

Kurt Weill

Volume 15

Number 1

Newsletter

Spring 1997

2. Kurt's working methods.

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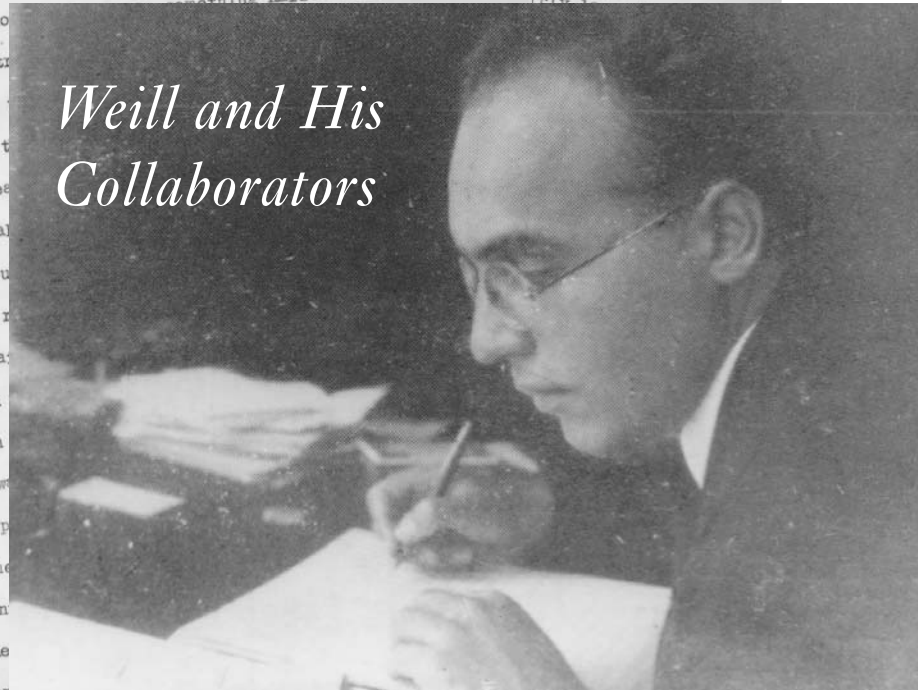
KURT'S WORKING METHODS

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Kurt Weill

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The Newsletter is published to provide an open forum wherein interested readers may express a variety of opinions. The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the publisher's official viewpoint. The editor encourages the submission of articles, reviews, and news items for inclusion in future issues.

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Cover photos: Kurt Weill composing in Berlin, late 1920s; "Kurt's Working Methods," 2 typewritten manuscript pages, Weill-Lenya Research Center, Ser. 37, box 1, folder 24.

Letters

To the editor:

The new recording of a few Weill songs by Marianne Faithfull, *20th Century Blues* (RCA 74321-38656-2), cannot pass without comment, even if it is less than enthusiastic. Whoever contrived this club act that ended up being recorded for posterity shows a lack of any historic perspective by calling it “An Evening in the Weimar Republic.” Of the fourteen songs performed, only a handful can in any way be considered relics of that era. Instead, there is a song written by Friedrich Hollaender for an American film made after World War II, another by Dubin and Warren for a Hollywood musical, a Weill song composed during his exile in Paris, another Weill song undertaken as propaganda during the war, another from his first American musical, and a tune by the pop composer Harry Nilsson, which seems totally out of context. The title song for the “Weill” tribute is, of course, by Noel Coward.

Most disconcerting of all is the way Ms. Faithfull interprets the appropriately Weimar Weill. She has a voice akin to the older Lenya, but when recordings of the real thing are available, what excuses the *ersatz*? Faithfull does not have Lenya’s understanding of the intent of the material. In particular, her reading of “Pirate Jenny” (in a new English translation by Frank McGuinness made for a Dublin production) shows how off-base she is, while inadvertently illustrating a point of the song that is often missed. By accident, Faithfull’s rendition helps us to analyze the true importance of the song as it functions in its original setting in *Die Dreigroschenoper*.

In its first incarnation, “Pirate Jenny” was not sung by the Lenya character named Jenny, but was performed by Polly as an entertainment during her wedding celebration. When Lenya became the surprise “star” of the production, she recorded the song and sang it in the famous Pabst film. Because the name of the song and the name of Lenya’s character were the same, the song took on the apparent function of Jenny Diver’s personal revenge against her middle class clientele. This was something Brecht and Weill wished at all costs to avoid.

As given to Polly Peachum, the song functions in a manner Brecht was already attempting to achieve, even if he had not yet fully articulated his theory of *Verfremdungseffekt*. Polly introduced the song as being a sentiment she only heard from someone else, perhaps from Jenny Diver, but she merely reports the lyric. If it is a cry from the heart, it is not from Polly’s heart. When Lenya appropriated the song, it is to her credit that she, too, played down the personal aspect, and sang it in the 1930 film without the slightest hint of the emotion Faithfull insists upon. Lenya sings the song coolly, staring at the camera. She moves so little, in fact, that she seems to become a painting of a woman singing, brought to life only at the last moment when she slowly raises her arm.

Weill showed his attitude toward the content of the song by making it a conscious parody of “Senta’s Ballad.” The coolness of the music was meant as an antidote to Wagnerian intensity. Brecht used the lyric to disguise an aspect of the drama which boiled under the surface. It is by way of “Pirate Jenny” that we can discover the reason for giving the “Barbara Song” its otherwise inexplicable title.

What Brecht knew was that Macheath had a life after *The Beggar’s Opera*. In his sequel to *The Beggar’s Opera*, a play called *Polly*, John Gay moved his characters to the Caribbean and turned

Macheath into a black pirate. The combination of a Caucasian Polly with an African Mackie brought with it the specter of Shakespeare’s *Othello*, from which he must have derived the notion that Polly would not just be deserted by her lover, but actually murdered by him. In *Othello*, Desdemona sings her “Willow Song” just prior to the murder. She, like Brecht’s Polly, introduces it by saying she heard it sung by a woman named Barbara. Between “Pirate Jenny” and the “Barbara Song,” Brecht buries the real tragedy as far as he can. The last thing in the world he wanted was the likes of Marianne Faithfull digging it up.

If there is any saving grace in having a recording like *20th Century Blues* in the marketplace, it is the thought that it might somehow introduce Weill to a generation of listeners that might not find him without a hook. My own fascination with Weill stemmed from hearing Bobby Darin’s “Mack the Knife” when I was about ten years old. Unfortunately, Marianne Faithfull is no Bobby Darin.

Robert Seigler
Utica, New York
22 February 1997

Marianne Faithfull Uses *Der Spiegel* to Burnish Her Image

The 12 December 1996 issue (no. 51/1996) of Germany’s popular magazine Der Spiegel carried an article about Marianne Faithfull to publicize her new Kurt Weill recording. It is excerpted and translated, as follows:

Some aspersions will always be cast upon her: that she is a rock slut, that she’s been carrying on wildly with the Rolling Stones, and that’s the only reason she’s been allowed to make a few recordings. But when such naughty gossip concerns matters that are important to her, Marianne Faithfull rises to clear them up.

Just as last year, when she went to New York in order to meet Kim Kowalke, who watches over the work of Kurt Weill. She had prettied herself up, even put on a skirt, and was — as she put it — extremely nervous. “I was scared. Like always, whenever you have to ask for a favor and expect ‘no’ for an answer.” Yet, she swept into the sacred halls of the Kurt Weill Foundation and in a four-hour session enlightened the stern Kim Kowalke about how she was exactly the right artist to sing Kurt Weill’s songs. “Anyone who has ever met me realizes that I’m no rock-bimbo,” the artist snorts with indignation. . . .

Kowalke, who has never met Faithfull, wrote a letter to Der Spiegel, prompting the following retraction (issue no. 10/1977):

Marianne Faithfull, the British rock legend, a passionate wearer of pants, apparently has problems with caring for her image. The singer told *Der Spiegel* that in order to get the rights to include Weill songs on her CD “20th Century Blues,” she actually did get into a skirt, and hurried to the office of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music. There she had discussions with Kim Kowalke, the rigid president of the New York-based Foundation, to wrest permission from him. Kowalke found this little Amazonian tale quite amusing, yet in a letter to *Der Spiegel* he characterizes it as pure fantasy. Up to this point, he had never “had the honor of communicating with this artist, let alone to have gotten to know her.” He was quite certain that he would have been “kindly disposed toward such a visit and would have remembered it, if only it had ever taken place.”

Weill and His Collaborators

by Lotte Lenya and George Davis



Lenya with George Davis at Brook House, 1951.

After Kurt Weill's untimely death in 1950, Lenya took comfort in the company of George Davis, a writer and magazine editor she and Weill had known perhaps as early as May 1938, when they were photographed for Harper's Bazaar to publicize Lenya's night club appearance at Le Ruban Bleu in New York City. Davis, who married Lenya in 1951, revived Lenya's performing career and fostered much of the Weill renaissance that took place in the 1950s. (More about George Davis will appear in future issues of the Newsletter.) Together, Davis and Lenya interviewed family members and collaborators in preparing to write a biography of Weill. Lenya's reminiscences, too, were to be included. But her performances and recordings overshadowed the project, and it lay largely neglected at the time of Davis's death in 1957. All that survives are Davis's typewritten notes from several interviews and the drafts of several stories told to him by Lenya. Davis incorporated some of this material into the well-known article "That was a Time!", which was published under Lenya's name.

This article reprints an abridged version of a chapter titled "Kurt's Working Methods." The manuscript was typed by Davis and is comprised mainly of Lenya's memories told in the third person. It is reprinted here without any substantive changes to style or syntax. The title of the original document is somewhat of a misnomer, because it describes Weill's collaborators in greater detail than his actual working methods. These verbal "portraits" are undoubtedly the work of Davis and probably reflect Lenya's opinions of the collaborators more than Weill's. [The original document is in the Weill-Lenya Research Center, Series 37, box 1, folder 24.]

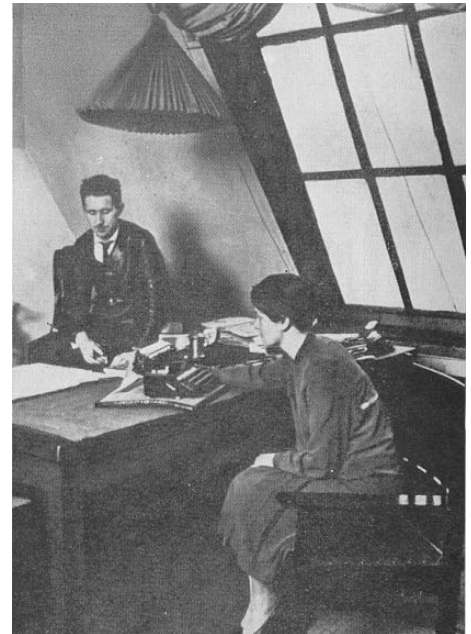
When Lenya met Kurt, at Kaiser's house in the country, Kurt and Kaiser were already working on the *Protagonist*. This then was the first time Lenya saw Kurt at work with a collaborator. In the Kaiser house there was no special room for Kaiser to work, indeed nobody actually ever saw Kaiser sitting at a desk or writing. There was very little talk about the play in the house — home was something Kaiser kept completely apart from the theater. Probably the most important talks Kurt and Kaiser had were in the afternoons, on their bicycle rides, or in the mornings, out in the rowboats — Lenya and Margarethe [Kaiser] could see the boat slowly disappearing from [sight] as they talked. Or on long walks around the lake Kurt and Kaiser would walk ahead, and their talk and laughter would float back to Lenya and Margarethe. Lenya sensed immediately a really deep relationship between the two men—indeed, after Maxwell Anderson, Kaiser came the nearest to Kurt among his collaborators. Both men were on the surface shy—though with Kurt it was almost entirely a surface shyness—once one knew him, he was the most direct and warm of people, though he rarely discussed with anyone his deeply personal problems. As for Kaiser, you knew as little, as much, on the first day you met him as on the last; an eternally evasive and enigmatic personality, the most so Lenya has ever known. However, both men had enchanting wit—Kaiser's the more fantastic, Kurt's the drier—and the two men appreciated and respected each other. This was the first time Lenya observed part of Kurt's working method that survived his whole lifetime. While one was absorbed in conversation with him, he would seem to be still listening, but suddenly with the mask of a child, listening with an inner ear. Then with an almost furtive, embarrassed manner, he would find a piece of paper—envelope, corner of a newspaper or paper bag, anything—with the quickest of strokes, only readable to him, sketch the five lines of the staff and a few bars, and slip it in his right hand pocket. In all his coat pockets, in the drawer of his desk, were uncountable numbers of these . . .

