

## Revival or Arrival?

by Mario Mercado

**The ninetieth anniversary of Kurt Weill's birth (2 March 1900) and the fortieth anniversary of his death (3 April 1950) has sparked programming in 1990 of virtually every one of Weill's concert and stage works as well as cultural exhibitions, radio programs, film series, and an international musicological conference. While there have been noteworthy revivals and festivals in the past, 1990 marks an extraordinary demonstration of interest in Weill's music. To commemorate the varied ninetieth-anniversary festivities, the Kurt Weill Foundation has published a special calendar of events, which is included with this issue of the Newsletter. Below is an informal guide to some of the major events now planned, as well as a summary of recording, broadcast, and publishing projects.**

The Westdeutscher Rundfunk radio production of *Der Kuhhandel* will open officially the Kurt Weill Festival, which is organized and supported by the cultural ministry of the city of Düsseldorf under the aegis of Dr. Johannes Rau, Minister-President of the state of North Rhine Westphalia. The municipal opera company of Bielefeld will present *Street Scene* (opening 3 March) in German and Theater Oberhausen will offer a triple-bill of one-act operas, *Der Protagonist*, *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren*, and *Royal Palace* (a 7 February premiere). New productions of *Die sieben Todsünden* and *Mahagonny Songspiel* will be mounted in Düsseldorf. Performances of both symphonies, *Der neue Orpheus*, *Quodlibet*, the Violin Concerto, *Bastille Music*, as well as much of the chamber music will figure on various programs of concert works. The *Walt Whitman Songs* (version for baritone soloist and orchestra), "Vom Tod im Wald," "Zu Potsdam unter den Eichen," "Legende vom toten Soldaten," *Das Berliner Requiem*, *Kiddush*, and *Recordare* have also been programmed. In addition, the Tanztheater Wanda Golonka will set a new ballet to *Frauen-*

*tanz*, the Düsseldorf Filminstitut will present a series of films for which Weill provided musical scores, and the popular singer Ute Lemper will appear in an all-Weill concert at the Düsseldorf Tonhalle.

On 25 March 1990 in Düsseldorf, "Kurt Weill und die Literatur," an overview of Weill's collaboration and association with prominent literary figures, opens at the Heinrich-Heine-Institut. Dr. Bernd Kortländer, Heine-Institut, and David Farneth, Weill-Lenya Research Center, serve as co-curators. An accompanying catalogue will contain essays by leading scholars.

The Foundation will also collaborate with the Dumont-Lindemann Archiv, Dr. Winrich Meiszies, Director, on an exhibition entitled "Kurt Weills Schaffen für die Bühne." The exhibition will focus on the premiere performances of Weill's stage works through contemporary photographs and documents. Before its official opening on 12 April in Düsseldorf, the exhibition will be displayed in Bielefeld, concurrently with performances of *Street Scene*.



### North Rhine Westphalia Kurt Weill Festival

A new production of *The Threepenny Opera* by the Great Lakes Theater Festival in Cleveland, Ohio opened in early September and initiated that city's Weill Festival. In addition to a concert performance of *Lady in the Dark* (co-produced with the Robert Page Singers), the GLTF Weill Festival features performances of *Der Jasager*, the *Marie Galante* Concert Suite, *Bastille Music*, "Vom Tod im Wald," *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, *Frauentanz*, the Violin Concerto, and the Cello Sonata. A large number of professional and educational institutions are participating in the Festival, including the Baldwin-Wallace Conservatory of Music, the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Cleveland Music School Settlement, the Oberlin College-Conservatory, as well as the Lyric Opera Cleve-



### Cleveland, Great Lakes Theater Festival

land, the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, and the Tom Evert Dance Company. On 30 March at Severance Hall, members of the Cleveland Octet will present both String Quartets and the rarely heard Two Movements for String Quartet (1922-23). The Cleveland Cinémathèque has programmed a special series of films—either those for which Weill composed scores or in which Lenya assumed leading roles. As a complement to the Weill

Festival, the Cleveland Museum of Art has mounted an exhibit entitled "Cross Section: Graphic Art in Germany After the First World War," 10 October-7 January. And Cleveland radio station WCPN will provide a comprehensive overview of Weill's European and American works during a ten-month broadcast series.

