

David Raksin Remembers Weill, *Where Do We Go From Here?*, and "Developing" Film Music in the 1940s

An Oral History Interview with Peggy Sherry

This interview is an edited version of a longer, formal oral history interview that forms part of the Oral History Collection at the Weill-Lenya Research Center. At the time of the interview, Peggy Sherry was Associate Archivist at the Research Center. She is now Reference Librarian/Archivist, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries.

[2 October 1991. Ms. Sherry began by showing David Raksin the first few pages of the short score of the music for *Where Do We Go From Here?*, the 1945 Twentieth Century-Fox release with music by Weill and lyrics by Ira Gershwin.]

PS: Mr. Raksin, how did you come to work on *Where Do We Go From Here?*

DR: Alfred Newman assigned me to this picture because Kurt had written the score with, as you say, lyrics by Ira Gershwin. The picture has an interesting sidelight in that originally they had intended to cast Danny Kaye as the lead, along with some very well-known comedian. But what happened, I guess, was that Zanuck and Goldwyn [the heads of competing studios] couldn't agree on a loan of Danny. So they got Fred MacMurray in his place, who was really not all that bad. Fred MacMurray was very musical, you know. He played the saxophone. The picture was not particularly distinguished, which is a shame, because the music and lyrics were fun. I enjoyed working on it.

Part of Kurt Weill's deal was that the underscoring [the background music to the action on screen] had to be based on his music, exclusively. No other composer's music could be used. So Al Newman (who knew that I had grown up learning about musicals, which are really a very, very separate, and a fine art) assigned me to it. I notice on this score that I am credited with writing "Magic Smoke" and "The Genie." This is slightly embarrassing for me. Of course I wrote them, but I had no idea I would ever get credited with them. I'm not even sure it's legal. The whole picture should have been credited to Kurt, you know. Even what everybody else wrote. That's not fair, but who am I to demand fairness? Who are they to be fair? Well, OK, I did write those bits and pieces. And, for copyright reasons, they all had to have names.

I went through the picture, writing the various sequences the way one does in underscoring — using Kurt's material rather than my own, except in these little things. We were in such a jam on this picture that you wouldn't believe it, and I think Dave Buttolph was even brought in to do a reel or two. I don't know how much he did, but I know that he did some, thank heavens. He was brilliant.

PS: Do you know how Weill got hired to do the picture?

DR: I haven't the vaguest idea. I think Bill Perlberg wanted somebody to work with Ira, and, of course, Kurt and Ira had already done *Lady in the Dark*. Weill was something. He was a real marvel, you know, loved by everybody as a person. He was trusted by musicians, and musicians are not quick to admire other people.

PS: So Weill had a reputation in Hollywood?

DR: He had a reputation everywhere as a first-rate guy. Absolutely. And we did not know how first-rate he was. We knew that he was a marvelous song writer, that he was an adroit musician who knew how to develop stuff. It wasn't until later that I realized he had studied with Busoni and had written a violin concerto and all these other marvelous pieces. In fact, very few people knew about any of it.

I remember that *Lindbergh's Flight* was done here in Hollywood. We had a group that used to meet one night a week in an art gallery out on Sunset Strip. I still remember "Schlaf Charlie." You know, Charlie Lindbergh is falling asleep, and then this sort of genie, or demon, or whatever it is, wants him to fold up; kind of encourages him to fall asleep, which is, of course, all wrong.

PS: Who was in the group?

DR: It was a group of artists, musicians, and writers. The head guru was a guy named John Davenport, who eventually, I think, became an editor of *Life* magazine. He was an English bird with the appropriate accent. One of his associates was Jerome Moross, the composer, and Jerry knew about Kurt Weill's music. All I knew about him was, of course, the *Dreigroschenoper* and *Mahagonny*, stuff like

David Raksin

Composer David Raksin was born in Philadelphia in 1912. After completing a degree in music at the University of Pennsylvania, he studied composition with Arnold Schoenberg. In New York, he worked as a performer, arranger, and conductor before moving to Hollywood in 1935. In 1936 he synchronized Chaplin's music for the soundtrack of the film Modern Times. He made his name as a studio composer with his score for Laura in 1944. His other film scores include Force of Evil (1948), Carrie (1952), and Separate Tables (1958).

Raksin has also composed orchestral and chamber works as well as music for ballet and television (Ben Casey). He produced an acclaimed series of 64 one-hour oral history interviews for National Public Radio entitled "The Subject Is Film Music," which is now available for study at the Library of Congress. Mr. Raksin is currently the President of the Society for the Preservation of Film Music. He resides in Van Nuys, California.

that. Jerry Moross put me on to his music, so I got to know all those things, and I used to sing them all the time for people and loved them very much. Then I came across *Lindbergh's Flight*. They did it here with just piano accompaniment and some wonderful guy singing the lead role. It was good. The text is by Bertolt Brecht, of course.

PS: That's correct.

DR: Brecht. Not God's gift to integrity and niceness. Oh, everybody knew about him. He was a very, very remarkable man, but he was also a drip. You know, he was a bounder.

PS: You were a pretty young guy at the time that this movie was being made. Were you well acquainted with the world of composers at the studios?

DR: Oh sure. Remember, I'd been out here since 1935. I came out to assist Chaplin on the music of *Modern Times*, so I'd been out here about ten years by the time I went to work on *Where Do We Go From Here?*

PS: I gather it was kind of a rough world for a composer to find a niche.

DR: Well, for me it wasn't. I mean, I had my rough periods, but they were because I was construed as arrogant, which might even have been true. You see, people out here would call you arrogant if you would not automatically say yes every time a producer nodded. And I didn't figure I was there for that reason. I was there to tell them what I thought as a musician. So there were times when I didn't work. But, for the most part, everybody wanted me because I had started out with Chaplin.

PS: I'd like to ask you some specific questions about this score. What part of the film-making process was it prepared for?

DR: Oh, the score you have here is made after the film is totally finished. You don't do the main title and all the underscoring until the picture is finished, or nearly finished. If you're working on incomplete footage you're going to have to do it over five times, and that's just gruesome. There isn't time or energy for that. Remember, this music is created under extreme duress. You get maybe four or five weeks to do something that should take three or four months.



David Raksin working in his studio. Photo: Peggy Sherry.

PS: So, is this a conductor's score?

DR: This is what's made from a conductor's book. What it is, really, is a little Particell. It's a reduction of the score. This one was probably done by a guy at Twentieth Century-Fox called Elton Kohler. He would manage, also under duress, to reduce all the stuff in the score down to a conductor's book. There are a lot of places where it just says "brass." It doesn't say which brass, but that's all there is.

