The Royal National Theatre Ushers in *Lady in the Dark*

*Opening Scenes Then and Now...*

The show is original and appealing and, as heroines go, so is Maria Friedman. Her Liza Elliott stalks into her shrink’s eyrie radiating nervy, brittle assurance, then spins rapturously off into the first of the dream-sequences that interrupt the more realistic proceedings. Our own Tina Brown would have to be promoted from the chair of the *New Yorker* to the throne of England to match a fantasy like that.

— Benedict Nightingale, “Freudian drama that does not shrink from emotion,” *The Times* (12 March 1997)

Adrienne Lobel has designed a conceptual setting of sail-like triangles which introduces a number of staging constraints. Even with Quinny Sacks’s low-adrenalin choreography, the chorus never look very securely in step. Lobel’s white gauze sails bounce Rick Fisher’s lighting all over the Lyttelton stage, making it tough for actors to hold the focus.


*It comes as a delightful shock to discover what a convincing musical play — complete with song and dance — Moss Hart, Ira Gershwin and Kurt Weill made almost 60 years ago out of Freudian psychotherapy, dreams and a suitable case for treatment. Francesca Zambello’s buoyant new production does not have to involve itself with any theatrical salvage work: *Lady in the Dark* has lost none of its satirical sharpness at the expense of a New York high fashion magazine. “My Ship” and much of the haunting music goes with a real period lilt. It swoons and smooches, yearns and saunters.*


*The production by Francesca Zambello is stylish, restrained, cerebral. Weill’s music is plangent and sinuous, a remarkable synthesis of Weimar jazz and pre-Sondheim querulousness. Maria Friedman, surely confirmed now as our supreme musical actress, negotiates her backward spiral with exuberant grace and wit, swirling in mists and ballgowns, deftly zipping on the Schiaparelli frock when she takes off with a movie star hunk (the Victor Mature role is occupied by a suitably anaemic grinner, Steven Edward Moore) and even stepping daintily across a tightrope, in Stoppardian vein, to prove she is a “proponent of mental acrobatics.” The famous “Saga of Jenny,” Liza’s bump-and-grind hymn to vacillation, is delivered with enchanting airiness.*

Kleine Dreigroschenmusik a popular repertory piece

According to publisher’s statistics, Weill’s Kleine Dreigroschenmusik (1929), a piece arranged by the composer from the music of Die Dreigroschenoper (1928), is the most widely performed of Weill’s works worldwide. Kleine Dreigroschenmusik features a unique ensemble of eighteen players (winds, percussion, banjo, guitar, accordion, and piano). Two major American orchestras will perform Kleine Dreigroschenmusik in their May concerts; on 9-11 May the Los Angeles Philharmonic, under the baton of John Adams, will combine it with Ives’s Country Band March, Central Park in the Dark, Ragtime No. 4, Piazzola/Adams’s Tiro Tangos for Violin and Orchestra, and Adams’s Violin Concerto. A completely different program will be performed by the Cleveland Orchestra on 8-10 and 13 May. Christoph von Dohnányi will conduct Kleine Dreigroschenmusik along with Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto and Sibelius’s Fifth Symphony.

Peter Sellars stages Weill in France and Germany

Mahagonny Songspiel will be presented at the Bobigny Music Festival between 31 May and 7 June. More performances follow on 11, 13, and 14 June at the Oper Frankfurt. Directed by Peter Sellars and conducted by Craig Smith, the cast includes Sanford Sylvan, James Maddalna, Frank Kelley, and Mary Westbrook-Geha, accompanied by the Emmanuel Music Ensemble. This production debuted at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1989. Composed by Weill in 1927 for the Baden-Baden Festival (with Lenya playing a leading role), the Songspiel is the precursor of Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny. A chamber piece for six singers and eleven instrumentalists, it was also the first fruit of the collaboration between Weill and Bertolt Brecht.

92nd Street Y hosts Klangforum Wien

Renowned Weill interpreter HK Gruber and the leading Austrian new music ensemble performed Weill during the first half of its concert at the 92nd Street Y in New York City on 23 February. Klangforum Wien, founded in 1985, has performed Weill under Gruber’s direction in Austria, France, and Germany. This ensemble, the Austrian counterpart of the Ensemble Modern (Frankfurt, Germany) and the London Sinfonietta, was making its first American appearance in February. A group that specializes in twentieth-century repertoire, it commissions new works and reacquaints listeners with a wide range of twentieth-century music. The day after taking part in a festival devoted to the music of Giacinto Scelsi, Klangforum Wien performed Kleine Dreigroschenmusik, Suite panaméenne, and selected Weill songs (with Gruber as chansonnier) along with Gruber’s own composition, Frankenstein!!

