

# BOOKS

**Bertolt Brecht: Chaos, According to Plan.** By John Fuegi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. 223 pp.

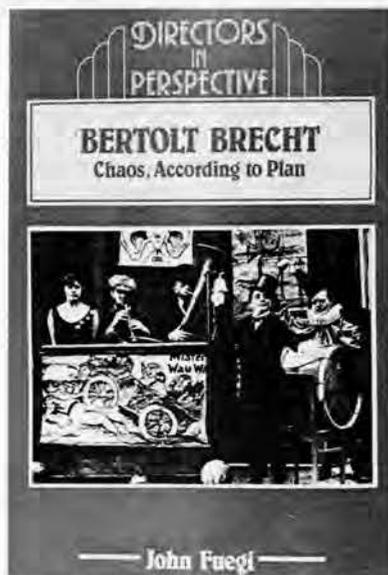
*Chaos, According to Plan* is part of the series "Directors in Perspective," published under the general editorship of Christopher Innes. The aim of the series is "to redress the balance" in theatrical criticism by giving the modern director his due, an admirable attempt that runs the risk of creating a new imbalance caused by the prejudices of the particular author. That John Fuegi never stumbles into this pitfall is but one of the outstanding qualities of his fine book.

As in his earlier work, *The Essential Brecht* (Hennessey & Ingalls, 1972), Fuegi argues that because Brecht was first and foremost a man of the theater, his plays and theory are best understood within the context of the living theater, as the pragmatic process of mounting a production for an audience. Or, as Brecht was fond of saying, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." From this starting point, Fuegi examines the ingredients of Brecht's theatrical practice — from his earliest directorial attempts to his international successes with the Berliner Ensemble — to help us understand how the pudding was made and why the eating was pleasurable.

From extensive production records, photographs, and interviews, Fuegi draws a detailed picture of Brecht at work in the theater: how he got what he wanted from actors, musicians, designers, technicians, collaborators, and "co-directors"; how Brecht the director corrected, and sometimes condemned, Brecht the playwright; how he modified his earlier theories to suit his current practice and often threw out theory altogether; and, above all, how he exercised nearly total control over every element of production until often he achieved, theory aside, electrifying performances.

The portrait of Brecht as director, however, carries Fuegi's study outside the theater. For, as Fuegi demonstrates, Brecht's brilliance lay in the conscious synthesis of contradictory elements (the "planned chaos" of the title), and these contradictions can not be understood without a scrutiny of the contradictions in other aspects of Brecht's life: his attitude towards himself, his relationships with collaborators and lovers, his financial affairs, his theory and polemics, his paradoxical public humility and self-promotion, and, finally, the scripts themselves. Thus, *Chaos, According to Plan* is as much a biographical sketch of Brecht as a complex human being as it is an analysis of his directorial methods.

Fuegi has impressive command of the evidence of Brecht's practical work in the theater and presents vividly yet succinctly a complex panorama of ideas. Like some of Brecht's



best poems, Fuegi's prose is concentrated. The author's opinion is always evident; he does not hide behind a scholarly facade. See, for example, Fuegi's delightful summary of the dramatic situation at the time of Brecht's birth (pp. 1-2); his provocative overview of Berlin in the 1920s (pp. 39-40); the outstanding discussion of the supposed conflict between Brecht's call for "coolness" and the "hot" effect of his productions on the audience (pp. 30-36); his summary of the contradictions within Brecht (pp. 50-51); his eloquent interpretation of *Mutter Courage*; and the description of Brecht's work with the Berliner Ensemble during his last years (pp. 110-86).

The strengths of this book so far outweigh the weaknesses that to mention its few flaws would seem almost petty. But, readers must be warned that the book contains a few minor errors of fact, as well as passages which may mislead those not already familiar with the principal works of Brecht scholarship. Occasionally, too, typographical errors and faulty grammar interrupt the smooth flow of Fuegi's prose. I found these minor errors the most irritating because, like warts on a Madonna, they mar the lucid, lively language in which Fuegi elegantly presents his case.

Fuegi assumes that his reader already knows a great deal about Brecht, and much of what he presents serves to correct some false or inflated notions fostered by previously published works. Therefore, *Chaos* should not be the first book one reads on the subject even though it may well be the best book in English on the brilliant, irritating, complex playwright/songster/propagandist/director/polemicist. If the world is ready for yet another biography of Brecht, I hope John Fuegi writes it.

RONALD SHULL  
Lexington, KY

**Opera for a New Republic: The *Zeitoper* of Krenek, Weill and Hindemith.** By Susan C. Cook. Ann Arbor: U.M.I. Research Press, 1988. 284 pp.

In an article published in 1930 Franz Schreker observed: "recently some modern critic implored contemporary composers to give the operatic stage the opera of this time. Now I'd like him to consider: a good opera cannot be written in two weeks — or even in three months. Under some circumstances it can take two years or longer to complete — two years! Just consider all the things that have happened during these last years, things that were praised, have disappeared and are today already ignored and ridiculed. The worst thing an artist could do would be to give any thought to the time in which he lives."

Schreker's rather drastic remarks are principally directed toward that phenomenon known as the *Zeitoper*. His discomfort with the genre was partially personal in nature, for he himself had completed a *Zeitoper* of his own only a year before and the creative episode had been anything but pleasant. Like Schreker, virtually every composer who was drawn into experimenting with topical opera would come to feel a similar disillusionment with the experience, and by the time Schreker penned his remarks the composers most successfully riding the wave of *Zeitoper* popularity were already turning to other interests. The German *Zeitoper* of the later 1920's was a short-lived, self-consciously ephemeral phenomenon whose historical significance lies in its very transience as a snapshot of an era.

Susan Cook has written an attractive book about this important chapter in twentieth-century music history in which she investigates the genre, its antecedents, and contemporary impact through three of its most successful representatives. Her clearly written and organized study, generously illustrated with photographs and musical examples, is divided into eight chapters with notes, alas, at the end of the book. The first four chapters explore the nature of musical life in Weimar Germany, the aesthetic precepts of its composers, artists, and writers, and the influence of impulses from France and America, particularly jazz and dance music (appendices A and B include a list of jazz-inspired compositions in Europe and America and a translation of an important essay by Krenek). Chapters 5-7 are studies of the topically inspired works by Ernst Krenek, Kurt Weill, and Paul Hindemith, while the short concluding chapter examines further examples of *Zeitoper* by Schreker, d'Albert, Toch, Brand, Rathaus, Grosz, Antheil, and Schoenberg (appendices C and D include plot synopses of the principal operas discussed and a rather imprecise statistical list of opera productions and performances).

In her introduction Cook argues in favor of a so-called "thick description" of music history through the exploration of social and cultural context, and it is gratifying to see that she has made a genuine effort to grasp the period from the perspective of contemporary sources. These include periodicals, newspapers, letters, and personal interviews, as well as a broad range of books and pamphlets scarcely known in this country, but of extraordinary significance at the time. (Most of these items and a rich variety of secondary sources are gathered together into an extremely valuable bibliography.) To be sure, there are a few surprising lacunae in this source list. It is puzzling, for instance, that she quotes extensively from correspondences between both Hindemith and Weill and their publishers, Schott and Universal Edition, respectively, but makes no use of the equally important correspondence between Krenek and U.E.

While Cook's treatment of her narrowly defined subject is clear, things do get a little fuzzy around the edges. There are, for instance, a great number of annoying inaccuracies and imprecisions regarding people, places, and works. She identifies Leo Kestenberg (p. 2) as the "head of the Prussian Ministry of Culture" when he was actually an advisor in musical matters. Paul Hindemith was not the founder of the experimental radio laboratory at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik (p. 21, 155), and Franz Schreker did not just "take a position" at the Hochschule in 1920, but had been appointed the institution's director. In a similar vein, Cook identifies Julius Kapp as an employee of the Berlin State Opera and a contributor to the *Blätter der Staatsoper* when he was in fact the Staatsoper's dramaturg and the editor of its house publication. There are likewise curious geographic dislocations, as when Cook writes that in 1925 Paul Bekker became the intendant of the opera houses of Cassel-Basel (p. 12) or implies that the occupation of French Senegalese troops in the Rhineland in the early twenties had a significant impact upon the reception of *Jonny spielt auf* at its first performance in the Bavarian capital of Munich in 1929 (p. 105).