PS: Were there other scores? Or is this, as far as you know, the only one that was left? Is this the only type of score that would have been preserved?

DR: Well, of course, there *were* orchestral scores, made by Maurice de Packh from my sketches and made by various other guys like Eddie Powell — who probably orchestrated some of Kurt's stuff — and Herbert Spencer. But, you know, there are conductor books all over the place. I have just a few, but they made them all the time.

PS: So, when it says next to the title "Dev.," what does that mean?

DR: Devised, or developed. Let's say you are starting with a composer's thirty-two bar piece of music. There are times when you play the whole thirty-two bars. Other times you can't do that because you have to adapt it to what the action is, and the action may call for all kinds of other stuff: stops and starts; changes and developments; doing the tune backwards, upside down, or whatever.

PS: So you didn't work together with Weill.

DR: No, I did not. I wish I had.

PS: Since you did the developing for the underscoring, you worked on the music after he was finished with it?

DR: Absolutely. He'd written all the music, and they gave it to me and said "go." When you do development and devising, what you're doing is composing.

PS: Can you explain to me the whole process, starting with the ideas in the composer's head and ending with the finished product of the film with the sound track?

DR: Well, first, the composer gets assigned to the picture. He works with the producer and the director, maybe the script writer, and anybody else. (In this case, Weill probably would have worked with Darryl Zanuck, the head of the studio.) The composer and lyricist decide what they're going to do, where the music will be, and who's going to sing it. Then they work with guys from the music department, who will tell them the singing range and vocal capabilities of the cast, in this case Fred MacMurray. A pianist is assigned to MacMurray, and they try out the music to make sure it's OK for him. At that point, Ira and Kurt would have written any extra bars that are needed. (If there's going to be action, chances are they won't mess with that because they don't know how it's going to be cut, and it would be a waste of time to prepare music for any but the final version. They would leave that for a guy like me.) And then, when their songs are ready to go, they are recorded. Actually they're pre-recorded.

PS: Do you know if Weill did any coaching during the pre-recording sessions?

DR: I wouldn't think so. Usually that came before. I can't remember who was under contract as a rehearsal pianist at the time, maybe it was Urban Thielmann. But let's say the rehearsal pianist taught MacMurray the song. Then Kurt and Ira would come in, and they'd sit with Ratoff and Bill Perlberg to listen to it, and Weill would have suggestions to make. If you're the composer, believe me, you have them.

PS: What happens next?

DR: The singer or actor goes on the stage and pre-records the song with Al Newman conducting, who is the best conductor we ever had here in town. Then they play that stuff back on the stage, and the actor lip-synchs while they film the whole thing. The picture is then put together, and they decide where they need underscoring. For that they talk to a guy like me.

PS: And then you do the underscoring.

DR: I do the underscoring . . .

PS: With the development.

DR: Yes, that's right. Taking the material and developing it.

PS: And stretching it out?

DR: Yes, and cutting it down, dovetailing it, stuff like that. What you do is — if you're really an honorable guy — you stick as much as you can to the composer's music. In this case, as I said, it was possible until I got to the very end, where I had to diverge from that.

PS: Tell me about that. The divergence.

DR: Well, at the very end of the picture, the hero — let's say Fred — has been sentenced to death. And I think a guy who's his rival for the affections of the girl is egging on the execution. Fred, at the last minute, manages to get away in a little cart — you know, drawn by a horse or a goat, or God only knows what. And he's going like mad, while they're pursuing him. And then ensues this chase through the centuries. You go to the sixteenth century, in which case he gets into a coach, drawn by several horses. Everybody's costume changes. Then he goes into the seventeenth century, God only knows what he's riding in there. Then the eighteenth century, then the nineteenth century, and finally, as he gets around to the twentieth

century, he's driving a Cadillac, or something like that. It makes kind of a tour and all of a sudden the screen says "Twentieth Century." Well, there needed to be music for that. But after several days of working, I said to Al Newman, "I'm never going to be able to make this on Kurt's music. I can't make the right kind of scherzi out of it. Sure, I can make anything fast, but it's not going to work." He said, "If you can't do it, I don't think anybody else can either. So, why don't you do whatever you want, and I'll go in between you and the studio." And so I did.

I remember the recording session; everybody was on the stage. I guess Grischka Ratoff must have been there, and Bill Perlberg. You know, it's fun when you record. When we got to the last sequence of the chase (it's done in pieces), all of a sudden "Twentieth Century" comes on, and you hear [he sings] the Twentieth Century-Fox signature, which Newman himself wrote. He nearly fell off the stand. I just thought it would be a funny thing to do, and it was. Everybody thought it was great, and Zanuck left it in. He would have thrown it out if he thought it was inappropriate. Anyhow, I did that bit, and all the rest of the finale. I was waiting to hear what Kurt would say, but I didn't see him until maybe a year or so later.

PS: Oh? Why not?

DR: Well, he was already in New York, probably getting lessons in the method of living from Madame Weill. Anyway, I went to a concert down at the old Philharmonic Hall and, during intermission, I saw Kurt. I walked up to him, you know, figuring he's not going to hit me on the head, although he might. He was with Maurice Abravanel, that wonderful old gent, that conductor. (They were very good friends, and I think somebody who was a buddy of theirs was conducting.) So I walked up to him, and he smiled, put his hand on my shoulder, shook my hand, and said "Very, very good." I said, "What about the last sequence?" He just laughed: "I couldn't help wondering what in God's name you were going to do with that, but it turned out very well."

PS: So after your contribution, what was left to be done?

The image displays three pages of a musical score. The left page is titled 'REEL 1 - 1539' and contains the main title music 'WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?'. It includes a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature. The middle page is titled 'REEL 1 - PART 3' and contains the song 'ALL AT ONCE' by Fred MacMurray. It includes a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature. The right page is titled 'REEL 1 - 208' and contains an excerpt from the finale, featuring the Twentieth Century-Fox theme. It includes a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature.

Pages from the short score of *Where Do We Go From Here?* Left to right: First page of the main title music, as developed by David Raksin; "All At Once," as sung by Fred MacMurray; excerpt from the Finale, where Raksin introduced the Twentieth Century-Fox theme. © Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 1992.



Sheet Music Cover



Columbus faces a mutiny in *Where Do We Go From Here?* (Photo: Twentieth Century-Fox, 1945)

DR: Well, they did previews, and things like that, and they brought the picture back. Maybe they edited it a little bit. I mean, they wouldn't think of leaving it alone so the music score wouldn't get damaged, because I think in director's and producer's school they teach you, if you don't mess around and louse up the score, you haven't done your work.

