

Israeli Folk Music: Songs of the Early Pioneers. Edited by Hans Nathan, with a Foreword and Afterword by Philip V. Bohlman. Recent Researches in the Oral Traditions of Music, vol.4 (Madison, Wisconsin: A-R Editions, 1994). 106 pages.

The events of 1933 and afterwards impressed upon German Jewry the urgency of seeking safer havens. Many looked to other European countries, others to America; a few considered settlement in the Palestinian Yishuv, pre-statehood Zion. Those who left became not birds of passage but of flight. Perhaps never able to return to their original homeland, they were compelled to reshape lives and reconstitute careers. Kurt Weill was among them, emigrating first from Berlin to Paris in 1933, and then in 1935 to the United States, while his parents went to Palestine. Hans Nathan, the editor of this volume, was likewise a Berliner until he left for America in 1936. A member of the Kulturbund Deutscher Iuden (German Jewish Culture League), Nathan played an active role in a briefly functional organization known as the World Center for Jewish Music in Palestine (WCJMP). In support of its general objectives to maintain world-wide connections with musicians and to encourage musical creativity in Palestine, this organization promoted interest in a new genre of Zionist Hebrew song-poetics reflecting the socio-cultural circumstances and topography of that land.

During the 1930s, the Palestine organization Keren Kayemeth (Fund for Sustenance) sent hundreds of postcards imprinted with the melodies and texts of such freshly-hatched Zionist folk songs to Jews still in Germany as well as those elsewhere around the world. Hans Nathan collected those postcards and in 1937 embarked upon a project to publish some of the songs in a more artistic form. Aided by his WCJMP contacts, he corresponded with composers in the United States (many of them emigrés), inviting them each to create piano accompaniments for a few of the postcard songs. The invitations resulted in a fine collection of arrangements,

some of which Nathan issued in the late 1930s as "Folk Songs of the New Palestine." Years later, upon his retirement from a long academic career, he returned to this music and prepared to reissue the arrangements in a single-volume edition.

Nathan died in 1989, leaving the completion of his project to ethnomusicologist Philip V. Bohlman. This present publication, with the addition of valuable resource information wrapped around the music itself, goes well beyond a mere reissue of fifteen lovely folk/art song selections. A foreword by Bohlman presenting the history of Hans Nathan's project is followed by Nathan's own preface, which features excerpts from his correspondence with Ernst Toch, Darius Milhaud, and Weill. Rounding out the preliminary section of this book are guidelines to the transliteration of Hebrew text, the songs' lyrics both in Hebrew and in English translation, and facsimiles of ten song postcards as well as a 1938 advertisement of the settings.

Bohlman's Afterword, subtitled "Folk Song, National Song," strengthens the scholarly content and scope of the publication. Although the essay is placed at the back of the volume, after the scores to the songs themselves, one would do well to read it before examining the music. Having published earlier studies dealing with the WCJMP organization and musical life in the German-Jewish community of Palestine/Israel, Bohlman insightfully reviews this collection. He views the songs first as original folk works, then as artistic re-creations, and draws attention to the broader ethnomusicological implications of "invented tradition."

As to the fifteen selections themselves, all are skillfully done, though they vary in quality. Most interesting are those by Paul Dessau, Stefan Wolpe, and Weill. Wolpe seems the most comfortable with these folk tunes. His three settings reflect an emerging Judaic-Near Eastern melodic style. Dessau, during his years in America was associated with the Jewish Music Forum in New York City (as was Wolpe) and composed music for synagogue liturgical services. His two postcard song arrangements in this book are simple and charmingly reflective of their texts.

Weill brought to his arrangements a strong background of works with Judaic relevance. The son of a cantor in the German city of Dessau, the young Weill composed a number of pieces that exhibit a resonance with Judaic models: Mi Addir, a Hebrew wedding ode, for voice and keyboard (1913); Gebet, a German prayer, for SATB choir (1915); and Ofrah's Lieder, in German and Hebrew, for voice and piano, with words by medieval Sephardic poet Yehuda Halevi (1916). He revisited the liturgical music that surrounded him in his childhood and youth in the composition of the Franz Werfel biblical drama Der Weg der Verheissung (1934-35) (later transformed into The Eternal Road). It was only a few years later that Nathan contacted him about writing the two postcard song arrangements included in this collec-

In Ba'a M'nucha (There Comes Peace) also titled Shir Ha-emek (Song of the Valley) - Weill offers a remarkable reconception of the original Slavic-like tune. He fleshes out the three poetic stanzas, fashioning a classic art-song form, emphasizing the melodic essence and muting its syncopated stresses. The pastoral quality remains, but the sweetness has been blunted. The piano part has a full repeat only for the second stanza, and then goes forward with the strength of its chordal patterns to end with a feeling of unresolved tension. Clearly, Weill understood the song's text, one that celebrates both a peaceful evening on the agricultural settlement and the sacrifices made by its brave guards on night watch. Concerning Havu L'venim (Bring the Bricks), Weill himself wrote to Nathan, "the whole song has been based on a restrained march rhythm which seems to me quite effective." The composer added at the end of the letter, "I hope you like it."

In all of his works, text interpretation guided Kurt Weill's creativity. This was as true of these two song arrangements as it was of his later Judaic works such as the admirable Sabbath *Kiddush* (Benediction over Sacramental Wine) of 1947 for cantor, SATB choir and organ and dedicated to his father. The inclusion of his pieces in this collection of songs provides further insights into the work of a gifted composer, a man who endowed his music with a measure of spiritual integrity.

IRENE HESKES New York The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny. London. English National Opera, Declan Donnellan, director; Sian Edwards, conductor. Premiere 8 June 1995.

In 1963, the Sadler's Wells Opera (which became the English National Opera in 1974) mounted an important and influential production of Mahagonny, an early landmark in the rediscovery of Kurt Weill's opera (as opposed to a Brecht play-withmusic). We'd had the 1956 Philips recording with Lotte Lenya as Jenny, and the inevitable transpositions. The most prominent and important of previous postwar stagings had been the Hamburg State Opera's in 1962 - a too strictly Brechtian affair, directed by Egon Monk, in decor after Caspar Neher's original. "Those who choose to stage Mahagonny in the spirit of Brecht's Anmerkungen of 1930 are unlikely to observe or care that Weill had no hand in them, and that he demonstrably had very different ideas about opera in general and Mahagonny in particular" (David Drew in Kurt Weill: A Handbook).

