



BOOKS

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ARTICLES

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Liu Shi-Rong (Director of the Artistic Committee of the Central Opera Theatre of the People's Republic of China). [Article in Chinese on Kurt Weill.] *People's Music* 4 (1991).

Rebling, Eberhard. "Der Fall Hindemith." *Motiv: Zeitschrift für Musik* 1 (January 1991): 25-26.

Schebera, Jürgen. "Kurt Weill als Galionsfigur." *Motiv: Zeitschrift für Musik* 1 (January 1991): 28-32.

RECORDINGS

Cabaret Songs by Schoenberg, Weill, Britten. Hanna Schaer, mezzo-soprano; François Tillard, piano. L'Empreinte CD ED 13008.

John Bunch Plays Kurt Weill. John Bunch, piano. Chiaroscuro CR(D) 144. [CD reissue]

Kleine Dreigroschenmusik, Concerto for violin & wind instruments, op. 12, Vom Tod im Wald. Waltraut Wächter, violin; Tomas Möwes, bass; Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra; Max Pommer, conductor. Ondine ODE 771-2.

Kleine Dreigroschenmusik. Atlantic Sinfonietta; Andrew Schenck, conductor. Koch International 3-7091-2H1. [Includes *The Good Soldier Schweik* by Robert Kurka and *La création du monde* by Darius Milhaud.]

Das Kurt Weill Programm. Anirathak and the Jürgen Sturm Band. Nabel CD 4638.

Die sieben Todsünden and Happy End. Lotte Lenya, male quartet and orchestra, orchestra and chorus; Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg, conductor. CBS MPK 45 886.

Stranger Here Myself. Angelina Réaux, soprano; with Robert Kapilow, William Schimmel, and Bill Ruyle. Koch International Classics 3-707-2 K2.

Street Scene. Scottish Opera; John Mauceri, cond. Decca 433 371.

Street Scene. English National Opera; Carl Davis, cond. TER 1185.

Kurt Weill Songs. Carole Farley, soprano; Roger Vignoles, piano. ASV [Academy Sound and Vision] CD DCA 790. [19 selections from Weills' American and German works]

BOOKS

Beredete Töne: Musik im historischen Prozeß. By Jost Hermand (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991).

Arnold Schoenberg: The Composer as Jew. By Alexander L. Ringer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Jost Hermand and Alexander Ringer disagree. It's no secret. Indeed, their presence at a conference virtually assures a lively discussion, as participants of the 1990 Duisburg Weill Symposium can attest. It also guarantees a stimulating read if, as in the present case, one immerses oneself in the counterpoint of these two distinctly dissimilar points of view.

Although the title of Ringer's book might suggest a monograph on the subject of Schoenberg's relationship to Judaism, it is in fact a collection of disparate essays from the past fifteen years that attempts not so much an exhaustive treatment of its subject as the illumination of various of its salient aspects. Hermand's volume, whose title may be translated *Eloquent Notes: Music in the Historical Process*, is likewise a compilation of essays (most of recent vintage), still more loosely bound together by their treatment of "programmatic" aspects of music over the last three centuries, with individual essays devoted to Bach, Beethoven, Wagner, Mahler, Janáček, Berg, Weill, Eisler, and Schoenberg, as well as to more general topics including music of the French Revolution, Expressionism, and contemporary modernism. Of the two volumes, Ringer's is the more physically appealing and readily useful in containing both musical examples and illustrations and including an index (though unaccountably no indication of where and when these essays first appeared). Hermand's broader range of topics, however, should insure a wide audience.

Both Ringer and Hermand are prolific scholars of eclectic interests and passionate commitments. Their agreement begins and ends with the belief that music is a cultural document that cannot be studied or truly appreciated without an understanding of its social, political, and historical context. Though their methods differ and their goals diverge, both men take as their starting point a conviction that music is rooted in its time and is at its best a vehicle for both commentary and reflection. Accordingly, both men are united in their disdain of what Ringer calls the "positivistic orientation" of so much recent music scholarship, which has included an unhealthy and one-dimensional preoccupation with "note-counting" and structural analysis. Hermand has long advocated

"historically-conscious listening" (first articulated in his 1981 book, *Konkretes Hören*) as a necessary counterbalance to the bad habits of passive, uncritical listening on the one hand, and the much vaunted ideal of structural listening on the other. And already here Ringer and Hermand begin to diverge.

Hermand is principally concerned with music as an historical social experience and thus sees the composer not only as a participant in or communicant of that experience, but one who through his or her artistry helps shape, indeed create the community and its critical awareness of historical social realities. Ringer is far from insensitive to these concerns, but his preoccupation is with the ways in which the artist both articulates and transforms those experiences into a work of art that asserts its own independent rights as a document of the human spirit. Simply put, it is the difference between art as engagement and art as transcendence. Of course neither concept is exclusive; Hermand would not deny engaged art its claims to utopian transcendence, nor Ringer the manifest, even militant, commitment of many an artistic masterpiece, but their differences of emphasis stem from profoundly different views of history. Where Hermand reads history as a dialectical evolutionary process (as implied by his subtitle), Ringer, at least in these essays, describes it no less dialectically as an unfolding state of being. At one point Ringer explains the difference as that between the Jewish "existence of a dynamic culture 'anchored' in living traditions" and "a conventional culture 'rooted' in physical space" (*Idea and Realization*, p. 64f.). This has consequences for the relationship of Jews to their non-Jewish surroundings: "Historically, the idea as transcendent abstraction accounts in no small measure for the oft-cited 'Jewish problem', a problem created long ago by a Christian civilization committed for its part to the word in all its seductive concreteness" (*The Quest for Language*, p. 55). "The dialectics of freedom and constraint, universal law and human creativity," Ringer writes elsewhere,

have been basic to Jewish thought at least since the revelation at Sinai – some might say since Adam and Eve. They are certainly inseparable from the concept of the one, unitary God as the invisible 'first cause' and ultimate source not only of nature but also of history. Christianity tends to stress man's fall from grace and the contingent loss of paradise as inexorable consequences of his original claim to knowledge and personal choice. In this view, shared officially by most denominations, sin came into this world as a function of the desire for freedom. ... Jews, at any rate, tend to think of man's first effective act of rebellion rather as the onset of history, an act no doubt foreseen by the Creator, since without it there would be none to serve Him.

In short, Ringer asserts, "once man left timeless Eden behind him and became a historical being – so Hasidic Jews in particular would argue – a dialectical relationship with God inevitably ensued, one of mutual dependence" (*Creation, Unity, and Law*, p. 71).

This mutual dependence, the tension between individual will and divine law, has inspired the Jew's perpetual yearning toward the unitary, an idea, Ringer argues, that runs through Jewish culture and has inspired its greatest thinkers, including Arnold Schoenberg, to a quest for transcendence into that state of oneness. In his essays Ringer is thus concerned with far more than Schoenberg's more obviously "Jewish" works such as *Moses und Aron* or *A Survivor from Warsaw* and attempts to show how Schoenberg's "Jewishness" goes to the very heart of his drive toward absolutes, most specifically in his twelve-tone method, which by its nature is rooted in theological precepts and reflects the "virtual identity of art and religion, with significant consequences, down to the smallest technical detail, for his creative thought and procedures" (*Creation, Unity, and Law*, p. 67).

Whether Schoenberg consciously associated his achievement with Jewish thought is brushed aside with reference to George Stein's controversial concept of the "meta-rabbi," that is, "exceptional men" who have "made specifically Jewish contributions to science, art, and politics thanks to their alienation from, rather than their commitment to, Judaism and the Jewish people." Prominent meta-rabbi "high masters of modernity" include Marx, Freud, Einstein, Bergson, and Kafka; in music Ringer claims for Mahler the central position in modern music's Genesis, while Schoenberg "in turning his back on the fleshpots of Romantic harmony created its Law" (*Jewish Music and a Jew's Music*, p. 199f.).

There is in these essays a disconcerting tendency toward leaps of scholarly faith when documentary evidence is scant. Ringer readily attributes "deep-seated cultural traits" in Schoenberg's thinking to an awareness of traditional roots for which we have little data, and the correlations he postulates between Schoenberg's thinking and the work of Jewish contemporaries such as Hermann Cohen, Theodor Herzl, or Marc Chagall are often unconvincing. (Given its prominence in these discussions, it is, incidentally, surprising that we are never given a detailed synopsis of Schoenberg's drama *Der biblische Weg*.) Similarly unconvincing is Ringer's embrace of Heinrich Berl's intriguing but questionable thesis, first articulated in 1926 in *Das Judentum in der Musik*, that the West's fundamentally spatial orientation is opposed by the Jewish (i.e. Oriental) view of time as the "primary condition of existence."

Schoenberg's "emancipation of dissonance" is therefore profoundly Jewish in its move away from the spatial-harmonic dimension of Western music toward an emphasis upon temporal-melodic organizational principles. It is unclear how this squares with Ringer's assertions elsewhere that Schoenberg also recognized the "true nature of German culture" ("Introduction: Composer and Jew," p. 19) and became "one of the few true disciples of Bach and the later Beethoven" ("Prophecy and Solitude," p. 33).