# KURT WEILL 1990

*Der Kuhhandel*, *The Eternal Road*, and *Marie Galante*, not mounted since their original premieres, will all have new productions during the 1989-90 season. All three stage works emanate from the mid-1930's, during the years when Weill lived in Paris and the United States; coincidentally, all three will be produced in March 1990. *Der Kuhhandel* will be presented by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk from 22 - 24 March in Düsseldorf, Mülheim, and Cologne and will inaugurate the Kurt Weill Festival sponsored by the cultural ministry of the City of Düsseldorf and the State of North Rhine Westphalia. The concert and radio performances of this operetta, with libretto by Robert Vambery, bear a startling contemporary relevance since the plot deals with arms sales in a fictitious Latin American country.

The Scottish Opera under John Mauceri plans to produce from 6 - 10 March in Glasgow the English-language version of *Der Weg der Verheißung* known as *The Eternal Road*. Based originally on Franz Werfel's German libretto, the work was ultimately realized in 1937 in the English adaptation of Ludwig Lewisohn with additional lyrics of Charles Alan. The exigencies of the production circumstances resulted in substantial cuts in the musical score; moreover, all the

performing materials were lost. However, a full score survived and, along with a piano-vocal score, has become the basis for the work's reconstruction. Since closing at the Manhattan Opera House in 1937, the biblical drama-musical oratorio – a critical success but a box-office failure – has not been revived.

There has been no opportunity to hear the complete musical score of *Marie Galante* within the context of the Jacques Deval play since 1934. The melodrama – revolving around the fate of a young French woman who is taken against her will to South America, is forced into prostitution, and unwittingly involved in a tragic espionage – was first a popular novel (by Deval) and then transformed into a play and also a film, the latter starring Helen Morgan and Spencer Tracy. The Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven will produce a new English adaptation directed by Arvin Brown. Weill's original score will feature the orchestration of "Youkali, Tango Habanera," which was only discovered in 1988 at the archives of the publisher Heugel-LeDuc in Montrouge, outside of Paris. The production is scheduled to premiere on 13 March and run for seven weeks.



## Der Kuhhandel, The Eternal Road, Marie Galante



## London, Almeida Festival

In London, the Almeida Theatre will present a mini-Weill festival featuring the *Marie Galante* Concert Suite, *War Play*, and "Cry the Beloved Country" a concert suite from *Lost in the Stars* devised by David Drew. It will form part of Almeida's annual summer festival which will also include the *Berliner Requiem* and an all-Weill voice recital.

The American Music Theater Festival production of *Love Life* opening in June 1990 at Philadelphia marks the first professional revival of the 1946 Weill-Alan Jay Lerner collaboration (in 1987, the University of Michigan staged the first revival; see article in vol. 5, no. 2). In addition to *Love Life*, other less frequently performed American works will be staged: *Lady in the Dark* by Light Opera Works in Evanston, Illinois (29 - 31 December 1989); concert performances of *Firebrand of Florence* in New York City (Spring 1990), and *Johnny Johnson* in London later in the year.



## American Musicals

The English National Opera opened a long run of *Street Scene* at the London Coliseum in October. David Pountney directs and Carl Davis conducts the production which runs through 23 November. (See press excerpts on page 27 for reviews of Scottish Opera *Street Scene* production.) In early December, the English-language production will travel to Ludwigshafen,

West Germany.

New York City Opera's plans to revive their 1979 production of *Street Scene* this fall were cancelled due to a musician's strike.

The anniversary season brings four new productions of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*: the Los Angeles Music Center Opera (September), the Augsburg Stadttheater (February), the Hamburg Staatsoper (May), and Maggio Musicale Fiorentino Festival performances led by Luciano Berio (June). As mentioned, beginning in February and running through May 1990, the Theater Oberhausen will present a triple-bill of *Royal Palace*, *Der Protagonist*, and *Der Zar läßt sich photographieren*. In addition, the Berlin Kammeroper is planning a double-bill of *Der Protagonist* and *Der Zar* for September 1990.

Weill's most famous and most-often performed work, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, will be performed literally hundreds of times throughout the anniversary season, in schools and universities and on professional stages, from Dubuque, Iowa to Sarajevo, Yugoslavia – from Montréal, Quebec to Brazzaville, Congo. The Theater des Westens



## German Stage Works

in Berlin recently revived on 14 July its highly successful 1987 Günter Krämer production and played it through October 1989. The first Broadway production of *The Threepenny Opera* since the ill-fated 1933 show, will open to preview audiences on 19 October in New York and officially premiere on 5 November. John Dexter will direct and Julius Rudel serves as musical director for the production starring Sting, Maureen McGovern, Suzanne Douglas, Georgia Brown, and Alvin Epstein (see related story on page 1). Finally, *The Threepenny Opera* will attract further international attention when 21st Century Films releases its feature film "Mack the Knife" in December 1989 (see related article on page 4).