It was probably the fall of '28 [i.e. '25] that the Kaisers gave Kurt and Lenya their apartment on the Luisenplatz in Charlottenburg, reserving one room for themselves, to stay overnight when they came from Grünheide. At that time Kurt had two pupils—two girls, one from South America, named Gonzales, the other from Holland, named Ostersetzer—who were his main support during the inflation. They came in the afternoon. At this time Kurt was also writing criticism for *Der Rundfunk* [*Der deutsche Rundfunk*], a radio magazine, which meant that he had to listen to radio programs. Sometimes he wrote about them without hearing them, when he and Lenya went to a concert or a movie, so he often made mistakes when there was a change in program and the landlady who had agreed to listen got the names mixed up. But at this time, as in all the years to follow, Kurt was at his desk by nine. He was still working on the *Protagonist*. Lenya rarely heard Kurt use the piano (years later, when Ogden Nash was asked about Kurt using the piano, he said he had only known him to use it when he put down his pipe). Rarely he would use the piano to check a modulation or whatever he had in mind.

In between work, for relaxation, he played lots of Mozart. People who came were often amazed that he had so small a music library, so few scores—as opposed to a large library of books—he had only scores of Mozart and Verdi—Bellini's *Norma*, Bizet's *Carmen*. At this time Lenya was not in the theater, so when Kurt was working she was sewing, turning his collars when they were worn out, shopping, reading. At noon time they had lunch, or rather dinner, according to German custom. They always slept after lunch for an hour, at this time. Afternoons, he went back to his desk, continued with his music, or wrote, until his pupils arrived. When Kurt got through with his pupils he and Lenya would go out for long walks in the park, would see friends, go to an American movie. They had a large circle of friends—there were two girls who were to be Lenya's witnesses at her wedding, one, Caña, a government worker, and Martha Gratena—many of Busoni's pupils, also his son Raffaello Busoni—who was then married to a Japanese girl and they were always cooking exotic dishes—pianist Walter Kaempfer, who became a priest during the Nazis—Philipp Jarnach, Maurice Abravanel, Heinz Jolles, Claudio Arrau, and of course the Kaisers, with whom they spent practically every weekend. It was during this period that Lenya got a job, through Georg Kaiser, as understudy to Grete Jacobson in the part of Juliet. Kaiser's friend Emil Lind was the director, a rather elderly, hard-of-hearing man, a reliable,

Alexanderplatz, a so-called *Volkstheater*, a popular theater at reduced prices. Kurt brought her to the theater every night, and always brought a bottle of May wine for Lenya, which she shared with the others. He called for Lenya after the theater; they would mostly have coffee and go home.

When Brecht became Kurt's collaborator, they worked together in Brecht's studio, an attic studio with a big skylight just off the intersection Am Knie. As always, a guitar in the Wedekind manner, no curtains, no rugs to speak of, a typewriter on the big table, lots of paper flying messily around, smoke clouding the room from Brecht's stogies, a huge couch against the wall, a big iron stove with a pipe because it was a windy corner. As you came up the



Brecht and Elisabeth Hauptmann working in the studio, 1927.

stairs, there was to the left a tiny bedroom for his secretary, so-called; on the other side of the studio another tiny bedroom for Brecht, a narrow bed under slanting walls. Lenya often went along with Kurt during the writing of *Mahagonny* and *Dreigroschenoper*, and always found Elisabeth Hauptmann there, his secretary, at that time literally his devoted shadow. She still had the neatness of a schoolteacher at that time, despite her conscious effort to be a Brecht-type woman, rosy-cheeked, with slightly popping brown eyes, plumpish with a Rubens-type behind, and the most servile imitation of Brecht's mannerisms of gesture and speech. When possible, Brecht liked to work surrounded by his disciples, getting ideas, reactions, a word here, a thought there, his ear constantly on the alert, freely, ruthlessly, everyone else sitting while Brecht walked leisurely around the room, pausing to question this one and that. On a large easel, which was also standard equipment in a Brecht room, would be the inevitable charcoal drawing by Caspar Neher, ideas for decor, costume, or character. When Kurt and Lenya arrived, Brecht often had extremely primitive ideas for a song, a few bars of music which he had previously picked out on his guitar. Kurt always took these with a smile, saying yes, he would try to work them in. Naturally, they were forgotten at once. Often there were complete lyrics waiting for Kurt to take home with him. When it was time for very serious work, the Brecht disciples left, except for Hauptmann, and often Lenya, and the two men would work steadily, with the most enormous respect for each other's opinions. When Kurt and Brecht were writing the *Jasager*, suddenly there were Chinese and Japanese scrolls added to the walls.

Lisa erkennt in Giovanni ihren Jugendgeliebten, schnell erneuern sie ihren Liebesbund und in glühender Umarmung beschließen sie zu fliehen (7). So findet sie der Gatte und sieht



in Mona Lisas Gesicht zum ersten Mal jenes rätselhaft-selige Lächeln. Giovanni verbirgt sich hinter einem Vorhang, und während der rasende Francesco ihn sucht, verbirgt er sich in dem Perlenschranke. Francesco bemerkt es, verschließt vor Mona Lisas Augen den Schrank, der ihren Geliebten birgt, wirft den Schlüssel zum Fenster hinaus und wirft sich in rasende Liebeswut über das Weib, während von unten eine Serenade heraufklingt. — II. Akt. Der nächste Morgen — Aschermittwoch. Dianora singt ein trauriges Liedchen (8) und geht in den Garten. Mona Lisa rüttelt ver-



gebens an der Tür des Schreins. Da bringt Dianova den Schlüssel: sie hat ihn unten gefunden. Mona Lisa, beseligt, reißt ihn an sich, zeigt ihn triumphierend ihrem grausamen Gatten. Der öffnet die Tür, prallt entsetzt zurück, springt dann mit einem Wutschrei in den Schrein — Mona Lisa packt mit letzter Anstrengung die Tür, wirft sie ins Schloß und bricht zusammen. — Der Schluß führt uns wieder in die Gegenwart. Das junge Paar dankt dem Klosterbruder für den aufschlußreichen Bericht. — Die Aufführung wird unter Leitung des Komponisten stehen und mit ersten Kräften besetzt sein. K. W.

Facsimile reproduction of an excerpt from Weill's review of *Mona Lisa* by Max von Schillings, with Weill's handwritten musical examples. *Der deutsche Rundfunk* 3, vol. 12 (22 March 1925), p. 746.

conservative director. (Jacobson was so much under the influence of [Elisabeth] Bergner that she never made it, though she always claimed Bergner was imitating her.) When Jacobson quit, Lenya played the part for sixty performances. The theater was Das Wallnertheater, in the Wallnerstrasse, near

Both Brecht and Caspar Neher

came from Augsburg, may have gone to school together. Neher often put on a pained expression, twisting his body silly at Brecht's witticisms, saying "I heard that fifteen years ago." Neher was blond, always with a straight lock over his forehead, tall, a little stooped, a slow-moving man, ever with squinting,



Caspar Neher, Düsseldorf, 1955.

scrutinizing eyes, never losing his temper, savoring all the battles around Brecht but never entering into them. Loved all the tensions between Brecht's women, almost but not quite needling them into continuing. Enormous talent, by far the most original German stage designer, widely imitated, and loathing all mediocrity. Had a passion for burlap, which he used in practically all settings, sprayed so that it looked like the most elaborate

fabric. When he went to Leipzig to work on *Mahagonny*, his first words to the stage director, even before hello, were, "Let me have the key to the *Samtkammer*." He knew that every German director solved his problems with a swag of velvet, which he hated as a fabric, as he hated every rich material. Was fascinated by American movies, as all Berlin was, doted on Gloria Swanson and Pauline Frederick, absorbed many Hollywood tricks into his costumes, though they became entirely his own. Moved with the grace of a large animal, never came at you with his ideas, never cornered you; actually most of what he had to say he said literally in passing, as though casually, as during the rehearsal of *Mahagonny*, when he saw Lenya getting terribly tense, passed slowly by her, head tilted slightly away, and said, "*Warum stellst du dich nicht auf den leckt mich am Arsch Standpunkt?*" [Why don't you just show them a 'kiss-my-ass' attitude?]" With an endearing giggle, typical. Kurt knew Neher first as Brecht's stage designer, and they liked each other instantly and became very, very close friends, in a way that Brecht and Kurt never did. Their first collaboration was on the *Little Mahagonny* for the Music Festival in Baden-Baden in 1927. Kurt never again met a stage designer whose work seemed the perfect match for his music. Saturday afternoons nothing could stop Kurt and Neher from dashing off to a huge dance hall on the Tauentzienstrasse, where they watched the girls and their customers; Brecht never went along. Between Brecht, Neher, and Kurt at this time was the greatest respect and admiration for each other, with each grasping instantly the ideas of the others.

By the time Brecht and Kurt wrote

Happy End their working relationship came to at least a temporary dead end, and both needed a rest from each other. Brecht had become more and more involved in politics, and all his ideas were now tinged with his political beliefs; he became increasingly opinionated and dictatorial. All this had an unfortunate influence on *Happy End*. After the first two acts everybody was sure that it was as great a success as *Threepenny*. Then in the third act Weigel came out with some typewritten pages in her hand and read what amounted to a Communist speech, a complete surprise to everybody but her and Brecht.



Theo Lingen, Erich Engel, Peter Lorre, Helene Weigel, Kurt Gerron (with cigar), Carola Neher, Oskar Homolka in rehearsal for *Happy End*, August 1929.



Erwin Piscator, Carola Neher, Herbert Jhering, and Brecht, 1929.

Also the struggle between [Carola] Neher and Weigel produced unhappy results—Neher's voice was thin and sharp, but she was very musical, and her songs, "Surabaya Johnny" and "Und das Meer ist blau" were vigorously applauded, but Brecht had insisted on a song for Weigel too, in the second act, and she was practically tone-deaf; Kurt wrote a kind of patter song for her, and the audience gave her only polite clapping.