Ringer's Schoenberg is a heroic figure whose life and work exhibit an "essential indivisibility" and demonstrate his "selfless and imperative" devotion to the "naked truth, where compromise is not tolerated." He is a composer whose music is "absolute" in the deepest sense of that much-abused term, pointing indeed to "something higher, beyond" ("The Quest for Language," p. 54). Accordingly, Ringer often smoothes over the contradictions in his sources or judges harshly composers such as Ernest Bloch and Max Bruch, whose musical Jewishness took on more "conventional" forms.

The distance between Ringer's position and Hermand's can be gauged by the curious overlap of their use of the term "intonation." In "Jewish Music and a Jew's Music" Ringer writes that in art "the ultimate test is rarely *what* but *how*, not the nature of the material but its treatment, its unique 'intonation'." And 'intonation' in that sense reflects not merely the individual psyche but the total historical experience of the community, physical and spiritual, to which the artist belongs, whether he identifies with it consciously or not" (p. 201). For Hermand the concept of 'intonation' (which he draws from Boris Assafiev's *Die musikalische Form als Prozeß*) is decidedly more conscious, and for the artist whose work reveals "progressive intonations" of his or her age the *what* is no less important than the *how*. This *what* is central to Hermand's positive assessment of Bach, Beethoven, Mahler, and Eisler, for in their works he finds progressive musical materials used for progressive musical ends – ends defined as much by the audience to which the composer addresses his works as by the ideas feeding his creative impulses.

It is by these criteria that Hermand judges Schoenberg – and most of musical modernism – a failure. Nothing could be further from Hermand's standpoint than Ringer's observation that "even though Jewish musicians were among the first to respond to the Utopian socialist stirrings of a Saint-Simon, the best among them sublimated their social concerns in purely artistic terms" ("Jewish Music and a Jew's Music," p. 202). It is precisely the artist who refuses to sublimate his social concerns but instead lends them the eloquence of his art in a manner that communicates those concerns to the widest possible audience that elevates an artist to the level of greatness. The artist is

called not to transcend material reality but to seek to change it, not to reach for an autonomous absolute, but for a binding realism.

Kurt Weill, to whom each author dedicates an essay, is in many ways a composer squarely at the intersection of their disagreement. This demonstrably "Jewish" composer was certainly better versed and arguably more heavily influenced by his Jewish heritage than Schoenberg. At the same time, his involvement with both his times and his audience, his rejection of autonomous transcendence in favor of active engagement, would appear to lend his works a decidedly "progressive intonation." And yet both Ringer and Hermand treat Weill in a way that is distinctly peripheral to their principal arguments.

In "Relevance and the Future of Opera: Arnold Schoenberg and Kurt Weill" Ringer presents a rambling account of the intersections between the two composers as well as an exploration of their aesthetic differences, focusing in particular on Schoenberg's commentaries upon Weill's 1928 article "The Musician Weill," as well as on Brecht's theories of opera. Ringer makes little of what he calls the composers' shared heritage as products of Central Europe's emancipated Jewry, with its memories and experience of persecution and exile, focusing instead upon their differing responses to the crisis of modern opera amidst the moral dilemmas of Weimar Germany. With *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* Weill produced what Ringer calls "the first and perhaps last work in which large-scale operatic design and socio-political relevance managed to coexist at the behest of both" (p. 96). While Ringer calls this work and the imposing torso of Schoenberg's *Moses and Aron* "the twin foundations of whatever viable opera the future might yet hold in store," he makes clear that Weill's was the more limited version:

Unlike Weill, caught in an ill-fated ideological propaganda war, Schoenberg attempted to give his sorely tried contemporaries sustenance in the grand tradition of the ancients, dramatizing basic conflicts that have beset humankind from time immemorial. Whereas Weill felt moved by the socio-economic crisis of his time to depict human folly at its most decadent, and in often deliberately absurd fashion at that, Schoenberg attacked the cultural dilemmas of Western civilization at their very roots (p. 102).

Hermand's "Kurt Weill und andere 'Brecht-Komponisten'" is based on the paper he delivered at the 1990 Duisburg Weill Symposium. It is in essence a defense of Brecht against his detractors and an argument for his decisive influence upon his musical collaborators. What Weill and Brecht's "other" composers, including

Hindemith, Eisler, Dessau, and Wagner-Régeny, have in common, Hermand argues, "is the simple fact that before, during, or after, that is when they were not collaborating with Brecht, they wrote a completely different kind of music than they wrote for Brecht" (p. 158). And what they wrote for Brecht, Hermand declares, was qualitatively better: "Brecht engaged all these composers not only for his own goals, but stimulated them, fascinated them, made them creative" (p. 171). Predictably, Hermand makes much of Brecht's musicality and role in shaping Weill's melodic material. Curiously, however, he is categorical in his assertion that in *Der Jasager*, one of his most successful "Brecht scores," Weill's effort to accommodate Brecht's new *Lehrstück* character with a more brittle music ... revealed only too clearly that this style did not suit him" (p. 167). Moreover, Hermand contrasts Brecht's "anti-bourgeois attitude" with Weill's insistence upon musical values (thus establishing a subterranean link to Schoenberg's insistence upon aesthetic autonomy, a point also made by Ringer) and addiction to culinary effects. The result was a weakness for false success which would inevitably lead the composer to Broadway. However, the central crisis of Weill's relationship to Brecht, Hermand maintains, was not aesthetic, but political. "Whereas Weill largely closed his eyes to the approaching dangers and like many of the good liberals continued to hope for the illusory triumph of reason because he could not bear to divorce himself from his fondness for the concepts or bourgeois subjectivity, Brecht made the decision ... once and for all to abandon the bourgeois-liberal position, of which he had never thought much in the first place, and place his talents in the service of that party which attempted to oppose most decisively the Nazi claims to power" (p. 167). Accordingly, "Brecht went to Denmark in order to be able to return immediately to Germany after Hitler's fall, whereas Weill went to the U.S. in order to turn his back forever on Germany and establish himself there as a Broadway composer" (p. 168).

Hermand's disturbingly simplistic treatment of the Brecht-Weill relationship and Ringer's one-dimensional discussion of the Schoenberg-Weill intersection are indicative of the flaws that mar these otherwise stimulating essays. But exaggeration, oversimplification, blurred facts, and the uncritical praise of heroic icons are the inevitable result when authors wield their finely ground axes with such single-minded purpose. In the meantime we can profit from their scholarship and take their disagreements as the starting points for inquiries of our own.

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BOOKS

Ferruccio Busoni: A Bio-Bibliography. By Marc-André Roberge. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1991. 400 pp.

In the introduction to his 1988 study on Ferruccio Busoni's musical poetics, Albrecht Riethmüller lamented the pitiable state of present-day Busoni scholarship. Sixty-eight years after Busoni's death, there is neither a complete edition of his works nor critical editions of his writings and letters. Most startlingly, even his *Nachlaß* remains uncataloged and largely unavailable to the public. "Nothing is done," Riethmüller concluded despairingly, alluding to Busoni's *Faust*, "everything must be started."

Busoni scholars like Riethmüller will welcome Marc-André Roberge's *Ferruccio Busoni, A Bio-Bibliography*. With Faustian thoroughness, Roberge has attempted to create a combination of *Werkverzeichnis*, discography, biography, and bibliography. The result is both astounding and disappointing. The "bio-bibliography" section, for example, is nothing more than an error-ridden, four-page summary of published source material. One wonders why Roberge included it, when he himself admits that "Busoni's life is well covered in many sources" (p. xviii). It is likewise curious that Roberge included a works list or *Werkverzeichnis*, which he acknowledges "evidently draws heavily on [existing] catalogues" (p. xviii). At best, the author provides a cursory review of Jürgen Kindermann's excellent and reliable catalogue of 1980. While he supplements Kindermann with new information on reprints and dates of first performances, he adds these details haphazardly, often leaves publication dates as question marks, and does not list manuscript locations, ultimately making his list dependent on Kindermann and unusable without it.

If disappointed by Roberge's biography and works list, the reader will be astounded by the wealth of new information that he offers in the discography and bibliography that follow. With the enthusiasm of a true collector, Roberge has gathered and listed over three hundred recordings, including those by Busoni himself, and over one thousand three hundred articles on Busoni's life and works in at least five languages. The discography represents a unique and valuable contribution to Busoni research; it includes even little known recordings by the Frankfurt Radio Orchestra from the 1930s and Busoni's unreleased recordings from London in 1919.

The bibliography is marred only by Roberge's attempt to be exhaustive. He diligently, if overzealously, collected ev-

ery published source on Busoni's life and works that he deemed worthwhile. Roberge divides his resulting list into thirteen idiosyncratic categories that he admits are "not air tight ... indeed, many items were candidates for more than one category and I often had to make a difficult choice" (p. xviii). The section entitled "Obituaries and Commemorative Essays" is particularly amorphous, for example, as is the chapter on "Surveys of Busoni's Life and Works," which Roberge concedes is a catch-all. Only the excellent indices keep the reader from losing his way.