The Sadler's Wells production was conducted by Colin Davis and directed by Michael Geliot, and David Drew was its guide and inspiration: he had sorted out as satisfactory a text and sequence as the "unfinished and unfinishable" score allows, and with Geliot had made the English translation (still the most musical and effective of the translations, I think). As heroine there was a clear lyric soprano, April Cantelo. And in rehearsals Davis had been heard exhorting the orchestra to "Play the music, you b——! Can't you hear how beautiful it is!"

That's history now. It was history vividly remembered at the company's disappointing second production - vulgarly and obtusely directed, and badly conducted when Mahagonny newcomers were heard asking, "Is this all it is? This is the work that stirred you so deeply, that bowled you over in 1963?" Donnellan and his designer Nicholas Ormerod (founders of the theater company Cheek by Jowl) had tackled Mahagonny before, at the 1985 Wexford Festival, and I had read good accounts of the effect it made in that tiny theater. But for the ENO, on a larger budget, they staged a splashy Mahagonny as a series of production numbers - as (in Drew's phrase) "the naïve juxtaposition of songtype numbers that some early critics took it for, and every badly paced and unmusical production makes it out to be."

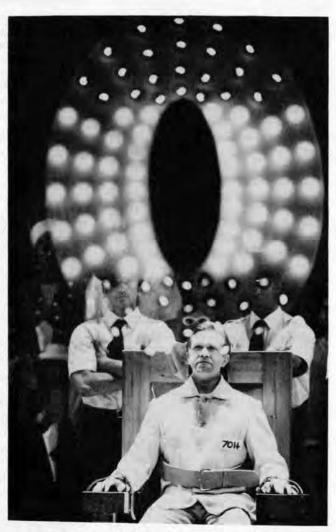
Ormerod's plain decor kept the big stage open, unfocused, and generally bare from side to side. Donnellan decked it with the large chorus, a corps of twelve busy, prominent actor-supers, and a small squad of children. The lumberjacks arrived as cameratoting tourists. Act II was played in tuxedos and black dresses, with large soft-porn projected posters of the girlies (and the boys) whose flesh was on sale. The trial scene was played in the manner of a television gameshow: hand-held mikes, a busy crew of camera operators, attentive make-up girls, etc. Jimmy was led to execution amid loud applause and a "bevy of bimbettes."

Dollar bills showered down on the audience. Clichés. No characters. No tension. No emotions. No dramatic line. No drama.

Coarse, erratic amplification of the miked singers was musically unpleasant and, whether they were singing or speaking, obscured the text (Michael Feingold's translation, modified). The Coliseum, seating 2,354, may be London's largest theater, but Sarah actresses -Bernhardt, Ellen Terry. Edith Evans - played it with success; back in 1959, in days when singers cared for projecting words as well as sound, the Sadler's Wells company visited it and gave unamplified but perfectly audible productions of Fledermaus and The Land of Smiles; and the ENO singers are usually more apprehensible than thev were in Mahagonny. The company has not before employed amplification in this crude way, and I hope it never does so again.

Lesley Garrett, whose

ENO Rose Maurrant (in *Street Scene*) and Cunning Little Vixen had promised better, played Jenny in the vein of her television show *Viva la Diva*. As a young, glamorous Begbick, Sally Burgess, usually so vivid a performer, adopted a brassy timbre and a fake American accent — until, in "Benares," she began to *sing*, and then Weill's music made its wonted effect. Robert Brubaker, the Jimmy, had a firm, focused tenor, admirably true and clear, but there was little lyricism or legato in his phrasing; he didn't sound the beauty of the music. Adrian Thompson, the Fatty, was the most lyrical performer. Brian Matthews, the



Jim (Robert Brubaker) awaits execution in the English National Opera production of Austieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny. Photo: Laurie Lewis

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Trinity Moses, had a handsome baritone but no feeling for words. Alaska-Wolf Joe was an elderly corncrake.

Sian Edwards, the conductor, had got good reviews for a Scottish Opera Mahagonny she conducted nine years ago: "absolute precision. . . listened always to the balance. . . made the apocalyptic march of the closing scene deeply impressive." In this ENO show I heard almost the reverse. Poor balance and ensemble (as if reliant solely on the amplification to make the voices audible); the delicious, insidious zither waltz delivered uninflected, as if by a music box; a slog through the buoyant, soaring "Mandelay"; the finale (which Adorno called "a strange kind of Mahler, stranger than Mahler himself") hammered through without breadth. strangeness, and grandeur.

Textual notes: the first, "operatic," further-ranging version of the "Havana-Lied" was used (I confess to preferring the revised version - tauter, catchier, more telling - that Weill composed for Lenya, but perhaps that's just familiarity; it was interesting to hear the original in context). Jim's "Wenn der Himmel hell wird" was returned from the start of Act III to its original place as the second-act finale (a mistake, I think: "Lass euch nicht verführen" is a stronger finale; Weill knew what he was doing when he shifted the aria). Jim's preceding monologue was delivered in the first version. "Kraniche-Duett" was omitted (no quarrel there: as Drew says, "the truthfulness of Mahagonny may well be greatest when the 'Kraniche-Duett' is omitted"). "Benares," that late importation from the Mahagonny Songspiel, was placed after the trial scene (where else can it go? and it's needed).

Edwards described her edition as "a personal one" in which "we have restored the original text at those places where Weill's revisions do not, in my view, succeed." She's in line with the last of Drew's Mahagonny notes in his Handbook: "The very nature of the work compels us to continue searching for ideal solutions long after we have recognized that there are none to be found." But in execution this Mahagonny did Kurt Weill no service.

