The time is ripe for a new biography of Weill in English. The first, by the late Ronald Sanders, relied chiefly on secondary sources, such as newspapers and autobiographical memoirs, and the handful of scores and records available at the time. Given his limitations, Sanders did a remarkable job. (Douglas Jarman's illustrated biography of Weill, published in 1982, is a slender volume that has not been reprinted.) But over the last ten years—as readers of this newsletter well know—the fortunes of Weill's music have changed dramatically. Accompanying and fueling this renaissance, itself measurable through performance statistics and recordings, has been a burst of academic activity rivaling that for any other major twentieth-century composer. Two symposia dedicated solely to Weill have been held. A number of dissertations on Weill and related topics have either appeared or are about to appear. Much of his personal and business correspondence has become accessible. Recent discoveries, both compositions and correspondence, have enhanced our understanding of his early years in particular. Perhaps most decisive, European Modernism has ceased to be the predominant cultural orthodoxy, becoming instead a topic for the historian. Weill can only gain from this shift, and need no longer be considered the 'might-have-been' he was dubbed two years ago in the New Grove Dictionary. Nor should there be any cultural obligation to apologize for Weill by constructing several personae to play off against one another (the European versus the American, the critical versus the commercial, the highbrow versus the middlebrow, etc.). The time is ripe for the complete picture.

Ronald Taylor, as his book's preface and select bibliography acknowledge, has had a wealth of material to draw on, which was simply not available to Sanders. Inevitably, then, and in the absence of David Drew's eagerly awaited volumes, Taylor's is the most comprehensive account to date. But what sort of account is it? Professor Taylor, a former teacher of German language and literature and a prolific author on literary and musical topics, has striven to produce a popular biography that is, as he puts it in the preface, "not addressed to specialists." The reader who has in mind are "those who have whistled 'Mack the Knife,' Surabaya-Johnny, and the 'Alabama Song' for years and would like to know more about the man who composed them, his life, the people he knew, the things that mattered to him, the works he wrote." The author is, as a matter of principle, "not... concerned with analysis of technique, or with the investigation of musical-historical issues." His choice of subjects here is hardly casual, however, for it becomes clear as one progresses through the book that Taylor himself is especially partial to the Weill-Brecht works from which these titles originate.

No doubt Taylor's initial encounter with Weill's music parallels that of his intended readers. No doubt he, too, has whistled the Weill-Brecht evergreens. But his exposure to Weill's entire oeuvre, although it may have enlarged his knowledge, seems to have done little to alter his perspective. This point is highlighted when he temporarily forsakes his popular platform and resorts to the professorial language of Kantian essentialism, in a brief but telling discussion of "the phenomenon of Weill's music an sich." He is at pains to identify an "unmistakable Weill musical accent, a Weill sound." He says that this is "identified in most people's minds with the Dreigroschenoper and the works surrounding it, down to The Seven Deadly Sins." (The mix of original and translated titles seems to follow no system.) This "characteristic sound," he maintains, becomes "less characteristic, bolder, more 'commercial'" in later works. This is not a purely musical matter, however. The key to Taylor's analysis is contained in the following four sentences, which deserve scrutiny:

The tensions and conflicts of the old Berlin environment had been the goal that drove him forwards. Take away these conflicts, remove the forces of opposition, and the raison d'être of the work evaporates. Paris was not Berlin. For reasons as much of survival as anything else Weill turned from confrontation to accommodation, to serving a market for which in Germany he had spent much of his time showing scorn.

Beneath the scarcely concealed tautologies (the "characteristic sound" becoming "less characteristic"), knowing platitudes ("Paris was not Berlin"), and contradictions (Die sieben Todsünden was composed in Paris) lurks the old bifurcation thesis. The Berlin Weill is the composer of confrontation, an active agent of stirring historical forces; the subsequent, post-emigration composer is a willing victim of pernicious market forces. Taylor is quick to credit Weill with some autonomy in the matter, and twice voices the sentiment that he "was far too intelligent a musician not to know what he was doing." But he quickly returns to the clichés of Weill criticism, voiced at one point as rhetorical questions: "A lapse of taste?" "A lowering of sights?" Of Der Weg der Verheissung, which became The Eternal Road, he concludes: "perhaps an early expression of that urge to accommodation and adaptability which was to become so strong in America." In a judgment unfathomable in the light of the generic innovations of Weill's American works Taylor concludes that Weill "accepted...the Broadway musical...as he found it and placed his talent at its disposal." "In Europe," Taylor goes on, "he had been a master of his forms. In America he became their servant." It is a serious if unoriginal charge, which the author hardly bothers to substantiate.

The biography's subtitle might suggest that Taylor has attempted to relocate the bifurcation thesis from the composer to the worlds in which he lived. Yet he ends up applying it in the customary way to the composer himself. He begins, in chummy style, with the question: "Will the real Weill please stand up?" and concludes, "We do not mind how many Kurt Weills stand up." Unfortunately, the conventional implication of such a question is all too apparent: that is, that all but one of them are frauds. If Weill is really to be credited with critical intelligence as a musician, and not to be presented as music's Walter Benjamin who overnight turned into its Henry Ford, then he deserves better than this.

Taylor's own discomfort with the terminology that underpins the bifurcation thesis is abundantly apparent in his infuriating use of quotation marks, which seem to nudge and wink at the reader on almost every page. His discussion of Paul Stefan's review of Royal Palace may serve as an illustration (the first pair of quotation marks are of course Stefani's, the rest Taylor's):

The issue that Stefan addresses when he calls Weill a "genuine" composer is one that regularly presents itself when one faces a piece of "light" music—whatever that means—written by a "serious" composer. To what extent, runs the thought, has he "written down" to a public with which he does not normally deal, introducing a calculated element of conde-
Because of his studied avoidance of "musico-historical issues," Professor Taylor never gets beyond such deconstructive punctuation marks, which, like most of Weill's music, are intended to question the "light-serious" dichotomy endemic to much European culture. And because of his general reluctance to enter into technical analysis, he never tells us what Weill's early compositions are, if not "difficult," and the melodies of A Kingdom for a Cow, if not "popular" (again, the quotation marks are Taylor's).