When *Happy End* was written, in the cast was Carola Neher, Brecht's mistress at the time, Helene Weigel, his steady mistress, and the mother of his son Stefan, so that three of

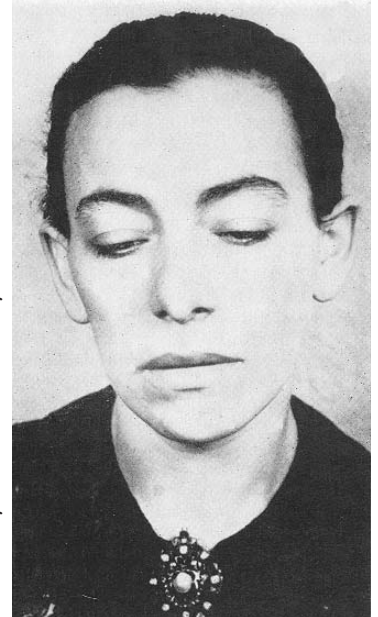
Brecht's women [including Elisabeth Hauptmann] were present at the sessions, so that the atmosphere seethed with jealousy, over which Brecht presided with superb tact. He was careful to see that both mistresses had equal roles in the play. They were of course completely different types. Carola Neher was vivacious, eyes like black cherries, auburn hair cut *bubikopf*, wavy tilted nose, the perfect soubrette type, extremely talented, always a banker in the background to surround her with great luxury, a luxurious apartment with Persian rugs, bamboo walls, ottomans with satin pillows, very modish, in the Bayernplatz, a stone's throw from where Kurt and Lenya lived. She had a Packard convertible, considered the elegant car at the time, which she drove in a typically fidgety manner. She was middle class, from Munich, had studied to be a pianist, had married a poet named Klabund, shy, quiet, always dying of TB. A typical actress, very jealous, not too nice to work with, accused Lenya of imitating her style. Many years later, she disappeared into Russia.

Helene Weigel was the daughter of a Galician peddler, small and slender, strong horse face, big teeth that she showed, two deep sunken dimples in her cheeks that appeared when she smiled, always looked much older than she actually was because of the severity of her appearance, hair pulled straight back, no makeup or nail polish. Extremely good-hearted, a born mother without looking like one, willing to knock herself out to help anyone, sincerely devoted to friends, straight and direct. Lenya does not consider her a born actress, but with her great stamina and determination, and with Brecht's great help, has become a competent actress in her own style, intelligent, controlled, with inexhaustible energy. There were the three women: Hauptmann the shadow, Neher sexy and talented, which unquestionably fascinated Brecht, Weigel deeply in love with Brecht, knowing him better than anyone ever has, or ever will, determined to wait her turn. And indeed, when Neher flew to London with one of her bankers, Brecht married Weigel, and she was secure, because at heart Brecht is a family man, with two trees at Christmastime. Brecht's close friends, even his children (but not Kurt), called him Bidi.

It was Kurt's idea that [Caspar] Neher write the libretto for an opera. At the time Lenya was in Russia making a movie with Piscator. Kurt was of course a tremendous reader, and he and Neher searched diligently for a subject. They found a fable by Herder, a nineteenth-century [*sic*] novelist, and turned it into *Die Bürgschaft*. They worked alternately in Kurt's studio and in Neher's. By this time the Weills and Neher were very friendly, and both Kurt and Lenya liked Erika Neher, and their young son Georg, the image of his father, who called Lenya "Zwiebel" and adored Kurt. By the time Lenya came back from Russia she found that Kurt and Neher had a passion for *Wasser-Kaukau* [*sic*], cocoa made with water, which Erika made for them by the gallon, and which

they refused with milk. Neher himself would, Lenya thinks, say that Kurt was really a collaborator on the text. There were no shenanigans of speaking over a tune; Neher had a deep love of opera (which Brecht detested) and wrote big arias and choruses, for which Kurt could write soaring melodies and intricate chorus parts. Brecht never came to rehearsals, but sent his spies, among them Hanns Eisler, servile, a born bootlicker, with a drooling lisp, who rushed back to Brecht with a report that this was more a *Spiessbürgerschaft* [bunch of Philistines] than *Bürgschaft*, greeted with roars of laughter by Brecht and his disciples. Kurt and Neher worked on the opera with great joy, and Kurt found it so wonderful to expand into the realm of opera. Of course Neher's sets for the opera were extraordinary.

Below: Helene Weigel, 1933.



Kurt had composed large parts of *The Eternal Road* somewhere between Paris, London, and Salzburg. Lenya did not meet Franz Werfel until they came to America. Werfel did not look like a writer to Lenya; he looked like a composer. He was short, flabby, terrible teeth, a drooling mouth, always wet, thin straggly hair, greasy looking, ready to burst into tears at the drop of a hat, a Viennese buttery voice, the sorrows of humanity on his shoulders and in his voice. Lenya has the impression that most of this was an act. Mrs. Werfel still had the remnants of her famous beauty, tall, blonde, blue eyes, voluptuous, very much like Maria Jeritza. She had been Mrs. Gustav Mahler. Always snapping at Werfel, and Lenya feels at heart [that she was] deeply anti-Semitic from her remarks, reactionary (she talked about having champagne after the workers were mowed down in Vienna). Started with champagne at breakfast, heavy drinker.



Erika Neher, 1930s.

The meeting between Kurt and Paul Green

was arranged by Cheryl Crawford, who was at that time one of the directors of the Group Theatre. She and Kurt had many discussions about the possibility of a show, and Kurt had something in mind like an American version of the *Good Soldier Schweik*.

Cheryl thought that the ideal person might be Paul Green, who had done *In Abraham's Bosom* for the Group. Cheryl and Kurt went down to Chapel Hill to Green's home, and down there began discussing what became *Johnny Johnson*. This started in the spring of 1936 and that summer Kurt and Lenya, Cheryl and Dorothy Patten took a house in Trumbull near the summer camp of the Group Theatre. Paul Green came up many times during the summer, stayed with the Weills, and the work progressed under the close supervision of Cheryl. This was Lenya's first real encounter with a Southern accent, which she found hard to understand. Green was tall, stalwart, with chestnut curls, with blue, evasive eyes, soft Southern voice, strong farmer's hands, something of a gentleman farmer, as opposed to Clifford

Odets, so unmistakably Lenya's idea of an intellectual, who might have been a steady at the Roman-isches Café in Berlin. Green was sometimes a little slow for Kurt's terrific speed, and Green sometimes had difficulty with lyrics, which his wife Elizabeth helped him with. Kurt called him *hinterfortzig*, shifty, not outspoken, said he was like a Tyrolean, but on the whole worked well with him. Scene of the Catholic and Protestant chaplains saying their prayers over the battlefield was Kurt's idea (?). Material was close to Kurt's heart, and he produced one of his best scores. Green was an excellent tennis player. When summer was over, Kurt and Lenya shared an

apartment with Cheryl in the East Fifties overlooking the East River. Green would come up from Chapel Hill, stay at the Hotel Bristol. Lenya remembers that Kurt had to push, drive, to make Green see things, the way he did with most of his collaborators. Here Cheryl was a great help, with her sensitivity, understanding of writers, and was one of the first Americans to appreciate Kurt's music.

The first serious play Kurt and Lenya saw

in New York was Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset*, which made an enormous impression on Kurt. It was Helen Deutsch who introduced the Weills to Anderson, at a cocktail party she gave for the Andersons. Lenya has no memory of Mab at that party, although she was there, but both Kurt and Lenya had looked forward eagerly to meeting Max, having seen not only *Winterset* but also *What Price Glory?* in Berlin, and they felt that in person he fitted the man they had imagined—big, eyes that were piercingly direct, quiet, standing away from the crowd but the weightiest person there. Lenya didn't talk to Max, but Kurt did for some time. The

next time they met Max, Helen Deutsch drove them out to dinner at Max's house. Helen Deutsch at that time lived across the road from the entrance to Max's property, in a redone red barn. As they drove up, Mab was working in the garden, in a little sunsuit, with a broadbrimmed straw hat, garden gloves, looking very pretty, with her deep violet eyes, apologizing, typically as Lenya was to know, for being found in these clothes. At the dinner were Helen Deutsch and the Andersons. There was a lot of talk about the theater, and after dinner Kurt played and Lenya sang "Pirate Jenny" in German. Hesper was then a very little girl, about four, with the look of a fairy princess, fragile, with long blonde hair. Max was writing *High Tor* at the time, and that night Mab read them a scene from *High Tor*, the scene with a sand shovel. Kurt felt it was such a pity they had not met Max earlier, because *High Tor* seemed to him an ideal subject for a musical play—and he always kept the idea that some day he would [turn it into a musical]. The friendship must have progressed rapidly, because this was not long before *Knickerbocker Holiday*. The original idea for *Knickerbocker* may have come from Kurt passing a hotel named Hotel Stuyvesant. Originally Burgess Meredith was to play in



Franz Werfel, 1930s.



Paul Green, 1930s.

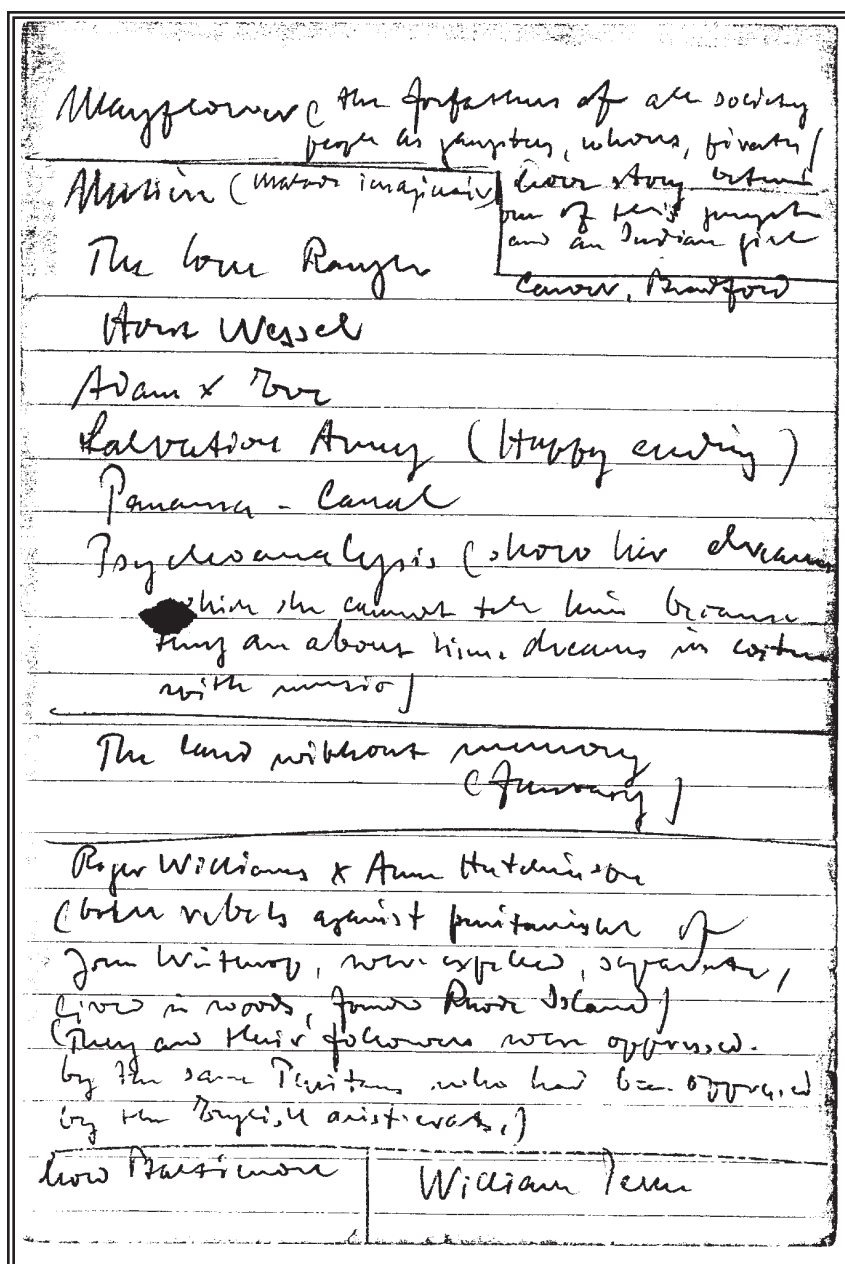


Cover of program for the Midsummer Drama Festival, Pasadena Playhouse, 1939.