Players Club presents Lost in the Stars

The Players Club, whose members come from New York’s professional theatrical community, presented a successful staged concert reading of Lost in the Stars last December. A reprise performance took place at Baruch College, City University of New York, in February as part of the celebration of Black History Month. Directed by Elizabeth Moxley Falk and assisted by musical director Timothy Lindberg, this staged concert reading showcased many young talents, among them Phillip Christian in an outstanding performance of the role of Absalom Kumalo.
New York City Opera revives
The Seven Deadly Sins

New York City Opera has often swung wildly from triumph to misery, but never with such a sickening lurch as it did on Saturday. The Seven Deadly Sins and Carmina Burana make an odd coupling anyway. But City Opera has hobbled an attractive new staging of the first work with a production of the second that drags and clanks so badly as to pull the whole evening down into the mire.

The Seven Deadly Sins was a high-voltage production with a comic-strip look: Director Anne Bogart kept everyone constantly in motion, and costume designer James Schuette saturated the eye with Dick Tracy yellows, greens and magentas. Flanigan, who could sing with a snarl when needed, looked surprisingly nimble amid a stageful of dancers, and often carried the show. (Literally, in one case: How many opera singers can march onstage with their co-star slung over one shoulder?)

— Justin Davidson, “City Opera Slides from Triumph to Misery,” Newsday (17 March 1997)

On Sunday, 16 March, the New York City Opera and the Guggenheim Museum’s “Works and Process” series organized a symposium entitled “The Politics of Music: Orff, Weill, and Brecht” at the Peter B. Lewis Theater in the Sackler Center for Arts Education. A full house of 300 attended a screening of O Fortuna! The Mystery of Carl Orff (directed by Tony Palmer), followed by thought-provoking discussion of music, politics, twentieth-century history, the relation between an artwork and its creator, and the socio-cultural context of musical performance and reception. A panel comprised of Michael Kater (York University), Kim Kowalke (University of Rochester), John Rockwell (Lincoln Center Festival), Richard Taruskin (University of California, Berkeley), and directors Anne Bogart and Donald Byrd, was moderated by Walter Hinderer (Princeton University). Together the speakers provided many insights for the audience, which responded enthusiastically when the floor was opened for questions. Produced by Mary Sharp Cronson, the symposium was funded in part by a grant from the Kurt Weill Foundation.

More concert performances of The Seven Deadly Sins

Apart from the BBC Proms performance scheduled for 2 August, Die sieben Todsünden (in original German) will be heard in San Francisco and in three cities in Italy in the coming months. Bruno Bartoletti will conduct the work, with soprano Patricia Risley, in Florence, Lucca, and Arezzo in early April.

On 18 and 20 June, Teresa Stratas will join the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and conductor Michael Tilson Thomas in a concert at the Davies Symphony Hall. Ms. Stratas has recorded Die sieben Todsünden on video for La Sept/Opéra de Lyon; a CD release will follow later this year on the Erato label.

Anja Silja, who performed the role of Anna I last year at Brussels’s Théâtre Royale de la Monnaie, will perform in concert at the Stuttgart Staatstheater in November, under the baton of Lothar Zagrosek.

All three sopranos will sing the original version of Die sieben Todsünden, rather than the arrangement for lower voice that was made for Lenya in 1956 by Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg.
From Video to Audio: September Songs

The soundtrack of Larry Weinstein’s award-winning video production of September Songs (1994) will be released as a CD in August 1997. The film took five Gemini awards in 1997, including “Best Music Variety Program” and “Best Direction in a Performing Arts Program,” adding to the long list of honors since its release. September Songs is currently distributed by Bullfrog Films in the U.S.

Consisting mostly of Weill standards, the recording will feature performances by Teresa Stratas (“Youkali,” “Surabaya Johnny”), Betty Carter (“Lonely House”), Lou Reed (“September Song”), Elvis Costello (“Lost in the Stars”), Nick Cave (“Mack the Knife”), William S. Burroughs (“What Keeps Mankind Alive”), among others. The CD will be distributed by Sony.

Lady in the Dark returns

First released in 1963, and now long out of print, the most complete recording of the music from Lady in the Dark (music by Kurt Weill, lyrics by Ira Gershwin, book by Moss Hart) will appear as a CD on the Sony label. The show contains some of Weill’s best-known American songs, including “Tschaikowsky,” “The Saga of Jenny,” and “My Ship,” performed by Risë Stevens in the lead role of Liza Elliott, with Adolph Green as Russell Paxton and John Reardon as Randy Curtis. The score was conducted by Lehman Engel.

