Kurt Weill: Composer in a Divided World. By Ronald Taylor. (London: Simon & Schuster, 1991; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992). 342 pp.

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 twelve 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 readers he 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 musico-historical issues." His choice of songs 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, blander, almost more commonplace" 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 goad 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 Stefan'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-

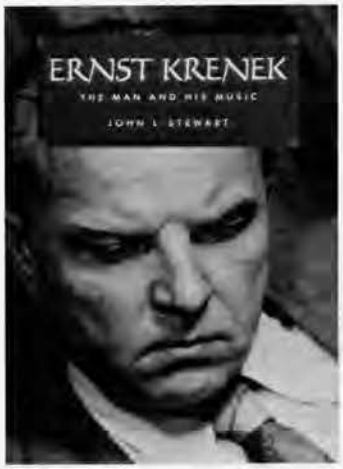
scension into his activity which will ultimately take its revenge. Or shifting the focus from the art to the artist has he betrayed his highest calling to the pursuit of easier rewards?

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 cliché, 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* opera 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 innovatory 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
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Ernst Krenek: The Man and His Music. By John L. Stewart. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1991. 445 pp.

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 Schünemann, 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 into the circles around Cocteau and *Les Six*, Stravinsky, Ernst Kurth, Werner Reinhart, and Rilke. A protégé 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. Retiring 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

renaissance of his works in Germany and Austria.

It is a daunting task to take the measure of a man of such rich accomplishments and varied experiences; more daunting still when he helps. From an early age Ernst Krenek brooded about his place in history. With an eye to the future assessment of that place he saved virtually everything of relevance and left a record of astonishing detail through diaries, published autobiographical accounts, interviews, and thousands of thoughtful, carefully crafted letters. It is a record of curious detachment, a record that from sheer preoccupation with its object, seems at times to lack a subject. Krenek was self-absorbed without a corresponding gift for self promotion. Even at a young age he could insinuate himself into elevated circles, but seldom asserted himself within them; he was at times haughty, but remained diffident; he could be impudent, but was at heart retiring. His music, while sometimes charming, is seldom ingratiating; its austerity impresses without necessarily compelling, and its earnestness is often masked by irony and dissimulation. These are works that, in their intellectual ambition, their determined quest for substance and integrity, have for the most part maintained a lonely vigil for the time when acclaim will follow from audiences that accept *their* terms of engagement.

John Stewart first got to know Krenek in Los Angeles in the late Forties. When he moved back to Southern California in 1964, he re-established regular contact and by 1971 had decided to embark upon a biography. With unlimited access to Krenek and most of his papers (the composer's autobiography will remain sealed until 2006), Stewart's book gives us the most complete English-language account of Krenek's life and works to date, though he readily acknowledges his debt to published sources by Garrett Bowles (*Ernst Krenek: A Bio-Bibliography*, 1989) and Claudia Maurer Zenck (*Ernst Krenek: ein Komponist im Exil*, 1980), and draws heavily upon published editions of Krenek's writings and correspondence with Friedrich T. Gubler and Theodor Adorno. (In the meantime Claudia Maurer Zenck has published Krenek's American diaries, *Ernst Krenek: Die amerikanischen Tagebücher 1937-1942*, Vienna: Böhlau, 1992).

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 characterology 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 Lert, for instance, is consistently given as Ernst *Sert*, though his brother, the conductor Richard Lert, is correctly identified. Elsewhere Stewart confuses Berlin's opera houses and asserts (p.94) that *Jonny 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 the *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 preoccupations. 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 equally and by turns to the moral intransigence 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 weint*, the Second Cello Concerto, and the song cycle *Spätlese*, stand out against a much larger body of lesser works that are singularly unappetizing (even as sympathetic a critic as Stewart can be ruthless when describing the "pedestrian music" of the opera *Dark Waters* (1951) or dismissing the Op.99 Violin and Piano Sonata (1945) as "formidable rather than engaging.") Indeed, though he lavishes much attention on the text and significance of *The Dissembler* (for baritone and instrumental ensemble, 1978) he concludes that it contains "little musical interest per se." The disturbing unevenness of Krenek's work (a criticism from which Weill and Hindemith, too, are not exempt) points in part to the disruptions between this century's composers and their audiences. Throughout his long life Krenek wavered between self-indulgent glass bead games and a yearning to communicate, a tension that to the end remained unresolved. In many ways, Krenek's long life provided the insistent presence that his music lacked in the concert hall and opera house. That presence and its reflections upon itself gave his best works time to find their small audience. While Krenek's prickly insistence upon music as the "logic of process" will likely continue to keep most others at arm's length, there is much of value to glean from this long and intensely lived life, for which Stewart's biography is a fine introduction.