ANDREW PORTER London



Jesse Coston (as Frank Maurrant) with other cast members Joke Kramer (Emma Jones), Walter Hoffman (Carl Olson), Eva Tamulénas (Olga Olson), and Danuta Bernolak (Anna Maurrant). Photo: Anita Walter.

Street Scene. Freiburg. Freiburger Theater. Gerd Heinz, director, Frank Beerman, conductor. Premiere 14 July 1995.

Elmer Rice and Kurt Weill asserted time and again in the mid-1940s that the time was ripe for the emergence on Broadway of an American opera: a through-composed, dramaturgically intensive work. The time was ripe, they said, for their Street Scene. Almost fifty years later, the time is ripe now in Germany as well. Following upon productions at such prominent venues as the Münchener Staatstheater and the Theater des Westens, smaller stages have begun to present this piece—a piece that plays such an important role in the repertoire of twentieth-century music theater.

A case in point is the Freiburger Theater, which this summer premiered its version of Street Scene. It is somewhat astonishing that a smaller theater would saddle itself at the end of the season with such a demanding work. The cast, in fact, enlists nearly the entire Freiburger ensemble. The production does have its shortcomings, but in spite of these the Freiburg has brought to the stage a Street Scene that can in many respects be measured against the best productions of the piece in recent years.

Received with enthusiasm and long applause, the Freiburg premiere made it abundantly clear that Weill's American work — which even now remains largely unknown in Germany — has much to offer, both musically

and dramaturgically; certainly much more than one would ever expect given the old myth that, after ceasing collaboration with Brecht, Weill sold his soul to the American entertainment industry. On the contrary, this production illustrates that high artistic standards and enjoyable entertainment are by no means mutually exclusive. Gerd Heinz's stage direction realizes with great seriousness and affection Weill's calculated, complex, and enormously detailed melodramatic passages. And Frank Beermann's musical direction gets inside Weill's score and coaxes out of many numbers - such as the Blues number "I got a Marble and a Star" or "Lonely House" - previously unheard colors.

The casting of the four primary roles (Sam Kaplan as well as Frank, Anna, and Rose Maurrant) is less than ideal in many respects. Questionable, above all, is the choice of Jesse Coston to play Frank Maurrant. Both as an actor and a singer, Coston is barely able to get at the heart of the role. His Frank is comparatively softer than most; at the beginning he is even sympathetic. The character's alcoholism and eventual brutality do not appear predestined from the beginning but instead develop in the course of the action. Although generally the working out onstage of the developmental possibilities of such a figure might be a welcome endeavor, Frank's development in this

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case sharply contradicts his portrayal in the libretto and above all in Weill's music. It raises all sorts of questions: Why is this man, who presents himself happily and sociably to his neighbors and approvingly applauds their "Ice-Cream Sextet," assigned such dark music? Why does his wife feel unhappy about her marriage to him? And why, in the end, does he turn into a murderer?

As for the other principal roles, each is played by an excellent singer whose dramatic persuasiveness lags far behind his or her vocal capabilities. This circumstance, so typical in the world of opera, is particularly troublesome for pieces, such as *Street Scene*, in which dialogue plays a significant part.

If the Freiburg principals are merely adequate, well-cast secondary characters pick up a good bit of the slack. Joke Kramer, for instance, plays a musically solid and dramatically convincing Emma Jones, eliciting numerous chuckles from the audience with her spiteful comments and nasty remarks. Notable as well are Annina Papzian and Rosemary Nencheck (Nursemaids), Hans-Jürgen Schöpflin (Daniel Buchanan), Jaakko Kortekangas (Harry Easter), and Franziska Weiß (Jenny Hildebrand). Small though some of these roles may be, they are an important part of Street Scene.

In fact, the high point of the whole production is provided by two minor characters: Dick and Mae as played by Jiri Sova and Juliane Hollerbach. The choreography of their scenes (devised by Sova himself) is so original and wild, their dancing so virtuoso and humorous, and their singing and acting so outstanding that one doubts whether these roles have ever been better cast in the entire performance history of *Street Scene*. One can search a long time before finding multiple talents like these.

The translation created the one inescapable problem of the evening: specifically, the question of whether the work's text is translatable into German. It is certainly helpful for those who are unfamiliar with the piece to have it performed in the language of the land. However, German translations of Langston Hughes's lyrics often transmute his balanced, poeticized folk language into the language of bourgeois operetta, obscuring important elements of the literary conception.

In many songs, Hughes makes use of recurring poetic key words or phrases ("I always will believe," "Lonely House," "Let Things be like they always was," "We'll go away together"). These recurrences give an aria a basic mood which remains musically preserved throughout the entire work, to be recalled at each textual repetition. In translation, however, such key words are often rendered differently at each occurrence due to the translator's consideration of the lyrical

context. The words thus lose their structural function and in turn rob from the music some of the meaning it generates through motivic construction.

The Freiburg interpretation, enforcing mistakes already in the translation, manifests a certain neutralization in terms of language, content, and political perspective. For example, "the exploitation of the workers by the capitalist classes" is hardly commensurate with the translation "Unzufriedenheit" (dissatisfaction). There are numerous such situations in which the translation lessens the potential for political and social conflict by inverting the meaning of the original. There is a danger in misinterpreting Street Scene by deflecting the emphasis from the piece's social message onto the individual fates of the main characters. It is the socio-political aspects (those addressing issues of gender, ethnicity, etc.) that make Street Scene so relevant for contemporary performance. The very problem that the Freiburg translation pushes into the background - that of hatred of those who are foreign or strange - is precisely the one that, given the current situation in Germany, should in every case be emphasized

> NILS GROSCH Freiburg

translated by Edward Harsh

The Threepenny Opera. Cambridge, Massachusetts. American Repertory Theatre. Ron Daniels, director. Craig Smith, musical director and conductor. Premiere 12 May 1995.



A scene from Act III of the American Repertory Theatre's Threepenny Opera.

