

KURT WEILL NEWSLETTER

Volume 6, Number 2

Fall 1988

Die Dreigroschenoper

A Commemorative Issue Celebrating the 60th Anniversary

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Threepenny at 60

The 60th-anniversary season of *Die Dreigroschenoper* will be celebrated with major productions throughout the world. The Nuova Commedia opens the newly remodeled Teatro Bellini in Naples on 15 October with *La Opera da Tre Soldi*. The production, directed by Tato Russo with scenery designed by Renato Lori and costumes by Santuzza Cali, will run through the end of 1989 and will have a tour to Palermo, Rome, Bari, Florence, and Milan. Conductor Antonio Sinagra leads a cast headed by Lando Buzzanca (Macheath), Enzo Cannavale (Peachum), Angela Luce (Mrs. Peachum), Dalia Frediani (Polly), Leopolda Mastelloni (Jenny), and Lucio Allocca (Tiger Brown).

The Turkish State Theater in Istanbul presents *Die Dreigroschenoper* in a Turkish translation opening this fall for a 100-performance run.

15 October marks the premiere of *Tolvskillingsoperan* by the Royal Dramatic Theatre of Sweden in Stockholm with Karin Betz directing and Jean Billgren conducting. While visiting New York this past spring, the noted company gained critical notice for its unconventional production of *Hamlet* directed by Ingmar Bergman.

A co-production of *The Threepenny Opera* by the Banff Centre, School of Fine Arts, Alberta, Canada and the Canadian Stage Company opens at the Bluma Appel Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre in Toronto, on 9 March and runs through 2 April 1989. The artistic team will include Kelly Robinson (Director), Peter Jotkus (Assistant Director), Wyn Davies (Conductor), Mary Kerr (Set and Costume Designer).

Sins on CBS

CBS Masterworks released on 3 October a new recording of *Die sieben Todsünden* with Julia Migenes and the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas. Robert Tear, Stuart Kale, Alan Opie, and Roderick Kennedy take the role of the family. The recording, on LP, cassette tape, and compact disc (CBS 44529), also includes *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*.

Continuing its fine series of reissues on compact disc, CBS has released recently the digitally mastered recording of *Street Scene* featuring the original Broadway cast with Maurice Abravanel, conductor. The recording (CBS MK 44668) was produced originally by Goddard Lieberson, the innovative head of Columbia Records who, along with George Avakian, was responsible for Lenya's recordings on the Columbia label.

Venus in Berlin

Ute Lemper introduced songs from Weill's American stage works to German audiences on 21 August in a concert with the RIAS-Philharmonic Band conducted by John Mauceri. Ms. Lemper offered "Speak Low" and "I'm a Stranger Here Myself" from *One Touch of Venus*, and Mauceri conducted the show's overture, all of which represented a first hearing in Germany of the original orchestrations. The program also included *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, the premiere of a suite of instrumental numbers from *Marie Galante*, and Lemper performing a variety of songs from Weill's German works in addition to "Tchaikowsky" and "My Ship" from *Lady in the Dark*. The concert was broadcast live from Philharmonic Hall and videotaped for television. Decca Records has issued a recording in Germany which is slated for January distribution in other countries.

Threepenny Most Popular Play in Germany

Die Dreigroschenoper proved the most popular work on German stages during the 1986-87 season by drawing 173,000 audience members, according to a study by the West German Stage Association. In a breakdown by authors, Shakespeare rated the most performances with 1,800, followed by 1,600 for Dario Fo, and 1,500 for Brecht. German-speaking theaters in West Germany, Austria, and Switzerland sold 15,000,000 tickets with 2,100 dramas representing the works of 504 dramatists. *Cats*, the most popular musical, sold 750,000 tickets for 700 performances in Vienna and Hamburg.

LETTERS

The following letter is reprinted from The Times Literary Supplement, 29 April 1988.

Sir: Having read with fascination David Drew's *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, and with great interest Peter Heyworth's comprehensive review of it (March 25-31), I would like to make a correction of historical fact which involves both authors.

In a note on page 212 of the Handbook Drew blames himself for having created the "legend" that Weill's *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* (the Suite from *The Threepenny Opera*) was first performed at the Berlin Opera Ball in January 1929, and states that Peter Heyworth, in the course of his Klemperer research, has established "beyond reasonable

doubt" that there had been no such premiere! But there was! And I myself was an eye-and-ear witness of it, thanks to an invitation from Dr. Hans Curjel (Klemperer's right-hand man). I well remember that the proceedings began with Erich Kleiber conducting Berlioz's *Rákóczy March*, and continued with Furtwängler conducting Johann Strauss's *Emperor Waltz* - a context that would have made Klemperer's arrival with the *Dreigroschenmusik* seem provocative on any occasion, but all the more so at the Opera Ball, which was, after all, one of the gala events in the social calendar of Berlin. Since I vividly recall leaving my table in order to watch this remarkable premiere from a nearby corner on the left of the conductor's podium, I feel that Mr. Drew's mea culpa ought to be rescinded!

BERTHOLD GOLDSCHMIDT
London

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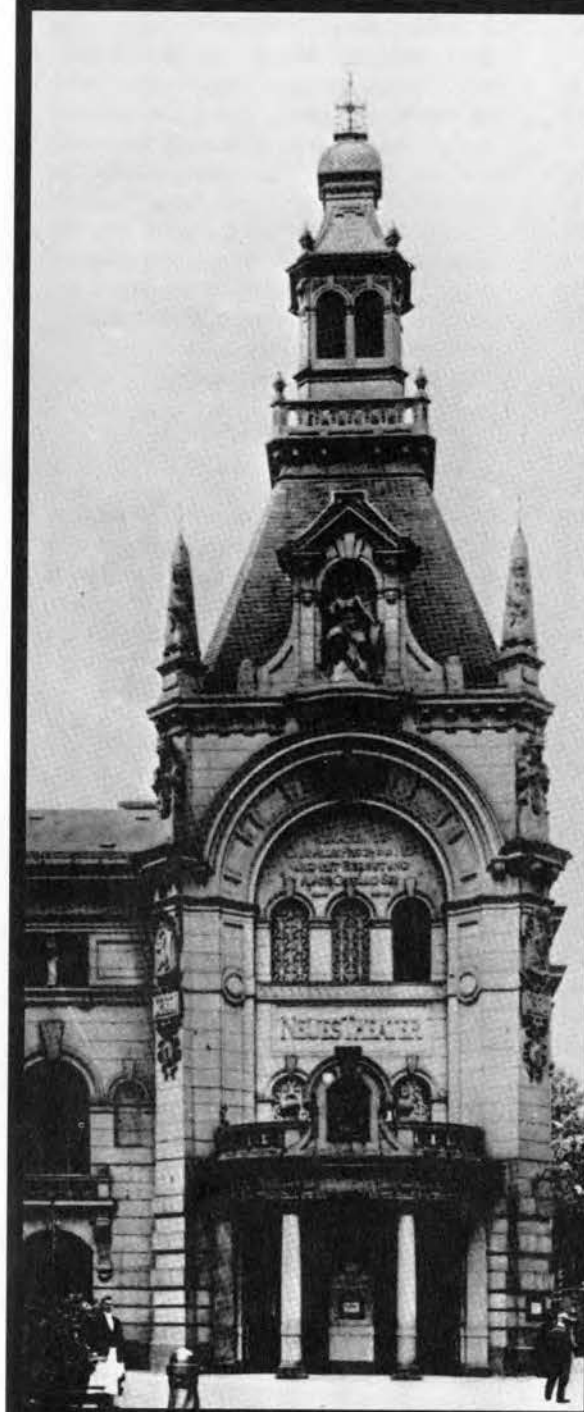
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Die Dreigroschenoper

A Commemorative Issue Celebrating the 60th Anniversary

Clockwise from upper left: 1. Announcement from *National-Zeitung*, 2 September 1928; 2. Sketch of the premiere performance from *Berliner Morgenpost*; 3. Scene from the premiere performance; 4. Theater vom Schiffbauerdamm.



3-Penny Bits: Sixty Years of Trivia

Within six weeks after the opening of *Die Dreigroschenoper* on 31 August 1928 at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm in Berlin, there were 10 contracts with theaters in major cities throughout Germany, and, of these, contracts for theaters in Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Munich, and Leipzig were concluded within the first week after the Berlin premiere. Concurrent with the long-running original production in Berlin, four productions opened in 1928, and in 1929 *Die Dreigroschenoper* enjoyed forty-six premieres in virtually every theater in Germany, as well as in Graz, Vienna, Basel, Bern, Zürich, Bruno, Prague, Budapest, Warsaw, Leningrad, Moscow, and Turku (Finland). Threepenny fever continued throughout Europe; the years 1930 & 1931 witnessed another forty productions, from Oslo to Tel-Aviv, as well as in the Friedrichs-theater at Dessau, Weill's birthplace, and three different theaters in Tokyo. Not surprisingly, performances dropped significantly during the following years and the last performances until after the war were given in 1939 at Hamburg and Munich. The American sector of West Berlin was the site of the first post-war production in 1945, and the Teatro San Carlo in Naples produced the first Italian *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*L'Opera da Tre Soldi*). A fresh impetus provoked (in part prompted by the great success of Marc Blitzstein's 1954 adaptation in the New York Theater de Lys) numerous and notable productions during the 50's, including Giorgio Strehler's at the Piccolo Teatro in Milan in 1956, and the first production in South America at the Teatro Independientes of Buenos Aires in 1957. During the first three years of the 1960's, seventy productions played in cities around the world, from Athens to Melbourne, Montevideo to Copenhagen, London to Tokyo.