One of Weill’s most revolutionary Broadway shows, Lady has suffered from relative neglect through the years. However, the production at the National Theatre in London and the re-release of this recording may indicate a resurgence of interest. As a bonus, the CD will include six songs from Lady as recorded by Danny Kaye (who created the role of Russell Paxton) in 1941, including his very first recorded rendition of “Tschaikowsky.” The scheduled release date is 20 May 1997.

Berlin Philharmonic records Weill

In February 1997 the Berlin Philharmonic recorded three of Weill’s orchestral works under the baton of Mariss Jansons. EMI will release the CD containing Symphony No. 2, Violin Concerto (Frank Peter Zimmermann, soloist), and the Suite based on Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny arranged by Wilhelm Bruckner-Rüggeberg. The Suite and the Concerto for violin and wind instruments were recorded live in concert at Philharmonic Hall in Berlin; the Symphony was recorded in the same hall during the same week, but under studio conditions.

This CD marks the first recording of the Mahagonny Suite and the first recording of Weill’s music by the Berlin Philharmonic. EMI expects to release the disc in Europe in October 1997 and a few months later in the U.S.

Weill on Dutch Radio

Currently, the Dutch National Radio is presenting a monumental series devoted to the life and work of Kurt Weill, comprising twelve programs of four hours each; they will be broadcast Monday nights until May 26 on Radio 4 from 8:00 P.M. until midnight. Almost all of Weill’s performable works will be heard.

The series was conceived and realized by Carrie de Swaan and Willem Breuker. It features music and interviews, including a number of newly recorded works. For the first time, a selection from Weill’s score to Davy Crockett (from an incomplete collaboration with H.R. Hays in 1938), the chorus “Ich weiss wofür” (1914), and the K’duscha by Albert Weill (Kurt’s father) will be performed. In addition, the series includes new performances of Der Protagonist, three movements from the Suite in E for orchestra (1918), the songs from Marie galante, Four Choruses from The Eternal Road, and Öl-Musik (a suite devised by David Drew from Weill’s music for the play Konjunktur).

New edition of Four Walt Whitman Songs published by EAMC

European American Music Corporation recently published a “newly ordered and annotated” edition of the Four Walt Whitman Songs. Designed by Corey Field, the edition features an introductory essay by Kim H. Kowalke, who writes, “The four songs comprise a compelling mini-drama, inflected with vernacular Americanisms but resonating with Schumann, Puccini, and Mahler—a mediation, if not a resolution, of conflicts on several fronts between the Old World and the New.” The revised publication order is based upon the one approved by Weill for the 1947 recording by William Horne.

Thomas Hampson sings “Dirge for Two Veterans” on his recent recording of Whitman settings released on Angel/EMI CDC 55 028. Craig Rutenberg is the pianist.
Upcoming Events

Calendar

April

4-26 The Seven Deadly Sins (Auden/Kallman translation). New York. New York City Opera.
5 Die sieben Todsünden. Lucca, Italy. Teatro del Giglio-Lucca.
6 Die Dreigroschenoper. Schleswig, Germany. Schleswig-Holstein Landestheater.
6 Die sieben Todsünden. Arezzo, Italy. Teatro Petrarca.
7 Die sieben Todsünden. Firenze, Italy. Teatro della Compagnia.
14 Pantomime from Der Protagonist. Vienna, Austria. Ensemble Kontrapunkte.
18-19 Die Dreigroschenoper. Röding, Denmark.
24 Kleine Dreigroschenmusik. Oslo, Norway.

May

2-7 Happy End (Feingold translation). New Haven, Connecticut. Yale School of Drama.
8-13 Kleine Dreigroschenmusik. Cleveland, Ohio. Cleveland Orchestra.
9-11 Kleine Dreigroschenmusik. Los Angeles, California. Los Angeles Philharmonic.
12 Happy End. Sofia, Bulgaria. RSO Sofia.
15 Songs from Die Dreigroschenoper. Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Funkhaus.

June

5 Die sieben Todsünden. Vienna, Austria. Radio Symphony Orchestra Vienna.
21 Scenes from Street Scene, Scenes from Lost in the Stars. Bochum, Germany. Bochum Symphony.