Within each category Roberge has listed articles, dissertations, reprints and translations, and often included an abstract. He was not able to examine all the literature that interested him, so descriptions are sometimes erroneous (for example B195). Consequently, he often leaves question marks in biographical citations, occasionally cites a wrong source, and omits commentaries at random. The section on Busoni's writing is by far the weakest: without the knowledge of materials in Busoni's *Nachlaß* any survey of Busoni's writings, and particularly of his libretti, is necessarily incomplete. Roberge's list is highly personal, dependent on the sources he was able to attain: he includes the Portuguese translation of *Arlecchino*, for example, but omits the title of the original textbook, which was published as "La nuova commedia dell'arte" in 1917. One wonders if it is possible to list all the translations by such a cosmopolite as Ferruccio Busoni. Nevertheless, Roberge offers the most complete, published list of Busoni's writings to date and a helpful table comparing the content of all previous collections. Likewise, his listing of correspondence is remarkably complete, and the bibliography of secondary literature stands as a singular achievement, one which undoubtedly will not be superseded for many years to come.

Most importantly, Roberge's work provides a new basis for Busoni scholarship for the 1990s and evinces the pressing research work that lies ahead. The chapter on "Studies about Busoni's works" makes clear the gap in serious analyses of Busoni's compositions, and the lists of biographical essays lend emphasis to Roberge's observation that a critical biography remains to be undertaken. But most urgent for the furtherance of Busoni scholarship would be a published catalogue of the Busoni *Nachlaß* located in former East Berlin.

Notes

1 Albrecht Riethmüller, *Ferruccio Busonis Poetik* (Mainz: Schott, 1988), p. 8.

2 Jürgen Kindermann, *Thematisch-chronologisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke von Ferruccio B. Busoni* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1980).

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Opening Night on Broadway; A Critical Quotebook of the Golden Era of the Musical Theatre, Oklahoma! (1943) to Fiddler on the Roof (1964). By Steven Suskin. New York: Schirmer Books (MacMillan), 1990. 810p.

The "morning-after" theater reviews of some 275 productions have been collected and edited by Steven Suskin as *Opening Night on Broadway*. To these review excerpts, Mr. Suskin has added his own discursive introduction, thumbnail biographies of 52 notables and 19 theater critics, major production credits for all productions, and chatty commentary on most of them. Illustrations consist of production photographs, posters, and heralds (often featuring pre- or post-Broadway credits and/or artwork), record album covers, sheet music covers, display ads from newspapers, and an undated map of the New York theater district that catches Broadway circa 1930-31.

Though *The New York Times* has published in book form its own collected theater reviews, one comes by notices from New York's other daily papers less easily. Mr. Suskin's book provides access to them, though his abbreviated format constrains and limits the presentation. However, the reader can here find excerpts from a selection of "morning-after" reviews to five shows by Kurt Weill: *One Touch of Venus*, *The Firebrand of Florence*, *Street Scene*, *Love Life*, and *Lost in the Stars*. For the last of these a rare typo reduces the run to 28 performances, an error for 281. However, *Lost in the Stars* is often cited as having 273 performances, an eight-performance discrepancy that may be justified if the production took a vacation for one of 35 weeks which separate Sunday, 30 October 1949 from its closing date the following July 1st. Such vacations were not uncommon for shows then, and some further research here is in order.

Mr. Suskin's subtitle misleads in suggesting the two musicals which bracket the period surveyed. Actually, he includes reviews of shows opening from the start of the calendar year 1943 through December 1964; obviously, "A Critical Quotebook, from *Something for the Boys* (1943) to *I Had a Ball* (1964)" has greater accuracy but far less marquee value. However, as Mr. Suskin has himself prescribed a Golden Era, one questions the inclusion of these marginal items. They cannot be said to provide context, as the author has elected an alphabetical rather than chronological arrangement. It is his choice to make, but it is costly. A chronology might trace the arc of a Golden Era of musical theater; alphabetical order merely confirms the order of the alphabet.

Having made this choice, Mr. Suskin attempts to reconcile the problems it raises. A fair amount of space is consumed with reminders to the reader that the reviewers

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of *Allegro* had already seen and reviewed *Oklahoma!* To complicate things further, the reviewers themselves often cite previously reviewed works as the basis for their appraisals through comparison. After an uncharacteristically brief review excerpt of *The Duchess Misbehaves* [Robert Garland for the *New York Journal-American*: "Come back, Nellie Bly. You are forgiven."], Mr. Suskin is compelled to explain this reference with more words than the quotation itself. Though these two musicals were both in and out of the Adelphi Theatre within three weeks, they are here separated by nearly three hundred pages of reviews of other shows, pages through which the reader has been jerked backward and forward through both time and the sequence of musical theater innovation. It is a problem that the eight-page chronology at the back of the book cannot redress.

Mr. Suskin seems to desire more than a casual readership, one with an active interest in creative evolution. Halfway through his introduction, he suggests that "a careful examination of the musicals of the Golden Era...will provide helpful and valuable guidance...[in creating] new musicals which [would] belong on the list of classics." Yet one wonders whether morning-after reviews read with the benefit of hindsight provide any more guidance than they did when read on the morning after. If the observations these reviews contained were that instructive to their readers, how would we explain away the writing and staging of *Pipe Dream* (let alone *The Girl From Nanuet*)? Furthermore, New York reviewers appraise shows that are "finished"; substantive changes are rarely made to a show after it has been reviewed in New York. If we are to read reviews of the past with an eye to the qualities that shaped hits, why are we deprived of pre-Broadway notices by such influential out-of-town critics as Boston's Elliot Norton?

There are pleasures to be had within *Opening Night On Broadway*, though on a more modest scale than Mr. Suskin claims. Not surprisingly, foremost are the reviews themselves. Their values are finite but inherent. For example, it is interesting to note that the original production of the acerbic *Love Life* was preceded opening night with a playing of the National Anthem (noted by Robert Coleman in the *New York Daily Mirror*, just after he praises this "superlative entertainment...[as] a new high standard for Broadway musicals..."). It is amusing to read John Chapman's parody of Ira Gershwin's lyrics in his *Daily News* review of *Firebrand of Florence*. And as if this is not enough, he progresses from the observation that Lotte Lenya was "most unhappily cast" as the Duchess to the opinion that "Sing Me Not Ballad" would have been "a wow for Ethel Merman." Wrap your imagination around that!

Similarly glittering nuggets of commentary sparkle throughout this ore of oratory, and one reads with pleasure despite a growing and unsettling question: Is morning-after reflection a valid forum for the evaluation of theater works? One reads with alarm the airy tone with which reviewers dismissed the score of *Annie Get Your Gun*. Though it proved the source of more "standards" than any other show in Broadway history, it is "musically not exciting" to the usually astute Louis Kronenberger in *PM Magazine*, and merely "pleasant" to Louis Nichols of *The New York Times*. (Unquoted in Suskin's excerpt, Nichols went on to whine that Irving Berlin's "numbers...[have] nothing like 'White Christmas' or 'Easter Parade' among them, but several which have a place a bracket or so below." Clearly, Nichols is fainting with damn praise.)

Despite such oversights, these reviewers did have one virtue in common which is in evident short supply among New York's theater critics today: love of theater. Formerly, the function of the reviewer was essentially that of the Theatrical Cheerleader. Today, critics see themselves as the Theater's Bouncer. They barricade the doors, intent upon their power to determine who gets in and who sees what. The most egregious flop of the 1940s tended to be appraised with a good humored regret. Today, the merely-passable is critically garroted with an attitude of how-dare-you. How dare you try...? Inevitably, one wonders what shows were stifled and what pleasures were lost because of morning-after reviews colored by dyspepsia and myopia.

So, on balance, is *Opening Night on Broadway* recommended, or not? More properly phrased, the question is whether the problems cited here outweigh the pleasures. As a reviewer, I feel secure with my objections, and why not? In *The New York Times* on 11 February 1992, music critic Bernard Holland wrote "critics are paid, in part, to carp." But then, as Jean Sibelius is said to have observed, "Never pay any attention to what critics say. In the history of the world, no statue has ever been set up to honor a critic."

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Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny. Bonn, Germany. Schauspiel Bonn, Oper Bonn, Siegfried Schoenbohm, dir., Kaspar de Roo, cond., 20, 22, 26-27, 29-30 December 1991; 2, 5, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 24, 26-27 January; 2, 5, 8, 10, 14, 16, 24, 26, 28 February; 4, 7, 15 March 1992.

David Drew sounds a resigned tone when he writes in his *Handbook*, "There is no 'ideal' production of *Mahagonny*, just as there is no 'definitive' edition." In fact, the editorial problems faced by a director are numerous because of several textual variants and the various possible orderings of the score, all of which affect the musical substance of the opera. But after the textual questions are answered, another arises: just how should *Mahagonny* be staged? The issue seems to be whether it is a matter "of coming to terms quite consciously with the stupidity of the genre 'opera'" (Brecht); whether the whole thing comes down to "surrealistic" opera which makes use of "the rubble of past music" (Adorno); or whether "one has to consider the fact that what we have in front of us are self-contained musical forms" (Weill).