Knickerbocker, and when he couldn't play the young man, it was necessary to build up the part of Peter Stuyvesant for Walter Huston. Kurt had been so desperate before meeting Max, and now had a deep happiness working with him. As the lyrics came in, Kurt was almost deliriously happy. As a purely working relationship, Lenya puts Max with Brecht, as far as Kurt was concerned; and of course Kurt loved Max as a person, where he had only respect for Brecht. Max's first version of *Knickerbocker* came from Hollywood. Kurt wrote the music for *Knickerbocker* on East 61st Street and in Quentin Anderson's house on South Mountain Road. Kurt found Max extremely musical, making changes with great ease, never stubborn, quick to understand. Later, working on *Lost in the Stars*, Kurt said how hard it would be for Max to find another composer, since the lyrics were very complex. When it came to staging a play, Max knew little about actors, designers, etc., trusting Kurt completely. Max went rarely to the theater, hardly ever to a movie, but Kurt followed everything— theater, movies, books, everything, up to Harlem constantly until he had mastered the Indian dance in *Knickerbocker*.



Peter Stuyvesant and the Pig Tail, reproduced from Washington Irving's *A History of New York* by Diedrich Knickerbocker. The book is in Kurt Weill's library.



None of the scraps of paper bearing Weill's musical ideas as described by Lenya on page 4 exists. However, there are numerous project lists like the one reproduced above that show the range of topics Weill explored. This example probably dates from the late 1930s. Note the entries inspired by his previous life in Europe and those which are specifically American. An entry under "Psychoanalysis," which probably predates his working on *Lady in the Dark* reads, "(show her dreams which she cannot tell him because they are about him. dreams in costumes, with music)." [Yale University Music Library, Weill/Lenya Papers, Box 68, Folder 19.]

Simplicity is the Richness

HK Gruber talks about performing Kurt Weill

In February, composer, conductor, and chansonnier HK Gruber talked informally to the editor of the Kurt Weill Newsletter about his connections to Kurt Weill, his experiences in performing Weill's music, and his theories about singing. Gruber was in New York conducting the Klangforum Wien in a program featuring Kleine Dreigroschenmusik, Suite panaméenne and his own well-known piece, Frankenstein!! Gruber is no stranger to Weill. He conducted the Ensemble Modern in their prize-winning CD "Berlin im Licht" (Largo 5114), led a long run of performances of Die Dreigroschenoper in Frankfurt, and was the narrator for a German video documentary about Lotte Lenya (Lenya: ein erfundenes Leben, Hessischer Rundfunk/ARTE, 1994). The following article presents selections from his conversation, in transcription.



For me, *Mahagonny* is the most important opera of this century.

I first heard Weill when I was twenty, when my friend Richard Blutschacher (with whom I wrote an opera, *Gomorra*) told me to buy the Brückner-Rüggeberg recording of *Mahagonny*. Around the same time I heard the recordings of Ernst Busch singing Eisler's political songs. I love Eisler and Weill because they both influenced singers to stop singing in the bel canto style. This was in 1963, in Vienna, and in those days we didn't know that Weill had composed anything but the *Threepenny Opera*. Sure, we knew the "Mackie Messer song." Everybody knew it. Every bird. And now every jazz player knows it. The next thing of Weill's I heard was, I think, in 1965, the first and second symphonies played by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bertini.

...on *Mahagonny*

Many people think *Wozzeck* is the most important opera of this century. Somebody else says *Lulu*, and a third person might say *Die Soldaten* by Zimmermann. I don't think we should compare works one against the other, but, for me, *Mahagonny* is the most important opera of this century, because here was somebody who wrote a libretto that belongs to our time, somebody is killed because he cannot pay his bills, and here was a composer who reacted to this circumstance by composing songs into his opera. This song form automatically had to change the style of singing. I am a theater person, and I'm very interested in music theater. But I see that it is very difficult still—even at the end of this century—to work with opera singers, because most of them are still living in the *beginning* of this century. Verdi once wrote to Boito, "Why do they always sing so beautifully? No characters. Why can't they cry and scream? They always sing too beautifully, so we don't have enough expression." Because Weill used songs—[sings] "Dennnnn wieeee man sich bettet so liegt - man" —if you hear that sung by a bel canto singer, you cannot understand the words, the words do not sound, and you get the wrong impression. When it's sung like that *Mahagonny* becomes a conventional opera. So if you play it wrong, then it becomes conventional, unimportant. But if you sing it right—play it *straight*, in the right style, without romanticism—then you will discover that it is the very first twentieth-century opera, and, for me, the most important.

...on playing Weill

I have experience working with the best musicians, and I see that Weill did not write very many dynamics into his scores. So, a conductor has to work on the balance, at the very least. The most important principle is to get the rhythm right. In each of Weill's works you have beautiful melodies. For instance if you think of the "Mackie Messer" arrangement in *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, you have the trombone playing the tune, but if the accompaniment is not played right and in balance, then it doesn't work. For instance, we should never *hear* that there is a percussion player, but if he stopped playing, we would immediately miss it. But usually the percussion is too much in the foreground, because the part is fun to play, of course. That's one of the reasons for balance problems. And the banjo should function like the cembalo in early music—it's a melodic percussion instrument. The player must sit in the front, providing the rhythm—like chords with knives in them. Once the accompaniment is right—and it could take hours of work—then you can put the melody over it. Because the accompaniment (and this is not

only in Weill's music, but it began in Italian opera) is the most interesting thing in the music. I remember when I worked the first time with Leonard Bernstein when he conducted his opera *A Quiet Place* with our orchestra in Vienna. It was very interesting, because when he conducted his own music, he worked on it as if he had forgotten that it was his own. He just worked on it. And he was most interested in the inner voices, and not the melodies. And that's the same thing with Weill. The melodies are brilliant, of course, but what goes on under them—in the viola, for instance—there Weill is really a genius. The inner voices are so full of jokes, but they are not silly jokes. Another interesting thing: sometimes we feel that the bass is wrong. The bass is *never* wrong. Sometimes a bass note doesn't seem to belong in the harmony, but he's treating it like a suspension. As a conductor, I am a listener. And I never stop rehearsing until I can see the score in my head simply by listening.

The singers have to change their way of singing, and the orchestra has to change its way of playing. That means, play it straight. Straight, straight, straight. And play as if you have a click-track in your ear. The listener should know exactly where the beat is at every moment. The playing must be that clear. The listener should be able to visualize the score. And that means the rehearsals have to concentrate on balance and attention to the inner voices.

What I like so much in Weill's way of using the entire tonal complex is that he says to the listener, "I am going in this direction" but in the next moment he suddenly changes directions. His chords are full of double meanings. And that's what makes for his richness. My piece *Frankenstein!!* sometimes lives in the same neighborhood with Weill. For instance, the "Rat Song" could even be an imitation. A very dangerous thing! Up until now I never programmed my music and Weill's together in the same concert, because I thought it could be dangerous, but now I'm doing it. Why not?

I think I have a similar way of hearing music as Weill did, because I feel so close to him as a musician. And I like his world very much, that is, the Weimar Republic. In his music we find a lot of dotted eighth-sixteenth rhythms. When this figure comes up I tell the musicians, "You have to play very *cleverly*—very Weimar Republic." Not lackadaisical or swinging, but almost in the old French way of playing this rhythm—a short eighth note and turning the sixteenth almost into a thirty-second note. Of course it depends on the musical situation, and we have to find out what is the best sound. If a jazz musician comes and says that it has to be more in a jazz manner, I would say no, because, especially with the European Weill, we have to remember that he is sitting in [assuming a Prussian accent] GER-man-y—next to Leip-ZIG—dreaming of America. That's how they heard it in the twenties. You know, syncopations with a Nazi articulation. Marc Blitzstein brought this issue to the point when he said that Weill's music is not jazz at all. It's march music with syncopation. Sure, the rhythms become more relaxed in his Broadway works, but it is interesting to see how many of the European elements are retained.

People working on Weill often approach his music from several directions. If you think more about the composer of the *Threepenny Opera* when you perform *Der neue Orpheus* and you conclude, "I must put some elements of *Threepenny* in it," then you are wrong, because that was another Weill. One has to consider that Weill is a very complex person. There is a right hand and there is a left hand, and sometimes both hands come together. Between the earliest

Weill and the latest Weill you will find a common denominator, and that is a question of aesthetic. When it seems to be romantic, it's not. When it seems to be jazzy, it's not. He's just using elements, but not quotations. They are only reminders—like intellectual reminders. But how he composes is always the same—that's the common denominator. He is making *complexity*.

... on singing

I will never forget the day I first heard the recording of Brecht singing, "Und derrrrrrr Hai-fisch, derrrrrrr hat Zäh-ne, Und die trrrrrrragt errrrrr, im Ge-sicht." Before this, I heard Lotte Lenya singing it with a fast vibrato, her voice deep in the throat—not a nice voice. But you could understand every word. When you read Brecht's texts, the words, when taken together, communicate a message. But each word, when separated, has an onomatopoeic quality of its own. And this onomatopoeic quality, along with the associations you can get from it, informs the quality of the whole piece. It is an added layer to the literal message. This extra meaning can only be conveyed by making a distinct sound out of each word. So "Dennnnnnn wieeeee man sich bet—tet so liegt-MAN," or, in *Seven Deadly Sins*, "Wer dem Un-rrrrecht in den Arrrrrm-fällt, den

Once Lenya said, "Listen to my records carefully, because I really sing. I sing the melody. Sometimes I speak in between, when the emotion needs it, but every note is there, even if I speak." That's it exactly. And that's what I learned from her.

will man nrrrrr-gend-wo ha-ben." If it's sung all mushed together, without attention to the consonants, then it's comfortable, but it doesn't tell you anything about the meaning of the words either. There's no sense of alarm. You find so many passages in Weill's music when he's using text (or even when he's not setting text) that are alarming moments—when you feel the music is being written to deliver a message against some unfair constellations in our society. In any language the consonants have to explode like bombs and the rolled R has to cut through the words like a saw. Like Brecht did it, and like Lenya did it. Carola Neher and Ernst Busch did it too. I've also heard records of Hans Eisler singing—such a bad voice!—but his pronunciation was excellent. I heard a recording of Eisler coaching a singer, and the singer tries to imitate him. By the end of the session it sounded like another singer, there was so much difference.

Vom Tod im Wald is a real problem. I've heard it performed several times when I didn't understand a single word. It's a Brecht text, and it's very low. So when I performed it I decided to use a microphone. I also use a microphone when I perform the Weill songs, just as I do when I sing *Pierrot Lunaire*. Using a mike is not a question of style, it's just a question of making the words sound.