Dating, too, is sometimes incorrect or misleading. Hindemith left Germany in 1938, not 1935 (p. 5). On page 6, we are told that Ernst Krenek left Germany in 1933, while on page 17, we learn that he fled the country in 1938; in point of fact, Krenek returned to Austria in 1928 and left that country shortly before the Anschluss in March 1938. Kurt Weill arrived in Berlin in the fall of 1920 before he had any idea of studying with Busoni (p. 117), and it is surely a misprint that 1920 (p. 13) and not 1926 is given as the date for Weill's *Protagonist*. On Page 11 Cook characterizes Paul Bekker's *Kritische Zeitbilder* as a postwar work when the book, published in 1921, is in fact a collection of newspaper reviews and essays, most of which had appeared before 1918. She claims that the progressive music journal *Melos* was published by Schott as early as 1920 (chapter 2, footnote 6)



when the periodical was not acquired by the Mainz publisher until 1927. The second edition of Busoni's *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst* appeared in 1916, not 1919 (p. 11). And Schreker's *Christophorus*, whose plot is completely garbled in her retelling, was written 1925-1929, not 1924-1928, its premiere scheduled for 1933, not 1931.

Elsewhere Cook leaves legends unchallenged, as when she gives undue emphasis to the importance of the Kroll opera — which, she later admits, "rarely produced modern works" — at the expense of the very real contributions of the Berlin State Opera and the Städtische Oper in Charlottenburg, both of which presented numerous premieres and first performances throughout the Weimar period. Cook shows a healthy skepticism when she questions the attribution of the foxtrot in the Finale of Hindemith's *Kammermusik No. 1* to the composer Wilm Wilm (p. 150). On the other hand, she accepts at face value as the purported source for Krenek's *Toccata and Chaconne*, Op. 13 of 1923 the entirely spurious chorale "Ja, ich glaub an Jesum Christum" (p. 78).

Such errors and oversights mar, but do not invalidate this otherwise useful study, whose principal merits rest in its central argument and overall narrative. Cook has given us significant insights into the musical culture of the Weimar Republic, into composers' preoccupation with defining and reaching new and broader audiences, embracing vernacular musical idioms from abroad, and experimenting with the props of a consumer-oriented technological age.

If there is one fundamental shortcoming in this study, however, it is the author's tendency to argue not from individual phenomena, but from concepts. In painstaking efforts to define her terms, Cook creates tidy categories that stand in direct contradiction to her avowed espousal of "thick history," where neat intersections and sharp contrasts seldom exist. *Neue Sachlichkeit*, for instance, is as much an outgrowth of Expressionism as a

reaction to it, and Cook's frequent and overly simplistic contrasts between old and new, progressive and conservative, pre- and post-war, pro- and anti-Wagnerian simply do not do justice to the complex cross-currents of the age or to the contradictory components in such figures as Paul Bekker, one of Cook's champions of the "new." Cook rightly emphasizes the influence of Bekker's sociological approach to music history, which fits well into her overall argument, but she fails to account for his advocacy of such diverse figures as Mahler, Schoenberg, Schreker, Rudi Stephan, Krenek, Busoni, and Weill, or his later interest in musical phenomenology and his rather conservative tastes as a stage director in Kassel and Wiesbaden. And what is one to make of the declaration: "Busoni and Bekker fostered the split between old and new which characterized postwar musical life" (p. 12), or the assertion "With the forced departure of both Krenek and Weill in 1933, only Paul Hindemith was left to speak for the postwar generation of German composers" (p. 145)? Or of: "Hans Pfitzner, however, along with Erich Wolfgang Korngold and other older composers, continued to create operas in the Wagnerian mold" (p. 10). Cook should have included Berg and Schoenberg among those "other older composers," but that might have thrown her tidy conservative-progressive categories into disarray. Blanket statements of this kind usually cover the shivering frame of some very thin history indeed.

Finally, Cook's narrow definition of the *Zeitoper* (which she asserts must be comic, include modern stereotypes, everyday settings, theatrical props of modern life, and the use of jazz) may clear up many misconceptions, but it also leads her to pay only passing attention to a host of important and unquestionably relevant works such as Max Brand's extremely successful *Maschinist Hopkins* and George Antheil's *Transatlantic*. She likewise gives short shrift to the genre of the topical ballet-pantomime, which included a number of remarkable works by, among others, Wilhelm Grosz and Jaap Kool. Finally, though she discusses at length the influence of revue and cabaret on the *Zeitoper*, Cook fails to address adequately the genre's relationship to the operetta, a form of musical theater which also made extensive use of contemporary props and proved receptive to impulses from abroad.

Impatience with the limitations of this study does not diminish one's appreciation for Cook's considerable accomplishment in gathering together so much valuable source material. Unlike the *Zeitoper* she discusses — many of which were written in three months (or even two weeks) — Cook's study reflects years of research for which we must be grateful. She has made a valuable contribution that breaks new ground and whets our appetite to explore an intriguing and largely forgotten repertory.

CHRISTOPHER HAILEY  
New Haven

# BOOKS

**Bertolt Brecht/Kurt Weill, *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*: Texte, Materialien, Kommentare.** Edited by Atilla Csampai and Dietmar Holland. Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1987. 316 pp.

The mistitled "Orgy" reproduced in reverse image on the cover of this handbook could well serve as an illustration of either of the works under discussion. Commonly known as "A Tavern Scene," it is also featured in Hogarth's series of engravings *The Rake's Progress*, which provided a starting point for Stravinsky's opera of the same name. Yet there is no denying a resemblance, both in style and subject, to the same artist's contemporaneous portrayals of Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, the latter being the main source of inspiration for the other work dealt with in this volume, *Die Dreigroschenoper*. One might be forgiven, therefore, for identifying the semi-recumbent foppish male on whom three ladies of ill-repute are lavishing professional attention as Macheath, rather than as the figure who was eventually to acquire the name of Tom Rakewell. But are there further, if less obvious, links between these two works than the common factor of Hogarth? According to the volume's editors, the answer is a definite "yes." This reviewer is less sure.

If the editors had been able to stick to the usual format of the "rororo opernbücher" series, to which this handbook belongs, the problems posed by the curious marriage between Auden-Kallman-Stravinsky and Brecht-Weill would have been compounded by the practical matter of fitting into a single volume two substantial librettos along with all the other materials and commentaries. It would have made for a very fat book, indeed. As it is, the editors were unsuccessful in securing permission from Suhrkamp Verlag to reprint the book of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Instead, as well as supplying a lengthy synopsis-cum-interpretation, they include a page of commentary justifying the coupling with *The Rake*.

Nonetheless, here are two operas of our century — before and after the catastrophe of the Nazi terror — which reveal numerous subterranean connections, not the least of which being that they react to the crisis of the genre — albeit with completely different, even contradictory means, both aesthetically and in terms of content — in a way that proclaims virtual paradigmatic status.



Apart from Hogarth, then, we have a factitious reference to National Socialism as well as a reaction to the general crisis of opera.

Furthermore, [the two works] are influenced, again in a contrasting way, by the principle of "epic" music-theater, with open, even aggressive polemical and socially critical force (Brecht-Weill) on the one hand, and with a highly differentiated technique of allusion to the history and topology of the genre itself (Stravinsky) on the other.

The contrasts, one could argue, are greater than the similarities, particularly in view of the twenty-three years and the Second World War that separate the works and the "contradictory means" to which the editors allude. (In their eagerness to stress connections, they plainly overstep the mark by naming Stravinsky's librettist, W.H. Auden, as Isherwood's collaborator on the translation of the *Dreigroschenroman*; it was Desmond Vesey, and the translation was published in 1937, not 1943.) It would have been considerably more illuminating, surely, to couple *Die Dreigroschenoper* with an earlier work of Stravinsky's, his *Histoire du soldat*. Here the links are — aesthetically, historically, and in terms of influence — quite manifest.

The question of compatibility aside, most of the materials offered here on the two "operas" have appeared elsewhere, for the most part in accessible publications. The only new material is, in each case, the introductory essay and the explanatory and summarizing notes interspersed between the various documents. In the case of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the principal source was Suhrkamp's *Dreigroschenbuch*, first published in 1960. Thus we get reprints of the partly inaccurate reminiscences by Lotte Lenya (to which the editors have added those by Ernst Josef Aufricht); the well-known commentaries by

Brecht and Weill; and the seemingly obligatory reviews by Adorno and Bloch. In addition, the editors have included excerpts from Jan Knopf's uneven *Brecht-Handbuch* (Metzler, 1980), Helmut Kothschenreuther's pioneering but now superannuated monograph *Kurt Weill* (Max Hesse, 1962), Carl Dahlhaus' *Musik-ästhetik* (Laaber, 1967), and Leo Gerhartz's introductory textbook on the history of opera, *Oper* (Laaber, 1983).