PS: How much control did you have over the editing?

DR: Oh, I had no control over the editing whatsoever.

PS: How about Weill?

DR: He certainly could have expressed his opinion. And if he said, "Look, why did you cut out so and so? It's important." Perhaps he could have convinced them it was important to the story. But generally they didn't really like it when we messed around with that.

PS: And what about the success of the film?

DR: I know very little about that. I'm sure that the snotty guys in New York looked down their noses at it. Sometimes the only way of knowing you've done the right thing is when they don't like it. Because they're really ignorant. If they weren't ignorant, they'd be composers.

PS: Whose idea was it to make this particular film into such a big musical film?

DR: I haven't any idea. Probably Bill Perlberg's.

PS: Did you know Weill personally? Did you see Weill often after that project?

DR: No. I wish I had. I mean, I would have loved to, because he was such a charming, wonderful guy, and somebody I looked up to as well.

PS: So, if you think about the other music of Weill that you know, how would you compare that with the music he wrote for *Where Do We Go From Here?*

DR: Well, look, you're asking the wrong guy, because I refuse to make a great differentiation among these things. If a man has the gift of being able to write in several different worlds of music, he is still the same man, and the same musical characteristics will appear there. Otherwise he's a phony. You see? A guy like Aaron Copland writes things like *Rodeo*, and then he writes the Third Symphony, or the Piano Fantasy. You cannot differentiate among those things. It's ridiculous to do that.

PS: You hear similarities, is that what you're saying?

DR: It's not just that you hear similarities. You hear the man in them. The man remains constant. One time I was interviewing Aaron Copland, who was an old friend. I said to him, "Aaron, you know, it's so odd. Here you are, a person who is universally loved, everybody in the profession loves you dearly, and yet, when I listen to your music, sometimes I hear all this implicit violence." And he gave me one of those angelic smiles, and he said: "If it's in the music, it's in the man." Same thing with Weill. His show music was the way it was because he was the man who studied with Busoni. You see, and he is the guy who wrote a violin concerto, and he is the guy who wrote *Lindbergh's Flight*. To have that degree of sophistication and somehow do it so that it can be said in a simple way is marvelous, like one of those line drawings of Picasso.

PS: So, suppose there are types and symbols and archetypes of Weill, the man, as you say, that are constant, and you wouldn't necessarily say that there are themes or passages from his First or Second Symphony that show up in this film with Fred MacMurray? I mean, it's not as if one is being borrowed from the other?

DR: Yeah. The thing that remains consistent is the spirit of the composer. You're going to hear certain things. Absolutely. Other guys tried to do them, you know, like Krenek, and, God forbid, Hanns Eisler. They would have died if they could have written a melody, a real melody, but never. Writing a tune is the scarcest thing in the world today. A real tune.

Alec Wilder: Curt about Weill

by Arnold Sundgaard



Alec Wilder Photo: Louis Ouzer

I had not known until recently that the German critics of Kurt Weill's American music had used Alec Wilder's *American Popular Song* as support for their disapproval. Since then I've read Alec's all too brief comments on Kurt and had forgotten how curt he really was. I'm sure it represents his candid critical judgment, but then you must keep in mind that the name of Frederick Loewe — who also studied with Busoni, as Kurt did — does not appear in the index. The bias in Loewe's case seemed to be Alec's general prejudice against the transplanting of Viennese music to Broadway. It probably stemmed from his attitude toward the operetta tradition of Romberg and Friml. It was not a belief that a European could not write an American song, as he defined it, because he devotes an entire chapter to Irving Berlin, who came from Russia, and considerable space to Vernon Duke, who was Russian as well. And I know how he admired Michael LeGrand, who is from France.

But something of the middle-European apparently disturbed him. When he spoke of Loewe, who also lived at the Algonquin, he always pronounced the "W" as "V" with a heavy germanic accent. Their paths crossed in the lobby, but they never really met. Yet he seemed to know all about Fritz's activities, both personal and professional, which always suggested envy to me. Alec, for all his melodic gifts, wrote a number of musicals aimed for Broadway, but none ever reached production, let alone the acclaim accorded those of Fritz and Kurt.

Why Kurt is dismissed in Alec's book is more complex. He certainly must have known the music through his friend Marc Blitzstein. He helped Marc through many personal nightmares, the nature of which I only dimly understood until after Marc's tragic death. Marc was working on *The Threepenny Opera* during this

period of their friendship, but I don't recall Alec's ever commenting on the music until I read his dismissal of "Mack the Knife." He also dismisses "September Song" by saying that his irritation stemmed from a feeling the composer was not personally involved. Those are strong words, and I can almost hear him enunciating them now!

But there is an aspect to his displeasure of which I have never spoken until now. One morning Alec was in the lobby of the Algonquin when he ran into Alan Jay Lerner, who was leaving the hotel with his luggage. Alan said he was on his way to Indiana for the first performance of *Down in the Valley*, Kurt's new opera, in which Marian Bell, Alan's wife, was singing the lead. Alec thought all this very odd because I had not mentioned such a premiere to him. He asked Alan why I, the librettist, had not been invited. Alan said that they hadn't known where to reach me. Alec said he muttered something to the effect I was still living in Cold Spring Harbor and my name was in the phone book, etc. By that time Alan was on his way out the door. Alec called to tell me about the opening in Indiana, and it was then I first learned about it. Later it was reported how Kurt had taken a curtain call and, along with Alan, had been lionized in Bloomington. Alec insisted Kurt had not wanted me to share in any of it. He never let me off the hook for not protesting the apparent slight. I didn't know what to think. I felt hurt, naturally, but I also accepted it as the price one paid for being a librettist. It has always been an exercise in anonymity.

And yet during the time of my collaboration with Kurt there had not been the slightest hint of this curious class distinction. At our auditions we performed the work together: he at the piano singing the songs and I reading the dialogue. At the time of publication by Schirmer, Kurt and Hans Heinsheimer summoned me to town to

help select the Grandma Moses painting used by Schirmer on the cover. But when only the name Kurt Weill appeared on that cover Alec called this omission to my attention in no uncertain terms. Did Kurt see the proofs before publication or was it Hans Heinsheimer's editorial decision? I rather think the latter. It all seems so trivial now, but I can't deny having felt somewhat less than joyous when I first saw a copy on display at the old Schirmer store on 43rd Street.

And there is still another side to it. When the Lemonade Opera went into rehearsal with *Down in the Valley*, Kurt invited me to join him at the theater to participate in all the discussions with Max Leavitt, the director. I found in those discussions that he was as much concerned with the details of production as he was with the music. He said he and Brecht had always tried to attend even the most insignificant production of their school operas in the belief they would learn from it. He wanted me to learn from it, too. Perhaps he had left me out of the Indiana trip because he did not want to embarrass me by asking if I could pay my way as he and Alan surely did. He knew I was not wallowing in money at the time.