By shirking such central questions, Taylor's approach signally fails to do justice to the subject. The author also follows the unacademic expediency of popular biography in not specifically citing any of his sources. Most of the quotations thus lose any context for their proper understanding and interpretation. We learn, for example, that Weill was "once asked whether a particular number should be taken slower or faster" and replied "I don't care. If you want to do it faster, do it faster." When? Where? Who was the interlocutor? Taylor uses the unidentified quotation as evidence of Weill's malleability. As such, it supports a common cliche, which is at best irrelevant, at worst totally misleading about a composer who played an uncommonly active role in the production of his theater works. Moreover, many of the verbatim quotations are taken from published memoirs and interviews, which a philologist of Taylor's training should mistrust.

Given Taylor's preferences, it is hardly surprising that his verdicts on some compositions are totally at odds with Weill's own. Having stated, for example, that the Mahagonny was "designed to set the composite genre of theater-plus-music moving in a new direction," he claims that Der Jasager "has no such history or aesthetic compulsion behind it." But it has both: not just the fact that the Lehrstück was considered the most innovative genre around 1930; that Der Jasager was the foremost example of that genre; and that Weill himself held it in corresponding esteem. It also marks a stylistic watershed in his oeuvre and is a compositional tour de force (Taylor calls it "musically... a slight work"). The latter point is a matter of opinion; the other points are historical facts that require discussion.

Perhaps less surprising is the verdict on Street Scene. Weill considered this a central work, the culmination of previous developments. The musical eclecticism of Street Scene he explained in terms of a response to the play's dramatic demands, as a reflection of the cultural diversity that the work represents. Taylor criticizes this diversity for "constantly threatening the aesthetic unity of the work" and for precluding "a profound emotional experience at the opera." As Weill stated, it is an "American opera," not a European one. The European ingredient is just one of many.

Taylor also turns briefly to the influence of Weill's Jewish background on his music. There is, he asserts, "nothing in Weill's music from the First Symphony of 1921 to Marie Galante and A Kingdom for a Cow, that makes it the music of a Jewish composer, any more than there is in that of Mendelssohn or, for that matter, George Gershwin and Jerome Kern." Weill's upbringing had, according to Taylor, "slipped away from him under the liberal, cosmopolitan pressures... of life in the metropolis." Such a response seems too superficial and also leaves open the matter of the American works. Is there really "nothing" of Weill's musical upbringing in, say, the harmonic inflections of Die Dreigroschenoper? The whole series of questions alluded to in the epilogue of David Drew's Handbook are relevant to this area but are all but evaded here.

Those who would like to know more about the man who composed Mack the Knife will find in this biography much of the available information, and a fair amount of unavailable information, synthesized in a narrative which is deceptively fluent. It is a fluency bought at the price of leaving old prejudices intact, if undermined by copious quotation marks, and eschewing the issues, both historical and musical, that would allow a more balanced picture of Weill to emerge.

STEPHEN HINTON
Yale University


Ernst Krenek, born just half a year after Kurt Weill, survived him by the better part of half a century. In the forty-two years from 1950 to his death at the end of 1991, Krenek added more than 120 opus numbers to his already voluminous works list — enough in itself for two lifetimes. In sheer quantity Krenek's output dwarfs the creative legacies of all but a few twentieth-century contemporaries and is surpassed only by the immense oeuvre of Darius Milhaud. As if his stature were not sufficiently assured by the range of his music, Krenek was his own poet and librettist and honed his incisive prose style in more than a dozen books on new and old music and in hundreds of wide-ranging lectures, essays, reviews, program notes, and analyses.

To catalogue Krenek's private and professional associations reads like an index of twentieth-century cultural history. A student of Franz Schreker in Vienna and Berlin, he found influential mentors in Georg Schuenneman, Leo Kestenberg, Eduard Erdmann, and Artur Schnabel. Compositional success came early with brash and strident chamber and orchestral works, and his brief marriage to Anna Mahler led to contact and stage collaboration with Franz Werfel and Oskar Kokoschka. Travels to France and Switzerland introduced him to the circles around Cocteau and Les Six, Stravinsky, Ernest Kurth, Werner Reinhart, and Rilke. A protege of Paul Bekker, Krenek worked in the opera house in Kassel and there wrote his "jazz opera," Jonny spielt auf, the work that established his international fame and secured for him financial independence. Returning to Vienna, Krenek joined the circle around Karl Kraus and published essays in local papers as well as the Frankfurter Zeitung. Through friendship with Theodor W. Adorno and Alban Berg, he found his way from the world of neo-romantic tonality to the austere rigors of the twelve-tone method. When the Anschluss forced Krenek's emigration, he found teaching positions in Vassar College and Hamline University before settling in Southern California. His closest American contacts included Carl Engel, Arnold Schoenberg, Roger Sessions, and Dimitri Mitropoulos, and among his students were George Perle, Robert Erickson, and Wilbur Ogden. In America, Krenek's musical odyssey took him on to serialism, electronic music, and even aleatoric procedures. He explored virtually every genre, with particular emphasis upon opera, choral works, and songs. After the war, he was a regular presence at Europe's summer festivals, and in the last decades of his life he enjoyed a significant...
Kurt Weill Newsletter
Volume 10 Number 2


Stewart’s lucid prose and judicious assessments of Krenek’s works (there are relatively few musical examples) provide a highly readable and extremely valuable summary of this complex life. The contradictions in Krenek’s thought and music are many, and Stewart does not shy away from addressing them. However, with so much source material readily at hand, Stewart barely touches upon many pertinent resources to be found in Austrian, German, Swiss, and American archives. The result, at times, is that one feels Stewart’s grasp of his biographical subject far exceeds his familiarity with its context.