Jürgen Schebera and Universal Edition rental records.

K.L. Ammer, translator of the Villon lyrics which Brecht adapted for *Die Dreigroschenoper*, used his royalty income to purchase a vineyard near Vienna where he produced a Threepenny Opera wine.
Martin Esslin. *Brecht: A Choice of Evils*. London: Methuen, 1959.

Playwright Günther Weisenborn, in his book about life in a political prison camp (*Memorial*), writes that "the first notes of the Moritat, hummed or whistled, was the signal that there was important news to be passed on."
Columbia Records memorandum, Weill-Lenya Research Center.

The opening night of *Three Penny Opera* at the Empire Theatre in New York, 12 April 1933, attracted a theatrically savvy crowd. In attendance were Rosamond Pinchot, Fannie Brice, Sidney Fox, Hazel Forbes, Martin Beck, Billy Rose, A. C. Blumenthal, and Howard and Betty Dietz.
New York Sun. 14 April 1933.

In 1946, while teaching at the University of Minnesota, I played and sang all the *Threepenny Opera* songs for the chairmen of theater and music, respectively, hoping they would produce the show. The music chairman said when I'd finished, "My, how central European, it will never go in the U.S.!"
Eric Bentley, New York.

George Antheil wrote the following to Lotte Lenya on 15 October 1953: "I shall never forget - and perhaps Kurt would not have thanked me for it - that it was I, at 23 Barrow Street, N.Y., in 1930, who played *Mahagonny* and *Dreigroschenoper* for Mark [Blitzstein] - who, then, didn't like them, but loved them three months later; I introduced Mark to Kurt's music, defended it."

According to Blitzstein's first draft of his adaptation, he planned to set the play in San Francisco, about 1890.
Weill-Lenya Research Center.

During curtain calls at New York's Theater de Lys in the 1950s, the carousel horse carrying Victoria's messenger (with a reprieve for Macheath) was given a lump of sugar.
Margo Miller, Boston Globe.

Actress Gigi McGuire took her three-year-old daughter to see her "Aunt Lenya" in her new play: "After the performance we went back to see Lenya, who had not been expecting us. Lenya said that when she peeked out and saw a little child in the first row, she thought, 'That could only be the McGuires!' Lenya asked young Gigi how she liked it, and the child replied that she liked the Fairies best. It took us a moment to figure out she meant Jenny, the chief Fairy, and her entourage of whores. 'They were beautiful,' she said."
Gigi McGuire, Fort Lauderdale.

At the time of the Theatre de Lys production, no record company had been willing to take the risk of issuing a cast album from the supposedly uncommercial "genre" of Off-Broadway. The spectacular success of *The Threepenny Opera* set a mighty precedent when its somewhat bastardized cast album was released on MGM records in 1954. Not only did it sell half a million copies - far beyond any reasonable expectations - it became with the exception of *My Fair Lady*, the largest selling cast album from any show, On- or Off-Broadway.
New York Daily News, 31 July 1960.

The role of the Street Singer in the London production of 1956 was, in fact, played by a renowned folk singer who certainly had done his share of singing in the streets. Ewan MacColl was at the forefront of the British folk music revival in the late 1950s and 60s. Together with his wife Peggy Seeger (sister of American protest singer Pete Seeger), MacColl compiled scholarly and performing anthologies of traditional British folksongs, while playing and recording both traditional and modern songs from both sides of the Atlantic. MacColl later became an influential friend of another important folk singer, Bob Dylan.

James Lynch, New York.

A Columbia Records memorandum reveals a special 45 rpm recording cut for distribution to radio stations:

One side will be the Louis Armstrong version (since re-titled THEME FROM THE THREEPENNY OPERA), but pared down to 2:36! On the back of it will be a real collector's item - the German version, by Lotte Lenya, the one made on the session at which Turk Murphy first recorded the tune. The Lenya-Murphy collaboration will not be released in the United States, but it is currently the No. 1 record in Germany. Avakian notes: "In four German cities, you can dial the operator and ask to hear the Lenya-Murphy record for the price of a local phone call!" Weill-Lenya Research Center.

The worldwide success of Bobby Darin's hit version of "Mack the Knife" did not come easily: WCBS radio banned the song from the airwaves, as disc jockeys developed a rather morbid habit of playing the song immediately following the latest news report of youth stabbings in an already-charged summer of gang violence in New York. Darin's recording of "Mack the Knife" won two Grammy awards in 1959: Best Single Record and Best New Performer. Over two million copies were sold, and the

song was responsible for winning Darin an adult audience. In a 1961 interview Darin said, "It was a fluke that it fell into my hands. I know what I'm singing about. I don't confuse a lyric with just words." 8 September 1959, press clipping in Weill-Lenya Research Center; New York Post, 12 February 1961; Current Biography, March 1963.

Volume II of a new Langston Hughes biography relays the following anecdote: Rice was so emotionally attached to the original *Street Scene* that he resisted suggestions for changes in the text, and often flatly refused to allow the dramatic emphasis to shift from the text towards the music, which was necessary in operatic composition. Weill, on the other hand, could not conceal completely his nostalgia for his greatest collaborator, Bertolt Brecht. Once, when Langston mentioned cockroaches in one line of the sadly beautiful song, "Lonely House," Rice stamped his foot. There must be no cockroaches in such a haunting lyric! Weill sighed his disapproval. *Street Scene* would be no *Threepenny Opera*, he confided to Langston. "Brecht would have left the cockroaches in." Arnold Rampersad. *The Life of Langston Hughes, Vol. II. New York: Oxford, 1988. p. 114.*

The *Threepenny Opera* has certainly run the gamut of political exploitation: in October 1964 a Chicago production directed by Bob Sicklinger was mounted as a benefit for the Young Republicans for Goldwater! The *Literary Times* reviewer snickered, "The hearty applause and 'bravos' that followed would have amused the German Communist author immensely." *Literary Times, Chicago, October 1964.*

A modern-day version of Peachum's enterprise is thriving in New York City. The Omar School for Beggars located at 234 Fifth Avenue offers classes in the art of begging. According to proprietor Omar Rockford, "You can't just put your hand out and expect to make money - there's much too much competition. We've been in business for five years, and several thousand graduates now make \$400 to \$500 a week tax-free." Tuition for five two-hour classes is \$100.

New York Magazine, 29 August 1988.

In the winter of 1986-87, a rock band in New York played under the name *Three Penny Opera* © in Greenwich village clubs including Kenny's Castaways and Peggy Sue's.

Recently a horse called "Mack the Knife" was a top finisher in the 64th running of the Prix d'Amerique at the Vincennes race track outside of Paris. "Mack" and "Permissionaire" were edged out in a photo finish by "Ourasi," one of the winningest trotters of all time, in the 2650-meter race.

Overprinting: Images from 3-Groschen wallpaper, produced in Germany in 1928.

Reflections By...

Marc Blitzstein

In January, 1950, I telephoned Kurt Weill at his Rockland County home: "Call it an exercise, Kurt, or call it an act of love. I don't know which: I've made a translation of the "Pirate Jenny" song from your *Dreigroschenoper*. When can I show it to you?"

Weill said: "Right now. Sing it to me."

"Over the phone?"

"Why not? Wait, I'll put Lenya on the extension." (Lenya, his wife, had created the number in Berlin.)

I started speak-singing the song - very careful about my words, just indicating the tune and the rhythms. After the first line, Weill at the other end began drumming his fingers to accompany me with the beat. I finished.

He said in the mild quiet tone so characteristic of him: "I think you've hit it. After all these years! It does work, Lenya?"

Lenya said (very excited): "Yes. Yes. That I can sing. When can I have a copy?"

Then Kurt again: "Marc, do it all, why don't you? The whole opera. I wish you could read the half-dozen 'versions' and 'translations' people have sent me; pfui! You do it. You're the one for it."

I was happy at their enthusiasm, but other work called. In April of that year Kurt Weill died. I attended the funeral. Coming home, I found myself haunted by another number from the *Dreigroschenoper* - this time the "Solomon Song," that wonderful cunning melody that seems to slip out from under the lyric, continuing beyond it.