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BOOKS

The New Singing Theatre: A Charter for the Music Theatre Movement. By Michael Bawtree. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). 232 pp.

Once upon a time, opera cognoscenti could speak of *Cav* and *Pag* knowing that the reference was to the works. Nowadays, thanks to metathesis and marketing, two have grown into three, with the result that the triptych 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 *Trittico*.

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 it is 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 works 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 coziness of style. And at times the writing could profit from a stronger dose of what Walter Allen refers to as a necessary element in both scholarship and good writing: disinterestedness. The author devotes a significant number of pages to the Banff Music Theatre Studio Ensemble, which he himself founded. One might have wished to find among these some perspective on the subject besides the author's own.

His analysis of the problems associated with any workshop-type experiment in a performance situation also prompts reservations. Such activities will more often than not throw up the questions Bawtree poses: "A game. Or a serious exercise?" (Or, more pungently expressed: "Hey man, why are you doing this crap?") (p.111) Personally, I would have found myself more able to provide a tentative response to such queries had the author himself not chosen to see the oppositions explicit in these quotes as a clash between, among other things, "anal repression and the free-ranging libido."(!) (p.125) Also questionable in this regard is Bawtree's uncritical appraisal of the Banff directorial work of Jeremy James Taylor, whose exercises in this part of the world did not inspire a great deal of confidence in his approach. Although some of the author's philosophical and ideological support for his views is well chosen — pertinent quotes from Dahlhaus, Weill-Brecht, and Auden — one wonders whether he has really thought through the implications of all the issues he raises. For example, the being-showing dialectic addressed by the performer is not much elucidated if in the last resort one simply falls back on the old Method-Stanislavskian standby of "behaving as if the given circumstances are real."(p.159)

Elsewhere there are scattered solecisms and factual errors which should have been picked up by an editor, as in the sentence: "But the cruelty of jokes about eunuchs are as nothing."(p.17) Stricter editorial guidance might also have rescued Bawtree from embarrassing turns of phrase, as in: "[it] triggered an attitude...in my own professional life which has led along highways and byways, spry ways and shy ways, to the writing of this book."(p.48)

But these and other similar problematics aside, the book makes a plea for a new approach to music theater that deserves to be heard. For, alas, the apparatus of "grand opera" still occupies a privileged position in the minds of funders and audiences. "Balance the books? But this is opera!" was the title of a recent piece in *The Guardian* pointing out that Plac 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."

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PERFORMANCES

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Stuttgart. Staatstheater, Ruth Berghaus, dir., Markus Stenz, cond. Premiered 22 March 1992; 9, 23 November, 19 December 1992, 15 January, 4 February, 23 March, 24-28 April, 1, 12 May 1993.

"So let us build a city here," sings Weill's and Brecht's Widow Begbick in scene 1 of their operatic parable *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, "and call it Mahagonny, which means City of Nets." First revealed to the astonished burghers of Leipzig some 62 years ago, *Mahagonny* survived the early scandals and enjoyed some two years of modest prosperity before being wiped from the operatic map by political and cultural developments in the Germany of its day.

In the three-and-a-half decades since Brecht's death, the City of Nets has been erected and destroyed on innumerable stages throughout the world, but especially in Germany, where it soon became part of the iconography of a divided country. The damage it had been born with in 1930 — and which, indeed, was also part of its subject-matter — was as nothing compared to that which it now suffered in the two Germanys at the hands of those musically insolent directors who subscribed to the old Brechtian dogmas and instructed their servant-conductors accordingly. Dissenters — whose ancestry went back to the legendary Sadler's Wells production of 1963 — were either denounced or ignored.

Then came the "change" of November 1989. The great throngs that had earlier been peacefully demonstrating in Leipzig and other East German cities surely included a few hardy souls who had somewhere witnessed the less peaceable demonstrations that herald the fall of Mahagonny and remembered the chorus's final admonishment: "Neither we nor you nor anyone can help a dead man."

The "death," by whatever hand, of the German Democratic Republic was bound, sooner or later, to affect the fortunes of Mahagonny and the kind of traffic that passed through it. But if there was anyone supremely qualified to guide motorists round the maze of Mahagonny and help them all — the learners and the skilled, the left-side drivers and the right, and even the hordes that hog the lethal center — to find a way into the districts that have for so long been walled-off, it was surely Ruth Berghaus.

Apparently predestined for Mahagonny by her Berliner Ensemble

The girls of Mahagonny arrive on the scene in the Stuttgart Staatstheater production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. *Photo: Abisag Tüllmann.*

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 bided 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.