While the discussion in Chapter 7, “Karl V and Christian Humanism,” brings new insights into radical and conservative tendencies within the resurgence of Catholic Austrian nationalism in the early thirties (a movement that has direct bearing for an understanding of the politics of such composers as Berg, Webern, Josef Marx, and Franz Schmidt) his uneven depiction of the more familiar terrain of fin-de-siècle Vienna and such topics as Otto Weininger’s sexual character or the complex nature of German Expressionism are disappointing in their uncritical reliance upon secondary sources. There are also a number of annoying errors regarding personalities and institutions of the inter-war European musical world. Frankfurt Opera Intendant Ernst Lent, for instance, is consistently given as Ernst Sert, though his brother, the conductor Richard Lent, is correctly identified. Elsewhere Stewart confuses Berlin’s opera houses and asserts (p. 94) that *jouney spielt auf* was produced at the State Opera (it was the Städtische Oper) or writes (p. 116) of stink bombs at a State Opera (!) performance of *Dreigroschenoper*. Paul Bekker’s tenure in Kassel began in 1925, not 1924, and Krenek was not hired as an administrative assistant but merely to give the young composer the opportunity to get to know the workings of the theater. (While most of Krenek’s letters to Bekker are located in the Library of Congress, the voluminous Bekker Collection at Yale University contains much valuable additional material regarding the Bekker-Krenek relationship and Bekker’s activities in Kassel and Wiesbaden.) Bekker’s emigration to America, incidentally, came at the end of 1934, not 1933.

Given the ambitious scope of this book and the wealth of valuable material it presents it would be churlish to dwell on such relatively minor (and easily corrected) errors. More serious, but perhaps insoluble, is the problem of narrative strategy. Stewart has tried to balance biographical chronology with thematic discussions inspired by specific works and literary precursors. As a result, he often seems to get ahead of himself, lose a coherent narrative thread, or become repetitious (a biographical chronology might have been useful as an appendix). Such lack of focus is no doubt an accurate reflection of Krenek himself, whose bouts of indecision and self-doubt accompanied periods of intense productivity and the pursuit of widely varied interests. Though he made his reputation with the clangorous works of the Weimar years, Krenek cannot be said to represent his generation in the way characteristic of Hindemith, Weill, or Brecht (there is in fact little that links Krenek with these, his most famous generational colleagues). He was never at home in Berlin and by the late twenties had settled in Vienna, where he could nurture his essentially conservative penchant for study and introspection. His outlook was anti-liberal, even anti-democratic, and he yearned for a kind of political order that embodied the universalism of the Catholic church and yet provided safe haven for an artistic and intellectual elite. In this state of mind Krenek was drawn hand by hand to the moral intrasigns of Karl Kraus, the hermetic perfectionism of Anton Webern, the social activism of David Josef Bach, the dialectical aesthetics of Theodor Adorno, and the academic socialism of Ernst Karl Winter. Stewart describes a shy man who sought stronger personalities with and against whom he could shape his own. The intellectual growth and aesthetic and philosophical maturity that Krenek achieved in Vienna during the decade before his emigration in 1938 helped him produce some of his most significant musical and prose works, including *Karl V, Leben des Orest*, the *Sixth String Quartet*, and his most important essays. It was, however, an uneasy balance that could scarcely have been successfully transplanted to his exile in America. The bitterness of Krenek’s later years, fueled by the lack of recognition in his adopted homeland, has much to do with the impossibility of resurrecting such a construct in America’s far less structured cultural landscape.

If Krenek, like Weill, had died in 1950, the shape and content of his legacy would not be significantly different, though we would be poorer by the major works of later years. But as throughout his career, the major endeavors of those last years, such as *Pallas Athene* (for baritone and instrumental ensemble, 1978) and his important essays. It was, however, an uneasy balance that could scarcely have been successfully transplanted to his exile in America. The bitterness of Krenek’s later years, fueled by the lack of recognition in his adopted homeland, has much to do with the impossibility of resurrecting such a construct in America’s far less structured cultural landscape.

Christopher Hailey
Occidental College

Once upon a time, opera cognoscenti could speak of Car and Pag knowing that the reference was to the works. Nowadays, thanks to metafiction and marketing, two have grown into three, with the result that the configuration of tenors (Pav, Carr, and Plac = Pavarotti, Carreras, and Placido Domingo) has achieved a fame (notoriety?) far greater either than Leoncavallo and Mascagni's double-bill or Puccini's Tristice.

These musings might seem an odd way to begin a review of a book on music theater, but their appropriateness is borne out by Michael Bawtree's wry observation that "grand opera is modular — anyone who knows the music can be fitted in at very short notice." Stephen Sondheim, too, has shrewdly noted that nowadays when an audience enters an opera house they are going for a specific kind of experience that is much more related to a rock concert than to a musical: the performers are the attraction, not the work.

Bawtree's study is part personal apologia, part survey of the past and present field, and — as his subtitle indicates — part charter for the future. It addresses most of the problems associated with the attempt to write for what he calls "the new singing theatre" and to find the audience for them. His argument, stimulating if occasionally muddled, is based on a mixture of anecdote, scholarship, and experience. The book should be required reading for anyone concerned with what Bawtree sees as the central issue: the need, as the twentieth century draws to a close, to find and perform works written in and for our age, just as eighteenth- and nineteenth-century audiences and performers were more concerned with works of their own time than with works of the past.