That one took me all night. Soon I was translating still other songs and snatches from Berthold Brecht's original text. The thing was getting under my skin. By that time I had reached the point of no return, and had to do it all.

The score is, for me, Kurt Weill's masterpiece. It is entirely his own material and style, owing to the Gay-Pepusch work only one short song, the "Morning Anthem." The music, deliberately popular-banal, is at once laconic and grand. With the simplest of means, with almost no decoration except the most blatant and labeled, it achieves timelessness and universality through total immediacy.

In my adaptation I have not touched this great score, not "modernized" or "filled in" one early-jazz passage, not removed one raw edge or unexpected *pianissimo*. I have interfered very little with the statements and tone of the book and lyrics.

[Reprinted from the New York Herald Tribune, 7 March 1954]

Ned Rorem

"Brecht"

If I am one of those who could live without him, it is not to underplay Brecht's final value (I could live without Berlioz too) - it's a question of taste. Yet Weill, whom I need, would not have been Weill without Brecht. Like Thomson with Stein or Sullivan with Gilbert, Weill with Brecht becomes more than the sum of his previous parts. His notes shed dew into Brecht's sour books (music without words can never of itself convey sourness), and their collaborations, using no musically exploratory language, were and remain like nothing ever heard before. What they lacked in humor was made up for in irony, and for the first time since *Don Giovanni*, horror was depicted by snappy tunes.

In his recent memoir *Voices*, Frederic Prokosch evokes the German poet in a Third Avenue bar during World War II. "America" said Brecht. "It was Kafka who really invented it, but they've taken the hint, and it's beginning to look like Kafka." Brecht had taken the hint too. His Florida, drawn for *Mahagonny* twenty years earlier, was (like Rimbaud's "incroyables Florides/Mélant aux fleurs des yeux de panthères à peaux/D'hommes") pure fancy, but a fancy robbed precisely from Kafka's daft 1912 portrayal of our fair land. Brecht liked to say things, claimed Prokosch, "that were blatantly untrue, as though to see whether his sly subversive charm could make them plausible....His revolutionary posture seemed to be a playful gambit which provided his talent with novel and shocking attitudes."

Novel and shocking are not how I find the master's attitudes, but boring and dated. But then, many great works are boring, witness Beethoven's quartets from whose violent virtues we sometimes take refuge in wandering minds, and all great works are dated, for all are historically locatable: they all date well or date badly. Yet Brecht's thesis that good men will always lose and that Authority will always convince the People that they're being killed for the best of reasons, though possibly true, causes in me a non-cathartic depression, possibly because those People are not people. The citizens of *Mahagonny* are sci-fi replicants programmed to indifference. Indeed they are (the author would contend) not unlike

(continued on next page)

Ingmar Bergman

A small portable gramophone stood on a small gilded table, wound up and ready. David, the younger of the brothers, stuffed a couple of socks into the sound box. A record with a blue Telefunken label on it lay on the turntable. The needle was dropped into the track and the harsh but subdued notes of the overture of *The Threepenny Opera* rose out of the black box. After the speaker's sarcastic words about why *The Threepenny Opera* was called just that, there followed "The Ballad of Mac the Knife": "Und Macheath der hat ein Messer/Doch das Messer sieht man nicht," and then "Pirate Jenny" with Lotte Lenya, that wounded voice, that scornfully arrogant tone, and then her gentleness and bantering: "Und wenn dann der Kopf fällt, sag ich? 'Hoppla!'"

A whole world of which I had never had an inkling, despair without tears, desperation that wept! "Versuch es nur, von deinem Kopf lebt höchstens eine Laus." I gulped brandy, smoked Turkish cigarettes and felt slightly sick. Why all this secrecy with night-time concerts, closed doors, soft gramophone needles and socks in the sound-box? "It's banned music," Horst said. "Brecht and Weill are banned. We found the records in London and smuggled them over so that Clärchen could hear them too."

He picked out the next record, Lewis Ruth's band crashing in. "Was ich möchte, ist es viel? Einmal in dem tristen Leben einem Mann mich hinzugeben. Ist das ein zu hohes Ziel?" The tomb-like sonorous bass broke in: "Ein guter Mensch sein? Ja, wer wär's nicht gern."

The acrid perfumed cigarette smoke floated round us and the moon shone down on the trees in the park. Clärchen was holding her head half turned away and was staring into the big mirror between the windows, her hand over one eye. David filled my glass. The moment burst like a thin membrane and I floated unresisting on to the next moment, which immediately burst, then on and on.

The Threepenny Opera finale. "Und man siehet die im Lichte, die im Dunkeln sieht man nicht." I didn't understand the words, anyhow not many of them, but I have always, like a shrewd animal, understood tone of voice, and I understood this tone of voice. It sank into my deepest consciousness, to remain there as a part of me.

(continued on next page)

Rorem (continued)

ourselves, programmed to ignore the humanity of other nations, and ultimately of each other.

Brecht's characters are forever generalities; only through Weill's art do they become particulars. Weill is bigger than Brecht for the pure reason that he can endow the playwright's symbols with vibrating flesh. It is the paradox of the music that, while being itself abstract, it lends humanity to all interpreters. No Claggart or Shylock or Iago or Jakob Schmidt remains entirely bereft of our compassion so long as he sings. I weep at Weill, I do not weep at Brecht. Brecht is less heightened than simply absorbed by Weill.

Brecht lamented that his pessimistic texts, as set by Weill, always left listeners feeling good. But isn't music's native property celebratory? Unlike certain literary works – one thinks of *Werther* – music never prods its hearers into killing themselves (despite the "Gloomy Sunday" legend). Song is the ultimate purgatory lending an inner glow to even the most despondent poetry. And composers as a breed are less prone than painters and poets and He Who Says Yes to committing suicide.

[Reprint of "Brecht" from *Settling the Score: Essays on Music* © 1988 by Ned Rorem, reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.]

Bergman (continued)

Twenty years later I at last had the opportunity to stage *The Threepenny Opera* in Sweden. What a dreadful compromise, what a parody of great ambitions, what cowardice, what betrayal of monumental insight! All resources, both artistic and material, had been put at my disposal and I failed because I was foolish and vain, an unbeatable combination when you are directing. I did not think about Clärchen's half-illuminated face and the harsh moonlight, the Turkish cigarettes and David leaning over the black portable gramophone. We had had the opportunity to listen to those scratchy Telefunken records, but we had done so absentmindedly, and agreed that the music would have to be reorchestrated. Provincial idiots and village geniuses. That's what it was like then. What's it like now?

[Reprinted from *The Magic Lantern: An Autobiography*, by Ingmar Bergman, translated from the Swedish by Joan Tate, New York: Viking, 1988. © 1987 Ingmar Bergman; English Translation © 1988 Joan Tate. Reprinted with permission.]

Opera or Play with Music? An Unsung "Dreigroschenprozess"

by Stephen Hinton

"Seid nicht auf uns erbost wie das
Gericht: Gesetzten Sinnes sind wir alle
nicht."
(Macheath)

The Threepenny Opera has always attracted controversy, just as the authors intended it to. Yet if, as so often, controversy has been a crucial factor in promoting the work's phenomenal success, the irony remains that the controversies to have commanded most attention are those that neither Brecht nor Weill could possibly have intended or foreseen. It started early on with the much publicized plagiarism scandal. The critic Alfred Kerr openly accused Brecht of failing to credit the translator of the interpolated Villon ballads, K.L. Ammer. As a result, Ammer was awarded 2.5% of the royalties from performances of the work in the original German. Even more widely publicized was the lawsuit over the Pabst film of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, which ended with Brecht's considerable costs being paid, even though he had broken contract, and with Weill receiving a handsome financial settlement by way of compensation for his exclusion from the production. The trial also inspired Brecht's "Dreigroschenprozess: ein soziologisches Experiment."

Less well known, but in many ways more relevant to the sort of controversy actually intended by the authors, is an episode of litigation that occurred shortly after the Ammer case but before the Pabst one. It was reported in October 1929 in the right-wing *Zeitschrift für Musik* as follows:

In the Lübeck Stattheater a series of performances of *Die Dreigroschenoper* was given with a cast of actors employed for spoken theater. At the end of the production the actors claimed that, according to their contract, they were not required to perform in an opera and demanded increased fees. The management refused to comply, whereupon legal action was taken. The theater's court of arbitration in Hamburg ruled that *Die Dreigroschenoper* was not an opera but a play with rhythmically spoken song interludes and dismissed the case with costs.

Not content with merely reporting the incident, the journal gleefully seized upon the court's decision as confirmation of its own cultural-political convictions:

On the basis of the operas produced by our "new" generation of artists there is much written about opera's demise. Here, too, the sound verdict of a German judge seems to have been necessary to establish order at last. Let us rid ourselves of these fashionable revue and operetta operas and clean up our temples of art! What is rare but good will then have light and air to flourish and we shall once again take joy in our opera.