About a year ago, Kim Kowalke sent me a freshly discovered letter addressed to John Wharton of the Playwrights' Company in which Kurt urges them to give me the Sidney Howard Award in 1948 for *The Great Campaign* rather than Arthur Miller for *All My Sons*. I did not know that until now, more than forty years later! What greater proof that he genuinely had my interests at heart all those many years ago? (Incidentally, Brecht saw the play as well and on his return to East Berlin sent for a copy. It apparently was on the schedule of the Berliner Ensemble at the time of his death.)

Alec always put Kurt down as a fiercely ambitious operator in the field of music whereas he, Alec, professed a scorn for the establishment. He said Kurt carried a brief case and his shoes were polished! However, I don't know what to make of that because Richard Rodgers, whose music he admired, also polished his shoes. Alec also had another category for composers he scorned. They were the academics whom he called "the green-eye shade boys." This group included everyone from Otto Luening to Douglas Moore, both of whom were friends of mine. And there was a third group comprised of any composer with whom I might have had a conversation on a possible project. That included Bernstein and Copland. He found ways of diminishing them all, most of it personal. Aaron once told Alec he found his music less interesting than Alec himself. Alec never forgave him for that.

When *Down in the Valley* was given a performance at the high school in Nyack near New City, where Kurt and Lenya lived, Alec came to see it. After the performance I was standing with Kurt and several other people in the hallway and Alec — not seeing Kurt in the group — came up to me and said, as I remember it, "You must congratulate Mr. Weill for me. He has done what I thought impossible; he has turned folk songs into middle class music." He heavily accented the "V" for the "W" in Weill just as he had done with Fritz Loewe's name. Then he saw Kurt and scurried away in embarrassment. Fortunately Kurt hadn't heard or seen him.

Alec never said a word to me about the libretto. Whether he thought I had turned folk lyrics into middle class arias, I do not know, and, suspecting the answer, I never asked.

At the time of Kurt's death in 1950, he and I had made plans to write another school opera based on men trapped in a coal mine. There were to be two levels for the chorus — the men below and the waiting relatives above. He gave me a collection called *Folk Songs of Pennsylvania* to look over for possible sources for the songs. I even wrote one song called "I Got My Dress from a Man in a Mine." Upon his death I put my notes away.

Then one day Hans Heinsheimer called to say that with the success of *Down in the Valley* Schirmer would like me to try something in a similar vein, and did I have any composer I'd like to work with. Well, in 1948 Alec and I had written a piece called *The Wind Blows Free*, which had elements in it that suggested he'd be good for it. (Actually two of the songs, "Douglas Mountain" and "Where do you go when its starts to rain?" from that work are still done today.) Alec and I went to see Hans, and he commissioned us to do *The Lowland Sea*, set in a whaling town like Nantucket. But Alec said he would write his own folk music, as it were. And so the songs in that work are all his own. The words for "The Cuckoo is a Pretty Bird" are traditional but the melody is Alec's. I soon forgot what the original melody was really like.

Still, none of the pieces Alec and I wrote for Schirmer had nearly the number of performances *Down in the Valley* had. And the reason, I think, is that Alec paid little attention to the dramatic structure of the libretto. He seemed so pleased to have words to work with that he skimmed through the pages to see where the music would fit. Once he almost wrote music for a stage direction. That would have been unthinkable for Kurt. He insisted that every word be justified for dramatic consistency.

Alec was a complicated personality. He once said he had never made it — whatever he meant by that — because he had never owned a tuxedo. And yet one time I looked up his name in *Who's Who in America*, and he gave his address not as the Algonquin (where he usually got his mail) but as the home of two ladies on 57th Street. That aroused my curiosity, and I learned that they were — and I still find it hard to believe — publicity agents! One time I had said to Marian McPartland that Alec hated publicity. Marian, his most vigorous champion and one of his oldest friends, looked me in the eye and said in her elegant English accent, "Bullsheet."

Well, that doesn't answer the question of why Alec omitted Kurt from consideration in *American Popular Song*, widely considered the definitive book on the subject. It may, however, tell something of what made up a most enigmatic human being. His judgments on many things were iconoclastic and idiosyncratic. But in matters of music I think he strove to be honest and said what he believed. Why else would he have insisted on including Irving Berlin in his book when Berlin refused to be interviewed or allow him to use musical excerpts as examples of Berlin's particular genius? He says of Vernon Duke that Duke's absorption of American popular music writing was "phenomenal," something he did not feel in listening to the theater songs of Kurt Weill. If one could determine what he heard in the songs of Berlin and Duke that he did not hear in the songs of Weill, the question would be answered.

One last intriguing speculation. Alec writes in his book, "I find 'Mack the Knife' no more than one more proof of the appeal of the sixth interval of the scale." But why did he single out "Mack the Knife," when it was written long before Kurt's American period? A recent paper by Ronald Prather of Trinity University in San Antonio discusses Alec's "It's So Peaceful in the Country," among other songs. He writes, "The descent of the minor seventh to the held 'd' over a minor seventh chord, followed immediately by the descent of the sixth (Wilder's favorite interval)..." The paper has many other references to the sixth interval in Alec's music. Is it conceivable that his pronouncements on Kurt's music were nothing more than Sixth Interval Envy?

Arnold Sundgaard is one of Weill's two surviving collaborators (*Down in the Valley*). He was the librettist for Wilder's *The Lowland Sea*, *Cumberland Fair*, *Kittiwake Island*, *The Opening*, *The Truth About Windmills*, and *Jack in the Country*.

Steve Reich on Kurt Weill

An Interview with K. Robert Schwarz

When I interviewed Steve Reich in July, he was composing the last act of his three-act music-video work, *The Cave*. Using as its central metaphor the Cave of Machpelah in the West Bank (the burial place of the Old Testament patriarchs and matriarchs), *The Cave* examines Jewish and Islamic attitudes toward the Biblical tradition both in Israel and the United States.

A collaboration with his wife, the video artist Beryl Korot, *The Cave* is Reich's first work for the musical theater. Since Reich has never had much affection for conventional opera, he has been forced to look for other theatrical models. The most important of those models has turned out to be Kurt Weill, who has been much on Reich's mind during the composition of *The Cave*. In fact, I didn't even have to ask Reich an opening question; he already knew exactly what he wanted to say, and his words spilled out in profusion.