The interpretive stance adopted by four of these five last-mentioned authors is indebted to a notion first proposed by Adorno and Bloch in their respective reviews: namely, that the popularity of *Die Dreigroschenoper* was founded on a fundamental misunderstanding on the part of the audience. Against the background of the last quarter of a century or so, in which literary criticism has grappled with the hermeneutic questions raised by reader-oriented textual theories, such a notion of "misunderstanding," which implies a single "definitive" reading of a text, seems both naive and old-fashioned. In this particular case, taken even on its own terms, the notion is strictly inapplicable. The "correct" reading, which Brecht retrospectively imposed on *Die Dreigroschenoper* with the help of theoretical "Notes," applies to the revised version of the text, published in 1931, and not to the piece that elicited the initial "Threepenny Fever." It is by no means insignificant, for instance, that the passage from the work so often cited to clinch the "correct" understanding of the work — Macheath's pseudo-Marxist valediction — was one of the more substantial of Brecht's (or possibly Elisabeth Hauptmann's) post-production emendations.

The only contribution in this anthology to take account of recent research into the discrepancies between the original and standard versions of *Die Dreigroschenoper* (in particular the work of Fritz Hennenberg) is the excellent short introductory essay by Egon Voss, which sensitively discusses the performance difficulties posed by the work's uncertain generic status. Voss pursues these reflections in his highly selective annotated discography, in which he censures any attempts at tampering with Weill's score, while considering the extraordinary musical demands placed on performers. These sections of the book are two welcome novelties among otherwise more familiar and, in parts, unreliable material. Prospective readers should be warned that the appended chronology, relying heavily on the dates given in Werner Hecht's handbook *Brechts Dreigroschenoper* (Suhrkamp, 1985), is riddled with inaccuracies.

STEPHEN HINTON  
Berlin

**The Theatre Art of Boris Aronson.** By Frank Rich with Lisa Aronson. New York: Knopf, 1987. 323 pp.

**Gershwin.** By Edward Jablonski. New York: Doubleday, 1987. 436 pp.

Two recent books are worthy additions to the shelf of essential books on the American theater. Both touch upon the career of Kurt Weill and, if not setting that career in new light, offer new perspectives on Weill's collaborators in the contexts of their own careers.

Today the late Boris Aronson is remembered best as the scenic designer of such stylized musicals of the 1960's and 1970's as *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Cabaret*, and the Prince-Sondheim shows from *Company* through *Pacific Overtures*. *The Theatre Art of Boris Aronson* provides opulent color photos of these designs and does more than merely present them as the culmination of a 60-year career. It builds a case for the scenic designer to be considered as a collaborative equal and supports as valid the expanding role that stage settings play in the current convention of American theater.

In the view of author Frank Rich, Aronson figured prominently in both of these developments. With the assistance of Lisa Aronson (Aronson's wife and associate), Rich illustrates his case with words by Aronson and his colleagues and with nearly 600 images, a third of which are reproduced in color. It is a measure of the book's success that such disparate documents can be shaped into a cohesive study. Rich's text is informed without waxing rhapsodic, though it is on firmer ground with the discussion of recent shows on which he has formed a first-hand opinion.

Aronson designed Weill's *Love Life* (1948). Its key role in Rich's story is suggested by the ten pages it is given and by the twenty-six images from the show which are offered, twenty-one in color. As elsewhere in the book, Aronson's color sketches are set beside black and white production shots of the same scenes, giving a clearer sense of the look of the show than either alone provides.

Unfortunately, Rich's text on *Love Life* seems to rely heavily on an interview with Elia Kazan, the production's director. Though previously associated with Weill's musicals (as a chorus member in *Johnny Johnson* and as the stage director for *One Touch of Venus*), Kazan's reputation has not rested on his work in musical theater or even in light comedy. Rich acknowledges charm, humor, and a lightness of touch as the ingredients needed to put *Love Life* over, but does not discuss



Kazan's ability to provide them. Rich concludes that the show, and not the production, must have been cold, sour, and out-of-sync with Broadway audiences of the late 1940's. Emblematic of this adoption of Kazan's view is an unfortunate typographical error on page 93 allowing a paragraph beginning in editorial voice to end as a quotation by Kazan without opening quotation marks to indicate where Rich's sentiments end and Kazan's begin. More than mere typographical correction is needed to rectify this discussion of *Love Life*.

Edward Jablonski's *Gershwin* is a sensitive biography of the composer's life, far more detailed than either his 1959 collaboration with Lawrence D. Stewart or the splashy Gershwin celebration compiled by Robert Kimball and Alfred Simon in 1973. Neither sensational nor timid, the Jablonski book offers a fuller account of the life and works than available elsewhere.

Weill appears in these pages when meeting the Gershwins in Berlin in 1928, and again in New York in 1935 when *Porgy and Bess* alerted Weill to the commercial possibilities of Broadway. In an epilogue, Weill's three collaborations with Ira Gershwin receive brief but informed coverage, and, in light of the Gershwins' careers, take on interesting resonances inevitably softened when the creation of these works is told from Weill's point of view.

*Gershwin* is not without problems, chiefly in its habit of repetition. Four pages after being told that the original *Porgy and Bess* production cut its prices to \$3.30 to keep running, the reader faces the same statement with the exact wording, as if it were news. This happens frequently throughout the book, although this flaw can not undermine the detailed chronicle of the opera's creation, nor the affecting, unsanitized version of Gershwin's final illness.

TERRY MILLER  
New York

## Maxwell Anderson Centennial Celebration

Rockland Community College is sponsoring a year-long Maxwell Anderson Centennial Celebration from May 1988 to June 1989. Dr. Martin F. Schwartz is the Director and Miss Helen Hayes serves as Chairperson. The opening night festivities are scheduled for 13 June at Rockland Community College; an exhibition, curated by Stephan Hadley will be on display at the Rockland County Historical Society from 14 September through November. Fall 1988 will bring a four-night film festival, the television premiere of "Remembering Max" on WNET (Channel 13 in New York), and a special ceremony at the Library of Congress. A conference, "Maxwell Anderson and the New York Theater" will take place on 15 April at Rockland Community College; publication of the papers is planned for the following June. Inquiries may be made to Dr. Schwartz, Rockland Community College, 145 College Road, Suffern, NY 10901.

## Seventh Symposium on Literature and the Arts A Call for Papers

**"German Literature and Music: An Aesthetic Fusion" — University of Houston, 1 - 4 March 1989.**

The University of Houston Department of German and School of Music invite papers from scholars of German literature and music scholars with specialization in compositions from German-speaking countries. Papers should investigate the relationship between literature and music of the period 1890 to the present.

From among literary works written during this time that have musical antecedents or consequences, scholars of literature may focus on a single work, the work of a single author, a single genre (drama, novel, poetry), or several different works. Similarly, from the many musical works composed in this period that have literary associations, music scholars may approach the fusion from the perspective of a single composer or composition, a single genre (art song, instrumental music, opera), or works in several forms. The submission deadline is 31 August 1988.

For more information, contact Professor Claus Reschke, Department of German, University of Houston, Houston, TX 77004; telephone (713) 749-2159.

# PERFORMANCES



*Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* in the Teatro Colón production at Buenos Aires. Photo: Arnaldo Colombaroli

## **Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny.** Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires, 24 November - 4 December 1987.

There are cities — Vienna and Milan come readily to mind — in which opera enjoys a position of extraordinary prominence in municipal cultural life. Buenos Aires is another such place, and opera's special position there is underscored by the magnificence of its opera house, the Teatro Colón. The Colón, often referred to as Argentina's twenty-third province, is stunning no less for its splendid appointments than for its grandiose dimensions. With a spacious parterre and seven galleries, this house has a seating capacity of nearly four thousand, and its vast stage veritably invites spectacle (of which the Colón has had more than its share since its gala opening in 1908). The audience of the Colón is as elegant as any in the world — though arguably more self-consciously so — and, not surprisingly, its tastes are impeccably conservative. Given this setting, as well as the memory of recent Argentine history, it was therefore both artistically daring and politically provocative to conclude the 1987 season (after which the theater will close for a year of eightieth-birthday renovations) with a new production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*.

As if in disdain for convention and the patriotic formality of the house itself, the curtain was already open as the audience took their seats. The orchestra, seated on a platform at stage level, was not lowered into the pit until the overture had begun (a process repeated after the intermission). Across the back of the bare stage, where the wings were open to view, ran a simple white strip, subdivided into

dozens of adjoining squares. This innocuous backdrop was in fact a series of screens onto which slides (sometimes in multiple image), film or even live video (the explanation for the cameras strategically spaced throughout the auditorium) were projected. What had at first appeared to be a bare, almost spartan production in stark contrast to the opulence of the theater turned out to be an extravagant multi-media show.