Once Lenya said, "Listen to my records carefully, because I really sing. I sing the melody. Sometimes I speak in between, when the emotion needs it, but every note is there, even if I speak." That's it

exactly. And that's what I learned from her. That's not my discovery. It's the result of my first experience with *Mahagonny* and all of Weill's music

... on simplicity

I don't like this phrase, "postmodern"! What was modern before, and what is modern now? We are living in a special time and we have several types of composers. Is John Adams postmodern? I wouldn't say so—he's John Adams. I like his music very much, and it could easily share a program with Cerha or Rihm (if it is a good piece), or any Henze, or any Webern.

Today we don't have many composers who are able to write with the left hand and also with the right hand. We have the right-hand composers who are writing complex music, and the left-hand composers who are writing musicals. But a right-handed composer who can also use the left hand with the same seriousness is very rare. Blacher is an example. Stravinsky. I hope someday people will say that I'm such a composer. I'm working on it! For me, this is a real musician.

Let's take the *Berliner Requiem*. It's Weill's piece about Berlin and why the murderers who have killed our sons are still living. And why are they still living? The end of *Berliner Requiem* is genius. You hear pas-

sages from the St. Matthew Passion—same style—and this kind of simplicity. The quiet way of setting "Warum denn nicht?" This is a great moment.

Simplicity is the answer to it. Of course, that's a general thing in Weill. The simplicity is the richness, the treasure, of the music. But then along comes some foolish person who says, "Ah ha! Weill is the first composer of the new simplicity"—which we have seen for the past ten or fifteen years. No, simplicity is a principle of music. It has to be simple. Good music doesn't have to be very complicated. Complexity can also be a matter of simplicity. Mozart and Beethoven are very complex, but not very complicated.

... on the European view of Weill

I find it very arrogant to hear Europeans say that Weill stopped writing good—complex—music after coming to America. It's not only arrogant, but it's unfair. When he came to the States, his home country turned out to be a country of mass murderers, and his decision not to speak German anymore was a decision that I can understand. If I was Weill I would have thought, "They hate me. They have thrown me out. They have stolen my money. They have taken my house. They have taken my music. They have taken my market. My publisher has stolen my money." So, logically, Weill said, "Why should I speak their language anymore?" What did culture mean to them when they could support culture on one hand and with the other murder so many people in a few years?

Is there any other composer in this century who was a big symphonic composer and also a main composer on Broadway? No, he's the only one. I don't think there is a big difference in producing

American Weill and European Weill—for me there is only one Weill, and that Weill has to be produced with a very intelligent vision for musical theater. Can you imagine one of the great, important European symphonic composers such as Henze or Rihm coming to New York and producing a musical? Playing in a theater opposite to one playing Andrew Lloyd Webber? I mean, this is a real difference. In Weill's day I'm sure there were also musicals on Broadway that had doubtful qualities, and he, as a symphonic composer, succeeded. And that is actually a greater success. So it's completely arrogant for the European experts to say that we have only one important Weill—after *we* have thrown him out. This is a second killing. It's so unfair, and I hate hearing it. And I still hear it often from important people running international festivals.

... on the future of music

I do not know the current American situation regarding new music very well, and I think it is different from in Austria and

Germany. In Vienna the children are trained in school to know the big masters. So, when the teacher says, "Max, stand up and tell us the names of the big masters," Max stands and proudly recites, "Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Bruckner, Mahler." And then Max grows up and he goes to concerts expecting to hear the big masters. He is completely surprised when someone tells him, "Hey, a composer lives

around the corner." He says, "What? What is a composer? I know only masters!" So, we have to change this system.

We should say, for every Mozart piece we play in a concert, we have to play a piece by a living composer. Because it will turn out that one of the youngsters of today is a Mozart. There's always a Mozart sitting someplace in the world, we just have to find out where. And we have to invest our money to find this Mozart, and then the investment will be a good one. We have to trust that they are alive. And we shouldn't be too disappointed when we hear a piece that we don't like by a living composer. We have to say, "OK, I didn't like it very much. So this composer probably isn't my Mozart. So, let's listen to some others." I think people in the United States are more open to new experiences than are people in Vienna. But even in Vienna now we have a lot of interest in modern music—more than we had twenty years ago—now we have several groups for modern music. Klangforum is now the most influential group for modern music, and its concerts attract full houses. So, you cannot say that people are completely uninterested in living composers, but we must work so that they do not forget that the Mozarts are still alive.

And the young Mozarts of today might even be writing rock or rap. I have a jazz musician friend who now writes so-called serious music. He says, "If Mozart came out of his grave today, he'd go directly to the nearest jazz club, not to the Musikverein." So, it could well be that the new Mozart—the new Orpheus—is sitting in a jazz club and playing a saxophone.

We must never forget that the world consists of four directions—north, south, east, and west. Music is a language that can—and must—have elements from everywhere.

**Complexity can also be a matter of simplicity.
Mozart and Beethoven are very complex,
but not very complicated.**

Remembering Berthold Goldschmidt (1903–96)



Photo: Boosey & Hawkes,
New York

Prominent German-Jewish composer and conductor Berthold Goldschmidt passed away in London on 17 October 1996 at the age of 93. Weill and Goldschmidt knew each other in Berlin, and their compositional lives were in some ways parallel, at least until both composers were forced out of Germany.

Goldschmidt grew up in Hamburg and studied composition with Franz Schreker at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik (1922–24). In 1925 he worked as a répétiteur under Erich Kleiber and prepared the premiere of Berg's *Wozzeck* at the Staatsoper. The following years saw the premieres in Berlin of his prize-winning *Passacaglia*, conducted by Kleiber, and of his String Quartet No. 1. In 1927 he became music adviser and conductor for Carl Ebert at the Landestheater in Darmstadt. His opera *Der gewaltige Hahnrei* premiered successfully at

the National Theater in Mannheim in 1932 and was scheduled to be performed at the Städtische Oper in Berlin, where he and Ebert were then working. The Nazi rise to power led to their dismissal, and Goldschmidt fled to England in 1935.

For over a decade he struggled to find paid work in England; at the end of the war he had secured a position as musical director of the German section of the BBC's European service (1944–47) and soon reestablished himself as a conductor at Glyndebourne. Taking up his composing pen, he wrote over the next decade an opera (*Beatrice Cenci*, 1949–50) and three concertos for cello, clarinet, and violin, respectively. Discouraged by the lack of interest in his music in the face of mounting fervor for the avant garde, he stopped composing. Goldschmidt collaborated with Deryck Cooke on the completion of Mahler's Symphony No. 10 and conducted the premiere in 1964. Finally in 1982, at the age of 79 and after a compositional silence of 24 years, he began composing again with a series of chamber and orchestral works.

The final decade of his life witnessed a revival of interest in Goldschmidt's music, with works published by Boosey & Hawkes and recordings appearing on the Decca, Sony, Largo, and CPO labels. His music was featured during the 1994 Berlin Festival and there have been recent successful stagings of his operas *Der gewaltige Hahnrei* in Berlin and Bern, and *Beatrice Cenci* in Magdeburg. London-Decca's Entartete Musik series has recently released in Europe "The Goldschmidt Album," a new recording featuring three of the conductors most associated with his music (Simon Rattle, Charles Dutoit, and Yakov Kreizberg) and the composer himself conducting a performance of his recent *Rondeau* for violin and orchestra, with Chantal Juillet as soloist.

... remembering Kurt Weill

Berthold Goldschmidt reminisced about Weill at the 1983 Kurt Weill Conference at Yale University.

My acquaintance with Kurt Weill goes back to the early twenties when he was a student of Busoni and I was with Franz Schreker. It was a fleeting acquaintance as is the case between students who go to concerts and don't know each other otherwise yet by way of compositions or importance or unimportance. But these acquaintances were renewed in very strange five-year cycles. In 1927 there was the first performance of Kurt Weill's one-act opera *Royal Palace* at the Kroll State Opera House. I remember the rehearsals very well indeed. I was quite amazed that Weill never uttered a single sound. He sat there almost completely uninterested in the staging and what was going on in the orchestra under the masterly direction of Erich Kleiber. It looked as if his mind had already been made up towards a completely different style of composition.

Exactly five years later, Weill took a much more active interest in the production of *Die Bürgschaft*, which was staged and rehearsed at the Charlottenburg opera, Berlin's Municipal Städtische Oper, where I was then working. He, together with Caspar Neher, made very useful and helpful suggestions about scenic alterations, lighting and so forth, and he also corrected the conductor, Fritz Stiedry, in matters relating to tempi and balance. This was not an easy task, because even in those days there was active resistance by Nazi sympathizers in the orchestra. For instance, horns playing *forte* when they are supposed to be playing *piano*, etc. This situation led to innumerable interruptions of the rehearsal as Weill stopped Stiedry to make corrections—always in a quiet but authoritative voice, and in total control. This self control was most impressive, especially since threats from inside and outside the theater were daily occurrences.

At the same time, my first opera, *Der gewaltige Hahnrei*, was to be premiered at the National Theatre in Mannheim, and this premiere coincided with rehearsals for *Die Bürgschaft*. When I came back to Berlin after the premiere and we were all together for a session concerning Weill's rehearsal, Weill asked the Intendant, Carl Ebert, "How did you like Berthold's opera in Mannheim?" Ebert responded, "Well, I wasn't there." "You weren't there? Who was?" Silence. "Nobody." Then for the first time I saw Kurt Weill fly into a rage. He jumped up, banged on the table, and exploded, "*Das ist eine Schweinerei ersten Ranges*." ["That is swinish behavior of the first order!"] I was terribly embarrassed, but not without a feeling of satisfaction.

He went on to accuse the management—which included, in addition to Ebert, two or three conductors and Rudolf Bing—of cowardice and irresponsibility towards a contemporary composer, and the incident caused a short-lived estrangement between Weill and the director of the Charlottenburg opera. But we were quick to find a line or two from the River Scene in *Die Bürgschaft* that characterized the artistic situation in the opera house and that also summed up the political situation in Berlin in early 1932: "*So entsteht Nebel*," or "That is how fog develops."

Books

Kurt Weill-Studien

edited by Nils Grosch, Joachim Lucchesi, and Jürgen Schebera
Veröffentlichungen der Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft Dessau, Band 1

Stuttgart: M&P Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 1996
 ISBN 3-476-45166-6

The Dessau-based Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft and Kurt-Weill-Zentrum have endeavored since their founding in 1992 to coordinate and support all Kurt Weill-related activity in Germany. The recently published *Kurt Weill-Studien* demonstrates impressively that research is not merely on the fringes of that activity. This first publication of the Gesellschaft is edited by Nils Grosch, Joachim Lucchesi, and Jürgen Schebera and contains nine contributions, most of which were prepared for presentation at the 1995 Kurt Weill Conference in Dessau. Supplemented by five short, first-time reprints of writings by Weill, the collected contents make for an idiosyncratic, hybrid form of book.

The scholarly articles are arranged according to the placement of their subject matter in the Weill chronology. However, because they exhibit such a remarkably wide range, they will be reviewed here according to methodological approach. The four articles that focus on Weill's music have special merit. Gunther Diehl, for instance, supplies a useful synopsis of his analytical work on *Der Protagonist*. J. Bradford Robinson articulates a complex of questions surrounding Weill's artistic appropriation of the "Broadway musical" genre. By using numerous versions of "Johnny's Song" as examples, he demonstrates the way in which Weill moved step by step from his "song-style" form based upon German *Schlager* (hit songs) to the very different form of songs for the American theater.

