace frills worn by the cabaret dancer in "Pride." Right: Costume worn by Tilly Losch portraying Anna as a film star on horseback in "Anger." Photo courtesy of the Brighton Museum.

Théâtre des CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES

JUIN
MERCREDI 7, SAMEDI 10, LUNDI 12
MERCREDI 14, SAMEDI 17
à 21 heures

LES BALLETS 1933



Poster of *Les Ballets 1933*, Paris. Photo courtesy of Jane Pritchard.

scantly-clad hag holding a mask in her raised left hand represents Lust; with one foot on a stool she has her legs spread and a man in a top hat kneels at her right foot. Avarice is portrayed by three grotesque figures kneeling over a pot of coins, and Envy, by a woman, stripped to the waist, balancing by one foot on a ball marked "rien." The word *rien* is also inscribed on her breasts and belly. The original sketch for this banner was on loan from Austria for the 1986 Neher Exhibition, and this design demonstrated that the image had been changed slightly in execution. As with the costumes, the condition of the banners varies, but some examples will be on display in Brighton at Christmas.

A certain number of images of the original production survive in George Hoyningen-Huene's black and white photographs. These were taken on stage at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, probably after a rehearsal of the ballet with the use of extra photographic lights. The photographs reveal only two sections of the set in front of which the performers portray a number of the scenes. Shots of Tilly Losch and Lotte Lenya, including the photograph of the Annas wrapped in the brown cape, show the downstage, right corner with steps up to the parlor on stilts, to which "access is gained by wooden steps and a swaying rickety door." The other Hoyningen-Huene photographs are taken against the arc of arches center stage, and all these photos have in the background the torn door marked "Envie," irrespective of the sin portrayed. These photographs were reproduced in a number of contemporary periodicals and newspapers (most notably in *Vogue*) but have rarely been seen since.

It is hoped that the exhibition of Brighton will lead to better documentation of all the works created for *Les Ballets 1933*. Included will be designs (borrowed from other collections and archives), publicity material, and photographs as well as sets, costumes, and properties for the ballets. Although the original choreography for the ballets is lost, our understanding of the works can be enlarged greatly by studying the preserved original materials.

Editor's note: There will be a study day on Saturday, 23 January 1988 in conjunction with the exhibition. Full details are available from the Brighton Art Gallery and Museum, Church Street, Brighton, England. (Telephone: 0273-603-005)

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