Photo: T. Charles Erickson

The American Repertory Theatre devoted its 1994-95 season to a re-examination of world theater classics. Following a stunningly theatrical Oresteia (Aeschylus) and a production of Shakespeare's Henry V, the spring repertory was devoted to two modern classics, Alfred Jarry's Ubu Roi and the Brecht-Weill Threepenny Opera. Recognizing that what was shocking in the 1890s is pretty tame stuff today, the American Repertory Theater (hereafter "ART") freely adapted and musicalized its Ubu Rock to create not a scandal but a very pleasant evening of rollicking and sometimes thought-provoking naughtiness. The company failed to recognize, unfortunately, the comparative timelessness of The Threepenny Opera and tried to improve it by making it "timely" as well.

The ART production sought aggressively to bring the story into the 1990s, ignoring Brecht's pointed decision to set John Gay's two-hundred-year-old story in the early nine-teenth century rather than in the present of the 1920s. Drawing on the references in the dialogue and lyrics to Soho, the company changed the setting (though unspecified in the program) to present-day New York. Thus the "Moritat" tells of a fire up in Yonkers; Macheath recalls in the tango "that little whorehouse down in Bowling Green"; and

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just as Polly is described as the "sweetheart of Soho," Lucy becomes the pride of Tribeca. The beggars are contemporary street-people; the Streetsinger (played by Alvin Epstein, who also serves as a narrator and as Reverend Kimball) is depicted as a sort of superannuated hippie in bell-bottom jeans. rattling a cardboard coffee cup for change. The brothel is set in a neon jungle evoking the Eighth Avenue porn district with the silhouette of a naked woman and signs proclaiming "Peep Show" and "Girls, Girls, Girls." "Mackie and me" are compared to Sonny and Cher and to Torvill and Dean. while Macheath and Brown, in the "Cannon Song," sing of their experience with "the U.S. Army. . . from Guam to Vietnam," and Macheath's gang is dressed - by way of a particularly odd choice - like fugitives from the chorus of Guys and Dolls.

Much of this imagery could be dismissed as merely the offspring of an annoying visual concept, but the problems do not end there. Many other elements of the production are confusing and simply do not work. For instance, in the third act, the ensemble stares into the audience proclaiming the approach of the mounted messenger. Brown, astride a huge sculpture of a horse, enters upstage dressed all in black, the exact replica of an old, widowed Queen Victoria. Does Queen Victoria work as a messenger in contemporary New York? A messenger from whom? From the queen. What queen? What coronation would be staged in present-day Manhattan? Brecht's ending is pointedly absurd, but it is not confusing nonsense.

Confusion aside, the production also suffers from a tendency to sermonize, which is in direct conflict with Brecht's desire to encourage audience members to think for themselves. At the end of the evening, the Streetsinger (not Peachum) calls not for us to combat injustice, but to "sing a song for the homeless" and to "try to be forgiving." This is an explicit topical reference to the recent decision by Boston authorities to close the Public Garden at night, denying the homeless a place to sleep.

If the book and lyrics are subject to such radical re-interpretation, what of the score? The music, alas, is treated with such awed respect that it becomes ponderous. The earnest, ten-piece orchestra at times drowns out the singers, and the singers, in turn, too often exhibit the orotund, high-palate style of opera singers. Despite conductor Craig Smith's claim that "the words have to come first," the words are often difficult if not impossible to understand. Clarity is sacrificed to "musicality."

Lynn Torgrove is a dramatically splendid Polly, but when she sings she reverts to operatic habits, to the detriment of the words. April Armstrong's marvelous spitfire of a Lucy Brown does better, getting maybe sixty percent of her words across. The lines of Sharon Scruggs's Jenny are almost completely unintelligible; even in "The Solomon Song," with its minimal accompaniment, one must strain to pick up more than the occasional few words. Of all the singers, only Patti Allison's memorable Mrs. Peachum manages to communicate every line with clarity and point.

Even the music, alas, does not entirely escape "improvement." In keeping with conductor Smith's declaration that he wants the tempi "faster than the metronome markings" to avoid a "leaden" quality, the orchestral opening is so fast that it evokes the accompaniment to a chase scene in a silent movie. The same is true of the "Cannon Song," which is so fast that the singers cannot keep up and so loud that their voices have to be amplified into oblivion. Conversely, the repetition of the "Wedding Song" ad nauseum by Macheath's gang is just one aspect of a scene that progresses with all the sprightliness of molasses. A more felicitous improvement is the restoration of the cut aria for Lucy, with its attendant poisoning scene for Lucy and Polly. Here too, however, the execution undercuts the intention. Ms. Armstrong's

sparkling (if not entirely intelligible) rendering of the aria argues its merit, but Smith's orchestration lacks any dissonance that might usefully subvert the florid grand-operatic style of the number. Just as Brecht's dramaturgy has been compromised, Weill's brilliant ironic sense seems to have gone unnoticed.

This production simply failed to trust the material. Jeremy Sams's translated lyrics, with their jarring updatings, sometimes smack of a sophomoric college revue: The pun I believe I heard on "curt" and "vile" in the "Solomon Song" absolved somewhat the impenetrable enunciation. To add a "shit" or "fuck" here and there can be effective, but a profusion of them quickly palls, as with the "hoo-fucking-ray" in the wedding song. By the same token, the choices of the director and the designers struck this viewer as too clever by half, seeking to improve on rather than to serve - a modern masterpiece, needlessly updating a work that is no more dated than it was when it was written nearly seventy years ago.

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Lucy (April Armstrong) and Polly (Lynn Torgrove).
Photo: T. Charles Erickson.

There Once Was a Girl Named Jenny, A Celebration of Music by Kurt Weill Devised by Richard Pearlman and Kim Kowalke. Rochester, New York. Eastman Opera Theatre. April 13, 1995.

Unlike other compendium shows, There Once Was a Girl Named Jenny avoids even the barest mention of its composer. It never pretends to tell the story of Kurt Weill's life or to point up the relevance of his songs to the times in which they were created. Instead, the authors have used forty-two songs, spanning a large part of the composer's career (from Mahagonny Songspiel to Lost in the Stars), to create a through-composed evening of theater in a "revuesical" format.