SR: There are some very particular things about Weill that struck me just about the time I started working on *The Cave*, because that turned my mind toward music theater. What I learned from Kurt Weill is that if you're going to write a piece of music theater, there are at least two basic assumptions that you should question—and that you should decide on the basis of your particular needs, not on historical precedent. They are: what is the orchestra to be, and what is the vocal style to be?

When Weill was doing the *Threepenny Opera* it would have been quite natural for him, having been trained with Busoni, to think of a standard opera house with an orchestra in the pit. But he made it quite clear that, no, I want a banjo, I need a saxophone, I need trap drums and a whole lot of instruments from popular culture. For the vocal style, again, given his background, it would have been quite natural to assume that he wanted bel canto operatic voices, which were plentiful in Berlin at the time. Again he said, no, I have this woman. She can't sing, but I think for *me* she can sing. [Reich laughs heartily.] And the result is a work which is a masterpiece, one that completely captures its historical time, not some other imaginary historical time. It doesn't capture the time of Mozart or Wagner or Verdi, it captures the Weimar Republic. That is only possible because of his selection of orchestra and because of his choice of vocal style.

So when an opera composer today merely assumes—because the opera house which has commissioned him or her has an opera orchestra in the pit and works with well-known bel canto singers—that opera demands those things, *that* is basically a superficial assumption. And I think that is the most important lesson I learned from Weill. I had to decide in *The Cave*, for instance, that the vocal style is primarily speech, highlighted by musical instruments doubling the speech-melody. That the orchestra would be a series of percussion instruments, samplers, amplified woodwinds, and so on. And that the vocal style would be quite different from anything that happens in an opera, in the sense of Verdi, Puccini, Wagner, Mozart, what have you.

The last thing that strikes me about Kurt Weill is that not terribly distant in historical time also lived Alban Berg. It seems to me that Berg sensed the death of German Romanticism, and in *Wozzeck* and *Lulu* you have a kind of agonized scream about the death of this culture. Weill was also keenly aware of the death of German Romanticism and merely did a physical about-face. I think Berg is there, as it were, facing backwards, with this gargantuan orchestra and operatic apparatus. Weill coolly turned forward and completely broke with that dead tradition. That is also something one can learn from. Weill, it seems to me, is peculiarly relevant to what's going on now in this country.

Those are the things that keep striking me about Weill. And they are things that came to mind when I had to face music theater with a basic gut dislike of opera. I said to myself, ok, I'm not interested in opera, but I *am* interested in things around me. And I want to be able to deal with them in a musical work. What to do about this? Simply start afresh, with some assumptions that are based on the present reality in which one lives. *That* one can learn from Weill. Certainly not to imitate his musical, harmonic, or melodic contours, or to imitate his selection of orchestra, or to imitate Lenya's vocal style. That would be vulgar and superficial. But what is extremely important is the need to question what is around and come up with one's orchestra, come up with one's vocal style.

KRS: You said that Weill is particularly relevant to what is going on in this country today. In what way?

SR: There is a tremendous interest in opera and music theater in the United States today. There are a group of people who are well-

known who have decided that to do opera simply means to do opera! Go to the opera house, use the opera singers, use the opera orchestra, and write some new notes for them. I find that exceedingly superficial — unless, like Stravinsky, you want to evoke a Mozartean opera, you want to evoke that historical period. But to use a traditional opera orchestra and operatic voices in works about contemporary political characters seems absurd.

KRS: One of Weill's concerns throughout his life was in combining materials from popular culture with those from European high culture. In effect he blurred the supposed divide between the two. Does that have special meaning for you?

SR: Kurt Weill is very relevant because we are living in a time when the lines between what is high art and what is going on in the street have, thankfully, drawn closer together. I say thankfully because I think they separated in this country and in Europe only recently, largely under the push of the death of German Romanticism (i.e., the work of Arnold Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern). Now that that influence has been shaken off, the distance between popular music and concert music has quite naturally grown closer.

KRS: Weill desired to reach a broader theater public, not just the elite of opera houses, and — perhaps like Copland — he felt he could simplify his means of expression without compromising his style. Do you share Weill's populist bent, his hope to embrace a larger public?

SR: I don't think that's a completely accurate reading of Weill. I think that Weill did what he did because he was drawn in certain directions. I don't think it was a conscious reaching out to a broad audience. As for myself, I've always just done what comes naturally. I am simply not interested in the music of the 18th and 19th century; I am interested in music from earlier than 1750. And I was actively involved for a while in jazz. So I really just reacted to the musics which made an impression on me. If the Debussy to Stravinsky to Bartok tradition made an impression on me, I think it's readily observable in my music—as is the influence of Miles Davis and Kenny Clarke and John Coltrane, as well as African music and Indonesian music and so on and so forth.

I think the initial resistance to what I did was based on the fact that there was so little audible connection between what I was doing and

what people were hearing in orchestral music. The orchestra comes from the 18th and 19th century, which is a superficial and false model for what "classical music" is about. It's taking 150 years of it and saying, this is the true paradigm. And I'd say, phooey, it's just 150 years, what about from 1750 back to the 12th century? I'm more interested in that.

KRS: What about the composer as a Jew? Weill, after all, escaped from the Nazis, an era you wrote about in *Different Trains*. How might his experiences as a Jewish composer be relevant to your own?

SR: At the time I was writing *Different Trains*, the question came up: what is the effect of a piece of "political" music on the politics of the time? And my answer would be, absolutely none. Don't kid yourself! Kurt Weill did the *Threepenny Opera* and had to *run for his life* to Paris. His music and Brecht's theater counted for absolutely less than zero. Hitler went on his merry way, and was defeated not by artists but by allied bombs. So I think those who would see music as a force in the political scene are wishful thinkers.

I can't think of any major political changes in the world that were effected by a change in art. Picasso's *Guernica* is an overwhelming masterpiece, but it didn't stop aerial bombing for two milliseconds! So I'd say, show me, where is the political art that has made the slightest difference? These are just private preoccupations of musicians. I don't see that the political history of the world has been influenced by the arts of any given time. I think much the opposite: that the arts reflect the political reality around them. They are the unconscious mirror of that.

People often say, Weill — the good democrat, the good socialist at the time of fascism — and Hans Eisler: the two of them run together. But the sad fact of the matter is I think that Eisler musically is a bore and has a thick-headed sensibility. So he was a good socialist and a good man in a bad time but, alas, he gets a B for boring. It's really the musical excellence, not the politics, that's going to carry your attitude through. Weill's attitude, and his removal from a certain kind of emotional Romanticism, lives because it's done so well.



Steve Reich Photo: Clive Barda

K. Robert Schwarz is a freelance music journalist and a frequent contributor to the New York Times, Stagebill, Pulse! and other publications.