"That is 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 Runkel is so admired for her Herodias and her Clytemnestra). 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 verratene 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 retouchings which Weill himself would surely have endorsed). In the broader questions of phrasing and musico-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 ("*Enterotisierung*") 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 'minimalized' 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 idealistically requires them to be.

DAVID DREW
London
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The Judgement of Paris: Ballet by Anthony Tudor to Selections from *Die Dreigroschenoper* by Kurt Weill. New York. New York Theater Ballet, Diana Byer, artistic director; Stanley Sussman, conductor. 24-26 April, 1992. Florence Gould Hall, New York City.

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

comedies *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 1938 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 supërannuated 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 Columbia 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. Parodoxically, this proved an advantage. If the dancers had 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 characterisations of trampy goddesses; and Weill's music seemed tailor-made for this dance. When Prenzlau took up her jaded 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

Sylvia Nolan (Minerva), Venus (Ursula Prenzlau), and Juno (Kirsten Long) cavort in the New York Theater Ballet production of *The Judgement of Paris*. *Photo: Johan Elbers.*

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Copenhagen. The Royal Opera, Peter Kupke, dir., Klause 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 makes any sense to perform the opera as anything else than an ordinary opera: good music, competent performance, theatrical effects, highbrow bourgeois 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 future 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 "Stürnisch 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 final scene of the opera is drastically shortened: no political slogans carried by the men, no 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-

Jenny (Elisabeth Lund) and the girls of Mahagonny bicycle into the Copenhagen Royal Theater production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. *Photo: Martin Mydtskov Ronne.*

formance, however interesting, gave no real indication of anything taking place in a city. We might just as well have been in a lonely shed in the desert, where a score of men and women had gathered. Admittedly, one got the impression of a rise and a fall, but certainly not of a city much less one replete with all the evils Brecht believed such an entity to represent and foster.

On the positive side, the creative team did create some memorable moments. The opening scene depicting the three founders' flight from the police and their arrival at the spot of the new *Netzestadt* was introduced by a yellow electric toy Volkswagen racing across the back of the stage, followed closely by a toy police car. The next moment the same toy cars (only in a somewhat larger version) crossed back again midstage; finally a full-size Volkswagen from the fifties, with Trinity Moses at the wheel and Widow Begbick and Fatty in the back, entered the front of the stage. Soon after, girls in flowered dresses with ample skirts and flirtatious, babydoll attitudes cycled onto the stage. Four lumberjacks on motorcycles Jim dressed up in leather trousers and studded motorcycle jacket followed. And what about the men of Mahagonny who eventually arrive there to be exploited? They came *on foot!*

Another sophisticated detail emerged in the eating scene: instead of "Zither and Bandonion auf der Bühne," an Austrian accordion player joins Trinity Moses playing the violin to serenade Jack's death. Thus, Moses — with his out-of-tune, sentimental playing — contributes to the financial exploitation of Jack's excessive appetite.

Fortunately, the performance was placed in the hands of opera singers, not singing actors. This is particularly important with the part of Jenny (sung here by Elisabeth Lund) in view of the considerable heritage of illustrious predecessors. Ms. Lund *sang* the "Kraniche Duett," "Alabama Song," and "Denn wie man sich bettet" — she did not recite it or (even worse) transpose it to an alto register. She successfully combined Jenny the soprano and Jenny the lover-prostitute, while exuding a dangerous and cynical sex appeal.

As has been the case with all the earlier Danish performances of *Mahagonny* from 1934 onwards, the leading opera critics savaged the production. A selection of headlines from the principal Copenhagen newspapers asserted: "*Mahagonny* as Musical"; "Prayer of the Nun — Meek *Mahagonny* at the Royal opera"; "The Crisis Round the Corner: Brecht and Weill as Fiction with Artificial Respiration, Overtaken by Facts of Today."

In spite of disagreement with the ideas behind the production as such, one must give the director and conductor what credit they deserve. But their wish to strip the opera of excessive agitprop also served to compromise Weill's musical and dramatic intentions. Clearly, the danger of falling between two stools remains.

NIELS KRABBE
University of Copenhagen

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Geneva. Grand Thèâtre, Kurt Joseph Schildknecht, dir., Jeffrey Tate, cond. May 1992.

...[Marie McLaughlin] does have a weakness for playing to the gallery: for my taste, her Despina [in the Grand Théâtre de Genève production of *Così fan 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 swivelled round on the conductor's chair, donned a black trilby in the glare of the spotlight and declaimed the continuity lines (superbly) to a taped 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 cabaret 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 surtitles) 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 impulse 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

Jimmy (Warren Ellsworth) is arrested in the Grand Théâtre de Genève production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. *Photo: Marc van Appelghem.*

PERFORMANCES

Trains Bound for Glory, concert suite arranged by David Drew from **Railroads on Parade**. New York City, American Symphony Orchestra, Leon Botstein, cond., 20 September, 1992.