The book is divided into four sections, the first three of which are entitled: "Definitions, Origins and the Way Things Are," "Goals and Training;" and "Thoughts on the New Singing Theatre." The final chapters are a peroration on "What is to be Done." Throughout, Bawtree does not always avoid the pitfalls of banal anecdote or a certain coyness of style. But this is opera! It was the title of a recent piece in The Guardian pointing out that Picc and Carr won't come out of the wings for less than £12,000. Yet, that same month Le Monde carried an account of a production of Haydn's L'infedeltà delusa, which proved, according to the reviewer, "that it is perfectly possible to mount a novel, inventive and appealing production on a shoestring." Here the production values were those of stagecraft, singing, teamwork, and the blending of personalities into a harmonious whole. This is precisely what Bawtree's book advocates. Until more attention is paid to arguments such as presented in The New Singing Theatre, Coward's words will continue to ring truer than he intended: "People are wrong when they say that the opera isn't what it used to be. It is what it used to be. That's what's wrong with it."

MICHAEI MORLEY
Flinders University of South Australia
training, Berghaus had, for many years, steadfastly refused to be lured into it by invitations from one side of the Wall or the other. Both as wife and later as loyal widow of Paul Dessau — another of “Brecht’s composers,” but one still to be rescued from the master’s posthumous clutches — she must have understood the dangers better than anyone. And so she had bid her time and waited for Mahagonny’s.

In Stuttgart she has found the time, the place, and the team: her new production is of epochal importance in the history of Weill’s opera and incidentally marks an auspicious start for the newly appointed opera director, Klaus Zehelein (whose predecessor, Peter Kehr, had left his distinguished mark on so much that has been achieved in Stuttgart in recent years). Courage and imagination of the sort required to mount such a Mahagonny at such a time are not only rare but costly; and money is by no means as plentiful in the German theater as it was two years ago.

“Thatis the city and here is its center,” proclaimed Reinhild Runkel’s sensational Begbick from center stage, legs astride, relentlessly confronting the audience beyond the footlights (small wonder that Begbick is so admired for her Herodias and her Clyteneistra). Scene 2 brought, in Dagmar Pecková, a Jenny to match Runkel’s Begbick and confirmed in its presentation of the “Mahagonny girls” that this was Berghaus’s production and no one else’s. Dressed for school rather than dressed to kill, they entered in file from the top of the great Mahagonny-stairway, but as they descended, acquired a formation at first shark-like, then suggestive of some ancient Roman galley. Without preaching — and there was none to come — Berghaus had conflated the images of killer and slave.

Meanwhile, something no less extraordinary had been happening in the orchestra pit, where, from the very opening bars, the young Markus Stenz had announced himself as an already outstanding opera conductor — or, for those in the audience who had heard him conducting the Berlin premiere of Henze’s Das verrottete Meer, had confirmed that his musicality and his theatrical grip extend far beyond the field of “contemporary” music, and would surely serve him equally well in, say, Verdi or Stravinsky. How much he achieved with Weill’s distinctive and tricky textures could only be suggested by detailed references to the score (not forgetting, here and there, some discreet retouching which Weill himself would surely have endorsed). In the broader questions of phrasing and music-dramatic articulation, Stenz’s decisions invariably commanded respect, whether or not one agreed with them; and in crucial matters of tempo he was often exemplary, though sometimes — notably in the Act II tableaux — driven much too hard by the exigencies of the staging.

The notorious brothel scene was a case in point. Berghaus’s basic idea was so brilliant and so simple that it defies mere description except in terms of the program book’s reprint of Marcuse’s 1964 observations on the de-eroticization (“Enteroitisierung”) of modern society; but it was also so primitive, in a relevant sense, that its in-built repetitiveness contradicted the music’s expressive and developmental functions, and quite literally “minimalised” them.

It was characteristic of the production that whereas the entire Jim-Jenny relationship was “de-eroticized” by sundry devices comparable to the one on which the brothel scene depended, its solitary yet immeasurably telling demonstration of a feeling at once erotic and lyrical was prompted by Begbick’s memory of how she too had once stood by “a wall” and exchanged words with a man, including words of love.

From such insights, a production that distanced itself from Brecht without disloyalty to him while also distancing itself from the fallen Wall (without forgetting either it or its many human and political equivalents) achieved its ultimate impact on an audience that emerged from the premiere as astonished and overwhelmed as if the City of Nets had been discovered for the first time that very evening. And with it, a true star had also been discovered. The Romanian-born Gabriel Sadeh has, since 1984, been First Tenor in the New Israeli Opera. Making his debut in Stuttgart, he proved to be the Jim Mahoney of Weill’s musical dreams. Amid the amply-deserved ovations for the whole cast and for Berghaus and her team, those for Sadeh at each of his curtain calls were of particular and discriminating intensity. His, above all, had been the voice of the City and its angered inhabitants.

In the end, however, it is not through any individual performance that this Mahagonny stands as a model and will endure as such, but rather through the strength of its architecture and its informing convictions. Once again Berghaus and her team — including her musical advisor, Frank Schneider — have built something new, from the ground up.

There will be at least another dozen or more performances during the 1992-93 season. No one with an opportunity for visiting Berghaus’s Mahagonny should allow themselves to miss it, whether they are partly netted, or as free as it ideistically requires them to be.

DAVID DREW
London
Reprinted with permission from The Times (London)


The ballets of Anthony Tudor are never easy. They are not mere collections of steps to be learned, then repeated by rote. Each dancer on a Tudor stage (soloists as well as corps) assumes a distinct character and must confront the dual challenges of acting and dance. Tudor is known, correctly or not, as the father of psychological ballet, and a successful performance of a work of his comes from within.

This psychological dimension is easily symbolized by the tragedies Pillar of Fire, Jardin aux Lilas, and Dark Elegies, but no less so by the “pure” dance The Leaves Are Fading, the “larks” Fandango and Little Improvisations, and the supposedly light...
Performances

comедies Gala Performance and The Judgement of Paris.