Der Jasager at CalArts

by Richard Minnich

Der Jasager demands simplicity.

Kurt Weill clearly understood this when he wrote the music for Bertolt Brecht's text, itself based on the Noh play *Taniko*. And this is precisely the theme that dominated our production, performed last April at the California Institute of the Arts and at two local elementary schools.

Believing that the greatest strength of *Der Jasager* lies in the specificity of its intent — its insistence on remaining a *Schuloper* — we attempted to stage a school opera with children, for children. Unfortunately, we quickly came up against a musical barrier that did not trouble Brecht and Weill: a scarcity of qualified child singers to play the various roles. Unable to find suitable children, we settled on casting all CalArts students, ranging in age from twenty to twenty-five. In this way, we modified one aspect of the *Lehrstück*: namely, that those who would normally be in the audience become performers who learn through the acting process. We did, however, present the piece to sixth-grade audiences who were approximately the same age as the children who originally performed it in the 1930s.

That which at first seemed great compromise turned into great fortune. Faced with no boy soprano, we cast a young-looking actress from the Theater School and dressed her in a blue Boy Scout uniform. Three women from the Music School played the three students, dressed in green Girl Scouts uniforms. The teacher was transformed into a scoutmaster, uniformed in starched khaki with sash and countless patches, making him appear frighteningly authoritative. We selected seven men, all composers from the Music School, to sing in the chorus. Dressed as stereotypical 1950s journalists with fedoras, clipboards, and brownie cameras, they commented on the action in the same removed, observational manner as the traditional Greek chorus prescribed by Brecht and Weill. Only the mother was cast and dressed traditionally, huddled in a rocking chair, head and shoulders draped with a shawl, knitting feebly.

By casting the production in this way and performing in English, we intended to create a production with which the schoolchildren in the audience could relate. The opera's primary concerns — the value of ancient customs, the nature of peer pressure and the mob mentality, the question of where authority ultimately lies — could, we

thought, best be expressed by relating all the figures to a popular organization, the Scouts.

We also decided that viewers could relate to chorus members as journalists better than as the darkly-robed figures we had originally envisioned. As a society, we rely on journalists (whether print, radio, or television) as our primary sources of information. The choice of stereotypical 1950s reporters was grounded in the belief that this remains the strongest image of the journalist, even for today's children, most of whom have seen enough old "Superman" reruns to identify Clark Kent as a man of the press.

Following Brecht's plan for the piece, we held discussions with audience members after the elementary school shows. (I had visited the schools the previous week with some of the actors to introduce the piece in an attempt to prevent the schoolchildren from being intimidated by the word "opera."). This was, by far, the most satisfying



Rehearsal photo from the original production of *Der Jasager*, Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht, Berlin, June 1930. Left to right: Prof. H. Martens, Kurt Weill, Kurt Drabek (conductor), students.

aspect of the entire project.

While some children asked simple questions about acting, the plot, and our backgrounds, a surprisingly large number asked sophisticated questions concerning the themes and morality of the opera. After the actress who played the part of the Boy explained her character's dilemma, audience members were asked what they would have done in her place. Approximately one-third said they would have allowed themselves to be sacrificed for the good of the traveling party. Several of those who re-

jected this decision said the ancient custom was stupid, and that other alternatives, such as returning the boy to his home and then embarking on a new journey, should have been considered.

Many of the children questioned the actions taken by the three students, claiming they were unnecessarily vicious in throwing the boy off the mountain. When the actresses playing the students explained the peer pressure their characters felt and their fears of appearing weak in front of one another, they defined the central problems we wanted the audience to consider. The subject of mob behavior proved to be all too topical only weeks later when the Los Angeles riots erupted, and we all witnessed such mob mentality on a terrifyingly large scale. This incident convincingly proved how current *Der Jasager* remains in all its concerns.

The conversations with the schoolchildren were videotaped and replayed on video monitors before and after the CalArts performances. In this way, we hoped to place the three performances at the Institute in the context of the larger project begun a few days earlier with the elementary school shows. Although we had our reservations about performing the piece outside of those schools, it was important for us to perform for our teachers and peers, and to gauge their reactions to the piece in relation to those of the school children.

Some older members of the audience spotted allusions to fascism: most notably in the costumes, the teacher's blind adherence to the ancient custom, and the zealotry of the three students. Others marveled at the perverse suddenness with which the boy's fate is sealed. (Not many were prepared to witness such a complex story unfold within the thirty minutes our production lasted).

The lesson I learned from *Der Jasager*, at least from a directorial standpoint, is to remain true to the spirit which compelled Brecht and Weill to write this opera, and not to become obsessed with perfect technical execution. It is a forgiving opera, written to be performed by amateurs, not professionals.

First and foremost, it is a *Lehrstück*, from which everyone involved — performers, stage crew, audience members, directors — may learn. Its lessons are every bit as pertinent today as they were in Weimar Germany sixty years ago. While many in Germany claim the genre is dead, it clearly has a life in the United States, where its form and content remain fresh and effective. *Der Jasager* is not only a well-conceived and well-written opera, but a tremendously effective learning tool that deserves to be embraced by both the educational and artistic communities.

Readers of the Newsletter are invited to send progress reports on their Weill-related research projects, dissertations, and publications for inclusion in this occasional column. Author's and general research queries are also welcome. Please submit a maximum of 150 words, in third person prose, along with complete citations for publications.

Richard Bower (Doctoral candidate, City University of New York) presented a paper, "How Can You Tell an American?": Kurt Weill's Earliest Years in the United States, 1935-1938," at the College Music Society's annual meeting in San Diego, October 1992. The paper traces elements of Weill's changing musical style using musical selections from *Johnny Johnson*, *Davy Crockett*, *You and Me*, and *Knickerbocker Holiday* as examples. Bower read an earlier version of the paper at the same society's Northeast Chapter meeting in April 1992.

Atay Citron (Rehovot) is working on *Spectacular Outcry*, a book and documentary film about the anti-Nazi pageants of American Jews. The book, to be published by Indiana University Press, documents and analyzes four spectacles staged in the 1930s and 40s to arouse sympathy in the U.S. for the Jewish victims of Nazism. The documentary film will focus on the pageants *The Romance of a People*, *The Eternal Road*, *We Will Never Die*, and *A Flag is Born*. Citron will gratefully receive information on these works from participants, spectators, and scholars. Kindly contact producer Stephen Messner, 15247 Earlham St., Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. (310) 459-1583.