The visual barrage that followed ranged from period drawings by Georg Grosz, Otto Dix, and other Weimar contemporaries (with an occasional photograph of Marilyn Monroe) to interpolations of film clips from such silent classics as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* and Charlie Chaplin's *Gold Rush*. Particularly arresting was the use of giant live video close-ups of the singers (mostly in the duets between Jenny and Jimmy), projected behind them like giant shadows. In counterpoint to this whirl of visual activity was an assortment of stage machinery, including platforms on which small groups of singers and instrumentalists were moved about on unseen rails; naturally when it came time for Jimmy to board his imaginary ship in Act II, there was a platform ready to take him on a voyage around the stage. The Colón's technical crew proved adept in coordinating all of this gadgetry, but the minor imprecisions and mishaps that remained made one all too aware of the precariousness of their achievement.

It is readily apparent that set designer Tito Egorza and stage director Jaime Kogan (who is well known throughout Latin America for his innovative theater and opera productions) were intent upon using modern technology to find contemporary equivalents for some of the more traditional alienation effects of Brechtian epic theater. There is a difference, however, between establishing critical distance and making a frontal assault on the listener's pow-

ers of concentration. Kogan's visual images often seemed gratuitous, and the video close-ups of the singers effectively divorced them from one another and from their stage environment, while at the same time creating a disturbing discrepancy between visual and aural receptions. The characters themselves were often little more than objects of directorial manipulation, indistinct and lacking independent will or identity. Kogan seems to have conceived of *Mahagonny* more as a series of cabaret scenes and production numbers than as an opera with its own large-scale architectural design. As a result the structural weaknesses inherent in the first- and third-act finales became all the more apparent. It is indeed a paradox that the *Mahagonny* opera, so grand, so "epic" in its scope, succeeds best when it retains some of the intimacy of its original chamber version.

The nature of the production makes it difficult to assess the achievements of the individual performers. Ute Trekel-Burckhardt was convincing as the Widow Begbick and Jan van Rhee has the makings of an outstanding Jimmy. Carole Farley, though suitably svelte as Jenny, did not seem entirely comfortable with the part and had difficulty projecting a well-defined character. Veteran Berliner Ensemble actor Hans Peter Minetti was an excellent narrator (in fluent Spanish), and he moved about the stage with practiced ease. The musical text was sung in German with running Spanish translations on yet another screen (apparently a novelty for Buenos Aires). Only van Rhee and Trekel-Burckhardt were truly at home in German so that intelligibility of the text was uneven. This problem was exacerbated by an imbalance between voice and orchestra, caused, as one critic no doubt correctly speculated, by the absence of an acoustical shell on the immense stage.

The score was performed virtually uncut with a single intermission after the first act. Conductor Antonio Tauriello was at times heavy-handed and less spirited than one might have wished, though the instrumental and choral forces were generally well rehearsed. Occasional inaccuracies in intonation and rhythm, particularly during ensemble scenes, seemed the result of coordination difficulties between instrumentalists and singers scattered about the stage and in the proscenium boxes.

This production of *Mahagonny* was not, strictly speaking, an Argentine premiere, since according to the excellent program notes by Juan Pedro Franze the work was first staged in 1967 in one of the city's smaller theaters, albeit with piano accompaniment. However, memories of the generally favorable reaction accorded that earlier staging can not have prepared the Colón's directors for the frenzied response to the present production. There were six sold-out performances (this reviewer attended the fourth), which in the Teatro Colón quite literally means standing room only. After the premiere the reviewer of the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* observed that "the psychosis unleashed more than three decades ago with the first [Buenos Aires] performance of Berg's *Wozzeck* is nothing compared to the absolutely stunning effect of last Tuesday's Colón performance of the monumental version of *Mahagonny*." While there were some misgivings about Kogan's excesses, local reviewers generally shared the audience's enthusiasm. In light of this remarkable resonance — and the fact that *Mahagonny* was done in the Colón at all — the criticisms of an outsider must weigh less heavily in the balance. The enormous effort and tremendous care invested in this production make one curious about the ends to which the considerable resources of the Teatro Colón will be put when it reopens. There is reason to be optimistic about the future of twentieth-century opera repertoire in Argentina.

CHRISTOPHER HAILEY  
New Haven

## Der neue Orpheus.

Brooklyn Philharmonic. New York, 29 January 1988.

On 29 January, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, under the direction of Lukas Foss, offered a program of works that found common inspiration in the figure and mythology of Orpheus. The program included Igor Stravinsky's *Orpheus* (1947), Hans Werner Henze's madrigal cycle *Orpheus Behind the Wire* (1981-83), Lukas Foss's own *Orpheus* (1972), and Kurt Weill's cantata for soprano, violin, and orchestra *Der neue Orpheus* (1925). The self-consciousness of the program might itself have been the predominant fascination of the

evening; the concert's achievement rests partly in the confrontational force created by the juxtaposition of the works, all of which struggle with the images of music and its maker. Considered as a whole, the program was disconcerting; the Apollonian serenity of Stravinsky's *Orpheus* and the dispassionate ritual of the Foss piece contrasted starkly with the brute images of Henze's settings of Edward Bond's holocaust poems and the apocalyptic suicide of Weill's twentieth-century artist.

*Der neue Orpheus* was composed in 1925 in the midst of Weill's own growing consciousness and mastery of "a new type of expression that is...new..., more confident, much freer, lighter — and simpler." Surely, Weill was acknowledging the formal clarity of the work, which according to the program notes, comprises three main sections. The piece begins with a terse orchestral introduction and the soprano soloist's evocation of a doomed mankind and its ravaged planet. A halting, but increasingly ominous melody is announced and quickly dismembered; staccato chords and rushing arpeggios form the substance of the accompaniment. In the second part, the appearance of Orpheus is announced and the hope of mankind's redemption is affirmed. Orpheus carries on in his redemptive mission in alternately droll and ironic circumstances described in seven "variations," which feature the soprano — who narrates Orpheus' activity among men — and a solo violin. In the third and final section, Orpheus encounters Euridice, "Das Weib, das unverstandene Leben." Here, Euridice assumes the figure of unredeemed humanity and withdraws from the redemptive embrace of Orpheus into banality. Orpheus, confounded, kills himself.

The text of "Der neue Orpheus," Iwan Goll's surrealist poem of 1917, depicts a bourgeois, socially conscious, and politically moderate Orpheus who is destroyed ultimately as he pursues the idealized redemptive mission of the artist in the sterile and hopeless contemporary world. The theme of social and individual alienation finds a musical correlative in Weill's peculiar use of a dissonance, the interval of the tritone. When Euridice's name is exclaimed near the end of the work, it is set to the interval of G/C-sharp. When Orpheus moves to embrace Euridice, the theme heard at the opening of the piece is suddenly recapitulated with jarring effect, the pitches now transposed through a tritone. Thus, the recapitulation seems ironic; the illusion of closure is belied by the irregularity and transformation of the harmonic structure.

Lucy Shelton, the soprano soloist, was assured and engaging in her interpretation; at moments, however, her projection was hampered by acoustic imbalances that brought the orchestra too readily into unwanted prominence. Yuval Waldman, the violinist, accompanied Ms. Shelton in the variations much as a second vocalist, rather than as a disengaged member of the orchestra; his playing responded to the irony of the singer's narrative with appropriate sinuousness and wit. Mr.

Foss conducted the work with more ease and less obtrusiveness than he did Stravinsky's *Orpheus*.

Similarities, rather than differences, between Weill and Stravinsky were noted by early critics of *Der neue Orpheus*; Heinrich Strobel and Hugo Leichtentritt each called attention to affinities between the orchestration and idiom of the two composers. But comparing Mr. Foss's renditions of the Weill and Stravinsky *Orpheus* affirmed my impression of the wholly different experiences of musical time that inform the two compositions. The details of *Der neue Orpheus* suggest a widening gap between Weill and the neo-classicism and objectivity of Stravinsky; the brief ostinato figure that precedes the entrance of the voice seems less akin to the ostinatos of Weill's own Violin Concerto, op. 12 than to the opening storm of *Die Walküre*. Critics have recognized the origins of the compositional style of *Der Neue Orpheus* in a "new objectivity"; yet, the interest of the work lies primarily in its theme of social commitment. In so far as the work stresses the image of confrontation, Weill's Orpheus might even claim some kinship with Wagner's panoply of operatic redeemers.