With one blow, Siegfried Schoenbohm's staging of *Mahagonny* in the Beuel Hall of the Bonn Schauspiel dismissed these issues to the academic sideshow. Instead we got true theater combined with opera of excellent musical calibre. Long associated with the opera house in Kassel, the director developed his own style with a series of striking stagings of Wagner's operas, among others, which transposed the myths so often thematized in musical theater into the present time through contemporary imagery, rather than trying to bring them up to date in a modishly artificial way. The musical sensitivity one therefore associates with Schoenbohm's stagings was also inherent in his latest production in Bonn.



Alaska Wolf Joe (Joachim Shorn) and Trinity Moses (Franz Nagler) face each other in the boxing ring in the Bonn *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* staging. Photo: Thilo Beu.

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The libretto of *Mahagonny* does not develop Jimmy's story dramatically per se, but rather presents Jimmy as a part of a montage, as the "subject without subjectivity" (Adorno). The montage consists, according to Kurt Weill, of "enlarged projections of things typical of the times." This "epic" principle suited the physical appearance of the Beuel Hall perfectly. The former factory space, situated quite prosaically between the chimneys and production yards of a former industrial park on the outskirts of the former capital city, has indeed been renovated with the best technical equipment the theater has to offer, but retains in every other way the ambiance of a factory (for example, unwhitewashed walls and visible backstage machinery). It avoids, in a word, all mockery of the "culinary" temple of the muses.

Upon entering the theater the spectator is refused permission to take his seat and is required to wait in a small, crowded lobby, where a loudspeaker blasts a "wanted" list, consisting of Leokadja Begbick and her "business" partners. Immediately thereafter the audience is herded into the backstage area where, after another irritating period of waiting, an automobile holding the fugitives rushes through a breach in the wall and comes to a halt in the center of the crowd, fulfilling Weill's challenge that the action be brought as close as possible to the audience. The audience then moves together with the actors through a kind of tunnel under the orchestra platform and up onto the main stage, arranged in an oval to suggest the boxing arena of the second act. Here, too, the spectator is left standing, prompting many to look impatiently at their tickets to see if indeed they had a reserved seat. In the meantime the curtains rise, and Jenny and the girls enter. The spectator, who has just been handed a leaflet announcing the advantages of the "city of nets," realizes gradually that he is involuntarily - even necessarily - a part of it all, because he is the intended recipient of the whore's pleadings. This conceit of confronting the spectator with his own role and making him a potential actor in his own right is most strongly realized in the first two scenes, though it remains effective throughout the production.

In the first act Schoenbohm stresses above all the dictum "Strictly forbidden!" The self-liberating act of the people of Mahagonny the night of the hurricane thereby becomes that much more plausible, because Jimmy Mahoney discovers the "laws of happiness," in effect as the representative

of the people of Mahagonny. His irrational order to sing something funny during the hurricane is repressed and couched in a plethora of regulations that make life in Mahagonny inviable. Leokadja Begbick's stranglehold on existence gains icy "expression" in the mask-like anonymity of the Mahagonny men; this transformation is reflected in "art" that becomes something threatening in a clever and, at the same time, spooky manner, parodied in the astonishingly banal piano solo of the ninth scene.

The central thesis that money has the power to purchase pleasure in Mahagonny might seem trivial, but this production develops the money "leitmotif" in severe yet ever varied ways. Joke Kramer, who is both vocally and theatrically an ideal Begbick, always has her hand on the cash register or in the account books, even during the few moments when she allows herself to strike

drainpipes illuminated dramatically a statically positioned chorus wearing raincoats.

In service to his concept that money is the actual "food" of Mahagonny, Schoenbohm cut the "play of God in Mahagonny" from the opera. In the finale, to delineate a fetishism of commodities, he avoided a grand spectacle in favor of a droll little funeral procession, in which the coffin, containing banknotes instead of Jimmy's body, is emptied into the sewer during the collapse of the burning city (thanks to the cooperation of the Bonn fire department).

The Bonn production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* demonstrated high musical values. The Beethovenhalle Orchestra, under the sensitive baton of Kasper de Roo, carried out the demands of the score with precision and a wide range of expression. De Roo carefully underscored

the artistry and grand-opera pathos inherent in Weill's large ensemble scenes. In general, the soloists and orchestra were well balanced; in light of the large distance between the pit and the stage, this was no small feat. De Roo resolved the question of what song "style" to employ with conviction: Any "problem" evaporated in the course of the production because every note Weill wrote was sung as if it were self-evident, without sacrifice to gestural or textual interpretation. Special praise should go to Renate Spingler as Jenny, whose lilting soprano also managed to have depth, and Alexander Stevenson as



Leokadja Begbick (Joke Kramer), Fatty (Leopold Kern), and Trinity Moses (Franz Nagler) arrive in Mahagonny in the Schauspiel Bonn production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Photo: Thilo Beu.

a sentimental note. It is she, in fact, who, using banknotes, scrubs away the traces of the fading words, scrawled on the floor - "Strictly forbidden!" - in order to make a place for the new motto - "Du darfst!" ["Thou shalt!"]

Weill's musical references to the traditions of operatic history (*Freischütz*, *Fidelio* and *Wozzeck*, to name just a few) play a significant role in the score. Similarly, Schoenbohm used citation as an element of montage in his staging. The gorging scene contained an unmistakable allusion to Fellini, and the staging of Jimmy's big aria, "Nur die Nacht," makes reference to Golgotha; here Jimmy himself dragged onto the stage in Christ-like fashion the lamp-post on which he would be hanged.

The movement on stage reflected motivically the underlying presence of tango rhythms in the score to evoke death, passion, and vice. Last but not least the production captured a surreal element; for instance, in the "Benares-Song," light emanating from

Jimmy, who sang with feeling but never lapsed into sentimentality. Leopold Kern as Fatty and Franz Nagler as Trinity Moses, partners to the brilliantly infamous Begbick, gave an individual stamp to their roles, as did Wolfram Kunkel who played both Jakob Schmidt and Bobby Higgins, Martin Keller as Moneybags Billy, and Joachim Schorn as Alaska Wolf Joe. The well-rehearsed chorus was first-rate both musically and dramatically.

Other opera companies should take a lesson from Bonn's success. *Mahagonny's* soloists do not need to cultivate a diffuse "song-style" to convey the text. Inherent in Weill's composition is a variety of musical idioms that result in the opera's cogency. Accordingly, the libretto delivers a stronger message when performed intelligently by operatically trained singers and in this respect, the Bonn staging in the Beuel Hall proved a model production.

HEINZ GEUEN
Kassel, Germany

Translated by Peggy Meyer Sherry

Lost in the Stars, Boston. Boston Lyric Opera, Bill T. Jones, dir., Christopher Larkin, cond., 17-21 January 1992.

Lost in the Stars demands great directorial care, so precariously does it stand at the crossroads of pathos and bathos, sentiment and sentimentality, realism and symbolism, tragedy and comedy, opera and drama. The musical play also attempts to bridge many racial, generational, and ideological gaps and to voice both Alan Paton's Christian outlook and Weill-Anderson's non-Christian one. Overall, this production by the Boston Lyric Opera, directed by choreographer Bill T. Jones and conducted by Christopher Larkin, failed to find that special point at which the many lines of *Lost in the Stars* intersect.

On opening night, the inspired and the bland fought to a deadlock. The production was intensely moving at some moments, unfortunately hack at others. On the whole, it was the sort of experience that makes one recall Dickens' beginning lines of *A Tale of Two Cities*. When the inspired and the bland occurred simultaneously (as was often the case), one couldn't help but dream of what might have been had Jones been more adept at directorial fundamentals or had a capable show doctor been brought in for even one rehearsal.

The best of times were truly first-class:

Robert Honeysucker sang Stephen's music beautifully, reaching depths of true heartbreak with his impassioned delivery of the title song and the "Soliloquy." Very few singing actors are better suited for this difficult leading role. Honeysucker deftly enacted the falling arc from belief into doubt that his character must follow from beginning to end. His is a dignified Stephen that can only become better with time and with wiser direction.

The choruses were musically and dramatically effective. With help from the excellent modulation in lighting provided by Tom Hennes, the supporting cast moved smoothly from being individual interior players in the plot to choric commentators about it. Their great lament "Cry, the Beloved Country" - delivered in red light from a semicircle surrounding the centerstage rituals of marriage and valediction that follow Absalom's death sentence - was the most intensely moving performance of the whole production.

A quintet of dancers from Jones's company complemented the vocal chorus, and they served their director's choreographic-voice very well. Their stylized African movements and contrapuntal stage-stamping added both visual and sonic rhythms to the more active moments of Weill's score (e.g., "Train to Johannesburg"). By means of alternate in-and-down/up-and-outward motions, they suggested the desperate frustration of all who struggle for freedom against agents of repression and exploitation.

Although the changeable onstage platforms used by stage designer Tom Hennes were occasionally distracting, his above-stage settings added thought-provoking commentary. They demonstrated his close understanding of the director's revised script as well as its sources in Weill-Anderson's original and Paton's novel. Large black-and-white posters dropped in from the flyloft helped locate the action in its realistic and multisymbolic worlds. These included a Magus-like hunter-stargazer, the face of a black child with haunting eyes, and, perhaps best of all, an advertisement for "Life" cigarettes, showing a young black adult and the slogan, "Life is Best." This latter poster operated with plurisignificant irony and satire in relation to the tragicomic themes of the musical (as well as to today's controversial targeting of African-American consumers by the tobacco industry).