The British choreographer, resident in the US from 1941, had a unique relationship to music. A proficient enough pianist to have once shared a keyboard with Sir Thomas Beecham, Tudor's choice of music in support of his visions proved both surprising and uncanny; already in the 1930s he chose scores of Mahler and Schoenberg. His musical taste was unerring, if sometimes it proved disconcerting to contemporary audiences.

In 1998 Tudor conceived a send-up of the Greek legend of the Golden Apple, involving Paris, Venus, Minerva, and Juno. His version, however, transposed the tale to a seedy bar in which Paris figures as a patron and the goddesses as superannuated bar girls. He added a character to play a dual role of waiter-pimp. Tudor chose to set his judgement to excerpts from Weill's Die Dreigroschenoper.

Tudor and Hugh Laing were in the original cast, as was Agnes de Mille. The three appeared again in the 1940 Ballet Theatre (now American Ballet Theatre) production, along with company director Lucia Chase and Maria Karnilova. Later, John Kriza replaced Tudor, and Sallie Wilson danced some performances. Wilson recreated the original judgement for this production by the New York Theatre Ballet from a variety of sources.

The NYTB is a small, generally young company, specializing in important revivals of smaller masterworks. The company also stages original ballets and hour-long productions of The Nutcracker and Cinderella, primarily for children. On the roster of Columbian Artists, it also tours nationally. Artistic director Diana Byer added Tudor's Fandango and Little Improvisations to the repertoire of the NYTB. For this past season she revived The Judgement of Paris for the New York season and beyond. Byer insisted on a live performance of the Dreigroschenoper selections, though in a scoring reduced from the version to which Tudor had set his choreography.

This piece is difficult to cast. James Beaumont and Keith Michael played patron (Paris) and waiter with no-nonsense professionalism. That was the easy part. The "goddesses" had to work. Ursula Prenzlau (Venus) is recently out of college, Kirsten Long (Juno) a bit older, and Sylvia Nolan (Minerva) a bit older than Long. These dancers do not as yet possess the experience to accommodate Tudor's world-weary, seen-it-all characters. Paradoxically, this proved an advantage. If the dancers tried to "act," they would have surely courted disaster and no laughs.

Wilson painstakingly created an atmosphere in which the three dancers could realize the characterizations of trampy goddesses; and Weill's music seemed tailored for this dance. When Prenzlau took up her judged walk across the stage, stopping to see if there was still a drink left in a glass, the audience was set on Tudor's unique wavelength. From this point onward, the performances flew handsomely. The gestures and movements Tudor had devised provided arresting companionship to the familiar tunes and sassy orchestrations.

This performance was an ensemble accomplishment in every sense. One could sit back and enjoy Tudor, and Weill, as well as the five dancers. One seldom goes to dance performances for the music — Tchaikovsky included — but the music is always of vital importance. In a good Tudor performance, music and dance reach a near ideal balance; this judgement was good.

The fate of touring The Judgement of Paris to a wide audience rests solely on financing for Byer and her New York Theatre Ballet. From the evidence of this representation, that financing must be secured.

BERT WECHSLER
New York City

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

Any production of Mahagonny must come to terms with at least two issues: how to deal with the political "message" of the opera Weill and Brecht wrote, and how to react to the fact that both composer and librettist found it necessary to publish their views about opera in general and about this opera in particular. Does it make any sense to perform the opera as anything else than an ordinary opera: good music, competent performance, theatrical effects, highbrow bourgeoisie entertainment in the opera house? Why bother any longer about Brecht's anger and his morbid fight against middle-class morality? Why take any interest in academic discussions about the nature of opera that were tied essentially to the musical climate of Weimar Germany and that, as such, seem no longer of any relevance?

The performance in Copenhagen was in the hands of two German personalities: the Brecht-director of the former Berliner Ensemble of the bygone German Democratic Republic, Peter Kupke, and the conductor Klaus Weise, educated in the GDR but with an established international career. Peter Kupke has directed numerous Brecht performances both in the former GDR and in Denmark; so many that, by his own admission, he simply got tired of Brecht and all the routine Brechtian paraphernalia that came to surround him. So when the Royal Opera invited him to direct Mahagonny, he accordingly aimed at a Weill opera that happened to be composed to a text by Brecht.

Even so, Kupke and Weise made drastic cuts in Weill's score, resulting in a condensed version with less than two hours of music: no lament from the men of Mahagonny who "wohnen in den Städten" (No.3), no "Stirnisch die Nacht" during Jim's fictional voyage (No.16), and — what is worse — no "Gott in Mahagonny" in the trial scene (No. 20). These absences were even above and beyond a number of cuts in songs and ensembles throughout the opera. Such changes all tended to make the opera non-political and "un-Brechtian." If there was any attack left in this performance, the target had shifted to consumption, not political and human exploitation by a social order. In accordance with the anti-Brecht attitude of the director, the trial scene of the opera is drastically shortened: no political slogans carried by the men, nor stubborn and macabre proclamation of the fate of the dead man — only a few repetitions of the final words, "Können uns und euch und niemand helfen."

And what of the city of Mahagonny? The stylized set design of the Copenhagen per-

Photo: Johan Elbers.
PERFORMANCES


...[Marie McLaughlin] does have a weakness for playing to the gallery: for my taste, her Despina [in the Grand Théâtre de Genève production of Cost fùn tutte] was vulgar and attention-seeking. These were just the qualities that made her Jenny in Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny so sensational. Once again she had the audience in the palm of her hand, teasing out the tunes (this time in faultless German) with a hot, raunchy, smoky allure. Even the Madonna-type corset seemed to fit. On this evidence, she deserves a show of her own.