In classic style, the show follows the fortunes of a group of young women, all named Jenny (Beck, Elliot, Galante, Hill, Smith and Holliday), as they plunge through the dying days of the glorious 1920s only to confront the despair that their downturn of fortune has brought them in the depths of the American Director Richard Pearlman Depression. explains in the program that, "noting that Weill's theatrical works contain no less than six characters named Jenny," he and Kowalke "detected a pattern of youthful idealism that leads to disillusionment (and frequently cynicism) and inevitably back to a temperedthrough-experience version of youthful ideals." I disagree with the notion that such a pattern exists; in fact, I disagree with the existence of six Jennies in Weill's work. They certainly are not the six last names used above (which correspond, respectively, to the first names Johanna, Liza, Marie, Jenny, Jenny and Lillian). Jenny Hildebrandt is ignored, but she is, after all, just a schoolgirl, and the protagonist of the "Saga of Jenny" is not really a character. But who cares, really, when the resulting show is such a joy to see and hear?

The first act, titled "The Big Party," is set in an extravagant, elegant Manhattan penthouse on New Year's Eve 1929 and has a generally optimistic point of view. The six women flirt with the six men who either admire them or ignore them. The men, on the other hand, flirt with concepts of big business: the joys of warprofiteering and oil cartels. Some folks fall in love; others avoid the complications that love can bring. Drinks are served, flowers collected in elegant vases, Ertè-like capes are worn, removed, replaced. The Jennies enjoy each other, vying jovially over a lottery ticket for example, as they go for money, intimacy, and power in their own right.

The second act ("The Big Hangover"), out on the street - presumably in front of the same Park Avenue building, or perhaps just around the corner - on a gloomy night in 1932, shows these six feisty women and their men-folk facing up to the loss of the material comforts they so relished in the first act. While there is no real plot in this show, one grows to know and care about a bunch of people who could be your relatives. This is accomplished partly through the songs they sing and the intimate ways in which they interact with one another. It is also a credit to Pearlman's impressive directorial manner, which has characters take in the entire audience as confidante, with a glance, gesture, or turn of phrase.

The first act of *There Once Was a Girl Named Jenny* is a bit too long at one hour and ten minutes. It works well but tries to cover too much ground too quickly in establishing relationships that will be developed in the second half. "Mr. Right" is wrongly placed in this act (frankly, it does not fit logically in either act) and could

easily be excised to reduce the act's running time. "Very, Very, Very" from One Touch of Venus proves to be a much funnier song than I believed it to be and "Beat! Beat! Drums!" emerges a dramatic highlight of the first act.

After intermission, the show moves along almost too swiftly, especially in view of its dark mood and the harsh situation of the characters. A dance number beyond the wonderful staging of "Youkali" would be a welcome relief. Perhaps the "Tango Angèle" could be added to flesh out the already dark impression made just moments before during the most powerful staging I have ever seen of the "Alabama Song." For the first time since I first heard this song in the 1960s I was moved to tears by the plight of its people. The "Ice Cream Sextet," here sung by seven people, provides the lightest moment in the act, providing great fun for company and audience alike.

The "company" are all students at the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music. At some moments in the show the performances are very good - so good that one could forget that the performers are students - but these moments are offset by some obvious and severe vocal problems. All six Jennies show weakness in their upper registers, while the men's vocal trouble is with pitch and placement. What is more, the vocalists too often sing behind the beat, rushing to squeeze in the words and losing the meaning of a lyric while trying too hard to interpret what simply needs rendering as written. (Rubato singing does not work with this music. Weill and collaborators knew what they were writing and what went where.) Despite a few fine solo moments, the company really shines only in the ensemble pieces. The male quartet numbers sounded great, as did the "Ice Cream Sextet."

The physical production is sumptuous. Surely, if Florenz Ziegfeld were alive, director Pearlman would have first call on the next edition of the Follies. His stage pictures and his manipulation of his cast in their on-and-off relationships keep his intentions focused and clear. His reworking of these songs makes it seem as if they were written expressly for this show. There is not a single false note in the director's work.

Kim Kowalke conducts a marvelous student orchestra that responds to his every gesture and plays beautifully. Jonette Lancos's choreography, although limited a bit by untrained dancers, evokes the period and shows off the wonderful costumes designed by Alice Volonino.

With a few changes and a professional company to put the material across properly, this could be a perfect evening's entertainment. Kudos to Pearlman and Kowalke for creating a Weill tribute which does not need to mention the composer even once; with this concept and staging, the music says it all.



Valerie Nicolosi, foreground, singing "Youkali" in There Once Was a Girl Named Jenny. Photo: Gelfand-Piper

PETER BERGMAN Richmond, MA



Testimonies of War: Kriegszeugnisse 1914-1945. Includes Weill's "Zu Potsdam unter den Eichen" and the premiere recording of Choral-Fantasie "Herr Gott dein Zorn tu von uns wenden" (1922) for string orchestra, 3 winds, and male chorus. (Also includes works by Blacher, Goldschmidt, Milhaud, Shortall, and Vaughan Williams.) Soloists: London Philharmonic Orchestra: Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin: Pozna Philharmonic Orchestra; BBC Symphony Chorus; The Wallace Collection; Sheriff. Noam Berthold Goldschmidt, Andrzei Boreiko and Stephen Jackson, conductors. Largo 5130 [2 CDs].

"Memory is the enemy of ephemeral politicians and the natural ally of historians and artists . . . collective amnesia is always the creature of trauma." So reads David Drew's opening statement in the remarkable eighty-five-page, bilingual booklet that accompanies Testimonies of War: Kriegszeugnisse, 1914-1945. Although one may accede to the general truth of his observation, it is nonetheless impossible not to sense that both historian and artist have perpetually struggled at establishing a record of war even as they have periodically attempted to establish markers that admonish, "Lest we forget."

The graphic records of the painters and the poets, created both in the trenches and at home, by turns have called upon pity, nostalgia, horror, and the patriotic spirit. For all the range of sentiment, however, they have frequently resounded in a surprisingly stilted and monochrome voice. "Great events," it would seem, do not necessarily spawn "great art," and war is no exception. One is obliged to conclude retrospectively that the power of even first-hand accounts resides principally in the act of making a record: "I was there." The natural corollary to such a posture, however, was already fashioned by André Gide in 1910: "There can be no question of art as soon as the idea of establishing a record enters in."