Irina (Pamela Dillard) sings "Trouble Man" in the Boston Lyric Opera production of *Lost in the Stars*.

Other highlights included Ronald Williams's noble delivery of the Leader's powerful part, a sharp-edged performance by Andrea Smith as the wily John Kumalo, and a refreshing bit of comic relief from Alex's eleven o'clock number ("Big Mole") by William Butler. Donna Hewitt-Didham also gave a jewel-like performance in her minor roles as Mrs. Mkize and as a soloist within the chorus.

Poor direction upset the leading ladies' parts. Pamela Dillard sang Irina's torch songs with constricted grace, but her stage deportment and costume made her appear too much like an older version of Butterfly McQueen in *Gone With the Wind* to be taken as seriously as she should. And, so frequently did she swoon to the floor with exaggerated melodrama that no one (not even the onstage characters) seemed to pay much attention by the time of the Act II prison scene (II,5) when such grief-stricken

intensity really mattered. The role of Linda (the nightclub singer) was miscast to LaVon Hardison - a performance artist with a nice, but lighthearted and upbeat singing voice. Her innocent delivery of "Who'll Buy" (with beaming smiles), lacked the type of sultry sex appeal and "sting" that Weill's prolonged chromatic appoggiaturas demand.

The worst times were largely the result of directorial gaffs in ignoring and/or trying to improve on the show's explicit means of self-integration and audience distancing. Most problems stemmed from their replotting of Weill and Anderson's script. The revisions muted the original playwrights' existentialist voices by radically altering the processes of mutual- and self-discovery that Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis undergo and produced many glaring inconsistencies of characterization and improbable actions (e.g., a crowd of villagers, including children, were up and outdoors during Stephen's middle-of-the-night death watch). Some musical underscoring was blithely turned into scene-change music, thereby losing its leitmotivic signification. "A Bird of Passage" was sung from offstage and, as could be expected, drowned out by the orchestra. From a snail-paced delivery of the first spoken-dialogue scene through various mispronunciations, glaring intonation problems in the entr'acte, and a near-disastrous failure of an unnecessary bit of spectacle to an embarrassingly fumbled curtain call, this performance of *Lost in the Stars* was not always professionalism at its peak.

That *Lost in the Stars* remains of much more than historical interest to the American public became very apparent; that it can still attract SRO audiences was proven beyond dispute. Weill's last musical play may no longer be suited to what Broadway has become, but this production demonstrated that it certainly deserves more frequent stagings by such regional companies as Boston's that can assemble a biracial and multi-generational cast and that are willing to voice its idealistic liberalism without fear.

DAVID KILROY
Harvard University

Johnny Johnson, Zürich. Opera Factory Zürich, Olivia Fuchs, dir., Thuring Bräm, Brenton Langbein, conds., 5 February - 17 March 1992.

Kurt Weill's first production in America was a short-lived yet lengthy stage work entitled *Johnny Johnson*. The play opened in New York on 19 August 1936 and ran for only 68 performances. The book and lyric writer, Paul Green, had already achieved literary fame by winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1927 for *In Abraham's Bosom*. Originally presented by the Group Theater and directed by Lee Strasberg, the cast for the premiere consisted of 33 actors, including an unknown Elia Kazan, all playing 55 different characters; the total running time was almost four hours.

The Seven Deadly Sins, Cleveland, OH. The Cleveland Orchestra, Christoph von Dohnányi, cond., Anja Silja, soprano, Peter Maus, Ferdinand Seiler (tenors), Jörg Gottschick (baritone), Andreas Kohn (bass), 20-22 February 1992.

Surprisingly, the Cleveland Orchestra's recent performance of the *The Seven Deadly Sins* marked only the orchestra's second presentation of a work by Weill. (The first was a performance of *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* conducted by Erich Leinsdorf in 1972.) Fortunately for those who missed this performance, the orchestra has scheduled repeat performances of *The Seven Deadly Sins* on its 1992 European summer tour in London and Salzburg and back home at the Blossom Music Festival. Music Director Christoph von Dohnányi, who conducted the work with the Israel Philharmonic last December, stepped in to replace the indisposed, scheduled conductor Friedrich Cerha.

Although Dohnányi opted for a straight concert performance with Anja Silja as Anna I positioned on stage left and the male quartet on the opposite side of the podium, the presentation was enhanced by extra-musical touches so subtle it was difficult to know whether some happened by accident or design. For example, Silja made her entrance in a neon-orange satin jacket, instantly suggesting an air of cynical insouciance, while her stunning talent and beauty perfectly projected the practical and pretty sides of Anna. The stage, darkened so the audience could read an English translation of the text in supertitles, permitted her to slip into the shadows when her 'family' sang; her disappearances from view suggested geographical separation from the family and served to underscore their feelings of impotence in controlling Anna's financial doings that would play such an integral part in their own wealth and welfare. Finally, the quartet, who remained in view throughout, adopted poses that projected the sentiments of the text at hand - lethargy, arrogance, anger, etc. - providing a silent counterpoint to Anna's struggles.

Anja Silja (who has performed as Salome, Berg's Lulu, and Marie in *Wozzeck*, and nearly every Wagnerian soprano role at Bayreuth) was perfectly at home in Weill, singing the original, higher soprano version of the score with ease. Silja delivered beautifully the complex feelings of passion, lyricism, and melancholic wistfulness Weill exacts; her sound was strong but supple and her impeccable technique permitted her to color her voice thoughtfully. Yet, Silja brought a sense of cabaret intimacy to her performance (as opposed to her voice), drawing her audience into the varied emotions of each song. Despite Weill's demands, one sensed that she had vocal colors and moods to spare, and by the "Epi-

logue" she not only conveyed Anna's world-weariness but her voice and demeanor appeared to undergo the transformation ensuing from Anna's years of travel and her carnal knowledge of the seven sins.

Each member of the quartet was imported for the performance from Europe (Germany or Austria), and from the moment they introduced the first sin, "Sloth," we realized that they were to be equally extraordinary. While the Family consistently provided inspired, close-harmony commentary that was appropriately bitter, acerbic, or falsely pious, they must be singled out for their stellar treatment of "Gluttony." I doubt a single member of the audience failed to catch the irony and mordant humor of Weill's dulcet, *bel canto* tones sung on the absurd text "Philadelphia," or the tenor's (Peter Maus) Puccinian rendition of his high A on the stolid, German "Kontrakt."

Dohnányi maintained tight control of the orchestra, but without sacrificing any of its vibrancy and panache; in effect, he embodied the split-personality motif through playing that was at times audacious - like the beautiful Anna - and at others contained like the rational Anna. Dohnányi's vivid unfolding of the orchestral tableaux succeeded in providing as much perspective on the conflict of the characters as Brecht's socio-political text. While the orchestra impressively captured the unaccustomed styles of cabaret, and dark, dance-tune parodies, it intuitively focused our attention on Weill's tributes to Mahler in the agitated Waltz of "Covetousness" and especially in the sardonic march of the final scene.

The Seven Deadly Sins was placed in a program representing three centuries of music; yet the Cleveland Orchestra, like three different ensembles, moved with ease and stylistic authority from the *style galante* of Haydn's early Symphony No. 12, to the Weill, and after an intermission to Schumann's Symphony No. 2 in C major. Indeed, the orchestra's warm, lush colors and long musical lines made it easy to forget that this was not Schumann's most compelling symphony.

PENELOPE PETERS
Oberlin Conservatory

Symphony no. 2, London. English Chamber Orchestra, Sian Edwards, cond., 17 February 1992.

Known more for their performances of 18th- and 19th-century repertoire, the English Chamber Orchestra, under Sian Edwards, made a welcome foray into modern times with a program drawn entirely from this century. It featured three living British composers and paired Weill's Symphony no. 2 with another 20th-century classic, Bartók's *Divertimento* for Strings.

The evening began with the *Introit* op. 28 by David Matthews, who also serves as the

orchestra's Music Adviser. It is a direct and affecting work for strings and two trumpets composed in 1981 for the ECO and written in a spacious and noble language that is somehow characteristic of the best of Matthew's music. Next came the Bartók in a lively and earthy performance that stressed its folk-dance qualities and featured effervescent string playing from the orchestra and its leader, José-Luis García.

The first of two London premieres followed. Michael Berkeley's *Clarinet Concerto* was commissioned by soloist, Emma Johnson, who gave the work an energetic and imaginative reading. The piece, written during preparations for an opera on the tortured and traumatic childhood of Rudyard Kipling, exhibits a dark quality - in both tone and conception - replete with Bartókian echoes of high-pitched timpani and nocturnal orchestral coloring that, although striking in themselves, seemed to obscure the concerto's central argument. I should like to hear it again. By contrast, I found less convincing the ECO's commission of a new work by Howard Skempton, *The Light Fantastic*. Was the work's weak impression owing to a tentative and colorless performance or to the composer's simple and almost apathetic approach to his material?