July

7 Songs from Happy End. Schladming, Austria. Stadtorchester Friedrichshafen.

August


September

10 Concerto for violin and wind instruments. Tasmania, Australia. Australian Broadcasting Corp.

October

7 Mahagonny Songspiel, Happy End. Antwerp, Belgium. Transparant. (15 subsequent performances, including tour of Belgium and Holland)

November

11 Der Silbersee. Freiburg, Germany. Philharmonisches Orchester der Stadt Freiburg.
16-17 Die sieben Todsünden. Stuttgarter Staatsoper.
28-29 Der Jasager. Hamburg, Germany. Alte Turnhalle.
The fifth annual Kurt-Weill-Fest took place in Dessau, Germany, between 27 February and 9 March. For the first time, the president of the Kurt Weill Foundation, Kim H. Kowalke, attended some of the performances and met with the organizers, including the president of Dessau’s Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft, Dr. Wolfgang Laczny, and Mayor Hans-Georg Otto. Government and civic officials held roundtable discussions with Foundation trustee Guy Stern and Kowalke to discuss the future of the festival, strategies for greater involvement by the Anhaltisches Theater, higher artistic standards, and multi-year planning and funding.

This year’s Festival featured a variety of productions performed by a wide range of amateur and professional musicians. Weill’s Mahagonny Songspiel appeared with four twentieth-century music theater pieces, including one by Schnittke, and the Anhaltisches Theater presented a revival of Der Silbersee. The Festival also scheduled a production of Gershwin’s Lady be Good, and a new revue entitled “American Dreams,” conducted by Victor Symonette. Arousing a tribute to Gershwin, Bernstein, and Weill, “American Dreams” demonstrated the appeal of American musical theater for German audiences.

Kowalke has solicited a proposal from Dessau officials, for consideration by the Board of Trustees of the Kurt Weill Foundation, to engage an artistic director to lead the annual festival. “Any viable Festival in Dessau, if it is to have more than local interest and appeal, must present performances of the highest artistic standards. The local support and enthusiasm is palpable, and now the Festival must aspire to a new level of musical quality,” Kowalke told the Dessau representatives.

### 1997 Grants Awarded

The Board of Trustees of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc. approved the grants listed below for the funding period January–December 1997:

**Research**

- Tobias Faßhauer, Berlin, Germany. Travel to the United States for research on Weill’s song style.
- Elmar Juchem, Göttingen, Germany. Dissertation fellowship to complete research on the collaboration of Weill and Maxwell Anderson.
- Michael von der Linn, New York, NY. Summer research fellowship to complete Weill chapter in doctoral dissertation.
- Harvard University. Publication assistance for the upcoming collection of essays, Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States.

**College, University and Amateur Performance**

- City College of San Francisco. Street Scene
- Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg. Happy End
- Covent Garden Chamber Orchestra. Concerto for violin and wind instruments

**Professional Performance**

- Light Opera Works, Illinois. One Touch of Venus

### Changes in Foundation Grant Guidelines (1998)

The Board of Trustees of the Kurt Weill Foundation has approved significant changes in eligibility requirements for the Foundation’s grant program, in anticipation of the many commemorative activities that will take place to honor Lenya’s and Weill’s centenaries (1998 and 2000 respectively). While the grant guidelines in the categories of research, publication assistance, and dissertation fellowships remain the same, major changes in eligibility are in effect in the College/University performance and production grants.

The maximum award for College/University productions of Weill works has now been raised to $5,000. All of Weill’s European and American stage works are eligible for funding, including The Threepenny Opera, provided that Weill’s original orchestrations are used. The Board also extends eligibility in this category to high school productions of Weill’s stage works.

The special professional performance grant (over $5,000), for which there is no application deadline, has been in effect for more than a year. The board reiterates its commitment to supporting large-scale projects (workshops, festivals, performances including symposia) that feature the work of Kurt Weill. Exhibitions that deal with cultural and historical issues having to do with Weill are also eligible.

For further information and an application package, please contact the Kurt Weill Foundation or see the Foundation’s website at [http://www.kwf.org](http://www.kwf.org).

### Dessau’s Kurt-Weill-Fest 1997

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Around the World

Salzburg Festival organizes a benefit in New York

World-renowned soprano Catherine Malfitano, with Pulitzer-Prize winning composer William Bolcom at the piano, performs a program of Weill songs at the Guggenheim Museum on 24 April. “Salzburg Festival in New York” is presented by the Guggenheim Museum in partnership with Hugo Boss. The gala performance comprises a wide range of Weill songs with Brecht lyrics, including celebrated numbers from Die Dreigroschenoper, Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, and Happy End. Malfitano’s recital also serves as a preview of her widely anticipated appearance as Jenny in the 1998 Salzburg Festival production of Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, a role she will repeat in November 1998 at the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Weill’s American musical catalog consolidated in German territories

The Kurt Weill Foundation is pleased to announce that licensing of Weill’s American musicals Knickerbocker Holiday, One Touch of Venus, Lady in the Dark, Street Scene, and Lost in the Stars in German-speaking territories is now handled by Josef Weinberger Ltd., as sub-agent of the Rodgers & Hammerstein Organization, with the exception of German-language productions of Street Scene and Lost in the Stars, which are represented by Schott Verlag in Mainz. The German representative of Josef Weinberger Ltd. is Ms. Barbara Boehme-Berthold of the Musik und Bühne Verlagsgesellschaft GmbH, Wiesbaden (tel. 49 611 306399; fax 49 611 372156).