Hitler's seizure of power may have had to wait another three years, but the pernicious rhetoric of "purity" and "order" employed by the National Socialists was already formulated and in circulation. The point the judge missed, being obliged to decide either way, is that *Die Dreigroschenoper* resists categorization. It is no less an opera than it is a straight play; its motivation and appeal as well as its difficulty reside precisely in an equivocality which informs the work at every level. As the *Zeitschrift für Musik* observed with the sharp insight of incensed reaction characteristic of that journal, Weill and Brecht were making their own creative contribution to the Weimar Republic's opera debate. Central to that debate was the critique of the "temples of art" which the National Socialists were strenuously trying to defend as manifestations of German *Geist*. When the state-sanctioned rhetoric became official government policy, implemented with jackboot ruthlessness, the controversial art of subverting generic boundaries was forced underground. Nonetheless, its popularity remained undiminished. As Universal Edition wrote to Weill in 1948, "In certain private circles during the Nazi period, the songs of *Die Dreigroschenoper* were a kind of anthem and served as spiritual rejuvenation for many an oppressed soul." The work became, as director Harry Buckwitz put it in 1949, "a modest outlet for a suppressed sense of liberty." In the immediate postwar period its double-edged messages were often interpreted, with hindsight, as shamefully unheeded warnings.

Stephen Hinton has kindly shared this information which he uncovered while researching his *Threepenny Opera Handbook*, forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.

Who Sings the "Barbara-Song"?

by Kim H. Kowalke

The "Barbara-Song" has always been something of a mystery, as Barbara makes an appearance in neither the song itself nor the remainder of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Who was she? Brecht's textless melody in an arrangement by F.S. Brunier, labeled "Barbara Song" by the poet himself [Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv 249/60], is found on the reverse of Brunier's similarly textless notation of Brecht's tune for "Die Seeräuber-Jenny," which is dated 9 March 1927 [BBA 249/59].¹ The document provides no clues about the identity of either woman, nor any about the original context or function of either song. That both poems can be found in the earliest surviving working drafts of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, stripped of any earlier references except their vestigial titles, confirms that Brecht gleaned most of the song texts for that work from pre-existent sources but tells us nothing about the original personae of Barbara or Jenny. Indeed, either or both may have had no more personal history or particular association beyond the purely phonetic attributes that inspired such other titles as "Benares Song" or "Mandelay Song."

No less perplexing and perhaps more interesting than the identity of Barbara is the performance tradition of the song in *Die Dreigroschenoper* which still bears her name. It is certainly more complicated than the parallel problems of who sings the Second Finale or "Seeräuberjenny." In the former case, the original libretto, published score, and autograph materials all concur that the Finale is to be sung by Mrs. Peachum and Macheath; only Brecht's revised literary version in the *Versuche* of 1931 inexplicably shifts the female part to Jenny. The dramatic conflict between Macheath and Mrs. Peachum, as well as the musical style and vocal heft required by the number, not to mention Weill's *pesante* tempo [$\text{♩} = 70$, which has seldom been observed on recordings], confirm that Mrs. Peachum is its rightful owner.

Jenny, on the other hand, stole "Seeräuberjenny" only at the time of G.W. Pabst's film version, an early script of which called for both Polly and Jenny to sing it at different points in the screenplay. Lenya's remarkable performance in the film forever stamped the song with her imprint and reinforced the nominal affinity between Jenny Diver and her kitchenmaid-pirate namesake in the song. Twenty-five years later, when Lenya again appropriated the song in Marc Blitzstein's adaptation, the gap in Polly's role was temporarily filled by "Bide-A-Wee in Soho," Blitzstein's new lyric for the "Bilbao

Song." Polly got her ballad back only when copyright problems forced the removal of *Happy End* music from *The Threepenny Opera*. Today the production script of Blitzstein's version calls for Polly to sing "Pirate Jenny" even though Lenya recorded it on the cast album and the actresses playing Jenny always sang it at the Theatre de Lys.

Likewise, every published script and score of *Die Dreigroschenoper* calls for the "Barbara-Song" to be sung by Polly in Act I, Scene 3, in response to Mrs. Peachum's inquiry, "Are you really married?" The lighting changes and a placard announces: "In a little song Polly gives her parents to understand that she has married the bandit Macheath."



Caspar Neher's sketch of Carola Neher as Polly.

Therefore, I had long thought that Marc Blitzstein's decision to reassign it to Lucy, played by Bea Arthur at the Theatre de Lys, was an ill-considered attempt to beef up Lucy's role while nodding toward Broadway and the Forties' husky torch song tradition. But recently Fritz Hennenberg and others have suggested that Lucy may have sung the song in the premiere production at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm.² My own research for an essay on "*The Threepenny Opera* in America" [forthcoming in Stephen Hinton's *Cambridge Opera Handbook*] turned up more evidence supporting Lucy's initial claim to the "Barbara-Song."

When Weill published the unorchestrated "Arie der Lucy" in 1932, he accompanied it with a note of explanation:

In a scene from the last act of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Lucy, the daughter of the police commissioner, sits in her room and awaits the visit of her rival Polly. She makes sinister plans for murder. The aria was written for this solo scene of Lucy as a companion piece, you might say, for the "Eifersuchtsduett" in Act II. This jealousy monologue for Lucy could be conceived as a type of aria because it was planned that an actress with good vocal ability would play Lucy at the Berlin premiere. When that casting didn't take place, the "Aria" was cut. It would have been cut in any case, because during the course of rehearsals it was decided that the whole scene was superfluous. Only with later revivals was the scene reinstated – now without the aria, which was vocally too difficult for the actress playing Lucy.³

The scene is indeed missing from the libretto published jointly by Universal Edition and Felix Bloch Erben in 1928 for rental to theaters, but Brecht reinstated it as "Kampf um das Eigentum," Act III, Scene 2, in the *Versuche* version – *sans* aria.

Carola Neher, who had been cast as Polly, missed the first weeks of rehearsals in August 1928 in order to care for her dying husband, Klabund. After his death, Neher returned to the company, but then claimed that the role of Polly was no longer large enough and withdrew. Less than a week before opening, Roma Bahn replaced Neher. (Bahn, in turn, surrendered the role to Charlotte Ander early in the run.) Meanwhile, Kate Kühl had been cast as Lucy, and it's possible that the "Barbara-Song" had, in Neher's absence, already been given to her to compensate the role for the loss of her other solo numbers, including the rage aria. In the earliest sur-

living version of the play, the so-called stage script reproduced by Felix Bloch Erben in June 1928,⁴ the "Barbara-Song" is Polly's in Act I, but Lucy still has her "Aria" in Act III, as well as the "Eifersuchtsduett" and Kipling's "Maria, Fürsprecherin der Frauen" in the last scene of Act II. The latter number was ultimately reduced only to its refrain and given to Polly as "Polly's Lied." If Polly also sang the "Barbara-Song" and "Lucy's Aria" had been cut, Lucy would have retained only the "Eifersuchtsduett."⁵

Felix Joachimson recalls that amidst general pandemonium Bahn (Polly) sang the "Barbara-Song" with the orchestra for the first time at the dress rehearsal.⁶ But other eyewitnesses, including Margot Aufricht, who served as rehearsal assistant, claim that Kate Kühl sang the number in the prison scene at the opening of Act II, Scene 3. This assertion gains credence from the presence of a holograph piano-vocal score of a version of the "Barbara-Song" in the Kate Kühl Collection and from indications (including dialogue cues) in the piano-conductor's score and a set of manuscript parts used by conductor Theo Mackeben.⁷

Indirect evidence for Lucy singing the "Barbara-Song" on opening night can be inferred from Herbert Ihering's later review of a new cast, now featuring Carola Neher, in the *Berliner Börsen-Courier* of 13 May 1929. Apparently by then the cut scene between Lucy and Polly had been restored, with Polly singing the "Barbara-Song" at its conclusion:

At the center is the Polly Peachum of Carola Neher...A new scene: Polly visits her rival to fight over Macheath. Carola Neher played this scene with a magical mixture of irony and anxiety. The way she dabbed her handkerchief to her eyes and patted her face is dictated by the music and recalls the great acting of Guthheil-Schoder in *Rosenkavalier*. Then she sings the "Ballade der Lucy," which has now been given to Polly, with charm and an ability to juggle wit and sentiment that is overpowering.