ANTHONY BARONE  
Columbia University

## Die sieben Todsünden.

Grosses Haus, Staatstheater Dresden. 11 December 1987.

Two years ago the Dresden composer Udo Zimmermann (one of the most performed of contemporary German opera composers) established the Dresdner Zentrum für zeitgenössische Musik, an organization dedicated to research and performance which sponsors an annual festival of contemporary music. Its latest project, produced in cooperation with the Dresden Staatstheater, was an unusual and successful performance of *Die sieben Todsünden*. The suggestion for the performance came from Arila Siegert, a dancer and choreographer who is known for continuing the traditions of *Ausdruckstanz* founded in Germany during the 1920's by such outstanding dancers as Mary Wigman and Gret Palucca. Opera director Peter Konwitschny collaborated with Siegert and Udo Zimmermann served as conductor.

Unlike the ballet evening which features *Die sieben Todsünden* on a program with one or more ballets, here the work assumed the evening's focus, preceded only by Charles Ives' six-minute orchestral piece *The Unanswered Question* (1908). The latter title suggested an overall theme for the evening: the odyssey of the two sisters as an "unanswered question," posing the query, "To what extent can the unconcealed ambitions for material prosperity compensate for the losses of personality and humanity?"

# PERFORMANCES

The Dresden production dismissed the usual staging of the work: the male quartet on a platform with Anna I singing from a stationary position at the side of the stage. Instead, all five vocal soloists were required to act, sing, and dance. Here, the curtain rose like a white sail revealing the two sisters, before they begin their deadly journey, dressed in innocent children's nightshirts. In the following seven movements, Konwitschny makes use of the family as part of the scenic element. With each successive sin, the house grows larger until it becomes a gigantic wall, overcoming the characters and the life they portray. Anna I is destroyed physically as well as psychologically while her sister, with an air of prosperity, celebrates an illusory victory over herself.

Such an extreme concept can only be realized effectively with excellent protagonists, and Dresden had them. Siegert danced her own choreography with great tension, often making her sister a partner in the expressive dancing. The choreography for "Unzucht" ("Lust") was the most striking. In it, a bed is transformed into an arena in which the two sisters depict their characteristic struggle with impressive dancing rich in psychological symbolism.

The young and highly talented mezzo-soprano Annette Jahns proved an ideal

partner to Siegert; they even looked like sisters. Siegert responded fully to nuances in Jahns's performance and incorporated them into her own acting and dancing. Jahns sings with secure intonation, and her unstrained voice has enormous power. It is a shame that she sings the posthumous, transposed arrangements, a decision that is hard to understand since Weill's original version for soprano is well within her range.

Four young and very talented singers from the Semeroper sang the roles of the family: Peter Kuchler, André Eckert, Jürgen Hartfiel, and Helmut Henschel. They provided excellent support for the two women and handled deftly the exposed passages of the score. Udo Zimmermann conducted the Dresdner Philharmonie with a thoughtful interpretation of Weill's music. Undoubtedly drawing upon his experience as a composer of music for the theater, Zimmermann conveyed successfully the lyricism and ironic bitterness of the score while paying attention to its inherent dance-like qualities. The orchestra, especially the string and woodwind sections, followed his direction carefully and played with precision. This performance is proof again that Weill's music unfolds all of its beauty and strength with first-class performers.

JÜRGEN SCHEBERA  
Leipzig

**War Play.** Boston Musica Viva, Richard Pittman, conductor. Jordan Hall, Boston, 18 March 1988.

In 1936, Broadway was not conducive to unusual sounds. George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* had just failed, and Weill's own *The 3-Penny Opera* had had a brief unsuccessful Broadway run just three years before in an adaptation by Jerrold Krimsky and Gifford Cochran. The big hits were Rodgers and Hart's *On Your Toes*, Cole Porter's *Red, Hot, and Blue!*, starring Ethel Merman, and the latest edition of the Ziegfeld Follies, featuring Fanny Brice. Not exactly the stuff of great social commentary.

Kurt Weill's first stage work composed completely in America, *Johnny Johnson*, might be said to bear resemblance to his collaborations with Brecht, both in style and substance. The Group Theater asked Weill to collaborate with Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paul Green on this highly stylized musical play about a pacifist who is considered insane by a world at war. Mostly, the cast consisted of non-singers such as John Garfield, Elia Kazan, and Lee J. Cobb. Therefore, much of the music was cut. Presumably, audiences in 1936 were not ready for the sardonic wit and acid orchestrations of the score; moreover, the numerous and significant production problems did not bode well for its run, and *Johnny Johnson* closed after sixty-eight performances. It failed again on Broadway in 1971 and was never a popular success in America until the Odyssey Theater Ensemble production in Los Angeles in 1986.

In 1974, Weill scholar David Drew devised a forty-minute *Songspiel* comprising the music from *Johnny Johnson* that pertains to the themes of war and peace (including two numbers that had been discarded from the original) under the title *War Play*. The *Songspiel* was first performed at the Berlin Festival in 1975, and the performance by the Boston Musica Viva marked its United States premiere.

Devoid of any characterization or plot elements, *War Play* strikes this listener as a rather vacant exercise. In fact, the piece seems almost charmingly naive. This performance did nothing to refute that view. Music director Richard Pittman chose opera singers to interpret the roles (in *War Play* all parts were performed by five singers). American English, especially in the theater, should be sung in a conversational, separated style, rather than the slurred and exaggerated diphthong-laden manner encountered here. The more sophisticated inner rhymes ("urge to splurge") were lost in the hooty sounds produced by baritone Robert Honeysucker. Soprano Janice Felty's interpretation of the "Farewell Song" seemed, in some ways, patronizing. Still, she offered the best singing of the evening in her heartfelt "Song of the Soldier's Mother"; performing in German, Ms. Felty seemed much more in her element. Although Kim Scown and Walter Boyce



Annette Jahns, left, and Arila Siegert, right, portray the two Annas in the Dresden Staatstheater production of *Die sieben Todsünden*. Photo: Hans-Ludwig Böhme

turned in an exciting performance of "In Times of War and Tumult," their diction was largely unintelligible.

The orchestra performed enthusiastically, although sometimes a little too much so (evident in several numbers where the players required a few seconds before assuming an assured ensemble). Speed was sometimes mistaken for style, and there was little agreement in the way the dotted-eighth-note sixteenth-note figure, so important in this score, should be played.

We should always be grateful to hear unfamiliar music by the still under-performed Weill. But this performance would seem typical of what Weill surely would have loathed: one of his most populist works served up in a truncated form offering no irony or meaning (other than the obvious "war is hell") in a high-falutin' concert hall by performers attempting to "let their hair down."

This was only part of a very demanding program which included two premiere performances of recent commissions. Bernard Hoffer's *The Nine Circles*, a "Music Drama after Dante Alighieri" figured as a very jazzy and entertaining strings vs. brass and percussion setting of Dante's *The Inferno*. Boston Musica Viva played it with much conviction and commitment, and Maestro Pittman achieved an amazingly good balance for so thickly textured a piece (the orchestra was augmented by electric guitar and bass, synthesizer, trap set, and extensive percussion). The legato string passages were beautifully articulated and contrasted mightily with the "big band" sound of the brass. George Russell's composition, *Six Aesthetic Gravities*, was also influenced by jazz, but in a much funkier vein than Mr. Hoffer's piece. Again, the players acquitted themselves well (although, as in the rest of the program, the strings seemed less at home in the style). This piece featured a moving Copland-esque flute and clarinet duet, played by Fenwick Smith and William Wrzesien. Both composers were on hand to receive well-deserved ovations.

ROGER GRODSKY  
Boston

**Happy End.** Banff Music Theatre Ensemble, The Banff Centre, Alberta, Canada. 26 February - 26 March 1988.

*Happy End* played recently in three locations in western Canada. The production by the Banff Music Theatre School of Fine Arts began its tour at the Banff Centre (situated in the midst of the Canadian Rocky Mountains), moved north to Edmonton for a run of seven nights at the Shoctor Theatre (the larger house in a complex there called the Citadel Theatre), and then crossed the Rockies to the Pacific coast and the Gateway Theatre in Richmond, a suburb of Vancouver.



Marcia Bellamy (Lillian Holiday) sings "Surabaya Johnny" while Richard Morris (Bill Cracker) looks on in the Banff Centre production of *Happy End*.

If these cities don't exactly represent a cook's tour of western Canada, they do represent a significant step forward for Banff's Music Theatre Program. With a company of young professionals, the program has for many years brought together the best available of the various elements of music theater but habitually managed to produce something less than equal to the sum of its parts. "Best available" is the catch; finding sufficiently talented singing actors has proved the most difficult.