Gunther Diehl (Altenholz) has completed his dissertation, "Der junge Kurt Weill und seine Ein-Akt-Oper *Der Protagonist* (1924/25) nach Georg Kaiser. Exemplarische Untersuchungen zur Deutung des frühen kompositorischen Werkes." The results of this study present a slowly emerging picture of the young Weill's compositional self-image from the very beginnings of work on *Der Protagonist* to the composer's first great public success with that piece. The author aims to lay the groundwork for a newly articulated understanding of the young Weill.

Albrecht Dümmling (Berlin) recently published "*Der Jasager und Der Neinsager*: Brecht-Weills Schuloper an der Karl-Marx Schule Neukölln 1930/31" in the catalogue for the exhibition, *Rixdorfer Musen, Neinsager und Caprifischer: Musik und Theater in Rixdorf und Neukölln*, edited by Dorothea Kolland and published by Edition Hentrich, Berlin. The article corrects some misinterpretations about the chronology of discussions and performances. Dümmling interviewed participants of early performances and located unpublished material about the first production at the

Zentralinstitut and the celebrated Paris performance in December, 1932.

David Farneth (Kurt Weill Foundation) delivered a paper at the International Musicological Society meeting in Madrid, April 1992, as part of a new study group, "Problems of Source Studies." His paper, "Sources Required to Make a Critical Edition of an American Musical: A Report of Work Underway by American Scholars and the Editorial Board of a New Kurt Weill Edition," will be published in the proceedings of the conference.

Hanns-Werner Heister (Herleshausen) has recently completed two articles on Weill that will be forthcoming next year: "'Amerikanische Oper' und antinazistische Propaganda. Aspekte von Kurt Weills Produktion im US-Exil" appearing in *Jahrbuch für Exilforschung* 1992; and "Polis-Theater und Broadway-Musical. Aspekte von Kurt Weills Musiktheater-Produktion im US-Exil" appearing in *Exil-Musik. Folgen des Nazismus für die internationale Musikkultur*. The first of these evaluates examples from several spheres of Weill's work in light of concepts such as Zionism and American patriotism. The second study deals with the aesthetic stance embodied by the American works. Heister asserts that the differences already visible in the 1920s between Weill and Brecht intensified upon the composer's emigration to the U.S. and led him eventually to hold a neo-Aristotelian view of music theater.

Stephen Hinton (Yale University) recently compiled fourteen entries on Kurt Weill and his works for the *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. Edited by Stanley Sadie, the four-volume dictionary is scheduled for publication in December. Other writings include the essay "Lehrstück: an Aesthetics of Performance," which will appear in *Music and Performance in the Weimar Republic* (edited by Bryan Gilliam) as part of the series Cambridge Studies in Performance Practice (Cambridge University Press). In June, he read a paper entitled "Großbritannien als Exiland: Der Fall Weill" at the conference "Musik und Exil" in Kassel.

Christine Isley (Middle Tennessee State University) completed a doctoral research project, "The Early Songs of Kurt Weill: 1913-1923, Discussed and Translated," at the University of Illinois in December, 1991. The study explores Weill's stylistic development through an examination of the early songs, including his choice of texts, treatment of prosody, and use of expressive devices: harmony, dynamics, tempo, and accompaniment. A comparison of three settings of the same poems by Reger, Pfitzner, and Wolf is also included. An article is scheduled to appear in the upcoming issue of the Newsletter of the Mid-South Regional National Association of Teachers of Singing.

Sylvia Kahan (Doctoral candidate, City University of New York) is writing a biography of the Princesse Edmond de Polignac, focusing on her Paris and Venice salons, and her spiritual and financial support of composers and performing artists between 1890 and 1939, including Stravinsky, Satie, Fauré, Poulenc, Weill, de Falla, Clara Haskil, Artur Rubinstein, etc. Any information about the Princesse and her artistic circle would be most gratefully welcomed (and properly acknowledged). Please contact Ms. Kahan at 410 West 24th Street, #15-J, New York, NY 10011; (212) 691-0458.

Kim H. Kowalke (University of Rochester and the Eastman School of Music) recently completed chapters for Bryan Gilliam's *Music and Performance in the Weimar Republic and The Brecht Companion*, both forthcoming from Cambridge University Press. The former, entitled "Singing Brecht vs. Brecht Singing: Performance in Theory and Practice," will be pre-published in the Winter 1992-93 issue of *Cambridge Opera Journal*. With Lys Symonette he is finishing the edition of the Lenya-Weill correspondence for the University of California Press, and he is co-writer of the script for Barrie Gavin's film *Formerly German: Kurt Weill in America*, based on Kowalke's essay of the same title in *A Stranger Here Myself: Kurt Weill Studien*. While on sabbatical 1993-94 he plans to complete a number of works-in-progress, including a long essay on Amerikanismus and *Mahagonny*.

Alan Lareau (Concordia College) recently published the essay "The Cabaret Movement in the Weimar Republic" in *Theatre Journal* 43, no. 4 (December 1991): 471-490. His current research interest is Frederick Hollaender in American exile.

Tamara Levitz (McGill University) worked on completing her Doctoral Dissertation in Musicology for the Eastman School of Music during 1992. In the dissertation she studies Busoni's master class in composition at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin from 1921-4. Using a large variety of unpublished archival materials, Levitz describes the events of the master class in detail, concentrating on the musical ideology behind Busoni's teaching, the unique artistic models he provided for his students, and the works they composed for him. Levitz also examines Busoni's relationships to his students, particularly to Kurt Weill, and explores the complexities of the friendship between Weill, Jarnach, and Busoni. In April, 1992, Ms. Levitz read a paper on "Busoni's European Circle in Berlin in the early 1920s," at the IMS meeting in Madrid. She is preparing a paper on Busoni's use of graphic art as an integral part of compositional procedure.

RECENT RESEARCH

Joachim Lucchesi is editing *Hermann Scherchen: Werke und Briefe in 8 Bänden* for the Peter Lang Verlag. Volume one, "Schriften 1," appeared in October, 1991. Lucchesi gave a paper on "Contextualizing *The Threepenny Opera*: Music and Politics" at the Modern Language Association in San Francisco, December, 1991; the paper will appear in the next issue of *Communications* (vol. 21, number 2, Fall 1992). His most recent article "... ob Sie noch deutscher Inländer sind?" *Der Komponist Kurt Weill im Exil* appeared in *Korrespondenzen* (Heft 11/12/13, Gesellschaft für Theaterpädagogik Niedersachsen, Hannover, 1992). His next book, *Das "Verhör" in der Oper. Die Debatte um Brecht/Dessaus "Lukullus"* is scheduled for publication this fall by BasisDruck, Berlin.