In retrospect, this account accords with Ihering's review of the premiere, published on 1 September 1928, wherein he described Kate Kühl as "impressive in a ballad," which must have been the "Barbara-Song."⁸

The "Ballade der Lucy" also turned up in New York at the Empire Theatre in April 1933. Earlier that year, two novice producers, John Krimsky and Gifford Cochran, had gone to Berlin to obtain the stage rights for

the American premiere of *Die Dreigroschenoper* and to meet with Weill and Brecht. Hoping to duplicate as closely as possible the Berlin production, they hired Erich Engel's assistant, Francesco von Mendelssohn, to direct and Cleon Throckmorton to recreate Caspar Neher's original designs. Although no copy of the English adaptation by Cochran and Jerrold Krimsky has been located to date, Weill suggested to Brecht in 1942 that "one of the principal reasons for the failure in 1933 was that it had been too literal a translation." The listing of musical numbers in the program booklet places the "Lucy Song" at the open-

couldn't send the full score until the next day: "At the moment I'm still in the process of adjusting the score according to the experiences of the performances here and bringing the piano score into line with the libretto. That is quite an undertaking, which must be done as carefully as possible so as not to run into trouble later when the provincial theaters mount the work." Weill sent portions of the partitur in installments, and in a letter received by UE on 21 September, he informed his publisher that under separate cover he was sending the corrected piano score and the complete libretto: "Since [in the libretto] I've marked precisely the numerals of the musical numbers (which you might wish to emphasize with a special typeface) according to the

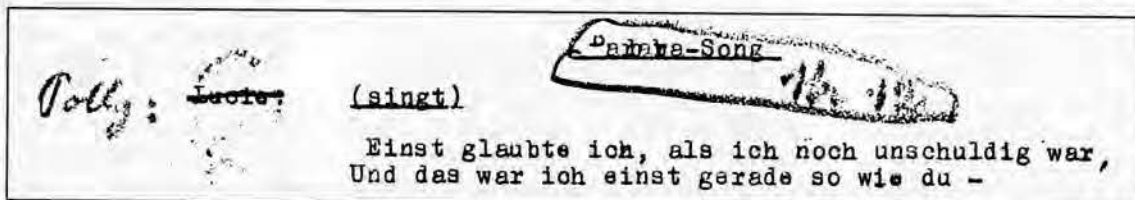


Figure 1.

ing of Act II, Scene 3. It was sung by Lucy (Josephine Huston); there was no mention of a "Barbara-Song."

When Leonard Bernstein conducted a concert version of Marc Blitzstein's adaptation at Brandeis in 1952, Barbara had regained her place in the title, but it was again sung by Lucy (Anita Ellis) at the pitch indicated in the published piano-vocal score.⁹ For the Theater de Lys production, in Act II, Scene 3 Bea Arthur simply sang it an octave lower than written. In a letter [in English] dated 20 February 1955 to Elisabeth Hauptmann, Lenya described that production in great detail and corroborated, albeit by omission, the precedent for Blitzstein's assignment of the "Barbara-Song" to Lucy: "As far as Blitzstein's version is concerned, he stuck very closely to Brecht's. The only major change was that Polly sings the Bilbao Song in the stable scene instead of Pirate Ballad and Jenny sings the Pirate Ballad in the brothel scene with a few added introduction lines for the song. That worked beautifully and me singing the song in that spot added considerably to the success of the production. The rest was pretty much the same."

Curiously, the circumstantial evidence of this chain of Lucys singing the "Barbara-Song" in Act II, Scene 3 (except when Carola Neher took over as Polly in 1929) is contradicted in all published materials of both script and score. The sensational but unexpected success of *Die Dreigroschenoper* in Berlin had caught Universal Edition off-guard, but it scrambled to produce a piano-vocal score and libretto as quickly as possible. On 7 September 1928, just a week after opening, Weill wrote to UE that he

piano-vocal score, it won't be necessary to put cues into the piano-vocal score."

The typescript of the complete libretto, with Weill's inserted numerals and Brecht's autograph corrections, has been preserved in UE's archive. In it, the text for the "Barbara-Song" has been labeled by Weill according to its original placement as "Nr. 12" in crayon [See figure 1.]. The typewritten "Lucie" has been crossed out and "Polly" written in the left margin. Even from a photocopy of the document, one can see that the column of lyrics has been cut, re-pasted, and interpolated at this spot with the left margin unaligned. It has been spliced into Act I, Scene 3, on an unnumbered page, inserted between those of the typescript numbered 19 and 20. The corresponding gap from the middle of page 33 to 35 would account for the excised "Barbara-Song." Although there are minor discrepancies in the numbering of the song in the autograph full score (13), typescript and proof of libretto (12), and Mackeben's score (13) and parts (13a), all sources confirm that the "Barbara-Song" had indeed been sung in Berlin at the opening of Act II, Scene 3.¹⁰

The galley proofs, corrected by Weill and Elisabeth Hauptmann, followed the text of the spliced typescript but failed to include the numeral or the title of the song, so Weill again wrote in "Barbara-Song" and "Nr. 12." The various layers of conflicting numbering of the score prompted UE to ask Weill about the sequence in a letter dated 4 October; Weill replied by telegram that the ordering of musical numbers should follow the libretto. When that libretto was published with an initial print run of 500 copies on 12 October 1928, it correctly identified the song as Polly's and as Nr. 9, thereby matching the

final ordering in the printed piano-vocal score.

From that time on, no published edition has departed from this text, assignment, and placement. Yet a pervasive tradition has perpetuated Lucy's squatter's claim to the property, despite the fact that Weill and Brecht themselves, within three weeks of opening night, both made it unequivocally clear that they considered the Lucy-assignment a temporary one occasioned only by exigencies at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. That the published materials actually do reflect Weill's and Brecht's original creative intentions can be inferred from internal musical evidence provided by a passage in the middle of the Third Finale. The orchestra ironically recalls a snippet of the "Barbara-Song" to undercut both the sentiment and meaning of Polly's preceding declaration "Mein lieber Macheath ist gerettet! Ich bin sehr glücklich." This remarkable reminiscence would only confuse, if the "Barbara-Song" were to be sung by Lucy and this section of the Finale were to be sung by Polly.

In this connection, the holograph piano-vocal score of the "Barbara-Song" in the Kate Kühl Collection is conclusive. In *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, David Drew identifies this document as an "earlier version" of the song, whereas Hennenberg says only that the setting "differs from the full score and the later piano-vocal edition."¹¹ Neither author, however, mentions that it breaks off after the repeat sign and lacks an ending, but is immediately followed by the section from the Third Finale sung by Polly that was cited above. [Figure 2] If, as Drew surmises, the Kühl manuscript is an earlier version of the song, then Weill wrote out 12 measures of the finale at the same point in the compositional process, but left out the crucial orchestral recall of the snippet from the "Barbara-Song" itself.

I would suggest another possibility: when Kate Kühl took over the song from Polly in rehearsal, either after Neher left or when Bahn had trouble learning the role in less than a week, Weill wrote out a score of the "Barbara-Song" for Kühl's use. He may have recognized that this change of performer would affect the reminiscence in the third finale as well, in that he also wrote out that passage for Kühl, because Lucy, not Polly, would have to sing it in that spot. In other words, the "Barbara-Song" could serve either Polly or Lucy, essentially interrupting the surrounding scene with a commentary

song related only tangentially to the plot in either case. It was Lucy's only chance for a solo number, but whoever sang it would also have to be featured in the related passage in the Third Finale.

Perhaps for this reason more than any other, Weill and Brecht decided that the "Barbara-Song" must ultimately be Polly's, for surely it is she, rather than Lucy, who must stand beside her parents and react in turn to Macheath's reprieve. Such a subtlety demonstrates once again that, contrary to popular belief and widespread performance practice, the score of *Die Dreigroschenoper* is not merely a collection of songs, which one can transpose, arrange, reassign, or reorder as if it were only incidental music. Unlike *Happy End*, Weill conceived the music for *Die Dreigroschenoper* as a large-scale composition: the case of the interrelationship between the "Barbara-Song" and the Third Finale is only the most obvious of

circumstances allowed. This is no less relevant to *Die Dreigroschenoper* than to the "substitute arias" in Baroque operas or Rossini's alternative versions of arias for particular productions.

Recently the competing claims for authority by the published version of a stage work versus the version actually performed in the theater at the first production have triggered widespread debates with respect to Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* and Kern and Hammerstein's *Show Boat*. In a controversial article published in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, perhaps the first in that journal to deal substantively with the American musical theater, Charles Hamm argues that the version of *Porgy* performed on Broadway in 1935 and mounted under Gershwin's supervision has at least as much, if not more, claim to be considered Gershwin's definitive version as the piano-vocal score which had been published before rehearsals had begun.

Hamm laments the unexamined assumption implicit in several recent recordings and productions that music cut at the premiere should in all cases be restored. EMI's remarkable 3-CD recording of *Show Boat* does precisely that, with William Hammerstein protesting that certain production cuts approved (or at least acquiesced to) by the authors should have been considered final.¹³

In the case of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Hennenberg has argued that Mackeben's rediscovered performance materials "can claim some value as an alternative" to Weill's autograph full score and, within limits, provide the basis for alternative readings—even (in a breathtaking leap of logic) versions with reduced orchestrations.

In the practical arena last season, Geoffrey Abbott conducted a new production in Augsburg honoring Brecht's 90th birthday and utilizing Mackeben's score, parts, and recordings to correct or augment Weill's own partitur. The theater widely publicized Abbott's attempt to duplicate the performance actually heard at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm.