So to *Happy End*. The work proved an excellent choice, providing good opportunities for young singers to develop acting skills. And, notwithstanding the history of dissatisfaction with Elisabeth Hauptmann's book, the story (when it's a story and not a sermon) moves along at a rapid pace and comprises stunts that are amusing, dialogue that's pithy, and, above all, characters who demand attention. Thus did Hauptmann, Brecht, and Weill serve Banff well.

Banff's production returned the favor in several ways, largely through the efforts of director Kelly Robinson and designer Sue LePage. Rather than succumb to cumbersome set changes necessitated by the two bar scenes in Act Two, they opted to make neighbors of the beer hall and the Salvation Army set. The Salvation Army set was not moved in until, as the script indicates, Act Two, but once there, it remained. The treatment of the action at this point was also daring and successful. While Dr. Nakamura threatened Baby Face with the "Song of the Big Shot" on stage right, the Army's fold mimed swoons of rapture in response to the Major's commensurately exaggerated exhortations on stage left. When the Major spoke, Dr. Nakamura and Baby Face menaced each other

silently. The coincident action braided together neatly, with an eerie juxtaposition of "cause you'll never hit the jackpot, till you like the going rough" and the Army's euphoria.

The two-level set was a delight: the lights, billboards and overall not-quite-sleazy texture, along with the title projections and film inserts, bade the audience welcome to the intrigue. The portrayal of this intrigue suffered somewhat in the acting, particularly in the leading roles: Richard Morris (Bill Cracker) and Marcia Bellamy (Lillian) tended to be stiff in their dialogue. Such reservations do not apply to their interpretations of the songs, however. Most convincing was Ms. Bellamy's "Surabaya Johnny."

Happy, the smaller character parts did not suffer from the sing-or-act-but-not-both malaise. Chris Martin led the way with a cocky Sam Wurlitzer, Robin Hart played a sinister and menacing Dr. Nakamura (though perhaps not menacing enough when it came to the crunch), and Chris Enns's Jimmy Dexter teased Hallelujah Lil with a fine edge of deceit and malice. Amanda Douglas Cooper bumbled marvelously as Sister Mary.

I think Weill would have been well pleased with the presentation of the music. The orchestra of eight was made up of musicians primarily from the advanced music program at the Banff Centre. Ably led by conductor Wyn Davies, they conveyed well Weill's upbeat melancholia.

All in all, Banff's *Happy End* was a success. This critic was not alone in applauding the production; the *Calgary Herald* and the *Edmonton Journal* delivered flattering verdicts of the opening production in Banff's planned cycle of Kurt Weill's stage works.

RICK CAULFIELD  
Banff

# PERFORMANCES

## Knickerbocker Holiday. Städtische Bühnen Münster. 6 March 1988.

In the fall of 1987, the West German public was badly shaken by the "Kiel Affair," also appropriately known as "Waterkantgate" [Water-edge-gate]. The extent to which the President of a Federal Ministry had encouraged criminal manipulations directed against his political rivals went way beyond the worst that a pessimist could have imagined within the Federal Republic's political culture. With the performances of *Knickerbocker Holiday* coming on the heels of this scandal, Maxwell Anderson's text served both as a serious and entertaining reflection on democracy and dictatorship, corruptibility and personal courage — it is almost frighteningly topical. To be sure, there was no one with the integrity of Anderson's Brom Broeck in the state chancellery of Kiel who would admit having an allergy to taking orders or to the arrogance of power.

One of this production's great moments occurred when the citizens of New Amsterdam fell to their knees before the new governor Stuyvesant and sang the pathetic hymn "All Hail the Political Honeymoon" — stretching out their arms, presumably not in imitation of the National Socialists's greeting. No, they used the left arm instead of the right; yet everyone got the idea. Perhaps even more impressive was the scene in which Stuyvesant disciplined the men of New Amsterdam in their military exercises. At first, one was horrified by how quickly these stubborn burghers turned into soldiers, but then one took heart as it became obvious from their clumsy actions that much of the martial drilling had failed to penetrate their flesh and blood. The choreography developed effectively this idea, set against the bitter and ironic military march music.

The choreography of the other ensemble scenes was also outstanding; stage director Stephan Mettin had made certain that every step was in its right place. Yet, unfortunately, these very scenes also exemplified the weaknesses of the staging. Clearly, Mettin tried to present the piece as a typical American-style musical. He stated, "At that time [1938], one outfitted the play like an operetta; something in the manner of *Zar und Zimmermann*." For someone familiar with *Der Kuhhandel*, Weill and Robert Vamberg's clever operetta of 1935, or Lortzing's *Zar und Zimmermann*, this seems quite plausible. But Mettin also added, "For me, it has nothing at all to do with this." No wonder then that he violated the piece. Mettin should have read his own program booklet more carefully, especially the reprint of Weill's discussion of the right balance between seriousness and humor, and, in particular, his ideal of genuine

musical theater arising from the territory between serious opera and light musical comedy. [Cf. "The Alchemy of Music," 1936, also published in Volume 4, Number 2 of the *Kurt Weill Newsletter*]

The basic contradiction of the staging first revealed itself in Susanne Klopstock's scenic designs: Dutch-inspired landscapes with meadows, tulip fields, and windmills that were combined with chains of lights and discreetly distant neon, the latter effects apparently meant to suggest a Broadway atmosphere. Incongruity was also reflected by the girls of New Amsterdam, who dressed and moved like showgirls, in strange contrast to the dusty bourgeoisie of the citizenry. This led to a grotesque situation in which Stuyvesant declared publicly that a Dutch lady in

The songs should have provided the needed dimension. Weill wrote: "Music can do what the greatest performer does at the height of his playing: it can win over the spectator with passion, it can create an exalted mood, which makes the poet's fantasy much simpler to follow and accept." Unfortunately, here the songs were robbed of their effect because the performers were incapable of the vocal demands: either their articulation was so poor that the words were unintelligible, or the voices projected so little that any phrase sung musically became inaudible.

Despite its small size, the orchestra covered the singers most of the time. Moreover, the conductor Thomas Modos gave his most careful attention to the sentimental songs and



Roland Holz (Peter Stuyvesant) addresses the citizens of New Amsterdam in the Münster production of *Knickerbocker Holiday*.

public must remain "unapproachable, like Caesar." How then, might it be explained that the girls who at first tremble before the Governor a minute later wiggle their hips in the best show business tradition?

Petra Pietschmann's Tina Tienhoven, the leading lady, seemed capable of portraying only two emotions, demonstrated by passionate embracing/kissing and hysterical weeping/screaming. Only actor Roland Holz (Stuyvesant) brought charisma to his role, while Olaf Kreutzenbeck proved a merely passable Brom Broeck. At least the city fathers succeeded in creating plausible caricatures by exploiting the comic possibilities of using Dutch and Rhinish accents. In general, the overall direction failed to portray any human elements. Instead, properly dressed people moved stiffly around the stage in calculated arrangements.

neglected the parodistic, ironic elements of the score.

German audiences have grown accustomed to being satisfied with superficiality in operetta and musical theater. Thus, the mostly youthful audience took greater pleasure in the primitive Indian raid, staged with awesome amateurism, than in Broeck's politico-philosophical brainstorms, because Anderson's confrontation with the complexities of democracy was barely presented. The young people probably left the performance with the notion that, "Grandfather's theater must have been quite amusing, if a bit dusty. But, even so, the Indian-fighting scenes were impressive."

That's true; they were indeed.

ANDREAS HAUFF  
Mainz



## Kleine Dreigroschenmusik. West Side Story Suite. Philip Jones Brass Ensemble. London 417-354-2 (CD).

I am usually distrustful of recordings with insufficient liner notes. Adrian Edwards's notes to this new recording of Kurt Weill's suite, *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, by the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble are surprisingly insufficient. No mention is made of the work's origin, the commission by Otto Klemperer, or the first performance; nor is there discussion about the suite's second movement, "Die Moritat vom Mackie Messer," which actually consists of two songs from the score of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Interestingly, the German liner notes, translated by Gerd Uekermann, do mention both song titles. Perhaps Mr. Edwards's notes were condensed and edited for the CD release, the format which I review here.