Tamara Levitz deals with issues of musical language, particularly the underlying aesthetic of the "Junge Klassizität." She describes the difference between the progressive style represented by Busoni and a reactionary style supported by Philipp Jarnach. The former draws near to the fundamental tenets of Classicism—such as the objectivity of the artist—in the creation of a topical music. The latter tries to advance the historical aesthetic as an unchallengeable law. She demonstrates Weill's adoption of Busoni's formulation, which inevitably led to a collision with Jarnach's approach. Levitz's work makes one consider the possibility that Jarnach's aesthetic reservations about Weill might have propagated the concept of two different Weills (the German, avant-garde composer versus the American, commercial one) that continues to be endorsed in Germany today.

Elisabeth Schwind shows that Marc Blitzstein, too, initially criticized Weill's song style aesthetic. But a change in Blitzstein's political views brought him around to Weill's way of thinking and caused him to embrace a complex musical style that could also reach a large, mass audience.

The other five articles discuss the compositional, performance, and/or reception histories of several compositions. As a result, they offer interesting background material but do not deal with the music as such. Of special note is Andreas Hauff's contribution, the most extensive of the entire volume, in which he grounds the compositional and performance history of *Die Bürgschaft* in the general history of the time. Without explicitly mentioning the concept of *Zeitoper*, Hauff interprets the work as an analogy to the political situation at the end of the Weimar Republic. He also points out allu-

sions to the Bible, Schiller's like-named ballad, and the formal structure of Wagner's *Ring*, all of which were references easily decipherable by those who possessed the middle-class education typical of the time. Hauff also shows how the changed political situation in 1957 led to the failure of a Berlin revival, in spite of several alterations and abbreviations that supposedly were made to accommodate the new environment.

The remaining historical essays are contributed by Jürgen Schebera (who examines the premiere performance of the Second Symphony, particularly in light of the contemporary criticism), Guy Stern (who sketches the complex and problematic compositional and performance history of *Der Weg der Verheißung*), and Elmar Juchem (who describes the financing of *Lost in the Stars*). All three, although rather narrower in compass, offer both new insights and an abundance of interesting source material.

The same can be said—at least partially—for Nils Grosch's article about *Der Berliner Requiem*. Citing previously unknown sources, he proposes a convincing reconstruction of an original version—a version that differs from the one first broadcast under the influence of radio censors. In the second part of the article he attempts to advance his reconstruction as the most conclusive version in terms of function and conception. Here Grosch's arguments are confusing, but the history of the piece is confusing too. While putting together a version for publication, Weill changed his mind several times, and all the versions he proposed or produced differ considerably from each other. David Drew, who edited the score in 1976, did not follow the usual custom of accepting the composer's last version as the definitive one but instead published a reduced edition containing only those parts of the *Requiem* that had never been in question. Meanwhile, in his *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (1986), he incorporated all numbers of all the versions. Grosch argues as if his own reconstruction should be the "one and only" edition, and the way he does so is unacceptable. For instance, he has a tendency to incorporate his opinion into indirect quotations. On one occasion this leads him into a direct falsehood relating to the text variants of No. 3 ("Marterl"/"Grabschrift 1919"). Grosch misrepresents the position presented by Drew in his *Handbook* (pp. 207–11) as one of certainty and then attacks it, when, in fact, Drew never makes a final judgment in the matter.

Overall, one could have wished for better and more complete editorial work. While attention to standard editorial practices may not be as important as the actual content of the essays, the overall impression is that the editors took their job too lightly. Of most concern are not the numerous typographical errors but the lack of critical attention that has been given to Grosch's article and others. For instance, Diehl's lecture-style text contains all the repetitions required for understanding by listeners; they could have been eliminated for this reading version. In another instance, footnote 20 in Schebera's text cites a letter from Weill to Lenya from the program notes of an LP recording. More precise editorial work would have cited the location of the original letter. Also, the lack of indices and English-language abstracts impedes easy study and scholarly exchange with researchers who are not fluent in German.

These concerns, however, do not obscure the overall achievement. The articles offer much new information, and their careful consideration of musical and aesthetic questions is most welcome. Also welcome are the signs of an increasing willingness in Germany to deal with Weill's American compositions and the conditions of their genesis. A more appropriate presentation would have given the excellent work of the individual authors the forum it deserves.

Martha Brech
 Berlin

Books

Metzler Kabarett-Lexikon

by Klaus Budzinski and Reinhard Hippen

Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996. 495 p.
ISBN 3-476-01448-7

Cabaret is an art form that resists definition; it derives its energy from the diversity of its forms, themes, and personalities. Since its beginnings over 100 years ago at the Parisian Chat Noir, it has constantly transformed itself to adapt to, mirror, and also resist the spirit of the times. Jazz and nude dancing, experimental puppet plays, lyric parodies and propaganda songs—the best examples of this intimate performance art strive to find new forms of expression and test the limits of the stage and the audience alike. The *Kleinkunst* (or “miniature art”) stage has long been a proving ground for young talents, and such figures as Max Reinhardt, Wolfgang Borchert, and Brigitte Mira found their first audiences here; even Kurt Weill had a short stint as a pianist in a Berlin cellar cabaret. As novelty and freshness are the spark of these performances, most of the troupes and locales disappeared after a few years (or even months) and live on only as legends.

Two leading historians of the German cabaret have issued a reference work useful for aficionados of the “light muse” in its many guises. It covers performers, authors, dancers, composers, and other stage artists from the turn of the century to today, as well as famous cabarets and ensembles, and key concepts of cabaret and satire. Despite its broader title, the volume is devoted specifically to German-language cabaret, although a few influential French figures are included. In addition to the classic names from the turn of the century and the Weimar Republic that are mentioned in the many cabaret histories, one will find contemporary young performers such as Tim Fischer, Ostbahn-Kurti, or Kordula Voelker, and a striking range of “special interest” troupes that make up today’s *Kleinkunst* scene: Turkish-German ensembles, local amateur groups, feminist troupes, even a cabaret representing the physically challenged. Examples of cultural and political resistance stand alongside personal tragedies and anecdotes of accommodation to dictatorships and the mass media. In the final pages of the book, one will find under the key word *Zensur* what is perhaps the central theme of the handbook: despite the century-long history of censorship and repression in Germany, be it Frank Wedekind’s incarceration for *lèse majesté* in 1899 or a southern German congregation burning the performer Lila Luder in effigy in 1988, the cabaret is a beacon of artistic and intellectual freedom.

To supplement its focus on literary satire, the collection contains entries pertinent to the related arts of dance and music, including, for instance, information on lesser-known composers such as Bela Laszky, Franz Bruinier, Bela Reinitz, and Tibor Kasics. (Sadly, other popular or commercial composers of the early cabaret, such as Walter Kollo, Hermann Klink, and Leo Fall, are absent.) Even figures on the margins of the cabaret are remembered here. One example is the bohemian Anton Kuh, who circulated in the artists’ cafes of Berlin and was acclaimed for his witty readings. One could wish for even more entries on other art forms, such as the shadow play, the caricature artist (*Schnellzeichner*), and the regional comic singer (*Völkessänger*)—the tradition to which Karl Valentin (identified as *Kabarettist* and *Komiker*) belongs.

The chief problem confronting the compilers was surely where to draw the limits of what was to be included as “cabaret,” which flows into the other arts such as revue, political theater, variety theater, and popular song. Many entries are devoted to *Liedermacher*, or contemporary singer-songwriters, with the justification that these performers are a modern version of the classic French chanson singers, though they generally do not play in the intimate locales of cabarets and lack the theatricality of the cabaret singer. Fewer articles are included on the agitprop troupes that adapted the revue format and the theatricalized satirical song to promote the Communist Party before a mass audience. Whereas the comedians Loriot and Otto [Waalkes] are listed, Munich’s right-wing Platzl singer Weiss-Ferdl is not; some will find their favorite star performers such as Iska Geri, Harald Paulsen, or even Georgette Dee absent. Such selection will always be somewhat subjective and arbitrary, but a clearer statement of criteria for inclusion would have been helpful in the Foreword. An index of names is helpful for locating figures for whom there is no main entry.

Faced with such a wealth of artists and ideas, the authors had to choose between depth and breadth, and have opted understandably for the latter. Not all entries go beyond listing names and dates to include short descriptive passages characterizing the artists, and many that do are too sketchy to be clear. Indeed, it is impossible to capture the style and wit of performers like Willy Rosen or Die Drei Tornados in a thumbnail sketch. The authors have abstained from text excerpts; selected bibliographic references follow individual entries, while a more global bibliography concludes the book along with lists of prize-winners, agencies, and booking houses. Many illustrations are headshots rather than stage photos that would have given a feel for the performances.

Due to the lack of historical sources and the reliance on anecdotes and highly colored memories, many factual errors have been perpetuated in cabaret research, which is traditionally a cross between literary history and journalism. The editors have gone to great lengths to document their information, but a few time-honored falsehoods have crept in. Franz Wachsmann did not write the classic “Allein in einer großen Stadt” while he was in exile in Paris for Marlene Dietrich to record, but rather he reconstructed the previously unpublished song, which had been performed in Berlin cabarets in the thirties. Kurt Tucholsky did not write for the Katakombe, though some of his published texts were performed there, and Kurt Geron was deported *during*, not following, the filming of the legendary propaganda film on Theresienstadt. (The apocryphal title *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt* unfortunately resurfaces.) With continued documentary work along the lines of this handbook, such myths, many admittedly trivial but often told and retold, may be cleared up over time.

The cabaret is an art of the margins, flourishing in the shadows and cellars of the hectic and often anonymous metropolis. This handbook’s accomplishment lies in its loving preservation of names and stories in danger of falling through the cracks of our star-oriented historiography—especially those of artists persecuted in the Third Reich—and in its recognition of the accomplishments of subsequent generations who keep the spirit of *Kleinkunst*, satirical performance, and literary entertainment alive.

Alan Lareau
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

Performances

Lady in the Dark

London

Royal National Theatre (Lyttelton Theatre)

Opening: 11 March 1997 (in repertory until July)

Lady in the Dark has always caused problems for producers and critics. While it is taken by some as a serious musical play with a light touch, others treat it as a musical with pretensions. Is *Lady in the Dark* a realistic psychological drama with an excuse for music in contrived dream sequences, or is it a set of song-and-dance routines fitted into a contrived plot? The National Theatre's revival serves as the starting point in reexamining the musical's unique historical status and its subject matter: psychoanalysis seems so much more routine today than in the 1940s, and in Europe so much more part of a *fin-de-siècle* phenomenon (a much less tractable subject for a musical) than in America, where it quickly became lampoonable as a rich person's pastime.

Part of the problem of staging *Lady in the Dark* at the National Theatre is a confusion about the term "musical" in British theater. London's dedicated theatergoers often avoid musicals except as an almost corrupting treat within their season subscriptions of *King Lear*, *John Gabriel Borkmann*, and other spoken dramas. Attending a musical, therefore, forces these theater buffs to reconsider their viewpoints and come to terms with musicals as part of mainstream twentieth-century theater. But is *Lady in the Dark* exactly a musical, in particular an American musical? Does part of the confusion arise because Weill so skillfully, yet idiosyncratically, synthesized European operetta, and even opera, with American musical theater? One of the strengths of this new production is that it compels the audience to take the work seriously on its own terms. Visually, for example, Adrienne Lobel's marvelous sets move effortlessly between fantasy and reality. By using colored cubes and triangles that are as suggestive of mental symbols as of Art Nouveau New York, Lobel provides the audience with external and internal images

that bounce off each other. The set, along with lighting and other effects, is quietly stunning without being superficially extravagant, which is in keeping with the complexity of the work itself.