If this were *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, there would be ample evidence supporting such an approach, since the piano-vocal score was published prior to the premiere in Leipzig and original hire materials were lost during the War. Indeed, the pre-Berlin productions of *Mahagonny* might each exert a claim for definitive alterations, as suggested by Drew in his preface to the 1969 edition of the piano-vocal score. But

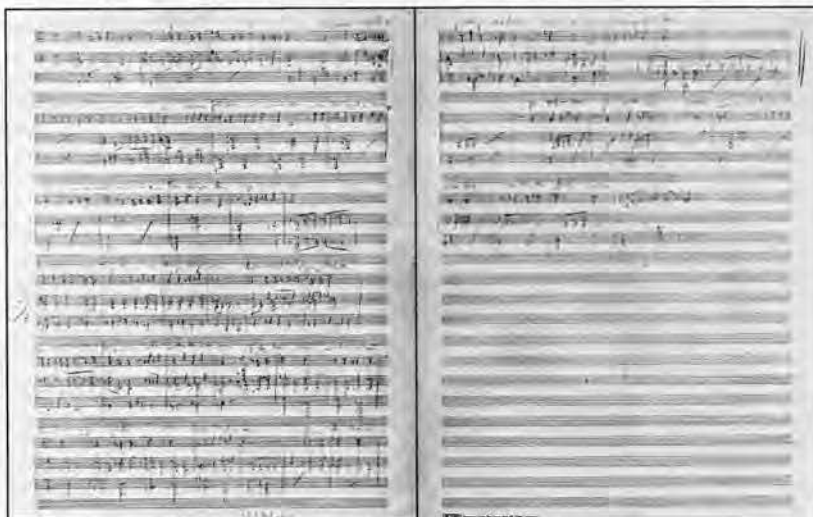


Figure 2. "Barbara Song" reproduced from the original located in the Kate Kühl Collection, Akademie der Künste, West Berlin. © Universal Edition 1928, renewed 1956

many motivic, harmonic, and tonal cross-references and correspondences which link widely separated numbers and coalesce in the cantus firmus of the chorale.¹²

The reverberations of Lucy singing the "Barbara-Song" in subsequent productions would not be sufficient to make the exercise of determining who originally sang the song more than a trivial pursuit if the matter did not have broader ramifications. Compromises effected for practical reasons at virtually every stage of the collaborative creative process have characterized musical theater from Monteverdi to Sondheim. The premiere production has seldom been the showcase for a definitive product of the completed process. More often it has been the first of a series of concrete "re-creations" of an ideal conception, mediating among various collaborators' conflicting visions and commanding no more authority than cir-

Weill and Brecht not only supervised and corrected UE's 1928 publications of the libretto and score of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, but also declined, despite ample opportunity, to incorporate certain aspects of the Berlin premiere into the permanent record. That they did not, despite the unprecedented success of that production, is a testament to the strength and integrity of their joint artistic vision. That vision, as delineated in the 1928 libretto, might deter those who would second-guess it, while inspiring and challenging those who would reify it in production sixty years later.

Copies of all correspondence of Weill and Lenya cited in this essay are in the Weill-Lenya Research Center; excerpts are quoted by permission of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc.

Notes

¹For a transcription of the Brecht/Brunier "Barbara-Song" with text underlay, see Michael Morley, "Suiting the Action to the

Word," *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, ed. Kim H. Kowalke (New Haven: Yale, 1986), pp. 199-200. See also Morley's "'New Tunes for Old': Brecht, Weill and the Language of Music in Four Unpublished Songs," *German Life and Letters* 35 (April 1982): 241-252; and Fritz Hennenberg, ed., *Das grosse Brecht-Liederbuch* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984).

²Fritz Hennenberg, "Weill, Brecht und *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Neue Materialien zur Entstehung und Uraufführung," *Österreichische Musik Zeitschrift* 40 (June 1985): 281-91, and *Das grosse Brecht-Liederbuch* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984): 387-88; Joachim Lucchesi and Ronald K. Shull, *Musik bei Brecht* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1988), p. 396.

³*Die Musik* 25 (November 1932): 128.

⁴For a description of the contents of the "Bühnenmanuskript," see Jürgen Schebera, ed., *Bertolt Brecht: Grosse kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe, Stücke 2* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988), p. 429ff; and

John Willett and Ralph Manheim, *Bertolt Brecht: Collected Plays*, Volume 2ii (London: Methuen, 1979), pp. 107-123. Both editions curiously ignore completely the version published jointly by Universal Edition and Felix Bloch Erben for rental to theaters.

⁵The Kate Kühl Collection in the Akademie der Künste, West Berlin, contains autograph piano-vocal scores of "Maria, Fürsprecherin der Frauen" and the "Barbara Song," a duplicated "Eifersuchtsduett," and a women's chorus part.

⁶"Portrait of a Quiet Man," p. 65 (Type-written); photocopy of unpublished biography in the Weill-Lenya Research Center.

⁷The Weill-Lenya Research Center has photocopies of both sets of documents. The holograph rehearsal score in the archive of Universal Edition is lacking a "Barbara Song."

⁸Arguments based on contemporary recordings are not convincing. Although both Carola Neher (1929) and Lenya (1930) [and later Florelle and Lys Gauty] recorded the "Barbara-Song," the absence of anything approaching an authentic "original cast recording" and the lax attitude of original cast members when recording single songs out of context renders dubious any conclusions about actual performance practice at the theater based thereon. Also Lenya recalled that actors frequently left the production to perform elsewhere and then returned to the cast of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, sometimes assuming different roles. She asserted that she herself had played Lucy occasionally.

⁹A tape recording of the performance is in the Weill-Lenya Research Center.

¹⁰The "Nr. 13" in Weill's autograph full score has been crossed out and "9" entered in another hand, presumably the editor's, Norbert Gingold.

¹¹David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (London: Faber, 1987), p. 197; Hennenberg, "Weill, Brecht und *Die Dreigroschenoper*," p. 285.

¹²David Drew discusses many of these motivic interrelationships in his contribution to the forthcoming *Cambridge Opera Handbook*. In a letter to UE dated 21 August 1928, Weill expressed his fear that his score would be treated like incidental music, "although with its 20 numbers it far surpasses the scope of ordinary stage music."

¹³Charles Hamm, "The Theatre Guild Production of *Porgy and Bess*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 40 (Fall 1987): 495-532; Stephen Holden, "Show Boat Makes New Waves," *The New York Times*, 25 September 1988, sec. 2, pp. 1, 27.



Roma Bahn (Polly) sings "Die Seeräuberjenny" (above), and poses in front of the theater curtain (right), Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, Berlin



A Threepenny Chronology

by David Farneth

- 1728** January 29. Premiere of *The Beggar's Opera* by John Gay with music arranged by Johann Christoph Pepusch, John Rich's Theatre in the Lincoln Inn Fields, London.
- 1898** February 10. Bertolt Brecht, born in Augsburg.
- 1900** March 2. Kurt Weill, born in Dessau.
- 1920** A London revival of *Beggar's Opera* plays 1,463 performances in an adaptation by Nigel Playfair and Frederic Austin at the Lyric Theatre.
- 1925** Music publisher B. Schott Söhne tries unsuccessfully to persuade Paul Hindemith to make a modern version of *The Beggar's Opera*. Instead, the firm commissions Otto Erhard and Kurt Elwenspöck in 1928 to make a translation of the original. [The only previous attempt to produce the play in Germany had failed (Hamburg, 1770)].
- 1927** March. Brecht writes lyrics for "Barbara-Song" and "Die Seeräuberjenny," set to melodies by Brecht, notated and arranged by F. S. Bruinier.
- Fall. Elisabeth Hauptmann learns of the success of *The Beggar's Opera* and translates the play for Brecht.
- 1928** Spring. Producer Ernst Josef Aufricht approaches Brecht for a play to open his newly acquired Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, Berlin. They settle upon *Die Bettleroper*.

August 25. Orchestra rehearsals begin.

The rehearsal period is fraught with difficulties: cast members leave; the script and music undergo revisions; dissension abounds over the lyrics and the difficulty of the music; cast members vie for bigger roles and special costumes; personal relationships interfere with the rehearsal process; the director threatens to quit.

Lion Feuchtwanger suggests the title "Die Dreigroschenoper" and Karl Kraus reportedly writes the second verse of the "Jealousy Duet."

August 30. The dress rehearsal lasts until 5:00 AM amid script changes and music cuts; rumors implying the production will be an artistic and financial failure spread.