"Kanonen-Song," the sixth movement, shares something with "Tarantella-Sevillana" from William Walton's suite from *Facade*. Both pieces contain music not to be found in their original sources. Weill's extension of the original "Kanonen-Song" offers one of the suite's most exciting moments, and I have always wondered if it had been cut from the original score for *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Mr. Edwards makes no mention of this addition, nor does he mention Weill's new saxophone line in the third movement, "Anstatt-dass-Song." David Drew's recently published *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* answered my question about the saxophone countermelody, but no source, to my knowledge, has answered the question about the "Kanonen-Song." [See below]

The original score for *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* requires an ensemble of sixteen players (two flutes, two clarinets, alto sax, tenor sax, two trumpets, trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion, banjo/guitar (or harp), accordion, and piano). David Purser's transcription for the Jones Brass Ensemble is for

ten brass players and one percussionist. Obviously, much tone color is lost, although horn and flügelhorn can provide, at times, a gentle, almost saxophone-like sound quality. Mutes expand the range of expressive possibilities, and some of Mr. Purser's choices worked quite well: the most successful movements of the transcription are the Overture, "Anstatt-dass-Song," "Kanonen Song," and "Dreigroschen-Finale."

The high tessitura of "Pollys Lied" needs a softer sound than that afforded by a piccolo trumpet, although I liked Mr. Purser's ingenious substitution of tuba and trombones for the original guitar arpeggios. "Die Ballade vom angenehmen Leben" omits the third chorus, probably because a brass ensemble can provide only a limited number of instrumental colors. One number, "Tango-Ballade," is particularly well-suited to the brass arrangement. However, the tempo is much faster than the one given in the score, and, consequently, the piece loses its sultry eroticism.

The piano is the most sorely missed instrument. As a result, this arrangement of the "Moritat" sacrifices an essential instrumental line, and its presence is also missed in the "Tango-Ballade." But the cymbal crash that closes the "Moritat" is the best one I have ever heard. A lovely moment.

The accompanying piece is an arrangement by Eric Cree of selections from Bernstein's *West Side Story*. The arrangement, for a larger number of players, is the more satisfying of the two. I suspect this is because Cree's version makes no claims as a transcription of the *Symphonic Dances* from *West Side Story*; rather, the arrangement is derived from the most suitable and effective parts of the score while taking into consideration the available performing forces. Perhaps song transcriptions from *Die Dreigroschenoper* would have been preferable to an unsatisfactory transcription of *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*.

LARRY MOORE  
New York

*Editor's note: The manuscript sources available at the Weill-Lenya Research Center show no evidence of the extension to "Kanonen Song" prior to its inclusion in Kleine Dreigroschenmusik. Jack Gottlieb, in a paper entitled "Wandering Motives: The Anatomy of Jewish Music," argues that the extension is similar to idioms found in Jewish music associated with the wedding ritual.*



*Die sieben Todsünden*, co-production of La compagnie Maguy Marin and the Lyon Opéra Ballet. Left: Cathy Polo as Anna II. Right: Maguy Marin (standing), as Anna I, with Cathy Polo (sitting). Photos: Gérard Amsellem.

# PRESS CLIPPINGS

## Maguy Marin Takes on *Sins* by Brecht/Weill

Lyon — *The Seven Deadly Sins*, the final collaboration by Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht, doesn't have the status of *Threepenny Opera* or *Mahagonny*, perhaps because of its brevity and hybrid character, but it reappears from time to time, often thanks to a choreographer with a strong theatrical bent. The latest is Maguy Marin, who has made it the basis of a darkly macabre work for the combined forces of the Lyon Opera Ballet and her own company.

What Maguy Marin has done is not really a ballet of any kind, but an allegorical theater piece in which movement is the main expressive element. Since the score lasts only about 35 minutes, broken into very short scenes, Marin had planned to precede each scene with a kind of dramatically expanded introduction using other music — a plan knocked sharply in the head by the Kurt Weill Foundation of New York, which holds the rights and takes a dim view of such ideas.

Instead, to create a more or less full-length piece on a unified theme, she created what amounts to about a 45-minute prologue that acts much like a flashback opening for a film. The events of Anna's encounters with sin are over and she is locked in a kind of *danse macabre* with the skeletal figure of Death, surrounded by the characters that figured in her earlier life. This is accompanied by a taped collage of reminiscences of popular songs of the '20s and '30s, cabaret songs, a Gardel tango, Schubert's *Death and the Maiden*, sounds suggesting a train on the tracks.

This first part is entitled "...des petits bourgeois" — a reference to Brecht's didactic ex post facto "complete" title, *Die sieben Todsünden der Kleinbürger* — and linked to the Brecht-Weill work proper by doing without an intermission, just raising the lights enough so the orchestra can find its way into the pit.

Marin's staging of *The Seven Deadly Sins* proper was faithful to the scenario, in her fashion, even to giving the individual scenes their specific character, such as that for Anger, in "Los Angeles," taking place on a movie set. But the most striking performance is Maguy Marin's own, not as a dancer but as the singing Anna I. She has flirted with singing before, and she proved to have a firm, warm, accurate cabaret-style voice, exemplary diction (in French translation), and a firm grasp on her dramatic role as the manipulative siamese twin to the vulnerable Anna II of Cathy Polo.

Montserrat Casanova's set, a huge scaffolding wrapped around three sides of the Lyon Opera's stage, allowed the action to be carried out on several levels figuratively as well as literally. The excellent family quartet (Pierre-Yves Le Maigat, René Schirrer, Michel Fockenoy, Frédéric Plantak) was stationed on an elevator that shot up and down according to need. Jacek Kasprzyk conducted efficiently, although some of the score's more powerful moments seemed pale.

There seems to have been no little dismay at the refusal of the Kurt Weill Foundation to allow other music to be mixed into *The Seven Deadly Sins*, and the late discovery of this situation meant that Marin had a month or so of heavy reorganizing. But the suspicion here is that not only did she rise to the challenge, but that the result was worth it. As it is, the integrity of the Weill score is intact, and since this is absolutely top-drawer Weill — full of compact energy, and with his "song" style ingeniously used to shape a relatively large form — that is a vital consideration.

David Stevens  
*International Herald Tribune*  
9 December 1987

## Sinfonietta's Birthday Treat

Unnecessary to waste space praising the London Sinfonietta on its 20th anniversary as the marathon event at the Festival Hall lasting most of Sunday afternoon and evening was evidence enough of its achievement and future promise. Without its presence over the past 20 years such an event simply couldn't have taken place nor would it have been attended by sold-out houses representing the young of all ages and much of the musical establishment...

Similarly, under Rattle's acute conducting, Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* was played with a precision and understanding that proved the

composer's stature. Which made Christopher Alden's staging seem all the more reprehensible as its silly pornography and feeble coordination quite failed to articulate the score or even elucidate which sin was which. From the mess, Elise Ross, as Anna I, somehow emerged unscathed to sing with real feeling.

Alan Blyth  
*Daily Telegraph*  
26 January 1988

## Belgians Help Homeless

André Ernotte just returned from Liège, Belgium, where he directed a production of the Weill-Brecht *Threepenny Opera*. After the opening, he was presented with a gift from the cast and crew — not the might-be-expected watch or pen, but an envelope. The envelope was labeled "For the homeless people in New York," and contained \$400 American. The gesture came about because Mr. Ernotte told a local interviewer that he worked in soup kitchens in New York whenever possible.

Enid Nemy  
*The New York Times*  
29 January 1988

## Exploring the Travail of South Africa

Yes, *Lost in the Stars* is painfully dated. The gentle hope of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Alan Paton's novel on which the Kurt Weill-Maxwell Anderson "musical tragedy" was based, has been crushed by the events in South Africa. Almost 40 years after the play opened on Broadway, the glimmer of reconciliation with which it ends flickers like a liberal pipe dream. Despite all that, however, or partly because of it, the work, even in the uneven production at the York Theater, remains remarkably moving.

Mr. Paton's anguished vision of his country's divisions still strikes deep and Weill's score still soars. One is held despite the adaptation's crude characterizations and Anderson's awkward pretensions to poetry. The new production benefits from George Merritt's performance in the central role of Stephen Kumalo, the black country pastor whose son kills a good white man, "a friend of our race." After a somewhat stiff start, Mr. Merritt gains authority as troubles come upon him. With his decency and faith, even in desperate hours, Kumalo personifies a lost dream.

Most of the performers were plainly chosen for their abilities as singers, not actors, and even better actors would be hard pressed by some of Anderson's lines: "The irony of it, that an advocate of Negro equality should be killed by a Negro." "There are good and bad among them." The director, Alex Dmitriev, has not been able to make such stogy exchanges stageworthy.