Ever since its rediscovery and publication in 1966, Weill's Symphony no. 2 has struggled for a permanent place in the concert repertoire. In Britain the fight seems to be over because in the past year or so there have been at least five performances, with Scotland leading the pack (BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and Scottish Chamber Orchestra), followed by London with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (conducted by this writer), and now by the English Chamber Orchestra. No special anniversary would seem to have prompted this proliferation; but whatever the reason, the symphony's intense singularity of expression and its pragmatic instrumentation (winds, horns, trumpets, and trombones in pairs, timpani and strings) recommend it as one of the outstanding additions to the 20th-century orchestral repertoire. The work was created in the midst of a personal struggle that reflected the circumstances of the even greater social turmoil of the early 1930s. In my mind it prompts comparisons with those special brooding works such as Honegger's *Symphonie Liturgique* and Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements*.

Commissioned by the American patroness the Princesse Edmond de Polignac (née Winaretta Singer), Weill began the work just before his flight from Germany and completed it at Louveciennes near Paris in February 1934. Bruno Walter was alerted to the symphony by Maurice

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PERFORMANCES

Abraham and was taken with the "remarkable popular tone, half ironic, half tragic which constitutes the charm of the work." In its earliest performances, Walter, perhaps anxious about the symphony's ability to charm critics and audiences, asked Weill to add extra percussion and programmatic titles. When Walter performed it with the New York Philharmonic, he presented it as *Three Night Scenes*, and Weill himself referred to it on a few occasions as a *Nocturne Symphonique*, though today the symphony is performed unadorned by percussion or descriptive titles. Here he was writing for one of the few times in his life in the instrumental genre of Mozart, Schubert, and Mahler: composers who remain this works' spiritual predecessors. After the initial rehearsals for the premiere with Walter and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, Weill gave his own uncomplicated verdict: "It is a good piece and sounds splendid."

The Weill Symphony made for a rousing finale in this intriguing program. Brisk tempi focussed the ear on the long line inherent in the opening *Allegro*. The Barbican acoustic is rather harsh, and the strings (8.6.6.4.2) were often overpowered by the winds and brass in the louder passages of the first movement. However, Edwards led the orchestra through the symphony's well-proportioned discourse with verve and eloquence.

The middle movement's direct harmonic appeal has more than a few references to the more 'popular' Weill (especially the lamenting trombone tune expertly played by Colin Sheen). This movement lacked the necessary tragic force because of the small number of strings, but otherwise it proceeded with an impressive gravity. Apart from these few points, the symphony flew to its heady conclusion with bravura performances from all quarters, and there could be no doubting the pleasure with which the performers and audience alike revelled in this score.

ROBERT ZIEGLER
London

Down in the Valley, Der Jasager. Fredonia Chamber Singers, Kammerchor der Universität Dortmund, Orchester Campus Cantat 90, Willi Gundlach, cond. Capriccio 60 020-1.

A remark by Weill himself suggested this coupling, which Capriccio has released as a part of its collection of Weill recordings. He originally intended *Down in the Valley* as a pilot work for a weekly radio series, devised by Olin Downes, which was to present dramatizations of folk songs. But sponsorship was not forthcoming. In-

stead, in response to a commission, he revised and expanded the work for performance at Indiana University's School of Music. Recounting the genesis, he wrote: "I remember the wonderful experience I had had with a school opera in Europe years ago, and it occurred to me that the piece we had written for Mr. Downes' radio program would be readily adaptable for an American school opera." (A double warning should be issued to the users of the CD's accompanying booklet: 1. It self destructs when opened; 2. The English version of Jürgen Schebera's informative liner notes does not quote Weill's original formulations but has translated them back from the German translation, with an inevitable loss in accuracy.)

The European school opera Weill had in mind when he reworked *Down in the Valley* for the stage was of course *Der Jasager*. Although worlds apart in musical style and dramatic content, the two works reflect the composer's abiding interest in creating operatic prototypes. They were also written for use by musical amateurs as "learning pieces." Appropriately, then, these new recordings document the collaboration of several amateur groups, from the United States and Germany, who came together in 1990 at "Campus Cantat," a biennial festival staged in Dortmund expressly for such international cooperation.

The parable of *Der Jasager*, derived (with small but significant alterations) from the Japanese Nô play *Taniko*, offers a number of lessons for the participants, which Weill himself specified: "a schooling for composers or a generation of composers, in order to place the genre of 'opera' on new foundations"; "a schooling in operatic presentation," requiring "simplicity and naturalness"; and the placing of music "at the service of institutions" such as schools, "rather than its being created as an end in itself" ("Aktuelles Zwiegespräch über die Schulooper," *Die Musikpflege* 1 [1930]). Its numbers present the elements of opera reduced to their bare essentials: recitative, solos, duets, choral ensembles, and even a contemplative ensemble for the three soloists. At the same time, *Der Jasager* was intended to engage the participants with the work's moral theme: the question of the individual's "active consent" (*Einverständnis*) to decisions made in the name of the collective good.

Down in the Valley, on the other hand, is concerned not so much with traditional operatic practices, apart from singing of course, as with techniques associated with the modern media. Hence Weill and Sundgaard's skillful use of the "flashback" (something common in radio and film but rare on the operatic stage) and melodrama (which Weill had already employed in *Street Scene*). Another difference between *Down in the Valley* and its German counterpart is that the

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pedagogic element is primarily musical. At any rate, the crime of passion retold in the ballad of "Down in the Valley" is scarcely apt to fuel debates on matters of political solidarity in the way *Der Jasager* did in the early 1930s.

In an important sense, any recording will necessarily miss the point of either of these "learning pieces." For all their differences, they are both designed for performers as much as listeners. Their compositional aesthetic is about process as much as result - about "travelling" as much as "arriving." A performance presents the listener with a moment - a single snapshot, as it were - taken from the long process of study. Perfection is a goal rather than a precondition. And one could even argue that perfectly polished recordings misrepresent an important aspect of the works' character.

That said, both of the recordings offered here are certainly not perfectly polished, nor were they presumably intended to be, but they are thoroughly presentable. Rather than quibble about occasional lapses in string intonation et cetera, I would however draw attention to the rather lackluster impression of the performances. The dialogue in *Down in the Valley*, for example, could have benefitted from some extra coaching. And in the second act of *Der Jasager*, the tempi tend to exceed those prescribed by Weill. This is a serious lapse. The work's "musical structure" (to paraphrase Paul Humphreys' perceptive dissertation on *Der Jasager*) is presented well enough but its "affective content" is played down. For it is the music, when performed with due care, that can eloquently undermine the work's rather austere (if not downright authoritarian) message. If this CD nonetheless encourages more - and possibly more polished - performances of these works, it will have usefully served an additional purpose to the one that brought the musicians together in the first place.

STEPHEN HINTON
Yale University



Kurt Weill (1900-1950). Recordare, Op. 11, Legende vom toten Soldaten, Zu Potsdam unter den Eichen, Berliner Requiem, Four Walt Whitman Songs. Jürgen Wagner, tenor, Wolfgang Holzmair, baritone, Niederrheinische Chor-gemeinschaft, Robert-Schumann-Kammerorchester, Hartmut Schmidt, Marc-Andreas Schlingensiefen, conds. Koch International (314 050).

In 1805 the Vienna correspondent of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* filed a rather mixed report about the premiere of *Eroica*. The work was too long, it lacked unity, and it contained too much that was bizarre and contrived. Subsequent performances - and he had several occasions to rehearse the symphony in the following months and years - did not compel him to change his earlier opinions. It was not until 1810 that he admitted somewhat grudgingly that he had been won over.

Not often does a music critic have the opportunity to revisit a musical event and to amplify or revise an earlier judgment, but the review at hand of a compact disc of selected vocal music by Kurt Weill, a "live" recording of a concert attended by the undersigned on 4 March 1990, in the Robert Schumann Saal in Düsseldorf, Germany, is a *re-view* and a *re-hearing* in the truest sense of the word.

Two years ago I reported in this Newsletter (vol. 8, no. 1) my basically positive impressions about the concert, one among many performances of Weill's music organized in the spring of that year as part of the Kurt-Weill-Festival in the state of North Rhine Westphalia. The concert took place during a time that, from a political perspective, was highly charged (see Christopher Hailey's essay "Re-Unification:" in the same issue), and the music of Kurt Weill, victim, witness, and survivor of some of the country's worst political developments, lent a particular relevant note to what was becoming a certainty in central Europe in March 1990: the leveraged takeover of the German Democratic Republic by its powerful West German neighbor. In retrospect, of course, it is easy to see that any other course of action might have led to chaos and anarchy in that part of the world, but for the participants of the International Kurt

Weill Conference in nearby Duisburg, many of them intellectuals with socialist leanings acquired during the 1960s, the prospects of a united Germany evoked unpleasant historical specters. The performance of Weill's *Berliner Requiem* and other pieces from the 1920s as well as of his *Four Whitman Songs* written during the composer's American years, thus added poignant counterpoint and commentary to the world events, encouraging associations between past and present, and the haunting "exotic" beauty of Weill's *Kiddush* gave everybody in the audience a glimpse of the rich Jewish culture snuffed out in Europe before and during World War II.

Weill's music performed during the concert in March 1990 had in no way lost its poignancy and political edge, but hearing the concert over and over again in the living room allows greater critical distance and a more accurate assessment of the concert's strengths and shortcomings.