Kurt Josef Schildknecht’s staging set out deliberately to titillate and shock, but it was a piecemeal approach with no coherent vision of the work. The narrator turned out to be Jeffrey Tate, who swiveled round on the conductor’s chair, donned a black tux in the glare of the spotlight and declaimed the continuity lines (superbly) to a taping accompaniment of typewriter clatter. The effect, unfortunately, was to interrupt the dramatic flow of the stage action – set in a vast grey box, with the cast walking on and off in silence like cabinet artists doing their sets. The visual aesthetic (decor by Werner Hutterli, costumes by Renate Schmitzer) was one of cool, arrogant modernity, not unlike what you see today in some German cities. Only when the cast dropped all dramatic pretense and delivered their lines from the footlights did some form of communication take place. Elsewhere, there were too many barriers between stage and audience – above all, the language barrier (despite French subtitles) and the lack of intimate surroundings.

But the music itself has rarely sounded more captivating. Tate was in his element, ever sensitive to balance and dynamics, unfurling the tunes with the artless impetus of a born Weill interpreter. Anne Howells’s Begbick was a smart, trouser-suited business-woman, sumptuously sung. Tagnar Ulfung (Fatty) and Harry Peeters (Trinity Moses) were ruthless side-kicks from the criminal underworld. Warren Ellsworth’s Jim carried an air of gaunt, tragic heroism. Apart from Miss McLaughlin, they would all have benefited from a more conventional operatic setting.

Andrew Clarke
Reprinted with permission from Opera.

When Beethoven or Haydn needed extra money or some creative relaxation, they harmonized Scottish folk songs. Under somewhat similar circumstances, Kurt Weill wrote for the 1939 World's Fair the music to an outdoor pageant entitled Railroads on Parade. Though no less lengthy than some of the Broadway shows he was to write in New York, the artistic ambitions of Railroads were modest. The score has languished until this year when David Drew finished "Trains Bound for Glory," a 20-minute suite from the show which was premiered in September by the American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

Comparisons with Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Starlight Express" aside, "Trains Bound for Glory" is worth an occasional hearing if for no other reason than the fact that no other Weill score has such an odd juxtaposition of styles and elements. Still fairly new in the United States in 1939, Weill earnestly but mellifluously captured American Americana in this story of trains in the wild west. He incorporated songs such as "Clementine" and "This Train is Bound for Glory" (hence Drew's title) into a highly contrapuntal and definitely Germanic orchestral texture. While the juxtaposition often isn't convincing in this compilation of music that is mostly from the 1940 revival of the piece, it's certainly curious.

In the opening bars, one is plunged into the murky world of Mahagonny and The Seven Deadly Sins with hardly scored chords (Weill's own orchestration, of course) peppered with minor thirds and perfect fourths, which immediately give way to a balmy Latin melody set against a relaxed tango rhythm. Suddenly, it's Mahagonny in Technicolor, superimposed over a choral arrangement of "Oh Susannah."

Even more curious is the following number, "Tell Old Bill." Weill adopted a wind-writing idea derived from the animated, descending scale of minor thirds played in the dotted rhythms that are heard in the second section of The Seven Deadly Sins. Those ushers in a folk-like tune tailored for the cheeky "how d'ya do" sentiments of the lyrics, ending with a fat, inconclusive major seventh chord. Weill also convincingly simulates the American diatonic folk song style in "The Sailor's Wife," set against gently lapping wind writing.

From there, Railroads appears to be a sort of laboratory for Weill's forays into American popular music styles, with a waltz suggesting a hurdy gurdy on a carousel and a cakewalk with a particularly interesting section titled "Little Girl in Blue." This last augments the strophic song form in all sorts of beguiling, unpredictable directions while juggling four distinctly different musical elements, no doubt to accommodate some choreographic busiess happening onstage.

Though "Trains Bound for Glory" may be mostly of historic interest to listeners now, it may have been of considerable importance to Weill as a testing ground for later work on the American stage. Although it would be silly to try to shoehorn it into an artistic continuum preceded by Johnny Johnson and followed by Lady in the Dark - both of which are very different from Railroads - Weill seems to have emerged from the World's Fair experience on the road to simulating the impressive range of popular music demanded a decade later by his Broadway collaboration with Alan Jay Lerner. The two worked together on Love Life, which is in some ways a pageant of American life from the 1700s to the 1940s. And later than that, the diatonic folkiness of "Trains" perhaps gave him a starting point for his unfinished Huck Finn.

The music's juxtaposition of Americana against Germanic counterpoint may not have been as much an incongruity for audiences in the late 1940s as it is for those today. Remember that George Gershwin's theater scores of the mid-1930s, such as Pardon My English and especially Let 'em Eat Cake, have their intensely contrapuntal moments and cheerfully tossed around different styles. Few would worry about such a style being branded post-modern. In fact, the program on which "Trains" was premiered, entitled Unexpected Discoveries: European Musical Emigres in America, offered an interesting context. Music director Leon Botstein followed "Trains" with Hindemith's 1943 "Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Carl Maria von Weber," another work that used borrowed melodies in an intensely contrapuntal setting.

The point in this comparison is not to head off arguments that Weill was cheapening himself by writing Railroads on Parade. The point is that given the modesty of the occasion's demands, Weill seized the moment to experiment with disparate styles very much in the manner of his contemporaries while also producing something easily digestible and charming for consumption by the widest possible audience. Moreover none may it be, Railroads on Parade appears to have been a valid artistic experience for Weill, albeit one that is more interesting for what it lead to than for what it is.

DAVID PATRICK STEARNS
New York City
stage would bestow on these roles (as might the singers assembled for this recording if they had been coached by an experienced stage director). The chorus sings its few snippets with effervescence.