*Happy End* will also enjoy numerous productions throughout the season. The Civic Theater of Mainz opens its production on 17 March and the Young Vic Theatre in London is planning an English-language production during its 89-90 season.



# KURT WEILL 1990

For the past two years, students in the professional programs at the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts in Canada have been involved in the study of Weill's European and American stage works, in scene classes, workshops, and full productions. This year the school will undertake a production of *Street Scene*. The Wiesbaden Konservatorium devotes two concerts to Weill's chamber music, in March and November. As part of the Weill Festival in North Rhine Westphalia, the Robert-Schumann-Hochschule in Düsseldorf will present the String Quartets, the Cello Sonata, and *Frauentanz* at the Düsseldorf Tonhalle, Kleiner Saal.

The Opera Program of the Juilliard School, New York, presents a production of *Die sieben Todsünden* on 23, 25, 27 February which will – perhaps surprisingly – mark the work's Lincoln Center premiere. In the city representing Lust in *The Seven Deadly Sins*, the Boston Conservatory offers its production of the Weill-Brecht scenario, newly choreographed by Anna Sokolow. *The Sins*, running 22-25 February, forms part of the Boston Conservatory's large-scale Weill Festival, which will include concerts devoted to Weill's orchestral and

wind literature by the school's faculty and ensembles, a full production of *Lady in the Dark*, a guest artist series, and lecture-demonstrations.

The collaboration for productions of *Der Jasager* and *Down in the Valley* among the University of Dortmund, Buffalo State College, and the State University of New York, Fredonia occupies a unique position among the educational initiatives. Over one-hundred students from

all three institutions will take part in Campus Cantat, an intensive choral workshop to be held in the Dortmund area in June under the direction of Dr. Willi Gundlach and

in conjunction with the North Rhine Westphalia Festival. The workshop will culminate in staged performances of both works for which the soloists, choruses, and instrumentalists will be drawn from the American and German students, enabling all to study the distinctly contrasting musical styles of Weill's *Schuloper* and folk-opera. Mrs. Lys Symonette, Musical Executive, Kurt Weill Foundation, will hold master classes and provide musical supervision.



## Weill at School

Two new books on Kurt Weill will be introduced in early March 1990 at the Leipzig book fair. The German-language version of *Kurt Weill: Musik und Theater: Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by Jürgen Schebera and Stephen Hinton, will appear simultaneously in editions from Henschelverlag, Berlin (GDR) and Argon Verlag, Berlin (West); Faber and Faber will publish an English edition in Fall 1990. Organized into three sections (Articles and Essays, Contributions for the magazine *Der deutsche Rundfunk*, Conversations and Interviews), the work attempts to collect in one volume all of Kurt Weill's significant writings known to date. Scholars will be particularly grateful to have restored to print those writings first published in David Drew's *Kurt Weill: Ausgewählte Schriften* (Suhrkamp, 1975). Aficiandos will be able to refer for the first time to a complete collection of writings in either German or English.

Jürgen Schebera's *Kurt Weill: Eine Biographie in Texten, Bildern, und Dokumenten* (published simultaneously by VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, Leipzig and B. Schott's Söhne, Mainz) will supersede his first biography published in 1983. Over 400 pages in length and including 239 photos, the large-format volume draws upon research which the author conducted at Yale University and the Weill-Lenya Research Center in New York with the support of a travel grant from the Kurt Weill Foundation. The book will include an extensive bibliography and a selected discography.

A new addition to the widely-acclaimed series of Cambridge Opera Handbooks will appear in early 1990 with the publication of *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera* by Stephen Hinton. Hinton has written three essays ("Matters of Intellectual Property: The Sources and Genesis of *Die Dreigroschenoper*," "The Premiere and After ...," and "Misunderstanding *The Threepenny Opera*"), included first translations of writings by Bloch, Adorno, and Benjamin, and compiled a comprehensive bibliography and selected discography. Other contri-

butions to the volume are by Kim H. Kowalke ("*The Threepenny Opera* in America"), David Drew ("Motifs, Tags, and Related Matters"), and Geoffrey Abbott ("The 'Dreigroschen' Sound"). Cambridge University Press plans to publish the handbook in advance of Weill's birthday celebrations.