Another of this production's strengths is the supporting cast. James Dreyfus (as Russell Paxton), though perhaps not as rapid-tongued as Danny Kaye, is magnificent as the camp fashion designer, and Charlotte Cornwell (as Maggie Grant) and Summer Rognlie (as Alison du Bois) play their respective caricatures with such gusto they would make the show worth seeing for their performances alone. Steven Edward Moore's Randy is more than credibly "hunky," as Adrian Dunbar's Johnson is broodingly sullen. The parts may be gifts, but these actors, like many of the rest of the cast, certainly take them up with relish.

At the heart of the work, however, is Liza Elliott, and here I have my biggest reservation about the evening. Maria Friedman is good, especially in the Circus Dream where she walks the tightrope (I wonder how they'll cope symbolically on the nights she falls off prematurely!), but she is not quite good enough. As the central character she should dominate personally, and more importantly, vocally. Liza should be able to sound like the hard New York editor she has forced herself to become, the repressed little girl with a half-remembered melodic fragment from her past, and the woman on the brink of psychological liberation as the drama unfolds. Maria Friedman is best as the repressed little girl, but less convincing as the dragon or the latent beauty. Although Liza is the central character of *Lady in the Dark*, Friedman's portrayal of her is never quite center-stage. "The Saga of Jenny" is sustained more by the magnificent music and lyrics than by the dramatic power of Friedman's performance, and the final outcome of her therapy is less enthralling than the mayhem during the musical.

It is probably the music that has caused the most consternation since the 1940s. Weill never lost the opera

composer's—as opposed to the musical composer's—habit of characterizing a scene as much with subtle orchestral touches or telling harmonies as with beautiful tunes. From Virgil Thomson to London reviewers of the present day, critics have taken issue with the music. Too Germanic, thought Thomson; too thin, thinks a modern-day counterpart. Yet I think that by showing the quality of Weill's music, the National's production triumphs, even though the original score has been reduced by Terry Davies. Davies manages to retain much of Weill's original orchestral coloring and telling touches, and the band's performance under Mark Dorrell is one of the best parts of the evening. The music appears as it should be, as part of the drama, sometimes commenting on stage actions and sometimes dominating the scenes. Therefore, it is more of a pity that some singers cannot meet Weill's musical demands. Steven Edward Moore's Randy, for instance, was vocally insipid despite his otherwise excellent performance.

Dramatically *Lady in the Dark* suffers from the imbalance between the lengths of the first and second acts. Nevertheless, under the direction of Francesca Zambello, this production overcomes it by keeping up a good pace. The National Theatre has taken *Lady in the Dark* seriously; it does much more than its duty to a work which is a landmark in musical theater.

Roderick Swanston
Royal College of Music, London



From left: Maria Friedman (Liza Elliott), Paul Shelley (Kendall Nesbitt), and Summer Rognlie (Alison Du Bois). Photo: Catherine Ashmore.

Performances

The Seven Deadly Sins

New York

New York City Opera

Premiere: 15 March 1997

In juxtaposing *The Seven Deadly Sins* with Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Paul Kellogg, the new Artistic Director of the New York City Opera, seemed to be setting a new standard of innovation—a standard that is eminently suitable to the City Opera, if unfamiliar of late, and a standard that Kellogg has set at Glimmerglass since the early 1980s. The two very different works embody distinct, even conflicting, responses to the cataclysms of National Socialism: where Weill and Brecht satirize the pieties and predilections of the *vox populi* in *The Seven Deadly Sins*, Orff panders to it and gives it voice in *Carmina Burana*. And how, you might wonder, does the City Opera render the tension between the two works? It doesn't. This is particularly surprising, since the two directors—Anne Bogart (*The Seven Deadly Sins*) and Donald Byrd (*Carmina Burana*)—bear impressive credentials in theatrical innovation. But neither Bogart nor Byrd brings a particularly strong vision to the works, and as a result, the evening ends up being rather bland. Weill/Brecht is colorful without being irritating or sharp, while the Orff is brash without being particularly jarring. Thus, these productions are neither carnal nor political; they are unusually and unsatisfyingly timid.

If there are stars of the evening, they are John Conklin's sets and Mimi Jordan Sherin's lighting designs. There is a spareness of representational means here that is strong and convincing: metallic tables serve to lend both productions an apt sense of steely coldness. But if Conklin produces dramaturgical continuity through the sets, his directors hardly seem to notice. Both Bogart and Byrd miss the opportunity to juxtapose or correlate the *Sins* and *Carmina* through the set elements that they share. The interest aroused by these two works is

almost exclusively local, for we see only discrete visions of discrete pieces. In the end, the evening adds up to less than the sum of its parts.

Under Bogart's direction, *The Seven Deadly Sins* has much of Hollywood in it, presumably to underscore the cartoon quality of the fantasized land. (Like Kafka's account of *Amerika* or Karl May's enormously popular accounts of the Wild West, this piece by Weill and Brecht is not based upon any real experience of the exotic land across the Atlantic that it portrays.) Bogart and James Schuette (costume designer) serve up the America of *Dick Tracy* rather



Ellen Lauren (Anna II) and Lauren Flanigan (Anna I).

Photo: Carol Rosegg.

than a more severe vision, such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (another work about a fantasized America from the period). Schuette dresses the quartet of male voices (members of Anna's moralizing and sententious family in Louisiana) in stern black, the two Annas in lacy white. The ensemble of figures embodying America, however, is decked out in garish colors. Given the polarities, one might expect the unexpected. But with a few exceptions—when Anna II, to counter Gluttony and stay thin, ends up jogging around the stage in a helpless loop—the work is directed with a kind of rote playfulness. Thus, the production appears more incidental than pointed or disturbing. Lauren Flanigan's Anna I is spirited and agile; Ellen Lauren lends an extraordinary physical malleability to Anna II's naiveté. The NYCO orchestra, under the baton of Derrick Inouye, sounds alarmingly ragged and imprecise.

At the outset of Donald Byrd's staging of *Carmina Burana*, the chorus is quite literally in the audience's face. Rendered eerily anonymous by black clothing and black headgear covering everything but the face and ears, the chorus is seated in symmetrical rows, lit from below, in two steep vertical boxes that fill a good portion of the proscenium. After the first chorus, when the boxes recede to the back of the stage, the space that opens up is hardly the site of focused or tightly conceived choreography or drama. It remains unclear what Byrd has in mind; there are extended passages of dramatic transparency as well as anti- or non-representational modern dance, but there is also a scene of cross-dressing and gay-bashing. Byrd's choreography is energetic and at times very elegant.

The gestural vocabulary is appealing but hardly surprising; the extended sections of ensemble work are allusive without being cogent. It is difficult to fathom whether the choreography is a postmodern rumination on Orff's piece or Byrd's deeply personal rendering, since the choreographer's intent and his relationship to the text remain hazy. The performances by principal singers Virginia Grasso (soprano) and John Hancock (baritone), despite the problematic choreography, are particularly impressive. Both singers are talented actors with powerful voices. And yet, in the end, the production seems merely incidental, unfocused, and unfinished.

It will surely take some time for the new artistic administration at the City Opera to gain its bearings; the present experiment, nevertheless, is a welcome move in the right direction. But the City Opera will have to produce more compelling and convincing productions than this to regain a reputation for innovation. The provocative juxtaposition of pieces here is promising and the artists who contributed to them are exceedingly talented. This double bill has offered a glimpse—but only a glimpse—of better things to come.

David J. Levin
Columbia University

Performances

Songplay: The Songs and Music of Kurt Weill

Cincinnati/St. Louis

Cincinnati Playhouse/Repertory
Theatre of St. Louis

September–November 1996

Songplay, conceived and directed by Jonathan Eaton, is essentially a Kurt Weill revue, organized around a newly devised dramatic framework. The title, evoking such resonances as *Singspiel*, *Liederspiel*, the Brechtian *Song*, and the *Mahagonny Singspiel*, provides the theatergoer with a suggestion of the format. Following the September 1996 premiere in Cincinnati, the second production opened on 30 October in the intimate setting of the studio theater at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis and was held over through the month of November.

Set in a tavern in an unspecified location and time period, the plot springs from two versions of the song “Youkali.” While the first version suppresses the conclusion, the second ends with “il n’y a pas de Youkali” (“there is no Youkali”). Six characters (each highly suggestive of one or more legendary Weill personae) meet to wait for a boat that will carry them away to a fantasy island. They interact dramatically so as to create a context for each of the thirty-five songs. At the end of the evening, they decide not to board the ship after all. The song selections include well-known hits, relatively unfa-

iliar works, and works performed publicly for the first time, including songs from the unfinished *Davy Crockett* and *High Wind in Jamaica*.

Mr. Eaton’s lightly-sketched story line corresponds to longstanding cultural and historic associations of the beloved songs, and *Songplay* often invites nostalgia. As Karen Murphy performs “Barbara Song,” for example, her Lenya-esque character Lillian momentarily evokes the listener’s memories of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. The rousing climax of “J’attends un navire” in French, rather than in English, reminds the listener of its status as an unofficial theme song of the French resistance. Although the distinction between the English lyrics of “Alabama Song” and the original German libretto (of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*) cannot be sufficiently portrayed, scattered German phrases in the dialogue provide some contrast. The rapid transitions from one song to the next occasionally—perhaps inevitably—results in abrupt shifts in dramatic mood, the least successful of which occurred between the poignant “Nanna’s Song” and the almost flippantly light “Love Song.”

Songplay focuses on Weill’s music; the production minimizes all other aspects. The multilevel set, which includes a neon new moon with a face (shades of “Mac Tonight!”) and a less noticeable floating ship, allows for the placement of the keyboard player behind the bar and three additional players (trumpet, percussion, reeds) on a mezzanine. The instrumentation provides a diverse palette that accommodates the wide range of styles.

The talented ensemble consisted of singing actors and opera singers. Herb Downer, a veteran of *Mahagonny Singspiel*, *The Seven Deadly Sins* and *Happy End* at the Yale Repertory Theatre, played a wise, unsophisticated African-American man. He not only sang with power and conviction, but also provided a strong stage presence that drew the audience safely through some very quick shifts of mood. In an all-around excellent performance, Kim Lindsay portrayed a waif-like French prostitute and led the company in an electrifying rendition of “Le Train du Ciel.” In

the face of compelling singing and acting, who cares if the sudden drawing of a knife before Downer’s rendition of “Mack the Knife” or the unexplained illness that struck Lindsay’s character seem contrived? The whole purpose of the plot is to facilitate performances such as these.

Michael Brian charmed and dazzled the audience as a lively urban Jew and Craig Priebe’s sneering Nazi, named “Johnny,” provided both the abusiveness and the political background necessary to introduce some of the songs. Pedro Porro, as an American cowboy, did not offer a consistently strong presence on stage, but delivered the best singing of the evening in his calm



Karen Murphy (left) and Craig Priebe (right).
Photo: The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis.

and beautiful rendition of “Lonely House.” Although Karen Murphy’s hardened woman was one of the most interesting characters, her singing was plagued by a Jekyll-and-Hyde dissimilarity between her belted lower register and her much weaker upper range. In both “Alabama Song” and “Barbara Song,” a quicker tempo might have compensated for the occasional shortage of vocal energy and exposure of the weak upper register. While Lenya and Ute Lemper bear witness that the songs can certainly stand idiosyncratic vocal technique, Murphy’s high range lacked a compelling presence and suffered by comparison to the more robust sounds of Priebe, Porro and Lindsay.