What Der Kuhhandel really cries out for is a full stage production. Only then could it prove its eminent theatricality and its claim to be a worthy successor to the tradition of Offenbach’s Le Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein, Johann Strauss’s Der lustige Krieg and Oscar Strauss’s The Chocolate Soldier.

HORST KOEGELER
Stuttgart


At one time, we might have said that the best introduction to Weill is his Kleine Dreigroschenmusik — the suite from Die Dreigroschenoper which Arthur Cohn called “one of the greatest top-drawer, low-down pieces ever penned.” What could be more characteristic than those familiar tunes and pungent harmonies? What more delicious than the enhanced “cabaret-style” instrumentation, the eerily embellished lines of the “Anastatt-dass Song,” the ferocious energy of the “Kanonen-Song” with its new interlude passage, all freed from the mannerisms of individual singers?

Alas, we are never free of the mannerisms of conductors. Thirteen full-length recordings of the work span an astounding gamut of taste in balance, tone, and tempo. (And this is not counting various “abridged” versions available on recently released archival recordings — including two by Otto Klemperer, who commissioned the work.)

Most conductors seem oblivious to Weill’s metronome markings, which tend to be surprisingly consistent with those of Die Dreigroschenoper. “Die Ballade vom angenehmen Leben,” for instance, is labeled “Fox trot” in the suite; in the autograph score to the stage work, Weill crossed out “Fox trot” in favor of “Shimmy.” But the metronome setting is the same.

Max Pommer’s Leipzig Radio performance (recorded in 1988 but released in 1991) is on the wrong track from the outset. For the suite, Weill had specified a maestoso from 100 to 84 beats per minute. Pommer tears into it at a ludicrous 160.

swift, smooth, and bright, genial and light-hearted.

In the second movement, “Moritat,” the drummer improvises a syncopated rhythm on the cymbals; in the third, the soprano sax is replaced by a tenor, an octave lower. The “Kanonen-Song” is the only movement heard at the proper tempo, but the flute drowned out the clarinets, there are wrong notes in the trumpet part, and the music never conjures up a military tread, much less an angry protest. Several sections (notably the “Tango-Ballade”) end with extreme rallenandas. While we hear occasional “sour” playing — a thump of percussion, an odd portamento from the winds — the effect is still of sanitized jazz, innocuous background music, with little respect for the score.

In Andrew Schenck’s recording, we find precisely what was missing: an alert musical intelligence informed by careful study, finding meaning in each nuance. Unexpectedly, the New York players evoke a more authentic style than their German counterparts. The “Moritat,” for instance, is smoky and sinister; its contours and rhythms have exactly the right weight. Only a few details — like the wood block in the tango — deserve more prominence.

The unhurried tempi are generally correct and permit a wealth of contrasts. In two cases, Schenck takes a relatively brisk pace (closer to Klemperer’s concept than Weill’s). In the “Kanonen-Song,” the result is persuasively chilling. But “Die Ballade vom angenehmen Leben” goes too fast; twice Schenck slams on the brakes just before the end of a stanza (echoing the slow introduction) only to resume with increased momentum. This affects theSuite an otherwise masterful interpretation. The conductor’s death in February at the age of 51 was a great loss.

Rounding out this Schenck CD are lively performances of Milhaud’s La Création du monde and Robert Kurtka’s The Good Soldier Schweik Suite. Both of these works have been paired with earlier Kleine Dreigroschenmusik recordings. Pommer’s disc contains other works by Weill.

While still a student of Busoni, Weill composed his Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra expressly for Joseph Szigeti, but the virtuoso evidently never played it. Widespread awareness of this work (and ofWeill’s concert music) began with Anahid Arajian’s 1955 recording. In a recent reissue, it retains its fascination despite rather crude monophonic engineering and an under-rehearsed ensemble. Nine recordings have appeared, yet not one boasts a truly celebrated soloist.

With its piquant chamber orchestration and its middle movement separated into three contrasting sections, the piece al-
most emerges as a grotesque modern counterpart to a Mozart divertimento. Pommer’s rendition startles us with its restless, racing quality, especially in the first movement. The marvel is that Waltraut Wächter, concertmistress of the Leipzig orchestra, can fiddle so fluently, even when playing spiccato. The winds, likewise, excel at spiccato. The winds, likewise, excel at

The recording is amply detailed, although the violin tone sounds thin until a sudden shift in microphone balances (18 pages into the music). Solo voices, such as pianissimo flute or xylophone, are sometimes too prominent. Again, the interpretation is free and loose (a pause, some rallentandos, a trumpet entry one moment late). Yet the right sense of atmosphere develops in the nostalgic pages that end the Serenade, and the involvement intensifies in the finale. The ultimate return to an allegro tempo is genuinely exciting, right into the coda, where there is an inexcusable cut of 33 bars.

The Pommer compilation ends with “Vom Tod im Wald,” Weill’s gruesomely “ballad” about death and societal indifference. Its ironic religious overtones are not accidental; the poem originated in Brecht’s Hauspostille (“Breviary”), and less than a year after its premiere, Weill reused the ballad as the opening movement in the first draft of his Berliner Requiem.

In this challenging atonal repertoire, Tomas Möves proves an agreeably resonant bass soloist. His vibrato is not excessive, but he sometimes has difficulty projecting the lower notes, even while the brass ensemble seems oddly remote. By contrast, Michael Rippon (in Atherton’s out-of-print Deutsche Grammophon record) is a less musical, marginally less accurate singer, but his greater intensity and a more dynamic accompaniment make for a far more colorful recording. The program notes for this Onvine recording are skimpy, and no translations are included.