August 31: World premiere of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, Berlin. The program billing is as follows: "*Die Dreigroschenoper* (The Beggars Opera) / Ein Stück mit Musik in einem Vorspiel und 8 Bildern nach dem / Englischen des John Gay. / (Eingelegte Balladen von François Villon und Rudyard Kipling) Übersetzung: Elisabeth Hauptmann; Bearbeitung: Brecht; Musik: Kurt Weill; Regie: Erich Engel; Bühnenbild: Caspar Neher; Musikalische Leitung: Theo Mackeben; Kapelle: Lewis Ruth Band." The cast includes: Harald Paulsen (Macheath), Erich Ponto (Peachum), Rosa Valetti (Mrs. Peachum), Roma Bahn (Polly), Kurt Geron (Brown), Kate Kühl (Lucy), and Lotte Lenya (Spelunken-Jenny).



Four announcements from volumes 79 and 80 (1928-29) of *Charivari*, the house journal of Felix Bloch Erben. Left: 1 May 1928, "Die Ludenoper." Above: 18 July 1928, "Des Bettler's Oper." Right: 8 September 1928, indicates theaters planning productions. Below: 1 June 1929, nine months after the premiere. Photos and information provided by Jürgen Schebera.



April 26. Weill and Brecht sign an agreement with Felix Bloch Erben for representation of stage rights. Elisabeth Hauptmann signs an appendix to the agreement on 2 May.

May. A working version of the script is deposited with Felix Bloch Erben under the title "Gesindel" ["Riff-Raff"]. Weill and Brecht (along with Lotte Lenya, Helene Weigel, and son Stefan Brecht) travel to the south of France to work on their adaptation.

June 4. Weill reports to his publisher, Universal Edition (UE), that "I am working full steam on the composition of *The Beggar's Opera*, which is proving great fun. It is written in a very light, singable style, since it will be performed by actors." The working title is now "Die Luden-Oper."

July 22. Because the script is still not final, Weill informs UE that the piano score is not ready for engraving. Instead, the firm should have a copyist prepare materials for rehearsals which are to begin on 10 August.

August 21. Because of time constraints, orchestra parts are prepared in Berlin instead of Vienna.

August 23. Weill inscribes his finished partitur in Charlottenburg. The "Moritat" is added later.

Having expected a flop, the audience takes awhile to warm to the piece. But by the "Kanonen-Song" they begin demanding encores and, after the performance, a "*Dreigroschen*-fever" overtakes theatrical circles and spreads into the mainstream of Berlin life. Within a week, theaters throughout Germany announce productions.

September. UE produces arrangements of single songs for salon orchestras and popular piano editions. Karl Koch, a prominent movie producer, films large segments of *Die Dreigroschenoper* during a performance.

October. UE and Felix Bloch Erben print the official libretto (UE 8850) for distribution to theaters as rental material. (Brecht refuses to let the script be offered for sale unless the publishers negotiate for these rights separately.) The piano-vocal score, edited by Norbert Gingold, is published at the end of October as UE 8851.

December. Weill promotes radio broadcasts of songs from *Die Dreigroschenoper* in Breslau, Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Cologne. The first recording by Deutsche Grammophon appears, and Weill reports to UE, "It is very effective, though technically not quite up to the mark. Unfortunately I wasn't able to succeed in getting a real sung performance of the songs made."

1929 Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag publishes an edition of the lyrics which UE also sells in great quantities under the number UE 8843. Numerous recordings released by Orchestrola, Electrola, Parlophon, HMV, Gramola, Gramophon, and others, flood the market.

January. Otto Klemperer conducts the first performance of *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, an arrangement commissioned from Weill, at the Berlin Opera Ball. On 5 February Weill writes to UE, "I heard the *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* (I have intentionally avoided the word suite) at the rehearsal yesterday and am very satisfied with it. There are 8 numbers in an entirely new concert arrangement, including some new interludes and completely new instrumentation." On 8 February, Klemperer conducts the piece in a Berlin Staatsoper orchestra concert.

March. The first performance at Vienna's Raimund Theater features Harald Paulsen in his original role of Macheath.

June. Verlag Ullstein, under a license from UE, publishes a popular piano-vocal edition (*Musik für Alle*, Nr. 274) of 11 numbers. This edition is purchased by thousands of households throughout Germany.

September 2. Weill, Brecht, and Aufricht attempt to reproduce the *Dreigroschenoper* success with *Happy End*. The production ends in shambles when Helene Weigel transforms the ending, berating the audience with Marxist propaganda. Surviving only three performances, *Happy End* is not performed again during the authors' lifetimes.

October. Weill recommends to UE the publication of Stefan Frankel's arrangement "Sieben Stücke nach der Dreigroschenoper" for violin and piano (UE 9969).

During the year *Die Dreigroschenoper* has 46 premieres in German theaters as well as productions in Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Hungary, Finland, and the USSR.

1930 January. Alexander Tairow directs a production of *Die Dreigroschenoper* at the Kamernyj theater in Moscow.

May. The Nero Moving Pictures Company signs a contract with Brecht and Weill for a film version of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, to be directed by G. W. Pabst.

July - November. Brecht has a dispute with Nero (Tobis-Warner) over the screenplay - Nero claims Brecht's revisions make the play Marxist. (Brecht's outline for the film is later published in *Versuche 3* as *Die Beule*.) Weill, in turn, is distressed by changes and additions made to his music and, by the end of September, the authors instigate a joint lawsuit against Nero. A widely publicized trial begins in October; the court splits the common suit into two actions and on 4 November rules in favor of Weill and against Brecht because Brecht fails to fulfill his obligations as screenwriter. In lieu of damages, Weill obtains a commitment from Tobis for three major film projects, granting him artistic approvals of subject matter, director, screenwriter, and designers. (Planning for the first project is well under way by 1933, when the Reichstag burns; one of the screenwriters is arrested by the Nazis and, shortly after, Weill flees Germany.)

October 13. French premiere of *L'Opéra de Quat' Sous* at Gaston Baty's Théâtre Montparnasse in Paris in a translation by André Mauprey.



Odette Florelle and Carola Neher played Polly in the French and German versions of Pabst's film. Photo: Casparius

1931 February. The G. W. Pabst *Die 3-Groschenoper* film premieres in Berlin at the Atrium theater, produced by Nero-Film for Tobis-Klang-Film and Warner Brothers. Screenplay: Laszlo Vajda, Leo Lania, and Béla Balázs; cameraman: Fritz Arno Wagner; sets: Andrej Andrejew, producer: Seymour Nebenzahl. The cast includes Rudolf Forster, Carola Neher, Fritz Rasp, Valeska Gert, Reinhold Schünzel, Lotte Lenya, Vladimir Sokolov, and Ernst Busch. (The American premiere takes place 15 May 1931 at the Warner Theatre in New York.) A French version is filmed with a different cast including Albert Préjean, Odette Florelle, Gaston Modot, Margo Lion, Jacques Henley, Lucy de Matha, and Vladimir Sokolov.



"3-Penny Opera" opens on Broadway at the Empire Theater on 12 April 1933. Photo provided by Burgess Meredith

1933 February 28. Brecht leaves Germany, travels to Prague, Vienna, Switzerland, Paris, and settles in Denmark in June.

March 21. Weill flees the German border and travels to Paris, where performances of *Der Jasager* and *Mahagonny* had achieved a great success the previous December.

April 12. *3-Penny Opera* opens on Broadway in New York at the Empire Theatre in a translation by Gifford Cochran and Jerrold Krinsky, directed by Francesco von Mendelssohn with a cast including George Heller, Rex Weber, Evelyn Beresford, Steffi Duna, Robert Chisholm, Marjorie Dillee, Burgess Meredith, and Josephine Huston. The production is a failure and runs only 12 performances.

1934 November. Brecht's *Dreigroschenroman* is published by Allert de Lange in Amsterdam.

1935 February. Weill is discouraged by negative reviews of a BBC broadcast of music from *Die Dreigroschenoper* and fears they will hamper his career in England.

September. Weill comes to New York to mount *The Eternal Road*; he never returns to Germany and makes only one brief return to Europe in 1947.

1936 June - August. Weill delivers lectures to the Group Theatre in Trumbull, Connecticut, using songs from *Die Dreigroschenoper* as examples. Marc Blitzstein is in attendance.

1937 Weill pursues new adaptations of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. He approaches various writers and producers during his American years including Charles MacArthur (in 1941), Thornton Wilder (in 1945) and Maxwell Anderson (in 1945).

September. Ernst Josef Aufricht produces *L'Opéra de Quat' Sous* at the Théâtre des Etoiles in Paris. Weill composes two new songs for the production's star, Yvette Guilbert, in the role of Mrs. Peachum.

1938 April 7. Lenya sings several songs from *Die Dreigroschenoper* during a four-week appearance at Le Ruban Bleu in New York.

July. Anthony Tudor compiles an arrangement of music from *Die Dreigroschenoper* for a ballet, "The Judgement of Paris," first performed by the Ballet Club at the Mercury Theatre, London. (The American premiere is by the Ballet Theatre, 23 January 1940 in New York, for which Weill declines to make an orchestral arrangement.)