A full-length biography and critical study of Kurt Weill by Ronald Taylor is to be published by Simon and Schuster in late 1990 or early 1991. It is designed as a "life and times," with the intention of giving not only an account of the material life, intellectual development, and personality of Weill himself but also a comprehensive picture of the social, political, and cultural background – in Europe and the US – against which his career took its course. The biographical narrative

is based on primary sources such as the correspondence and other documentary material held by the Weill-Lenya Research Center, the Yale University Music Library, Universal Edition, and libraries and

archives in both Germanies, as well as on the memoirs of those who knew him and experienced the reception of his work. Similarly the historical and cultural backdrop has been put together primarily from sources of the time, with extensive use made of the testimony of writers, artists, and musicians, as well as from other observers of the historical scene.

Ronald Taylor was until recently Professor of German at the University of Sussex, England. In the musical field he has written books on the Minnesinger, on Wagner, on Schumann, and on Liszt; as a literary scholar he has published a book on the writer and composer E. T. A. Hoffmann and a socio-literary study *Literature and Society in Germany 1918-1945*.

Yale University Press has announced plans to publish a paperback edition of *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill* in Spring 1990.



## Books

# KURT WEILL 1990

The Decca/London, CBS Masterworks, Polydor, Capriccio, TER, Musical Heritage Society, Newport Classic, Largo, and Koch International labels will all release new recordings during the 1989-90 season. After more than forty years the complete score for *Street Scene* will be featured on two recordings, both scheduled for release in late 1990: Josephine Barstow, James Morris, Angelina Réaux, and Jerry Hadley, conducted by John Mauceri, will be featured on a Decca/London recording, and the cast of the English National Opera 1989 production with Carl Davis, conductor, will be issued by TER. Decca is also making new recordings of *Die sieben Todsünden* and *Mahagonny Songspiel*.

Capriccio continues its ambitious Weill series of featured performances presented by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk. *Der Zar läßt sich photographieren* was recently issued, and planned for 1990 release are *Der Lindberghflug*, *Ballad of Magna Carta*, *Happy End*, and *Der Silbersee*, all conducted by Jan Latham-König.

Under the guiding hand of producer Larry Lash and on its Polydor label, PolyGram Classics is reissuing compact discs of recordings which originally appeared on the Deutsche Grammophon and MGM labels: due out in November 1989 are *Der Jasager* and the Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra (Anahid Ajemian, violinist, Izler Solomon, conductor), *Die sieben Todsünden* and *Das Berliner Requiem*.



## Recordings

*Happy End Songspiel*, "Vom Tod im Wald," and "Pantomime" from *Der Protagonist* are to follow next year.

In characteristic fashion, *Die Dreigroschenoper* refuses to take a back seat. Decca will release in December 1989 a complete German recording featuring René Kollo, Helga Dernesch, Mario Adorf, Ute Lemper, and Milva, with John Mauceri conducting; and Koch International will bring out in March 1990 another complete German rendition with Victor C. Symonette leading musicians of the Radio and Television Orchestra, Sofia and featuring Manfred Jung, Anita Herrmann, Herrman Becht, Stephanie Myszak, and Natalia Shoumanova.

CBS Masterworks will issue the soundtrack to the new Menahem Golan film, "Mack the Knife," with Raul Julia, Richard Harris, Julie

Walters, Julia Migenes, and Roger Daltrey. A cast album from the new Broadway *3 Penny Opera* production is anticipated on A&M Records.

Newly released concert works include Symphony no. 2 with Julius Rudel and the Bavarian Radio Orchestra on Musical Heritage Society and "Kiddush," *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, and Concerto for Violin and Winds on Newport Classic. Under the artistic direction of David Drew, Cologne-based Largo Records is producing a release of previously unrecorded concert music performed by the Ensemble Modern with HK Gruber.

Apart from the radio tributes which will take place on 2 March, several extensive broadcast series in Europe will celebrate Weill's 90th birthday. In conjunction with the Kurt Weill Festival in Düsseldorf, the Westdeutscher Rundfunk Köln has announced an ambitious season of Weill-related broadcasts.