Responses to war in the world of music have assumed numerous guises and have been written with varying degrees of immediacy. Some works were pragmatic and timely reactions, such as Debussy's "Berceuse héroïque" of 1914, composed for King Albert's Book and inscribed to the King of the Belgians and his soldiers, or the moving solo song, "Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maison" (1915), written on a text by the composer himself. A somewhat more oblique testimony appears in his En blanc et noir (1915) for two pianos, which makes prominent use of "Ein' feste Burg" in a second movement dedicated to a friend who had fallen in battle. Similarly, a listener would never take Ravel's Tombeau de Couperin for a war memorial if he or she were without knowledge of the dedications and the funerary urn drawn by the composer on the title page. It is only the extramusical information that forces a consideration of the relationship between the work's Neoclassical pose and the socio-political conditions under which it was written.

Indeed, in the world of music the range of responses to the thirty-one years' war, 1914-1945, is not always immediately obvious, and the matter is clearly in need of sorting out. The repertoires are vast, led by marches in great number and a profusion of war ballads whose texts and tunes are addressed to the

masses. The quantity of music intended for concert hall use that belongs to this repertory is smaller in absolute terms but surprisingly larger than the titles of works alone might suggest — a fact to which Ben Arnold's *Music and War: A Research and Information Guide* (New York, 1993) has given recent and vivid testimony.

Drew's two-CD set provides further evidence of the complexity of the issue at hand. As the title suggests, the collection focuses on Germany and avoids large-scale works that are readily available, even though the largest of these, Britten's War Requiem, casts a long shadow in the introductory remarks of the accompanying booklet. In those remarks, Drew states that the album was "planned and first released in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II" and that the works chosen were intended "to define in musical and textual terms certain links and coherences which are beyond the scope of any single work, however comprehensive."

A defining factor of the recordings is that inclusion in the set is limited to works written by composers who had witnessed the war first-hand, not through newspaper clippings and newsreels as did Schoenberg and Stravinsky, both of whom had matriculated to California before actual fighting erupted.

Such a focus would seem to guarantee a certain immediacy, but in fact the choice of Boris Blacher as the sole representative on the first disc leads to any number of questions. The announced desire for "coherence" in choosing a "composer whose work could be heard as representative" only forces recognition of the inevitable diversity of such war "testimonies."

Blacher's opening "Alla Marcia" from 1934 serves as an appropriate introduction, looking back to World War I and ahead to the "gathering storm" which was already in view. From this perspective, however, his ensuing Dance Scenes and Chiarina come as a surprise. Dance Scenes was written in 1938 in London as the result of a commission for Colonel de Basil's Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo, but the political crisis of 1939 caused the London season to be canceled and the company to disband. Some of the work's motifs found their way into another ballet. Harlekinade, performed in Berlin during the first year of the war. The original ballet was to remain forgotten until 1976, the year following Blacher's death, when Drew discovered the manuscript in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.

Without a context for the piece, no thought that the work was written in a time of war would ever come to mind. It is typical of numerous works by Blacher, who, in his penchant for writing works with a series of movements, marks himself as both a natural ballet composer and as a miniaturist. The movements are given to interior changes of mood, frequently within a relatively short space of time, and confirm that the music was intended to accompany action.

The range of expression found in Dance Scenes is familiar given its era. Neoclassical dotted rhythms of the "Pas de deux" accompany a flute arioso that shows affinity, by turns, for Hindemith and Shostakovich; the brief (1'09") "Rag-Caprice" invokes Milhaud initially by its title and ultimately through its music; the "Valse" evades the wry waltz style cultivated by Satie and Stravinsky in the teens and caroms from a full orchestral gravity that recalls Ravel to the helium-air of the music-hall and more especially the American Broadway musical. From the starchy, mannered rhythms of the "Tango" to the more quietly seductive strains of the oboe in the "Rhumba," the work showcases a variety of popular dances that had for some time been familiar to most Western European composers. Only the March Variation following the "Rhumba" moves from light-footedness to potential caricature, though Blacher's intentions here can only be surmised. (It is much less heavy-handed

than Hindemith's parody of a Bavarian military march that closed his *Kammermusik No.* 5 [1927].) The work ends unexpectedly with a "Danzon" whose bouncy South American flavor recalls Milhaud and Copland.

Chiarina, which follows on the first disc, is also a ballet, written in 1946 immediately following the cessation of hostilities and premiered by the Berlin State Opera in 1950. The emphasis here continues to lie principally on neoclassical ingredients wedded to pop: the world of Stravinsky's Apollo (1927), the energetic language of the same composer's Piano Concerto (1924) and Concerto for Strings (1946), and the popular rhythms of ragtime. Only once, in the "Coda," is a more serious note sounded with ominous drums and a kind of TV cop-chase music followed by a strutting march. This soon dissolves into the sounds of revue music and later the specific rhythmic structures of ragtime. Blacher's reputation as a composer of vignettes within miniatures is preserved. The whole is securely written and immensely attractive, but before the work is concluded one begins to crave a visual dance compo-

In the course of enjoying the music, however, one is periodically brought back to the question, "Where's the War?" Is there a connection in subtext via context? The musical ingredients are familiar from the earlier ballet, but there is virtually no evidence of postwar Angst. Drew's assertion is that the ballet, whose scenario is set in 1880, contrasts dramatically with the music which was written "no earlier than 1946," allowing "Blacher to suggest that the anachronistic is a means of escaping into the present from a past that is much more recent than the 1880s." Furthermore, we are asked to recognize that "Throughout, the 'little' orchestra and its piano soloist function as a filtering device for Blacher's recollections of the clandestine records he and his friends had listened to behind locked doors during the war years."

Persuasive though this argument may be, today the musical score sounds decidedly free of political entanglements and rather more akin to Postmodernist polystylistic pastiche, a well-crafted and attractive descendant of Milhaud and Stravinsky and precursor to William Bolcom. Nonetheless, though surface matter and content may be at odds, Drew's close reading is important. Indeed, similar close readings of numerous "war documents" are virtually mandatory if we are ever to mediate the chasm between intentionality and reception.