Sourcebooks available to newsletter readers

Over the past two years, the Kurt Weill Foundation staff has prepared a series of sourcebooks in conjunction with major productions of Weill’s stage works. Initially intended as information booklets for the press on Street Scene (Theater des Westens, 1995), The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny (English National Opera, 1995), Der Silbersee (BBC Proms, 1996), Lady in the Dark (Royal National Theatre, 1997), and The Seven Deadly Sins (New York City Opera, 1997), the Foundation now offers these spiral-bound sourcebooks, which include historical materials on the genesis, premiere, and production history of each work, to interested readers of this newsletter. Although the sourcebooks are free of charge, there is a shipping and handling fee of $5US for each copy requested.

Weill article wins Irving Lowens prize

The Sonneck Society for American Music awarded its Irving Lowens Memorial Award to Kim H. Kowalke for his article “Kurt Weill, Modernism, and Popular Culture: Öffentlichkeit als Stil” (Modernism/Modernity 2, no. 1 (1995)). The award is given annually for the best article that makes an outstanding contribution to American music studies. In the article, Kowalke examines what he calls “the central question in Weill scholarship today[:] . . . whether or not in all principles—of composition, of direction, of character—everything Weill wrote in America is fundamentally different from the way that was Weill’s in Europe.” Information about Modernism/Modernity, including access to full text articles and single issues, is available on the World Wide Web at the Muse Project: (http://calliope.jhu.edu/journals/).
New Publications

BOOKS


ARTICLES

Grosch, Nils. “‘Berlin im Licht’—Bertolt Brecht als Schlagertexter?” Communications 25, no. 2: 38–41.


RECORDINGS


Betty Buckley: An Evening at Carnegie Hall. Betty Buckley, vocalist; American Theatre Orchestra; Paul Gemignani, conductor. Sterling S1012-2. [Includes “September Song,” “Pirate Jenny,” and “My Ship.”]

Delishious: Lyrics by Ira Gershwin. Benjamin Pears, vocalist; Bradford Conner, piano. Oakton Recordings ORCH0002. [Includes “The Saga of Jenny.”]

Friedrich Hollaender: Wenn ich mir was wünschen dürfte. Bear Family Records BCD 16 009 HK. [Set of eight CDs and accompanying book featuring essays by Viktor Roththal, Jürgen Schebera, Alan Larea, Bernard Streerath, Volker Kühl, Jan-Christopher Horak, Hans Schifferle, Tracy Oliver, Robert Fischer, and Rainer Bertram]

Here I’ll Stay. Julie Andrews. Philips 446 219. [Includes “Here I’ll Stay.”]


Pascal von Wroblewsky singt Kurt Weill. Pascal von Wroblewsky; Deutsches Filmorchester Babelsberg, Bernd Wefelmeyer, conductor; Orchester der Komischen Oper Berlin, Mario Vencago, conductor. Männerdoppelquartett der Komischen Oper Berlin. Deutsche Schallplatten DS 1048-2. [Includes Die sieben Todsünden in the Brückner-Rüggeberg arrangement and songs from selected German stage works in orchestral arrangements.]

The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich.

SCORES


1. Beat! Beat! Drums!
2. Oh Captain! My Captain!
3. Come up from the Fields, Father
4. Dirge for Two Veterans

Weill, Kurt. The Seven Deadly Sins and Symphony No. 2. Teresa Stratas, soprano; Kent Nagano, conductor; Orchestre de l’Opéra National de Lyon. Erato 0630-17068-2. [Includes Die sieben Todsünden in the Brückner-Rüggeberg arrangement and songs from selected German stage works in orchestral arrangements.]

20th Century Blues. Marianne Faithfull, vocalist; Paul Trueblood, piano. RCA Victor 74321 386562. [Includes eight songs by Weill.]

Walk on the Weill Side: The Songs of Kurt Weill. Ronny Whyte, vocalist; Eddie Monteiro, vocalist and accordion; Boots Maleson, bass; John Cocuzzo, drums. Audiophile ACID 209. [Sixteen songs in jazz vocal arrangements.]

Whitman Songs, “Dirge for Two Veterans.” Thomas Hampson, baritone; Craig Rutenberg, piano. Angel/EMI CDC 55028.