### WDR 4:

21 January "Weill auf Schellack"

3 March "Weill Show," Wiesbadener Maifestspiele 1979,

7 April *Der Kuhhandel*

5 May *Street Scene*

2 June *Happy End*, *Der Lindberghflug*, *The Ballad of Magna Carta*

7 July *Der Silbersee*

4 August *Der Jasager* and *Down in the Valley*

WDR 3 is planning Sunday evening presentations of *Der Zar läßt sich photographieren*, *Die sieben Todsünden*, and *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* as well as broadcasts of both symphonies, Otto Klemperer's historic recording of *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, and a



## Radio

selection of interviews and discussions.

Dr. Jürgen Schebera has conceived and written a series entitled "Kurt Weill: Stationen," scheduled for six one-hour special broadcasts on Radio DDR II, January - June 1990. The series will showcase a newly produced *Der Protagonist* with Eberhard Büchner of the German State Opera in the leading role, accompanied by the Berlin

Radio Philharmonic conducted by Robert Hanell. The series will continue with previously recorded radio productions of Weill's German stage works: *Der Zar läßt sich*

*photographieren* (Westdeutscher Rundfunk, 1987), *Der Lindberghflug* (Leipzig concert performance, 1970's), *Der Jasager* (DDR Radio, 1970's), *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (DDR Radio, 1960's), and *Die Bürgschaft* (Sender Freies Berlin, 1980).

Miklos Galla is producing for Radio Bartok in Hungary a series of ten radio broadcasts featuring the full range of Weill's works. The series will make its premiere on 2 March 1990; each show will last one hour, with the exception of a full broadcast of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*.

# KURT WEILL 1990

*The Kurt Weill Foundation extends an invitation to the interested public to attend the International Kurt Weill Symposium, at Duisburg, Federal Republic of Germany, in conjunction with the North Rhine Westphalia Kurt Weill Festival. Duisburg is a convenient half-hour commute by train or streetcar from Düsseldorf, the center of most festival performances and exhibitions. Please see the enclosed calendar for a complete listing of the festival events. Questions regarding registration and accommodations may be directed to the Steinheim Institut, Geibelstrasse 41, D-4100 Duisburg 1, FRG. Telephone: 0203-370 071 (From the U.S.: 011-49-203-370071).*

## INTERNATIONAL KURT WEILL SYMPOSIUM

22-25 MARCH 1990

STEIGENBERGER DUISBURGERHOF

Sponsored by

**SALOMON LUDWIG STEINHEIM INSTITUT FÜR DEUTSCH-JÜDISCHE GESCHICHTE  
KURT WEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC, INC.**

in Co-operation with

**LANDESZENTRALE FÜR POLITISCHE BILDUNG, DÜSSELDORF  
EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC/UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER**

Program Committee: Prof. Dr. Julius Schoeps; Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Ruf; David Drew; Prof. Dr. Kim Kowalke, chair.

Local arrangements: Prof. Dr. Julius Schoeps

### 22 MARCH

**16.00** Preview for Symposium Participants of "Kurt Weill und die Literatur," Exhibit of the Heinrich-Heine Institut and the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music. Heinrich-Heine Institut, Düsseldorf.

**20.00** Concert Performance of *Der Kuhhandel*, Official Opening of the Kurt-Weill-Festival, WDR-Köln Rundfunkorchester, Jan Latham-König, conductor; Lore Lorentz, narrator. Tonhalle, Düsseldorf.

### 23 MARCH

**9.00** Greetings  
Dr. Julius Schoeps, *Steinheim Institut*  
Dr. Jürgen Thym, *Musicology Department, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester*  
Dr. Christoph-Hellmut Mahling, *President, International Musicological Society*  
Mrs. Lys Symonette, *Vice-President, Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc.*

**Session 1: Weill in Germany and America: 1933 and Beyond**  
Dr. Julius Schoeps, *Chair*

**9.30** "Fragwürdiges in der deutschen Rezeption"  
Dr. Stephen Hinton, *Technische Universität, Berlin (West)*  
"I Am An American!"  
Dr. Kim Kowalke, *Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester*  
"Der 'alien American' Kurt Weill und seine Aktivitäten für die War Effort der USA 1940-45"  
Dr. Jürgen Schebera, *Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, Berlin*  
Respondent:  
Dr. Joachim Lucchesi, *Akademie der Künste der DDR, Berlin*  
**Discussion**

**12.00** Luncheon

**Session 2: Weill's Place in 20th-Century Music**  
Dr. Christoph-Hellmut Mahling, *Chair*

**14.00** "Weill's Place in 20th-Century Music"  
Dr. Hermann Danuser, *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg*