Mario Mercado (Kurt Weill Foundation) delivered a paper entitled "The Tango and Kurt Weill" at the 18th Amherst Colloquium on German Literature at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in April, 1992. This study will be published as part of the proceedings from the interdisciplinary conference "Germany and the 'New World,' Cultural Exchanges with Latin America and the Caribbean" in 1993 by Francke Verlag, Bern and Stuttgart. In March, 1992, Southern Illinois University Press published Mercado's *The Evolution of Mozart's Pianistic Style*, a study of the development of the composer's keyboard idiom as evident in the genres ranging from solo keyboard work to the piano concerto Mozart cultivated and established.

bruce mcclung (University of Cincinnati, College-Conservatory of Music) is completing his doctoral dissertation, "American Dreams: Analyzing Moss Hart, Kurt Weill, and Ira Gershwin's *Lady in the Dark*," at the University of Rochester. A summary of some of his research will appear in the essay "Psicosi per musica: Re-examining *Lady in the Dark*" in the forthcoming collection of essays from the 1990 International Kurt Weill Symposium. mcclung would be interested in hearing from anyone who was associated with the original Broadway production (first season, second season, or tour) and can be reached at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music, (513) 556-9549 or at home, (513) 871-2602.

Barbara Münch (student, Ludwig-Maximilian University, Munich) is writing a thesis on *Die sieben Todsünden*. Münch's specialization in comparative literature and musicology led her to confront the incongruities of language and music as they relate to musical and linguistic aspects of the Weill-Brecht work. In this context, Münch studied the Lieder of Robert Schumann, expressionist music, musical structures in Ingeborg Bachmann's novel *Malina*, and Theodor W. Adorno's writings on music. With reference to Kowalke's and Drew's

writings, Münch analyzes the aesthetic difficulties of dealing with a "double structure" of music and language. On one hand lies Brecht's coalescence of political theory, and on the other Weill's critical destruction of traditional music, in which references to Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* can be found.

J. Bradford Robinson (Hannover, Germany) has written a lengthy essay on the reception of American dance music in 1920s Germany for inclusion in the forthcoming anthology edited by Bryan Gilliam (see Hinton & Kowalke above). Using a small rhythmic figure that occurred in many jazz-related works of the period (including several by Weill) for illustration, he traces its "jazz" pedigree in the popular music, art music, improvisation manuals, and theoretical writings of the time and demonstrates how these different disciplines influenced one another. Robinson traces an unbroken line of interaction between commercial band leaders, Tin Pan Alley imports, German imitations, early jazz primers, and *Kunstjazz*, and ends with an analysis of the jazz elements in Berg's *Der Wein* and *Lulu*. Of special interest to Weill scholars is a discussion of pseudo-improvisation, several examples of which are taken from works by Weill.

Jürgen Schebera (Berlin) is preparing an enlarged, English edition of his recent *Kurt Weill: Eine Biographie in Texten, Bildern, und Dokumenten* (Schott, 1990), scheduled for publication by Yale University Press in Autumn 1992. New to the edition are recently discovered photos and extensive quotations from early family letters. Together with Stephen Hinton, Schebera is working on the English edition of *Kurt Weill: Musik und Theater: Gesammelte Schriften*, which is scheduled for publication by Faber & Faber in 1993. He is also preparing five articles, each devoted to one of Weill's German stage works, for volume 5 of *Pipers Enzyklopädie des Musiktheaters*. He contributed program notes for the recent Capriccio release of *Der Kuhhandel* and is preparing notes for a new recording of *Die sieben Todsünden* and *Mahagonny Songspiel*, also for Capriccio.

Guy Stern (Wayne State University) participated last year in a Franz Werfel Conference. His paper, "The Musical Settings of Werfel's Dramas," written in collaboration with musicologist Peter Schoenbach (Wayne State), will appear in a Werfel anthology edited by Hans Wagener and Wolfgang Nehring of UCLA. Parts of the paper deal with *The Eternal Road*. Stern also spoke at a Brecht conference at the University of Delaware about "Lotte Lenya's Creative Interpretation of Brecht." The proceedings will be published by the University of Delaware Press under the editorship of Hans-Peter Breuer (University of Delaware) and James Lyon (University of California, San Diego). His article

"Sporadische Heimkehr: Lotte Lenyas Besuche des Elternhauses und bei Wiener Werlegern" appeared in *Eine schwierige Heimkehr. Österreichisches Exil 1938-1945*, edited by Johann Holaner, Sigrud Paul Scheichl, and Wolfgang Wiesmüller (Innsbruck: Institut für Germanistik, 1991).

James Zychowicz (A&REditions, Madison) completed a monograph on Weill's sketches for *Lost in the Stars*. In this study the author identifies the various stages of work through which Weill progressed, and he offers parameters that can be useful for further manuscript study. Zychowicz further describes the history of the work, going back to *Ulysses Africanus* (1939) and the various attempts Weill and Anderson made either to mount this uncompleted work or to use music intended for it. Zychowicz also gave a paper on "The Odyssey of Kurt Weill's *Ulysses Africanus*" at the Midwest Chapter Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Minneapolis, MN.

Neher Exhibition at the WLRC

This Fall the two exhibition cases in the Reading Room at the Weill-Lenya Research Center contain an exhibit devoted to the collaboration of Weill with one of this century's most renowned stage designers, Caspar Neher (1897-1962). Entitled "Neher and Weill: Collaboration, Re-presentation, Re-creation," it consists primarily of prints from the Research Center's collection which illustrate both Neher's designs and their realizations in productions of *Mahagonny Songspiel*, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, *Happy End*, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Die Bürgschaft*, *Silbersee*, and *Die sieben Todsünden*. Illustrations of his costume designs for Pabst's film of *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1930) are also displayed.

The exhibition counters tendencies to regard Neher simply as "Brecht's designer." Of particular interest is the Weill-Neher collaboration in the years 1927 to 1933—i.e., in Germany until the Nazi's seizure of power in March, and in Paris and London later that year—and Neher's resumption of the staging of Weill's works after the war. Most interesting is the fact that he honored a pledge made at the time of the first production of the anti-totalitarian opera "Die Bürgschaft" (for which he also wrote the libretto) to produce it again after the Nazi's fall from power. He did this in 1957, not long after his return to Berlin following the war. There were other re-creations of the visual aspect of Weill's stage works which followed the war's end and even Weill's death (in 1950). Among these is the production of *Die Strasse* (*Street Scene*) for Düsseldorf in 1955.

The exhibit was prepared by John Andrus, Associate Archivist, with the assistance of Murray Wortzel, volunteer in the Archive and librarian *emeritus*. It is expected to remain on view until early in the New Year.