First, the positive points: the CD contains the first commercial recording of Weill's *Four Whitman Songs* in their orchestrated version, a version I now consider preferable to the original with piano accompaniment because of its timbral richness and incomparably more subtle response to the highly evocative nature and war imagery of Whitman's verse. Wolfgang Holzmair, a fine baritone with a great range of expressive shadings (his *mezza voce* ability and the openness of his vowel sounds are particularly noteworthy), and Mark-Andreas Schlingensiefen, conducting the Robert Schumann Chamber Orchestra, together offer an inspired performance. However, it is clear that the singer is a native German speaker with little experience speaking in the American song idiom. A few coaching sessions certainly would have enhanced the "authenticity" of Holzmair's interpretation.

Jürgen Wagner (tenor) is a similarly convincing soloist in the last piece on the CD, the *Kiddush*, a setting of the Hebrew prayer for sanctification of wine. At the 1990 concert, the performance, showing off also the Niederrheinische Chorgemeinschaft at its best, had to be repeated as an encore, and the rehearing confirmed that the enthusiasm of the audience was indeed justified.

The first half of the CD is less satisfying. The early a cappella work *Recordare*, a lengthy and richly polyphonic setting of the Lamentations of Jeremiah in the tradition of Richard Strauss's *Deutsche Motette* and Schoenberg's *Friede auf Erden*, is an extremely difficult work, and the students of the Evangelische Kirchenmusik Düsseldorf who made up the choir were no doubt challenged to the limit of their abilities. True, the somewhat strained expression of the music is part and parcel of the lamentation and prayer of the text, but the forced tone of the performance here seems to derive less from interpretive decisions than

from the amateur chorus's lack of experience with a highly dissonant, nearly atonal harmonic idiom. In order to assert themselves against the dissonances of their neighbors, the voices shout out their parts, resulting in little timbral or dynamic variety as well as considerable pitch insecurities, especially at entrances.

After this tour-de-force, of course, the voices were exhausted, and the rendition of the subsequent pieces on the program, *Legende vom toten Soldaten*, *Zu Potsdam unter den Eichen*, and the *Berlin Requiem* was somewhat weak and colorless. Despite some fine moments in the Düsseldorf performance of the *Requiem* - gripping and scandalous, simultaneously, in its text-music relations and juxtaposition of different musical genres and styles, I would recommend David Artherton's interpretation of that work (DGG 2709 064) with its nuanced soloistic (rather than choral) renditions of vocal parts.

Despite some considerable flaws, the CD is a must for any connoisseur of Weill's music; it preserves music of Weill not otherwise available on recordings and is the permanent record of a highly significant concert during the spring of 1990 in pre-unified Germany, bearing witness to the continued relevance and vitality of Weill's oeuvre.

JÜRGEN THYM
Eastman School of Music



Concerto for violin and wind instruments, op. 12. Orchestre de Caen, Jean-Louis Basset, cond., Rodrigue Milosi, violin. ADDA (590033).

Weill's Concerto for violin and wind instruments, op. 12, received its premiere by violinist Marcel Darrieux and the Orchestre de Concerts Straram, led by Walther Straram, in Paris in 1925. Only in the past few years, has the concerto begun to be established in the standard concert repertoire throughout France. One recalls an exceptionally beautiful performance offered in 1986 by the Ensemble Musique Vivante, conducted by Diego Masson, given within the context of a mini-Weill festival. Since then, the concerto has been played rather often, re-

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cently at Lyon and Marseille, and notably in the provincial city of Caen.

Unfortunately, the recorded performance of the latter with violinist Rodrigue Milosi and conductor Jean-Louis Bassett will not be among those to recommend, less because of the soloist than because of the technical and musical deficiencies of the Caen orchestra. It would probably be naive to expect of this young organization the assured technical proficiency of the Paris-based Ensemble Intercontemporain or the London Sinfonietta. First and foremost, Weill's Violin concerto requires clear timbral differentiation among the woodwinds in order to delineate the score's rich yet subtle contrapuntal complexities. Though possibly the result of poor recording techniques, in general the tutti winds do not offer an agreeable sound, the horn's intonation is often circumspect and its sound too "present," the oboe lacks its singularity of color, and, perhaps most peculiarly, the percussion instruments – assigned a prominent role in Weill's score – are scarcely detectable. Certain of the winds do raise the value of the recording; for instance, the flutes throughout and the trumpet in the cadenza section offer a commanding yet respectful reading. But overall, the character of the work fails to emerge.

Deficiencies in the ensemble's playing can only partly explain this inadequacy. Bassett's conducting, given to very slow tempos, results in the loss of a clear design of the concerto's fluid structure. Characteristic of the performance's shortcomings is the opening clarinet duet: Weill's incisive rhythms, the crescendos, and the appoggiaturas, are executed in a wholly inexpressive style. While comparisons might be made between this piece and certain works of Hindemith and Stravinsky, seen as representative of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* aesthetic, is it always necessary to play without expression and above all without imagination? After all, the composer specifies *poco espressivo* and later *molto espressivo*.

The Weill concerto is paired with Bernstein's *Serenade* for violin, strings, harp, and percussion, after Plato's "Symposium" (written in 1954, 30 years after the Weill), a work with programmatic movement titles, demonstrating throughout its five movements the varied and contrasting musical language typical of the composer. Milosi offers a remarkable performance of the work. The strengths of his playing, his sure and steady tone, luminous in quality, imbues the interpretation, but, again, his inherent and interpretative gifts are not commensurately by the Caen orchestra. Ultimately, while one feels grateful to the young French firm, ADDA, for having chosen repertoire off the beaten path and having trusted its performance to young interpreters from outside Paris, one cannot, however, but remain disappointed with the results.

PASCAL HUYNH
Berlin



Stranger Here Myself: Songs of Kurt Weill.

Angelina Réaux, soprano, with Robert Kapilow, William Schimmel, and Bill Ruyle. Koch International Classics 3-7087-2.

Angelina Réaux's ambitious solo theater recital of Weill songs, a collaboration with director Christopher Alden, has traveled far and successfully since premiering at the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1988. Twenty-one numbers, sung in three languages, are arranged within a scenario of a woman alone in a hotel room, reviewing the events of her life and contemplating suicide. The two-part sequence is framed by twin renditions of "Epitaph" from *Das Berliner Requiem*; "That's Him" and "It Never Was You" serve as an "alive and well" epilogue. Six of the German numbers are sung in translations (by Marc Blitzstein and Michael Feingold), as is part of one of the French songs. There is also a sprinkling of "wrong language" lines.

Except for Susan's song from *Love Life*, all of the material has been previously recorded in outstanding performances, so the main interest lies in Réaux's interpretations, and in the effect of the new dramatic situation on familiar pieces. Réaux has already proven herself a compelling Weill performer on disc with her excellent Rose on the Decca/London *Street Scene*. In many ways, her achievement here is also impressive. She has a vivid vocal presence and the magnetism of her personality sustains a long demanding program. Her preparation has been thorough, her French and German are good, and she produces a wide variety of contrasting vocal timbres appropriate to the styles required, from "legit" soprano (the two *Street Scene* excerpts) through relaxed, mid-range musical comedy voice ("That's Him") to Piaf-tinged chanteuse ("Je ne t'aime pas"). Her interpretive choices are boldly personal. Moreover, she receives excellent support from conductor/pianist Robert Kapilow, accordionist William Schimmel and percussionist Bill Ruyle; Schimmel in particular works many expressive miracles.

When we get to the purposes to which so much thought, care and talent have been

put, misgivings may set in. On her second Weill album for Nonesuch, Teresa Stratas placed German and French songs side-by-side with American ones, and the often startling juxtapositions broke open meaning upon meaning. To move with her from "Surabaya Johnny" to "Foolish Heart," from "Fennimore's Song" to "One Life to Live," was to discover profound truths about cycles of human happiness and unhappiness. Something of a similar nature seems to have been Réaux's intention here; but though she clearly draws on Stratas's example, to my ears the ordering and performance of the songs in *Stranger Here Myself* tend to constrict rather than expand our experience of the music and words. Almost every number gets steered towards its bleakest possible destination: anger, frustration, self-pity, manic activity following or followed by depression – the program is designed as a series of cul-de-sacs. Time and again, genuine emotional release is avoided; humor, such a potent element of Blitzstein's lyrics in particular, tends to be slighted. That this is the result of deliberate or artistic choice rather than accident does not lessen disappointment at the narrowness of vision: when the anonymous protagonist leaves at the end, there is little sense that she has reached a deeper understanding of herself or her life.

Over repeated listenings, too, I experienced a sensation of curious disparity between Réaux's outer means of expression and her inner emotional truthfulness. One phrase might ring true, the next not; often I found it difficult to disentangle the two impressions. In a song like "Sing Me Not a Ballad," Réaux's charms began to sound spontaneous yet calculated. Quiet, direct numbers fare best: "Lonely House" is by any standard a fine performance. Large, desperate utterances, like the screamed "No!" in the last verse of the Barbara Song, ring false. And the persistent mining of the songs for emotional woundedness leaves an unfortunate impression of self-absorption and even grandiosity.