The cast comes into its own when the orchestra plays, which thankfully is most of the time. Under Lawrence W. Hill's musical direction and led by the voice of Ken Prymus, the ensemble (blacks and whites segregated, South Africa fashion) do justice to Weill's songs, from the throbbing "Train to Johannesburg" ("Black man go to Johannesburg. Go. Go. Never come back. Never come back.") to the haunting "Cry, the Beloved Country," which, alas, has lost none of its despairing relevance.

April Armstrong puts loving longing into "Stay Well"; young Sean Ashby offers an enthusiastic "Big Mole," and Mr. Merritt's rich baritone gets full play in "Thousands of Miles," the sentimental yet lovely "Little Gray House" and the enduring "Lost in the Stars."

In the final scenes, the murdered man's father, having been rapidly transformed for purposes of an inspirational ending from a prejudiced white to a bosom friend of Stephen Kumalo, promises "There will be a tomorrow" and their respective grandchildren strike up a friendship. That invites a smile at the conventions of show business or the wishful innocence of the 1940's — but tears may get in the way.

Walter Goodman  
*The New York Times*  
31 March 1988

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# SELECTED PERFORMANCES

## AUSTRIA

*Die Dreigroschenoper*, Vienna, Conservatory, 15-17 December 1987

## AUSTRALIA

*Street Scene*, Brisbane, Queensland Conservatory, 1-9 September 1988

## CANADA

*Happy End*, Regina, Sask., The Globe Theatre, 8-24 April 1988

*Happy End*, Margaret Greenham Theatre, Banff, includes extensive 4-week tour through Western Canada, February-March 1988

## ENGLAND

*Happy End*, London, Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art, 23-25, 27 March 1988

*Happy End*, London, Young Vic Theatre, 1988-89 Season

*Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, The London Sinfonietta, Lothar Zagrosek, cond., 17 March 1988

## FRANCE

*Concerto, violin & winds*, Marseille, Ensemble Orchestral de Marseille, N. Leber, cond., 11-12 December 1987

*Der Jasager*, Paris, La Compagnie de l'Échelle, 27-29 May 1988

*Der Jasager*, Strasbourg, Ensemble Justiniana, April-June 1988, includes tour throughout France

*L'Opéra de Quat'Sous*, Lille, L'Université de Lille, Le Conservatoire National, 29-31 March 1988

*L'Opéra de Quat'Sous*, Festival de la Tour à Revest, Le Théâtre de la Godille du Brux, June 1988

*Les sept péchés capitaux*, Place de la Comédie, Lyon, Lyon Opéra Ballet, La Compagnie Maguy Marin, Maguy Marin, sop., Kent Nagano, cond., 5, 6, 8-13 December 1987

## FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

*Concerto, violin & winds*, Düsseldorf, Ensemble Neue Musik, 15-16 January 1988

*Concerto, violin and winds*, Karlsruhe, Landesmusikrat Baden-Württemberg, 6, 8-10 April 1988

*Die Dreigroschenoper*, Schauspielhaus Komödie, Augsburg, 1987-88 season

*Die Dreigroschenoper*, Theater an der Ruhr, Mülheim, Roberto Ciulli, dir., January 1988

*Die Dreigroschenoper*, Krefeld-Mönchengladbach Bühnen, 1987-88 season

*Happy End*, Schauspielhaus, Bielefeld, May 1988

*Happy End*, Theatermanufaktur, Berlin, November-December 1987

*Happy End*, Städtische Bühnen, Regensburg, 29 April-May 1988

*Knickerbocker Holiday*, Städtische Bühnen Münster, Münster, February 1988

*Der neue Orpheus*, Musiktheater im Revier, Gelsenkirchen, 28 April 1988

*Die sieben Todsünden*, Staatstheater, Kassel, January 1988

*Der Silbersee*, Musiktheater im Revier, Gelsenkirchen, May 1988

*Street Scene*, Cologne, Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Harald Banter, prod.; Donald Arthur, dir.; Jan Latham-Köning, cond., 3-5 May 1988, includes performances at Duisburg and Recklinghausen

*Symphony no. 2*, Gera, Orchester der Bühnen der Stadt Gera, Michael Stolle, cond., 20-21 January 1988

## GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

*Die Dreigroschenoper*, Staatsschauspielhaus, Dresden, Gertrud Elisabeth Zillmer, dir.; Jens-Uwe Günther, cond., February 1988

*Die sieben Todsünden*, Staatstheater Dresden, Tanztheater, Dresdner Philharmonie, Udo Zimmerman, cond., December 1987

## ITALY

*Die Dreigroschenoper*, Teatro Due, Parma, Orchestra del Festival "Due Dimensioni," Giorgio Gaslini, cond., January 1988

*Der Jasager*, Milan, Teatro Piccolo, Lamberto Puggelli, dir., Emilio Pomarico, cond., 12 January-7 February 1988

*Der Lindberghflug*, Chiesa San Stefano, Florence, Orchestra Regionale di Toscana, Bruno Bartoletti, cond., 22 March 1988

## NETHERLANDS

*Das Berliner Requiem*, Amsterdam, Netherlands Wind Ensemble, 29 January 1988

*Concerto, violin & winds*, Amsterdam, Netherlands Wind Ensemble, 29 January 1988

*Happy End*, Stadshouwborg, Amsterdam, 12-13 April 1988

*Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, Amsterdam, Netherlands Wind Ensemble, Edo de Waart, cond., 15 March 1988

## NEW ZEALAND

*The Threepenny Opera*, Wellington, Down Stage Theater, 27 February-9 April 1988

## SCOTLAND

*Lady in the Dark*, concert performance, Edinburgh, Edinburgh Festival, John Mauceri, cond., 31 August 1988

## SWEDEN

*Symphony No. 2*, Umea, Umea Sinfonietta, Jesper Grove Jörgensen, cond., 6 December 1987

## SWITZERLAND

*L'Opéra de Quat'Sous*, Bienne, April 1988

## UNITED STATES

*Berlin to Broadway*, Providence, RI, Brown University, Karla Silverman, dir., Art Salgado, cond., 25-29 May 1988

*Berlin to Broadway*, Bette Oliver Theater, Sarasota, FL, Asolo State Theatre, 18 June-31 July 1988

*Das Berliner Requiem*, Muhlenberg, PA, Muhlenberg College, Artie Clifton, cond.; Jeremy Slavin, tenor, William Murphy, baritone, Paul Rowe, bass-baritone, 9 April 1988

*Concerto, violin & winds*, Muhlenberg, PA, Muhlenberg College, Muhlenberg Wind Ensemble, Paul Windt, violin, Artie Clifton, cond., 9 April 1988

*Die Dreigroschenoper*, Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY, The Princeton Festival, Victor Symonette, cond., 9-10 July 1988

*The Eternal Road*, choral excerpts, St. Peter's Church, New York, NY, Gregg Smith Singers & Long Island Symphonic Choral Association, 16 January 1988

*Happy End*, Schaeffer Theatre, Lewiston, ME, Bates College, 11-13, 17-19 March 1988

*Happy End*, Mill Pond Center, Durham, NH, Durham Stage Company, 20 November-13 December 1987

*Der Lindberghflug*, San Diego, CA, Michael Kantor, cond., 7 May 1988

*Lost in the Stars*, Church of the Heavenly Rest, New York, NY, The York Theatre Company, Alex Dmitriev, dir.; Lawrence W. Hill, cond., 25 March-17 April 1988

*Lost in the Stars*, Carnegie Hall, New York, NY, American Composers Orchestra, Dennis Russell Davies, cond., 9 October 1988

*Marie Galante*, Knoxville, TN, Knoxville Symphony Orchestra, Kirk Trevor, cond., Faith Esham, sop., 28 April 1988

*The Seven Deadly Sins*, Kimo Theater, Albuquerque NM, Southwest Ballet Company, 11-13 March 1988

*The Threepenny Opera*, Boston, MA, Opera Company of Boston, Sarah Caldwell, cond., 22, 24, 27 April-1 May 1988

*The Threepenny Opera*, University of Alaska, Anchorage, AK, 13-24 April 1988

*The Threepenny Opera*, Stamford, CT, Stamford Grand Opera, March 1988

*Vom Tod im Wald*, Muhlenberg, PA, Muhlenberg College, Artie Clifton, cond.; Paul Rowe, bass-baritone, 9 April 1988

*Street Scene*, Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska, 12-14 February 1988

*War Play*, Jordan Hall, Boston, MA, Boston Musica Viva, Richard Pittman, cond., 18 March 1988

Ballet, "Kurt Weill," 92nd Street Y, New York, NY, Anna Sokolow Player's Project, 4-8 January 1988

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