When Beethoven or Haydn needed extra money or simply 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 musical 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 darkly 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 dotted rhythms that are heard in the second section of *The Seven Deadly Sins*. That ushers in a folk-like tune tailored for the cheery "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 business 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 folksiness 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 countrapuntal 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 digestable and charming for consumption by the widest possible audience. However naive it may 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

RECORDINGS

Der Kuhhandel, excerpts. Lucy Peacock, Eberhard Büchner, Christian Schotenröhr, Walter Raffeiner, Udo Holdorf, Oskar Hillebrandt, e.a., Kölner Rundfunkchor, Kölner Rundfunkorchester, Jan Latham-König, conductor. Capriccio (60 013-1).

Two and a half years after its concert performances at the North Rhine Westphalia Kurt Weill Festival, excerpts from *Der Kuhhandel*, Weill's "*Satirische Operette in 2 Akten*," arrive on a 78-minute CD. It is virtually the performance that was heard at the Düsseldorf Tonhalle on 22 March 1990 with two marked differences.

This recording was engineered at a Cologne studio by Harold Banter and the technical staff of the Westdeutscher Rundfunk. The gain is enormous. In the concert hall the performance had suffered considerably due to the unhappy relationship between miked singers and unmiked orchestra, the result being that some of Weill's meticulously calculated orchestration simply could not be heard. The recording is characterized by an acid brittleness often associated with the Weill sound.

Second, all of the linking commentaries and narrative explanations employed in the concert performance have been mercifully cut. For all her reputation as Germany's number one cabaret diseuse, Lore Lorentz's delivery of vast stretches of text during the 1990 performances was rather embarrassing. Granted, the subject matter of the libretto makes little sense without the dialogue — so little indeed that even the title of the piece is hard to grasp — but I definitely prefer the work in this form to the vastly overstated and arch utterances of a narrator who is supposed to lead us through what is ultimately a rather simple plot. Here, the CD's text book provides a detailed plot synopsis with the Robert Vambery texts in their original German and in English trans-

lation, prefaced with the inevitable introduction by Jürgen Schebera.

To hear the music again after such a long time makes me wonder how music dramaturgs at German theaters can ignore a topical piece that glorifies war-mongering weapons dealers; a piece which, in addition, offers such an abundance of lilting tunes. That unmistakable bitter-sweet Weillian flavor is in evidence, though here perhaps just a little sweeter than in neighboring pieces such as *Happy End* and *Die sieben Tödsunden*.

Having attended several recent productions of *Mahagonny* throughout Germany (it seems to have been number one among last season's Weill productions in his native country), I am struck by the numerous connections between that opera and *Kuhhandel*: the shaping of the melodies, their harmonic language and orchestration, and, of course, the many American references (though here they have a very definite South American rhythmic bite and bounce). Could it be that Weill has made use here of some of the material from the *Mahagonny* wastepaper basket? Two reasons speak against it: the circumstances of his flight from Nazi Germany, which allowed him hardly to take with him anything not absolutely necessary to survive the first weeks of his immigration; and, second, the character of his musical ideas. Even if *Der Kuhhandel* has no ear-catching tunes on a par with "Denn wie man sich bettet," its melodies and their rhythmic guise never fail to tingle, so that one experiences them in what I can only call a bodily way.

That said, I miss an irresistible punch in this recorded performance, under the otherwise much appreciated Jan Latham-Koenig — that Dionysean élan which the Düsseldorf concert performance (in spite of its various shortcomings, listed meticulously in Michael Morley's report in the Volume 8 no.1 Newsletter) so intoxicatingly communicated. The musical forces are better controlled, but at the expense of a less energetically driven performance. I recall the Düsseldorf performance as a high-voltage event, a reckless indulgence in dance-like swing and panache. Here, the music sounds rather tame and temperate.

Is it in compensation for these shortcomings that Oskar Hillerbrant so vastly overdoes his blustering as the military ogre, the General Garcia Conchas? Insufferable! As Juan Santos, the dispossessed owner of the cow, Eberhard Büchner endows his Caribbean peasant with all the saucy charm of a rather naive Latin lover, while Lucy Peacock, as his beloved Juanita, fails to equip her character with those racy high tempers we associate with these ladies from the islands of the sun. The other performers are more or less okay, but one is very aware of how much more character performers trained for the American musical 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 KOEGLER
Stuttgart

Kleine Dreigroschenmusik. Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra, Opus 12. Vom Tod im Wald, Opus 23. The Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra, Max Pommer. Ondine ODE 771-2.