#### Respondents:

Dr. Albrecht Dümling, *Der Tagesspiegel, Berlin (West)*  
Dr. Eberhardt Klemm, *Hanns-Eisler-Archiv*  
Aribert Reimann, *Akademie der Künste, Berlin (West)*  
Horst Kögler, *Stuttgarter Zeitung*  
Dr. Joachim Lucchesi, *Akademie der Künste der DDR*  
Dr. Claudia Maurer-Zenck, *University of Graz*  
Gerhardt Koch, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*  
Klaus Henning Bachmann, *Jüdische Rundschau, Berlin (West)*

#### Discussion

**Presentation of a Kurt Weill Bibliography**  
David Farneth, *Archivist, Weill-Lenya Research Center*

**17.00** Adjourn

#### BANQUET

Maestro Maurice Abravanel, *guest speaker*

**22.00** "Sind Sie zufrieden mit den Grammophonplatten, die von Ihren Kompositionen herauskommen?": Weill auf Schellackplatten"  
Dr. Jürgen Schebera (*Berlin, DDR*) and Bernd Meyer (*Dresden*)



# KURT WEILL 1990

24 MARCH

## Session 3: Weill's Early Career

- 9.00 "Weill in Dessau: Life as a Cantor's Son"  
Dr. Guy Stern, *Wayne State University (Detroit)*
- "Weill in Berlin: Musical Training and Experiences"  
Tamara Levitz, *Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester*
- "Kurt Weill und andere 'Brecht-Komponisten'"  
Dr. Jost Hermand, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*
- Respondent:  
Dr. Alexander Ringer, *University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana*

## Discussion

12.00 Luncheon

## Session 4: Content, Structure, and Musical Language

Dr. Wolfgang Ruf, *Chair*

- 14.00 "Kurt Weills Musiktheater und die Tradition der deutschen Romantik"  
Andreas Hauff, *Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz*
- "Structure and Affective Content in the Music for *Der Jasager*"  
Dr. Ian Kemp, *University of Manchester (England)*
- "Reflections on *Die Bürgschaft*"  
David Drew, *London*
- "Models and Musical Language in Weill's Symphonies"  
Dr. Robert Bailey, *New York University*

## Discussion

17.00 Adjourn

20.00 Concert by the Niederrheinische Chorgemeinschaft and the Knabenchor Hannover, Schumannsaal, Düsseldorf. Professor Hartmut Schmidt, *conductor*.

25 MARCH

## Session 5: American Songs

- 9.00 "I Cannot/Will Not Sing the Old Songs Now: Weill's Adaptation of Popular Song Forms"  
Dr. Michael Morley, *Flinders University of South Australia*
- "Psychosis *per musica*": Re-examining *Lady in the Dark*  
Bruce McClung, *Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester*
- "Pro Patria Mori? – Kurt Weill's Whitman Songs"  
Dr. Ann Clark Fehn & Dr. Jürgen Thym, *University of Rochester*
- Respondent:  
Werner Grünzweig, *Berlin (West)*

12:00 Symposium adjourns.

## SINGING THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS IN THE SOPRANO VERSION

*The following letter appeared in a June 1989 issue of Gramophone. It is reprinted here with permission of the author.*

### "Die sieben Todsünden"

In his review of the new CBS Masterworks recording of Kurt Weill's *Die sieben Todsünden*, AML unfortunately makes several erroneous statements about both the work and the performance in question. I should like to set the matter right once and for all.

At the premiere in Paris on June 7th, 1933, the role of Anna I was sung by the composer's once and future wife Lotte Lenya, and sung in the so-called "soprano version." This version, the only one the composer authorized and heard in his lifetime, has to the present time received only one complete commercial recording, that on EMI-Angel featuring Elise Ross as Anna I and conducted by Simon Rattle. This authentic version forms the main text of the currently-available Schott piano-vocal score (pp. 5-79).

Kurt Weill died in 1950. For a new production of the piece by the New York City Ballet (and the subsequent recording with Lenya), the conductor Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg transposed all the role of Anna I, and consequently large chunks of the rest of the score, for the far lower vocal range of the mid-fifties Lenya. This "Fassung für tiefe Stimme" occupies the appendix of the aforesaid piano-vocal score (pp. 83-131). I find no precedent for AML's statement that the composer, or anyone else, "scaled down the orchestration" at this or any other time.