GLEN BOISSEAU BECKER
Brentwood, New York

Kurt Weill Songs, from Huckleberry Finn, One Touch of Venus, Lady in the Dark, Love Life, Happy End, Mahagonny, Die Dreigroschenoper and Das Berliner Requiem, “Das schöne Kind,” “Ritterlied.” Carole Farley, soprano, with Roger Vignoles, piano. ASV(CD DCA 790)

Lucky To Be Me, includes “My Ship,” “September Song,” and “Speak Low.” Jesse Norman, soprano, with John Williams, piano Philips (422 401-2)

Kiri Side Tracks, includes “It Never Was You” Kiri Te Kanawa, soprano, with André Previn, piano, Philips (434 092-2)

Both in quality and quantity, Carole Farley’s generous collection (19 songs) is the clear winner among the recent song recitals; I would, in fact, rank it high on the all-time list of recorded Weill collections. Farley was the Metropolitan Opera’s first Lulu (when Teresa Stratas bowed out claiming the production had been allotted inadequate rehearsal time.) That was in 1977, the days of the two-act “Lulu.” I later saw her in the three-act version, in Toronto; she had grown from a promising ingenue to a first-rate dramatic artist, and that’s also what she sounds like here.

It’s a nicely-chosen collection as well, with few surprises. I hadn’t heard the “Ritterlied,” from Weill at age 13, and hadn’t missed much. It’s a jaunty little thing, with a few measures that might have dropped from Mahler’s “Wunderhorn.” “Das schöne Kind,” from four years later, is the work of a steadier hand, and Farley’s singing captures the sense of melancholy better, to my taste, than the more lachrymose Stephen Kimbrough recording on Arabesque.

The rest is mostly familiar territory: “Denn wie man sich bettet,” “Alabama Song” (as a solo), “Jenny,” “Speak Low,” and all that. Farley produces a nicely controlled smear at proper moments (the “Alabama” is delicious), but she hasn’t fallen into the Ute Lemper-Georgia Brown-don’t-we-all-wish-we-were-Lenya trap. This is singing on the high (i.e., Strataspheric) intelligence level.

Some of the success here can be laid at Roger Vignoles’s keyboard. His accompaniments are simple, elegant, close to the original, and just flexible enough to allow Farley the right amount of expressive leeway. Granted, neither Dame Kiri (with André Previn at the piano) nor Jessye Norman (with John Williams) seem much interested in creating authentic Weill documents in their recent song collections. (I wish someone would tell me what illustrious operatic sopranos are interested in with these easy-listening, brutally over-arranged pop tune collections that inundate the dealers’ shelves — and, as far as I can see, stay there.)

Te Kanawa sings “It Never Was You” up on your lap, lips at your ear, phrasing with her eyebrows, or so it sounds. Maybe I’m getting too old for this kind of thing, but this is supposed to be a seductive song style, and I think it stinks. The Weill isn’t even the worst on the disc; if you hanker for a 5-minute version of “Polkadot and Moonbeams,” this is your disc.

Norman has other problems, but at least there’s the radiance of that Grand-Marnier-souffle of a voice of hers to irradiate your soul. She tries a childlike innocence for “My Ship,” and that doesn’t quite work. I’m not sure that she’s sure of what “September Song” is about, but she makes it very beautiful. Her quite wonderful, truly seductive “Speak Low” is spoiled, however, by some wriggly chromatic stuff from John Williams’s accompanying piano. One composer per Weill song is enough. Oh, and by the way, her program notes have it that Ethel Barrymore played the lead in the original “Knickerbocker Holiday.” You learn something every day.

ALAN RICH
Los Angeles
**SELECTED PERFORMANCES**

**CANADA**


**ENGLAND**


**FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY**


*Die Dreigroschenoper*, Münster. Wolfgang-Borchert-Theater, 12, 17, 18 September 1992, and in repertory.


**HAPPY END**


*Happy End*, Esslingen. Landesbühne Esslingen, Helbrit Foron, dir., Wolfgang Windisch, cond., 21-22, 25, 27 February, 1, 6, 8 (Ohringen), 10, 13, 15 (Böblingen), 18 (Sindelfingen), 19 (Tuttlingen), 21, 22, 29 (Gerabronn) March, 3-4, 6-9, 12 April 1992.


*Der Zar läßt sich photographieren*, Radebeul Theatre, Radebeuler, October 20, 1992.

**FRANCE**


**SPAIN**


**SWITZERLAND**


**UNITED STATES**


*The Protagonist, The Tar has His Photograph Taken*, Sante Fe, NM. The Santa Fe Opera, Jonathan Eaton, dir., George Manahan, cond., 31 July, 4, 13, 14 August 1993.


NEWSLETTER RESPONSE FORM

Name ____________________________
Institution _______________________
Address __________________________
Telephone Number ____________________

___ Add my name to mailing list
___ Delete my name from mailing list
___ Update listing

Detach and mail to: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 7 East 20th Street, New York, NY 10003-1106; or call, (212) 505-5240

ORDER FORM

The Foundation has a limited number of the following books for sale. Please send this form along with a check payable in U.S. dollars to the Foundation at the address given below. All books will be shipped by UPS in the United States and by surface rate to Europe. New York residents, please add 8.25% sales tax.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of copies</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hinton. Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera. Cambridge, 1990</td>
<td>$12.00(Pbk)</td>
<td>$35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kortländer, Meiszies, Farneth, eds. Vom Kurfürstendamm zum Broadway: Kurt Weill (1900-1950). Droste, 1990.</td>
<td>$18.00(Pbk)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kowalke. Kurt Weill in Europe. UMI Research Press, 1979</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recording Berlin im Licht. Largo 5514.</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Postage and handling: $2.50 per item (USA, Canada), $6.00 elsewhere.

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: _______________________

Detach and mail with payment to: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 7 East 20th Street, New York, NY 10003

THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC, INC.
7 East 20th Street
New York, NY 10003-1106
Phone: (212) 505-5240

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
New York, NY
Permit No. 893