An authentic artist communicates the impression both of a strong individual personality and of a brighter light shining through it: by transcending ego, the performer paradoxically becomes more fully her or himself. In the case of a singer like Stratas, the actual vibration of the voice can touch a place inside the listener and cause a sympathetic resonance. With Réaux, this happens only intermittently. For all its theatrical vividness, the performance of this song sequence tends to end up closing in around the performer rather than reaching into us. At the same time, her skilled manipulation of a wide range of interpretive gestures is undeniably gripping. Réaux, in this hand-picked program, not only presents but also embodies the deep confusions of our era and reveals more about where she and we are at this moment in time than she may realize.

NICHOLAS DEUTSCH
New York City

SELECTED PERFORMANCES

AUSTRIA

Die sieben Todsünden, Vienna. Salzburg Festival, Cleveland Orchestra, Christoph von Dohnányi, cond., Anja Silja, soprano, 29 July 1992.

CANADA

Concerto for violin and wind instruments, op. 12, Victoria, British Columbia. Victoria Symphony, 12 March 1992.

Concerto for violin and wind instruments, op. 12, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Symphony Nova Scotia, 5 November 1991.

DENMARK

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Copenhagen. The Royal Opera, Peter Kupke, dir., Klaus Weise, cond., 2 May 1992.

ENGLAND

Happy End Songspiel, The Threepenny Opera, Aldeburgh. Britten/Weill Festival, Britten-Pears Orchestra, Singers from the Britten-Pears School, Stuart Bedford, cond., 25 October 1992.

Marie Galante, Happy End, Northampton. Ling Theatre, 26 January 1992.

One Touch of Venus, concert performance, London. Discover the Lost Musicals, The Barbican, Ian Marshall Fisher, dir., 16, 23, 30 August, 6 September 1992.

Street Scene, London. English National Opera, David Pontney, dir., James Holmes, cond., 13, 19, 22, 27 February, 2, 5, 11, 14, 19 March 1992.

String Quartet in B minor, Frauentanz, op. 10, Aldeburgh. Britten/Weill Festival, Britten-Pears Ensemble, Borodin String Quartet, Lucy Shelton, soprano, 23 October 1992.

Symphony no. 2. Concerto for violin and wind instruments, op. 12, Aldeburgh. Britten/Weill Festival, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Davis, cond., 22 October 1992.

Symphony no. 2, London. English Chamber Orchestra, Sian Edwards, cond., 17 February 1992.

The Threepenny Opera, Basford. New Victoria Theatre, Rob Swain, dir., 5-8 February 1992.

The Threepenny Opera, Battersea. Battersea Arts Centre, Dominic Matthew Gray, dir., Giles Chaundy, cond., 3-17 October 1991.

The Threepenny Opera, Birmingham. Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Anthony Clark, dir., Mark Vibrans, cond., 27 September - 19 October 1991.

The Threepenny Opera, North Staffordshire. New Victoria Theatre, Rob Swain, dir., 5 February 1992.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Bonn. Schauspiel Bonn, Oper Bonn, Siegfried Schoenbohm, dir., Kaspar de Roo, cond., 20, 22, 26-27, 29-30 December 1991, 2, 5, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 24, 26-27 January; 2, 5, 8, 10, 14, 16, 24, 26, 28 February; 4, 7, 15 March 1992.

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Frankfurt. Frankfurter Oper, 1990-91 production, Arie Zinger, dir., 13, 15, 28 February; 12, 21, 26, 29 March 1992.

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Halle. Landestheater Halle, Henry Akina, dir., 1990-91 production, 5, 18 January 1992.

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Stuttgart. Staatstheater, Ruth Berghaus, dir., Markus Stenz, cond., 22, 25, 27, 29 March; 2, 8, 10, 14, 27 April; 9 May, 6, 14 June 1992.

Concerto for violin and wind instruments, op. 12, Ludwigshafen. Leipziger Radio-Philharmonie, Olaf Henzold, cond., Jenny Abel, violin, 6 December 1991.

Concerto for violin and wind instruments, op. 12, Schleswig. Schleswig-Holsteinisches Sinfonieorchester, Gerhard Schneider, cond., 15-18 October (Flensburg, Husum, Rendsburg) 1991.

Die Dreigroschenoper, Bad Hersfeld. Bad Hersfelder Festspiele, 2 August 1992.

Die Dreigroschenoper, Bamberg. E.T.A.-Hoffmann-Theater, Wolfgang Dehler, dir., Mathias Kosel, cond., 1-2, 5-9 February 1992.

Die Dreigroschenoper, Halberstadt. Volkstheater, Günther Frisches, dir., Martin Akerwall, cond., 3, 6, 9, 12 October 1991, February 1992.

Die Dreigroschenoper, Ingolstadt. Stadttheater Ingolstadt, János Taub, dir., Jürgen Voigt, cond., 28 March 1992.

Die Dreigroschenoper, Meiningen. Das Meininger Theater, 10 April 1992.

Die Dreigroschenoper, Neustrelitz. Landestheater Mecklenburg Neustrelitz,

Tobias Lenel, dir., Golo Nikolas Berg, cond., 12 October 1991.

Die Dreigroschenoper, Zwickau. Bühnen der Stadt Zwickau, 26 February 1993.

Happy End, Bremerhaven. Stadttheater Bremerhaven, Manfred Repp, dir., Hermann Gerner, cond., 19, 28, 30 January, 7, 12, 20, 29 February, 4, 6 March 1992.

Happy End, Berlin. Neuköllner Oper, 9 May 1992.

Happy End, Esslingen. Landesbühne Esslingen, Helfrid Foron, dir., Wolfgang Windisch, cond., 21-22, 25, 27 February; 10, 13, 21, 23 March; 3-4, 6-9, 12 April 1992.

Johnny Johnson, Freiburg. Haus der Jugend, 15 February 1992.

String Quartet, op. 8, Berlin. Brandis-Quartett, Kammermusiksaal, 20 February 1992.

FRANCE

L'Opéra de Quat'Sous, Bron. Le Théâtre 2000 (Ternay), 13-14 March 1992.

L'Opéra de Quat'Sous, Caluire. Association des Festivals de Caluire (Monthieu), March 1992.

L'Opéra de Quat'Sous, Plessis-Robinson. Théâtre de l'Acte, 19-22, 26-29, 31 December 1991.

HONG KONG

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny. Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, 2, 5, 7, 9 April 1992.

ISRAEL

Seven Deadly Sins, Haifa. Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Christoph Dohnányi, cond., Anja Silja, soprano, 31 December 1991, 1-3 January (Tel Aviv) 1992.

SWITZERLAND

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Geneva. Grand Theatre, Kurt Josef Schildknecht, dir., Jeffrey Tate, cond., 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23 May 1992.

Four Walt Whitman Songs, Symphony no. 2, Concerto for violin and wind instruments, op. 12. Winterthur. Musikkolegium Winterthur, M.A. Schlingensiepen, cond., 19, 22 February 1992.

Johnny Johnson, Zürich. Opera Factory, Olivia Fuchs, dir., Brenton Langbein, Thüning Bräm, conds., 20-22 February, 4-7 March 1992 (various other Swiss locations beginning 5 February - 17 March 1992).

Symphony no. 2, Lugano. Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, Gary Bertini, cond., 24 January 1992.

UNITED STATES

Berliner Requiem, Kiddush, New York, NY. Riverside Choral Society, Patrick Gardner, cond., 2 May 1992.

Columbus from Where Do We Go From Here, New York, NY. The Dessoff Choir, Amy Kaiser, cond., 15 March 1992.

"Cry, the Beloved Country," a Concert Suite from *Lost in the Stars*, Hartsdale, NY. New Orchestra of Westchester, Paul Lustig Dunkel, cond., 24-26 January 1992.

Down in the Valley, Elizabethtown, IL. Southeastern Illinois College Community Chorus, Bruce Boone, dir., 26 April 1992.

Happy End, Brattleboro, VT. Vermont Theatre Co., Sam Pilo, dir., Paul Dedell, cond., Spring 1992.

Der Jasager, Valencia, CA. California Institute of the Arts, Interdisciplinary Student Festival, Richard Minnich, Sean Feit, dirs., 23 March-10 April 1992.

Knickerbocker Holiday, Evanston, IL. Light Opera Works, 31 December 1992, 1-3 January 1993.

Marie Galante Concert Suite, The Seven Deadly Sins, Kleine Dreigroschenmusik, Middletown, CT. Wesleyan University, 29 February 1992.

Railroads on Parade, New York, NY. American Symphony Orchestra, Leon Botstein, cond., 20 September 1992.

The Seven Deadly Sins, Cleveland, OH. Cleveland Orchestra, Christoph von Dohnányi, cond., Anja Silja, soprano, Peter Maus, Ferdinand Seiler (tenors), Jörg Gottschick (baritone), Andreas Kohn (bass), 20-22 February 1992.

The Seven Deadly Sins, Symphony no. 2, Mount Vernon, VA. Mount Vernon Chamber Orchestra, Ulysses S. James, cond., Adelle Nicholson, soprano, Fall 1992.

Symphony no. 2, Milwaukee, WI. Milwaukee Symphony, Julius Rudel, cond., 9-11 January 1992.

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