Contrary to the statement in the review, on the new CBS recording it is the *lower* (ie. unauthorized) version that Julia Migenes sings – a surprise, not to mention a disappointment, from a singer who managed a superb Lulu only a few years ago. The Rattle/Ross version remains the only recording so far of what Weill wrote.

For anyone who has heard the original version, or spent much time studying the score, the 1955 "adaptation" is unacceptable. The transposition of virtually two-thirds of the score not only changes the whole orchestral (not to mention vocal) color, but wreaks havoc with the key-scheme and – most noticeably – with the segues between sections of the score. In several cases, specified immediate transitions become literally impossible in the lowered version.

The difficulty with performing the authentic text stems partly from the erroneous concept of the score fostered by the Lenya recording, and by subsequent imitators like Gisela May, but also, I believe, from the peculiar tessitura of the original soprano part. This never goes above a G, and in fact would probably lie uncomfortably *low* for many operatically-inclined singers. Is there a good light operetta soprano in the house? (The Brecht translator Michael Feingold once put forth the name of Jeannette MacDonald – posthumously, of course...) In any case, we clearly need to start from zero in assessing the musical and dramatic character of Anna I.

Nicholas Deutsch  
New York

*AML replies* – Mr. Deutsch is absolutely right. I am grateful to him for so courteously correcting me, and I apologize most sincerely to readers for misleading them. Foolishly I took it for granted that, with a soprano soloist and a conductor of the repute of Michael Tilson Thomas, the authentic soprano version was being used. I was undoubtedly wrong in stating that the composer "scaled down" the orchestration, though I believe that adjustments were made for the 1955 adaptation.

## CIDA MOREYRA REVIVES WEILL IN BRAZIL

by Celso Loureiro Chaves

A cabaret-type evening of Kurt Weill songs by Brazilian singer Cida Moreyra may well be the beginning of a Weill revival in Brazil. Cabaret shows are rare here, but Ms. Moreyra's *Bilbao-Cabaret* was presented very successfully in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Brasília, and Porto Alegre, and will appear in other cities during the Brazilian spring season already under way.

It is uncommon for a Brazilian performer to center her repertoire on the songs of a single composer and to perform them as consistently as Ms. Moreyra has performed the songs of Kurt Weill during the past fifteen years. Ms. Moreyra first caught the attention of the Brazilian public in the early 1970's while performing in an evening of Weill and Brecht songs presented by the Ornitório Theater Group of São Paulo, *Ornitório Canta Brecht & Weill*. Later, when she decided to embark on a solo career, Ms. Moreyra, who accompanies herself on the piano, continued to perform and to record Weill's works, to the extent that songs such as "Surabaya Johnny" and "Alabama-Song" have now become indistinguishable in the mind of Brazilian audiences from her voice and pathos. Ms. Moreyra's devotion to the music of Weill culminated in a recent recording, "Cida Moreyra Interpreta Brecht," dedicated almost exclusively to the songs of Weill and Brecht. (It also includes Kurt Schwaen's setting of "Legende vom toten Soldaten" and "Ballade von der Seeräuberin").

*Bilbao-Cabaret* was planned as a follow-up to "Cida Moreyra Interpreta Brecht," but it ultimately departs from the recording in many aspects, most significantly in the way Ms. Moreyra has expanded her repertoire. The title of the show does not refer to the German literary cabaret of the 1920's. Rather, it is reminiscent of the atmosphere of the low-life cabarets of bohemian Rio de Janeiro in the 1940's, with their combination of song, dance, and short comic plays closely related to the daily life of the spectators. For that reason, Ms. Moreyra has decided to include, alongside Weill's songs, a few songs by Brazilian composers, most notably Chico Buarque, whose own cinematic exegesis of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Opera do Malandro* [The Scoundrel's Opera], premiered in Rio de Janeiro in 1978.

The juxtaposition of songs composed many decades apart and within two different cultures could have been a cause for potential danger, risking to take the show to the verge of absurdity. However, the seamless transition between the Brazilian and the Weill materials in *Bilbao-Cabaret* has had the opposite effect: the comparatively fewer Brazilian songs serve as connections between the various songs by Weill, bringing them closer to Brazilian reality, as if they were themselves part of the rich tradition of Brazilian popular song.