The second disc contains more Blacher, a Partita for strings and six percussion from 1945, and a piano Sonatine No. 2 from 1940,

in which the composer's indebtedness to Stravinsky continues to be apparent. The Partita, despite its Neoclassic title, could pass as a composition for a film score, with the percussion episodes in the final movement carrying potentially militaristic overtones. The final entry by Blacher, his Three Psalms for baritone and piano from 1943, complements Two Psalms by Berthold Gold-schmidt from 1935. Drew says, "in both cases, the danger to each composer at the time of composition is potentially life threatening, and is increased by the very act of composition."

Kurt Weill too adopted a penitential psalm for his *Choral-Fantasie* of 1922 for string orchestra, winds, and male chorus. Here the young Weill provides a commentary on the recent conclusion of hostilities with a clear warning for the future. Drew persuasively contends that in a setting of the vengeful Jehovah of Jens Peter Jacobsen's text, Weill can logically be seen to forecast the "destruction of the mythical city of *Mahagonny* — which Weill saw as a modern reincarnation of Sodom and Gomorrah."

Coming to the end of an integral listening of these richly produced recordings of largely unfamiliar works, one is left with much to ponder. The final compositions on the disk represent a series of war snapshots that make this collection an unexpected treasure trove: an affectingly moving Chorale for piano written by Milhaud in 1941 shortly after his arrival in America; another male chorus by Weill, "Zu Potsdam unter den Eichen" (text by Brecht) of 1929; a 1942 "Fanfare for Those Who Will Not Return" for five trumpets by the little-known American Harrington Shortall, one of eighteen fanfares written on commission from Eugene Goosens and the Cincinnati Symphony; and a ringing "Valiant for Truth" for mixed chorus by Ralph Vaughan Williams of 1940.

Having no access to the scores or other recordings of these repertoires, I can say at least that the performances sounded controlled as well as communicative throughout. Let us hope that this is only the first of a series of such "Testimonies of War" and that the search for the elusive role of art in the period of two world conflagrations — so richly pursued in the fields of painting, sculpture, architecture, prose and poetry — will now begin to be systematically detailed in the world of sound.

GLENN WATKINS University of Michigan Lenya: ein erfundenes Leben. Produced by Hessischer Rundfunk/Arte Musica. Directed by Barrie Gavin.

The television department of Frankfurtam-Main's Hessischer Rundfunk has produced an affectionate hour-long portrait, "Lotte Lenya, an Invented Life." The film is rich in contemporaneous documention but psychologically superficial and at the very least misleading.

Invented indeed. Nobody who was close to her ever called her anything but Lenya (originally spelled Lenja), from her arrival in Berlin in 1921 to her death in New York City in 1981. Lenya found her invented name, she once told me, "exotic," but Ernst Josef

Aufricht, the great Berlin avantgarde producer of the premieres of three important Brecht-Weill works, once expressed bafflement to me over her decision: "Who could ever have wanted a more beautiful stage name than Karoline Blamauer?"

Some aspects of this documentary portrait are rather puzzling. The film seems indecisive about its intended audience. Interviews with Lenya's American friends give the impression of an endeavor focused on America, an impression reinforced by the fact that interview with Symonette, Lenya's Germanborn musical assistant and advisor, is conducted entirely in English. On the other hand, the ostentatious interpolation of the

Viennese chansonnier HK Gruber as an obtrusive cicerone may make for greater accessibility to German-speaking viewers, but it also does some violence to the film's integrity as a work of biographic art.

After Weill and Lenya moved to Brook House in New York's suburban Rockland County, Lenya became best friends with Mab Anderson, the wife of Weill's collaborator Maxwell Anderson. Several reminiscences from an interview with the Andersons' daughter contribute importantly to this portrait. Recounting how Lenya's kitchen door at Brook House was always open for her as a child. Hesper Anderson provides a brief but

vivid example of the spontaneous gift that made Lenya the performer such an arresting phenomenon. In this instance, the Brook House washing machine suddenly began moving across the floor, inspiring Lenya to a hilarious imitation of the machine that had suddenly taken on a life of its own. Momentarily, Lenya became that machine itself.

The film also offers footage of Lenya in action, when the electricity generated by the commingling of talent and adrenalin produces that magical quality (author Fitzroy



A scene from Lenya, Ein erfundenes Leben.

Davis once labelled it quicksilver) that transmutes the mundane mortal into the born performer, and in some cases, as in Lenya's, into the star.

The excerpts from the interview with Lys Symonette provide an important bridge between the German and American phases of Lenya's life. Commendably, Symonette makes no bones about the distressing fact that at precisely the moment Weill most desperately needed all the support he could get — when the Nazis' rise to power meant clear and present danger for all Jews in Germany — Lenya abandoned him. (Lenya herself admitted that she headed straight for Monte

Carlo and its gambling tables.) Symonette also emphasizes the crushing burden of guilt for this behavior towards Weill that Lenya bore for the rest of her life.

A few passages remind me of Lenya's volatile and unpredictable relationship to the truth. On camera she praises Leonard Bernstein's Brandeis University *Threepenny Opera* to the skies; to me, in private, she did rather the opposite. I think that the veracity of other segments might likewise be questionable. One can hope that future scholars and writers will not accept anything on faith.

The portrait gingerly sidesteps anything having to do with sexuality, a matter which played an important part in Lenva's life. One hears not even a hint of the poignant but squalidly precocious sexual initiation that she confided to more than one close friend, and which significantly influenced the rest of her life. The fact that after Weill's death she knowingly married three homosexuals in succession casts a blinding light on Lenva's own complicated personality, but director Gavin's portrait does not even hint at such a fact.

This documentary does have its positive moments. It provides a few rich samples of how beautifully Lenya read poetry in both German and English. It

contains a few startling anecdotes (as in the story of Lenya and Weill's mistress grieving together at his graveside), and some fascinating excerpts from an interview with Carmen Capalbo (who staged Marc Blitzstein's version of *The Threepenny Opera*) and Hal Prince (who staged *Cabaret*). And a brief scene from Lenya's Ruhr Festival appearance in Brecht's masterpiece *Mutter Courage* makes one long to have seen the whole thing.