Kleine Dreigroschenmusik. The Atlantic Sinfonietta, Andrew Schenck. Koch International Classics 3-7091-2 H1.

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 "Anstatt-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 slowed his maestoso overture from 100 to 84 beats per minute. Pommer tears into it at a ludicrous 160: swift, smooth, and bright, genial and lighthearted.

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 drowns 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 rallentandos. 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 angenehemen Leben" goes too far; twice Schenck slams on the brakes just before the end of a stanza (echoing the slow introduction) only to resume with increased momentum. This affectation mars 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 Kurka'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 of Weill's concert music) began with Anahid Ajemian'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 nervous, non-legato playing.

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 Serenata, 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 gruesome "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 Möwes 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 Ondine 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", "Reiterlied." Carole Farley, soprano, with Roger Vignoles, piano. ASV(CD DCA 790)

Lucky To Be Me, includes "My Ship," "September Song," and "Speak Low." Jessye 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, Phillips (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 "Reiterlied," 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 "Polkadots and Moonbeams," this is your disc.

Norman has other problems, but at least there's the radiance of that Grand-Marnier-soufflé 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

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Selected Performances

CANADA

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

Der Jasager, Waterloo, Ontario. Wilfred Laurier University, 28-29 February 1992.

ENGLAND

Happy End Songspiel, The Threepenny Opera, Aldeburgh. Britten/Weill Festival, Britten-Pears Orchestra, Singers from the Britten-Pears School, Steuart Bedford, cond., 25 October 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 Poutney, 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, Ealing. Questors Theatre, Carol Metcalfe, dir., 15-22 February 1992.

The Threepenny Opera, Blackburn, Lancashire. The Masque, St. Peters School. 4-7 November 1992.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Stuttgart. Ruth Berghaus, dir., Markus Stenz, cond., 9, 28 November, 19 December 1992; 15 January, 4 February, 23 March, 23, 28 April, 12 May 1993.

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Karlsruhe. Badisches Staatstheater, premiere 20 September 1992, in repertory 1992-93 season.

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, Gera. Bühnen der Stadt Gera, Reinhardt Ottmar Schuchart, dir., Günter Schimm, Michael Stolle, conds., 1990-91 production, 17-19 January; 12, 21-22 March 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, Münster. Wolfgang-Borchert-Theater, 12, 17, 18 September 1992, and in repertory.

Die Dreigroschenoper, Zwickau. Bühnen der Stadt Zwickau, premiere, 26 February 1993, in repertory, 1992-93 season.

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, 1, 6, 8 (Öhring), 10, 13, 15 (Ilshofen), 18 (Sindelfingen), 19 (Tuttlingen), 21, 23, 29 (Gerabronn) March, 3-4, 6-9, 12 April 1992.

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

Der Zar läßt sich photographieren, Mahagonny Songspiel, Hamburg. Jungen Forum Musiktheater, Hochschule für Musik und Theater, Anja Flemming, dir., Michael Petermann, cond., 27, 29, 31 January, 2 February 1992.

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

SPAIN

Der Lindberghflug, Barcelona. Orquesta de Cámara Teatre Lliure, Oriol Roch, cond., 28 July 1992.

SWITZERLAND

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

UNITED STATES

Happy End, Lancaster, PA. Franklin and Marshall College, 6-15 February 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.

Lost in the Stars, Chicago, IL. The Goodman Theatre, Mainstage, Director Frank Galati, June 18-July 24 1993.

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

Recital, Boston, MA. Jordan Hall, Wang Celebrity Series. "I'm an American"; American songs, Angelina Réaux, sop., Robert Kapilow, pianist.

Trains Bound For Glory (*Railroads on Parade*) New York, NY. American Symphony Orchestra, Leon Botstein, cond., 20 September 1992.

The Seven Deadly Sins, Los Angeles, CA. Los Angeles Philharmonic, Esa-Pekka Salonen, cond., Elise Ross, sop., 29, 30 October, 1 November 1992.

The Seven Deadly Sins, Symphony No. 2, Mount Vernon, VA. Mount Vernon Chamber Orchestra, Ulysses S. James, cond., Nancy Scimone, sop., 18 October 1992.

The Threepenny Opera, Tempe, AZ. Arizona State University, William Reber, dir., 9, 10, 11 October 1992.

The Threepenny Opera, Irvine, CA. University of California at Irvine, Irvine Barclay Theatre, 21-25, 27-29 November 1992.

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