*Bilbao-Cabaret* departs from Ms. Moreyra's previous performances and also from the performance traditions of Weill's music in Brazil. Many previously unexplored aspects of Weill's songs are being stressed now that the lyrics have been recently re-translated into Portuguese. Words and sentences that in older versions bore little or no relation to the original texts have been excised, and other passages have been either re-instated or clarified. The new translations bring the texts closer to the original meaning of the

songs while at the same time re-establish their formal balance. Thus, "Die Moritat vom Mackie Messer" has not only regained its six verses, but Mack's misdeeds are once again those described by the Street Singer in *Die Dreigroschenoper* and not those of corrupt administrators, as in older Brazilian translations.

During the military dictatorship in Brazil, many of Weill's songs were used as a banner for political protests, hence the not-always-subtle transformations in the lyrics often made between 1964 and 1985. In fact, "Surabaya Johnny" as recorded by Ms. Moreyra in 1983 was one of the songs which won for Brazilian artists a major battle against cultural censorship. Now that the military dictatorship is gone, Weill's songs are returning to their original form, having more than fulfilled a social function in their previously politicized adaptations.



Cida Moreyra

Ms. Moreyra is also extending her repertoire to encompass Weill's Parisian and American periods. Except for a recital by soprano Lúcia Passos in 1984, the repertory of Weill's songs performed in Brazil has been restricted basically to *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Happy End*, and some portions of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. In *Bilbao-Cabaret*, however, Ms. Moreyra has included "Youkali" and "Speak Low." This significant departure from the repertoire of her former shows has prompted a new recording of the latter song by another performer, Marisa Monte, whose version is broadcast regularly by many Brazilian radio stations.

The most distinctive trait of *Bilbao-Cabaret*, however, is the performance of some of Weill's songs in their original languages. Now that new translations are being used and the older,

politicized versions are no longer relevant, Ms. Moreyra seems inclined to revert occasionally to the original languages of the songs, thus restoring their melodic and rhythmic integrity. The most notable example is "Surabaya Johnny," which is performed twice in *Bilbao-Cabaret* – first in Portuguese and then in German. In so doing, Ms. Moreyra brings the re-evaluation of Weill's songs full-circle and shows how they are to be understood not only in Portuguese (with inherent, if inevitable, changes of prosody and rhythmic stress) but also in their original form.

*Bilbao-Cabaret* is lacking still in timbric imagery. The instrumental basis of Ms. Moreyra's performances is the solo piano, and the inclusion of the occasional synthesizer pushes the songs even further from the sonority of Weill's original arrangements. Thus, the unique timbre of Weill's music is lost and, it seems, will continue to elude the audiences until full-fledged productions of his works can reach the Brazilian stage.

The tradition of performances of Weill's works in Brazil has always been spurious, with a marked disregard for the original intentions of words and music. No authentic version of any of Weill's stage works has ever been performed in Brazil, despite the countless versions of *Die Dreigroschenoper* that have been produced since the 1960's, to which must be added at least two versions of *Happy End* in the late 1970's, and one infamous production of *Mahagonny Songspiel* in the early 1980's which took so many liberties with text and music as to render the work incomprehensible.

It would be too optimistic, however, to assume that one of Brazil's few opera companies would be ready to turn its back if only momentarily on the standard operatic repertoire and attempt a foray into one of Weill's stage works, presenting it in an unabridged, unaltered version, and using the original orchestrations. The Brazilian economic situation prevents such adventures, and opera companies, more than ever, are unwilling to gamble at the box office.

Until that happens, Ms. Moreyra's renewed interest in the music of Kurt Weill will remain as the clearest suggestion that a Weill renaissance is underway in Brazil. Indeed, the recent performances of *Bilbao-Cabaret* bring an unprecedented honesty to the treatment of the original texts and expand Weill repertoire in Brazil beyond the songs so frequently performed – songs that in Brazil had come virtually to be regarded as Weill's only compositions.

### Discography

Monte, Marisa. *Marisa Monte*. EMI-Odeon 364791761 (CD). 1988. [includes "Speak Low"]

Moreyra Cida. *Abolero Blues*. Continental 13044008 (LP). 1983. [includes "Surabaya-Johnny" (translation by Duda Neves and Silvia Vergueiro)]

Moreyra Cida. *Cida Moreyra Interpreta Brecht*. Continental 101404339 (LP). 1988. [includes "Moritat", "Alabama-Song", "Die Seeräuber Jenny" (translation by Cacá Rosset and Luiz Galizia), "In der Jugend gold'nem Schimmer" (translation by Rosset and Galizia); also "Legende vom toten Soldaten" and "Ballade von den Seeräubern," music by Kurt Schwaen]