One quotation sums up Lenya's magical stage esthetic in eight pregnant words: "Stand perfectly still, feel it, and sing it."

> PAUL MOOR Berlin

SELECTED PERFORMANCES

AUSTRALIA

- Symphony No. 2, Brisbane, Queensland. Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra. 31 August 1995.
- The Threepenny Opera. Queensland Theatre Company. 26-31 May 1995.

AUSTRIA

- Jeunesse Festival, Vienna. Various venues. 29 September-24 October 1995.
- Die Dreigroschenoper, Bregenz/Lake Constanz. Festival of Bregenz. 5 August 1995.
- Die Dreigroschenoper, Vienna. Burgtheater. 31 December 1995.
- Der Lindberghflug, Vienna. Brahms-Saal, Musikverein. 3 April 1995.
- Frauentanz, Linz. Ensemble Octogon. 20 September 1995.

FRANCE

- Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Paris. Bastille Opera. Premiere: 14 October 1995.
- Der Jasager, Paris. Amphithéâtre-Bastille. 13-17 November 1995.
- Der Lindberghflug, Paris. Futurs-Musiques, Soli-Tutti. April 1996.
- L'Opéra de quat'sous. Paris. Théâtre National de Chaillot. 7 November - 2 December 1995.

GERMANY

- Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Bremerhaven. Stadttheater. 18 May-18 June 1995.
- Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Chemnitz. Städtische Theater. 1 April 1995.
- Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Cottbus. 14 May-25 June 1995.
- Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Duisburg. Deutsche Oper am Rhein. In repertory 1995-1996.
- Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Koblenz. 8 May-22 June 1995.
- Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Der Lindberghflug, Köln. Kölner Rundfunk-Sinfonie-Orchester. 29 September 1995.
- Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Pirmasens. Studiobühne. 11 June 1995.

- Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Radebeul. Landestheater Sachsen. In repertory 6 May 1995 - 23 May 1996.
- Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Stuttgart. Württembergische Staatstheater. 10-24 May 1995.
- Concerto for violin and wind instruments, Chemnitz. Städtisches Theater, Sächsische Bläser. 8 May 1995.
- Die Dreigroschenoper, Berlin. Deutsches Theater. 19 August 1995.
- Die Dreigroschenoper, Frankfurt am Main. Städtische Bühnen, Schauspielhaus. 14 April-17 May 1995.
- Johnny Johnson, Berlin. Theater des Westens. Premiere 12 January 1996.
- Der Kuhhandel, Göttingen. Theodor-Heuss-Gymnasium. 7-10 July 1995.
- Der neue Orpheus, Krefeld. Städtische Bühnen. 26 April 1995.
- Der Silbersee, Dessau. Landestheater. March 1996.
- Der Silbersee, Leipzig. Opernhaus Leipzig (Drehscheibe). Premiere: 7 March 1996.
- Die sieben Todsünden, München. Oberlandbühne Miesbach. 13-16 April 1995.
- Street Scene, Freiburg. Theater Freiburg. Premiere: 14 July 1995.
- Symphony No. 1, Berlin. Berliner Festwochen 1995, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester. 23 September 1995.
- Symphony No. 2, Bonn. Camerata musicale, Universität Bonn. 7 July 1995.
- Symphony No. 2, Halle. Akademisches Orchester der MLU. 7 June 1995.
- Symphony No. 2, Karlstadt. Värmlands Sinfonietta. 14 May 1995.

NETHERLANDS

- Das Berliner Requiem, Amsterdam. Holland Festival. 18 June 1995.
- Die sieben Todsünden, Amsterdam. Holland Festival, Gastspiel des Tanztheaters Wuppertal. 17 June 1995.
- Symphony No. 2, Den Haag. Residentie Orkest. 1 July 1995.
- Walt Whitman Songs, Mahagonny Songspiel, Amsterdam. Metropole Orkester. 28 May 1995.

SOUTH AFRICA

The Threepenny Opera, Pretoria.
Technikon Pretoria. 22-31 August
1995.

SWITZERLAND

Der neue Orpheus, Schaffhausen. Schaffhauser Symphonieorchester. 28 April, 28 May 1995.

UNITED KINGDOM

- Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, London. English National Opera. 8-30 June 1995.
- Die Dreigroschenoper, Taunton. Brewhouse Theatre. 30 August 1995.
- Suite from Die Dreigroschenoper, London. Royal Festival Hall, London Philharmonic. 7 April 1995.
- Happy End, London. Bridewell Theatre. 7 August-2 September 1995.
- Love Life, Leeds. Opera North. 24 January 1996.
- The Threepenny Opera, Birmingham.
 University of Birmingham. 29 June, 1
 July 1995.

UNITED STATES

- Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, New York. Metropolitan Opera. 25, 29 November, 2, 6, 9 December 1995. (Broadcast on 9 December 1995 at 1:30 p.m. over the Texaco-Metropolitan Opera International Radio Network.)
- Das Berliner Requiem, Philadelphia. Curtis Opera Studio. 14-17 February 1996.
- Concerto for violin and wind instruments, Aspen, CO. Aspen Music Festival. 9 August 1995.
- Die Dreigroschenoper, New York.
 National Youth Music Theatre of Great
 Britain. 26-28 October 1995.
- Kleine Dreigroschenmusik, Arlington, VA. Arlington Symphony. 4, 10 June 1995.
- Kleine Dreigroschenmusik, Atlanta. Orchestra Atlanta. 15 April 1995.
- Kleine Dreigroschenmusik, Miami Beach. New World Symphony. 6-9 April 1995.
- *Happy End*, Chicago. Prologue Theatre. 25-29 September 1995.
- Der Protagonist, New York. American Symphony Orchestra. 10 May 1996.
- Songs for Soprano and Chamber Ensemble, Caramoor, New York. St. Luke's Orchestra. 7 July 1995.

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	Kurt Weill Studien. Olms Verlag, 1993.	\$40.00	
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