The Nazis are forced to stop the playing of songs from *Die Dreigroschenoper* at the Exhibit of Degenerate Art in Düsseldorf because they attract such large and appreciative crowds.

- 1939 After repeated attempts to secure a production of the work in the U.S., Weill writes to Brecht to suggest that the contract with Felix Bloch Erben for the stage rights of *Die Dreigroschenoper* be terminated – he fears that no American producer will make a contract with a German publisher. No action is taken until 1949 when Brecht unilaterally signs an agreement with Suhrkamp Verlag.
- 1942 March. Weill and Brecht clash over a proposed adaptation in the U.S. which would use an all-Black cast and new musical arrangements.
June 1. Brecht writes in his *Arbeitsjournal* that MGM is interested in filming *Die Dreigroschenoper*. No further details are given.
- 1945 First post-war production in Germany at the Hebbel Theater in the American sector of West Berlin.
- 1946 First performance in the United States since 1933, Illini Theatre Guild, University of Illinois, in an English translation by Desmond Vesey. The production is mounted upon the recommendation of Eric Bentley but performed without the opportunity to consult a full score.
- 1947 Theaters in Stuttgart, Munich, Hamburg, and Flensburg obtain the rights for post-war productions in Germany.
August. Brecht attempts to sell film rights to a Swedish company; Weill cautions that the contracts with Felix Bloch Erben must first be canceled and that worldwide rights kept clear for a film in the U.S. or England.
Weill makes notes indicating that *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Mahagonny*, and *Der Silbersee* were steps on the path to *Street Scene*.
- 1948 February. Six performances of Vesey's translation at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.



Scene from Northwestern University production of 1948. Photo provided by Claudia Webster Robinson

May 24. Premiere of Benjamin Britten's version of *The Beggar's Opera* in Cambridge, England.

- 1949 January. Brecht informs Weill that he wishes to update the text for German productions, and others request permission to update the music. Weill is firmly opposed to all proposals for changes, but his protests do not prevent Brecht from writing revisions in April (changes in Act I and some new lyrics) for the Munich Kammerspiele production, directed by Harry Buckwitz.
Marc Blitzstein begins working on an English translation, with Weill's blessing.
- 1950 April 3. Weill dies in New York; disputes with Brecht regarding *Die Dreigroschenoper* remain unresolved.
Vanguard Records releases the excerpts from *Die Dreigroschenoper* with principal singers of the Vienna State Opera, conducted by F. Charles Adler.
- 1951 February. Lenya sings a tribute to Kurt Weill in Carnegie Hall including a concert version of *Die Dreigroschenoper* in German.
- 1952 February. New York City Opera announces a production of Blitzstein's adaptation. Protests cause the cancellation of the production; one editorial calls the work "a piece of anti-capitalist propaganda which exalts anarchical gangsterism and prostitution over democratic law and order."
June 14. Leonard Bernstein conducts a concert performance of the new English adaptation by Marc Blitzstein at Brandeis University, Massa-

chusetts. The cast features Lotte Lenya along with David Thomas, Mary Krete, Jo Sullivan, David Brooks, George Mathews, and Anita Ellis. Decca's subsequent plans to record the score do not materialize because rights cannot be cleared.



Theater poster by David Stone Martin for Marc Blitzstein's English adaptation at the Theater de Lys, New York.

- 1954 March 10. Premiere of the Theatre de Lys production, New York, produced by Stanley Chase and Carmen Capalbo in Blitzstein's English adaptation. Lotte Lenya leads a cast which includes Scott Merrill, Jo Sullivan, Leon Lishner, Charlotte Rae, and Bea Arthur. The first run lasts 96 performances; the show reopens on 20 September 1955 and plays for 2,611 performances, then the longest running musical in history. A cast album is recorded by MGM and achieves record-breaking sales. The production catapults "Mack the Knife" to hit-song status and secures a place for *The Threepenny Opera* in the standard repertoire of theaters large and small throughout the U.S.



Editorial cartoon appearing at the time of London's 1956 Royal Court production. Photo provided by Stephen Hinton

- 1956** February. Sam Wanamaker directs a production of Blitzstein's English adaptation at the Royal Court Theatre, London. The cast includes Ewan MacColl, Eric Pohlmann, Lisa Lee, Daphne Anderson, George A. Cooper, Maria Remusat, Georgia Brown, and Bill Owen.

February 10. Brecht attends Giorgio Strehler's production at Piccolo Teatro, Milan. Bruno Maderna is the conductor and the cast includes Tino Carraro, Mario Carotenuto, Giusi Dandolo, Marina Bonfigli, Checcho Rissone, Romana Righetti, Franco Graziosi, Milly Monti, and Ottavio Fanfani.

Louis Armstrong records his jazz version of "Mack the Knife," leading the way for hundreds of artists to interpret the song for popular audiences. By this date, seventeen popular versions of "Mack the Knife" have been recorded in the U.S. Subsequent renditions include recordings by Bobby Darin (1959), Ella Fitzgerald (1960), Jimmy Durante, Frank Sinatra, and Sting (1985).

August 14. Brecht dies in Buckow.

- 1958** Phillips issues the first complete recording in German of the music from *Die Dreigroschenoper* conducted by Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg with a cast including Wolfgang Neuss, Willy Trenk-Trebitsch, Trude Hesterburg, Erich Schellow, Johanna von Kóczian, Lotte Lenya, Wolfgang Grunert, and Inge Wolffberg.



Jacket cover of Phillips 1958 recording.

- 1960** April 12. Erich Engel directs the Berliner Ensemble in the first production in the German Democratic Republic. The cast includes Wolf Kaiser, Norbert Christian, Charlotte Brummerhoff, Regine Lutz, Hans Hamacher, Elsa Grube-Deister, Erik S. Klein, Felicitas Ritsch and Günter Naumann.
- 1963** Kurt Ulrich Films produces a German film adaptation with a cast including Curt Jürgens, Hildegard Neff, Gert Fröbe, June Richie, and Hilde Hildebrandt. A simultaneous version with English overdubbing using lyrics by Marc Blitzstein is released with Sammy Davis, Jr. cast as the Street Singer.
- 1964** Lenya and Stefan Brecht license broadcast rights to the "Moritat" to the Joseph Schlitz Brewing Company for use in advertising their product, Old Milwaukee Beer, on television and radio.
- 1966** Phillips Records releases the complete music from *Die Dreigroschenoper* with the cast from a Harry Buckwitz production at the Frankfurt State Theater including Anita May, Kari Hübner, Franz Kutschera, and Hans Korte. Members of the Frankfurt Opera Orchestra are conducted by Wolfgang Rennert.
- 1969** December. *L'Opéra de Quat' Sous* opens at Théâtre de l'Est Parisien in a translation by Jean-Claude Hémery, directed by Guy Rétoré.
- 1972** February. Tony Richardson directs a production at the Prince of Wales Theatre, London, with a translation by Hugh MacDiarmid and a cast including Vanessa Redgrave, Joe Melia, Ronald Radd, Annie Ross, Barbara Windwor, and Hermione Baddeley.

Universal Edition publishes a full score in the Philharmonia series, no. 400, edited by Karl Heinz Füssli.

- 1976** May. Richard Foreman directs a production by the New York Shakespeare Festival at the Vivian Beaumont Theater in New York with an English translation by Ralph Manheim and John Willett. The cast includes C. K. Alexander, Blair Brown, Ellen Greene, Raul Julia, Caroline Kava, David Sabin, and Elizabeth Wilson. Columbia Records issues a cast album using new arrangements for larger orchestra made and conducted by Stanley Silverman.

- 1981** New production at the Berliner Ensemble with "collective" direction by Christoph Brüch, Wolf Buge, Wolfgang Pintzka, Hein Trilling, and Konrad Zschiedrich.



Tim Curry (Macheath) and Sally Dexter (Polly) in the National Theater production of 1986. Photo by Zoe Dominic

- 1986** March. Production of a new English translation by Robert David McDonald at the National Theatre, London, directed by Peter Wood.

October - February 1987. *L'Opéra de Quat' Sous*, co-production of Théâtre Musical de Paris and Châtelet Théâtre de l'Europe, directed by Giorgio Strehler in a new French translation by Strehler and Myriam Tanant.



Scene from Giorgio Strehler's 1987 French production at Théâtre Musical de Paris -- Châtelet

- 1987** May. The Theater des Westens presents the first production in West Berlin since 1945, directed by Günter Krämer.

"Moritat" becomes the theme song for a series of award-winning commercials for the McDonald's corporation.

- 1988** Cannon Films commences principal photography of a new English film adaptation (lyrics by Blitzstein and others), directed by Menahem Golan with a cast including Raul Julia, Julia Migenes, Richard Harris, and Roger Daltrey.

Information for this chronology was compiled from documents in the Weill-Lenya Research Center, published sources, and an unpublished paper by Kim H. Kowalke.