Both as a means of familiarizing audiences with Weill’s songs and on its own merit, *Songplay* was a worthy production, stemming from a historically grounded approach that, while lifting the songs from their original contexts, remains sensitive to the aims of the composer.

Stephanie Campbell
Washington University, St. Louis



From left: Herb Downer, Kim Lindsay, Pedro Porro, and Michael Brian. Photo: The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis.

Performances

Suite from Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Violin Concerto

Berlin

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

26 February–1 March 1997

Orchestral tone color as a means of expression in the music of the early twentieth century was the basis for the Berlin Philharmonic program performed from 26 February through 1 March. Running through the evening like a bright red ribbon, the concept left the impression of unity among a group of works that could hardly have been of greater contrast. The program contained (and this a small sensation) two compositions by Kurt Weill: the *Suite from Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, arranged by Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg in 1960, and the stylistically very different Concerto for violin and wind instruments, op. 12. Two other contrasting pieces, Arthur Honegger's Third Symphony (*Symphonie Liturgique*) and Maurice Ravel's *La Valse* rounded out the evening. Thanks to the meticulously detailed, perfect playing of the Berlin Philharmonic and soloist Frank Peter Zimmermann under conductor Mariss Jansons, each piece preserved its individuality; in the end, the performers revealed different aspects of expressive orchestral color without creating a hierarchy among the four works.

The concert opened with the rarely played *Mahagonny* Suite. It is a sort of abridged version of the opera, presenting several songs and interludes, leading up to the finale, in a well-thought-out and dramatically balanced continuity. In contrast to the *Mahagonny Songspiel*—conceived long before the opera—the Suite contains complex compositional structures, such as the fugato depicting the typhoon and the

superimposition of song reprises, which are repeated later on in the protest march of the finale. The orchestral sound-colors are complex. Solo instruments (mostly winds) take over the vocal lines. They either contrast with the accompanying instruments or work with them to fashion a near-homogeneous sound. The spectrum ranges from pure string sounds in the style of a salon orchestra to those of typically brazen winds (dominated by brass) and percussion. In sections where the orchestration is mixed, the guitar, banjo, or piano occasionally stands out. In this way, the sound of the Suite gains an elasticity that surpasses more pedestrian arrangements and comes close to



Mariss Jansons. Photo: Godfrey MacDonnic

the opera itself, a characteristic enjoyed even more by those intimately familiar with the original work. Some irritatingly long breaks interrupted the internal tension between individual numbers, but in the end there were several bravos among the enthusiastic applause.

Honegger's Third Symphony, performed by the full orchestra, provided a powerful and thought-provoking end to the first half. In this work, begun in January 1945 and reflective of wartime sensibilities, Honegger took up the theme of man's quest to build joy and peace in his struggles against brutality. The work is intensely emotional. The last movement, which contains numerous crescendi and glissandi, culminates in a crescendoing dissonant cluster for the entire orchestra. This rousing effect is further intensified by its abrupt end, followed by a gentle, almost singable

melody as the symbol of the dove of peace.

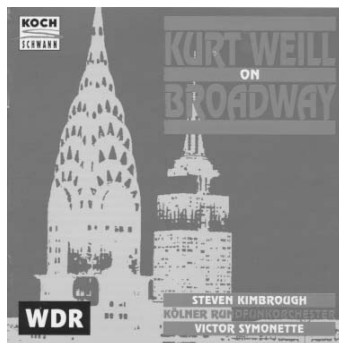
Weill's Concerto for violin and wind instruments, composed in 1924, opened the second half of the concert. Zimmermann, the soloist, launched into the work at an extremely swift tempo and played the difficult solo parts accurately. By slightly accentuating individual tones over longer melodious phrases, he attempted to set himself apart from the broad rhythmic patterns in the winds (which seemed somewhat over-supported by four double basses). Zimmermann's approach harked back to the traditional concept of the solo concerto as a bravura piece. His long phrases bridged over contrasting sections, creating a sort of unity between them. This was not always an advantage, however. The closing lacked a certain emphasis, although that can perhaps be ascribed to the tempo, which was so fast as to preclude any further acceleration or contrast between soloist and orchestra. The interpretation downplayed the fusion of instrumental colors and restrained the youthful impetuosity and expressive strength that is inherent in the work.

Ravel composed *La Valse* only four years before Weill wrote his Violin Concerto, but the works seem to come from two different worlds. Probably planned as a crowd-pleaser, *La Valse* fit well into the theme of orchestral color, but it made a startling effect after the three pieces that were composed in free tonality. *La Valse* begins with traditional harmonies and dancing waltz rhythms; in no time Ravel has the entire orchestra swaying in 3/4 time, capturing the essence of pure Viennese culture. But as the piece progresses, the orchestration becomes more complex and the dominating waltz rhythm recedes. A transition takes place from a sound world based upon orchestration of harmonies to a more complex one, in which chord formations enter new dimensions.

The combination of these four works demonstrated clearly that programs conceived apart from academicism can create strong emotional effects. Severe "experts" usually react skeptically when audiences applaud too enthusiastically. In Berlin, the audience had every reason to show its spirited appreciation.

Martha Brech
Berlin

Recordings



Kurt Weill on Broadway

Stephen Kimbrough, baritone

Kölner Rundfunkorchester

Victor Symonette, conductor

Koch 3-1416-2

Recording includes "You Have to Do What You Do Do"; "A Rhyme for Angela"; "Life, Love, and Laughter" [*Firebrand of Florence*]; "This is the Life"; "Here I'll Stay" [*Love Life*]; "Dr. Crippen"; "Westwind"; "Who am I?" [*One Touch of Venus*]; "The Westpointer"; "Cowboy Song" [*Johnny Johnson*].

Kurt Weill's Broadway works are poorly represented on recordings. While standards like "The Saga of Jenny" are offered again and again, only two shows have been presented complete on compact disc: *Street Scene* and *Lost in the Stars* (both already exceptions to the rule, being well-documented by original cast recordings). These two works might have been singled out because their high-minded aspirations accord with a certain conception of Weill: the avant-garde composer who sold out but partly redeemed himself with attempts to make Broadway respectable.

Two scores in particular, *Love Life* and *The Firebrand of Florence*, have become mere footnotes in Broadway history because they have gone virtually unrecorded. Circumstances surrounding their original productions are partly to blame for this. *Love Life* enjoyed a *succès d'estime*, but union conflicts precluded a recording. *Firebrand* garnered critical accolades for its score and for Gershwin's Gilbertian lyrics but generated little public interest, folding after forty-three performances. Weill blamed inadequate casting, John Murray Anderson's ponderous staging, and Edwin Justus Mayer's book (adapted from his 1924 stage hit), which even George Kaufman's doctoring failed to rescue. Then there was bad timing. In April 1945 *Firebrand* had to compete with a surfeit of costume musicals: *Oklahoma*, *Carousel*, *Bloomer Girl*, *Song of Norway*, and Romberg's *Up in Central Park*. Romberg's name alone conjured memories of the not-too-distant past, when Central European operetta provided the model for book musicals. With *Firebrand*, Weill sought to refashion classic operetta for the Broadway stage. That season's public probably found the conception stale.

Whatever the reasons for their obscurity, we can begin to reassess *Firebrand* and *Love Life* thanks to two new compact discs, both entitled *Kurt Weill on Broadway*. The one, conducted by John McGlinn, is reviewed elsewhere in this issue (see facing page). The other is conducted by Victor Symonette, who has had a long personal association with this

music. Only two selections on Symonette's recording are generally familiar: "Westwind" (*One Touch of Venus*) and "The Cowboy Song" (*Johnny Johnson*). Not the least of the disc's pleasures is the inclusion of three first-rate numbers cut from their shows after Weill had orchestrated them. "The Westpointer" reveals one of many thematic links between *Johnny Johnson* and Weill's pre-Broadway career: the opening phrase is that of *Mahagonny*'s "Mandelay." "The Bachelor Song" (*Knickerbocker Holiday*) was the only number written expressly for the hero's sidekick, Tenpin. "Who am I?" (*One Touch of Venus*) is a quasi-blues originally sung by Whitelaw Savory in the opening scene of Act II. Like the little-known "Dr. Crippen"—also included here—"Who am I?" is unusually grim in the context of the *Venus* score. Its mordant style is one associated, perhaps too casually, with the "European Weill."

The remainder of the CD Symonette devotes to *Firebrand* and *Love Life*, with his selections mostly duplicating McGlinn's. Having more soloists at his disposal, McGlinn places the arias for Cellini and Samuel Cooper in their complete musical context. The difference is especially telling in *Firebrand*, which is rich in extended chain ensembles. Among these is the Act I opening, which depicts Cellini's near-execution and pardon, and the Act II Trial Scene, in which he cheats the hangman again. The opening presents twenty minutes of continuous music, the centerpiece of which is Cellini's recitative and aria with chorus, "Life, Love, and Laughter." Even in the context of the operetta genre, Weill's through-composed first scene is unprecedented. For the dramatically parallel trial scene, Weill reworks earlier music but also gives Cellini a new recitative-aria-chorus, "You Have to Do What You Do Do," the lyrics of which Gershwin based on the "Zodiac Song" discarded from *Lady in the Dark*. Symonette includes only Cellini's numbers; McGlinn performs the entire scenes.

The duplication between the Kurt Weill on Broadway discs is instructive insofar as it illustrates different approaches to the reconstruction of neglected Broadway scores. Orchestration is one example. McGlinn tends to take the final state of the original orchestral parts—with their many indications of cut passages and reduced forces—as definitive. Symonette presents Weill's orchestration in its original conception. To decide between the two, one could start by comparing the versions of Cellini's recitative preceding "Life, Love, and Laughter." McGlinn observes the tacet written into the brass parts. I prefer Symonette's reading, which preserves Weill's brass fanfares: major harmony on "full of glory" and "blossom and bloom," diminished-sevenths on "I cannot see" and "death of me." The orchestration fits the scene's pomp, not to mention Cellini's over-developed sense of self-worth. One cannot automatically treat the elimination of instrumental parts (in this case, the brass) in a vocal passage as a definitive recomposition. The action might just as well have been a last-ditch effort to accommodate a singer's limitations. (Weill's letters express reservations about the *Firebrand* cast that were echoed by the critics.) In a recording studio, or with singers like Kimbrough and Hampson, such late alterations can be ignored.

Steven Kimbrough makes a stalwart Cellini and is a clear choice for the *Venus* songs originally entrusted to John Boles, who began his career as an operetta baritone in many an early motion picture. Kimbrough is less than ideal in comic character roles: the *Firebrand*'s Duke and *Knickerbocker Holiday*'s Tenpin. But this is caviling. By making these songs available, some for the first time, in accurate performances informed by careful study of the sources, Symonette and Kimbrough have performed an invaluable service for those seeking a more sympathetic understanding of Kurt Weill on Broadway.

Joel Galand

University of Rochester

Recordings

Kurt Weill on Broadway

Thomas Hampson, Elizabeth Futral, Jerry Hadley, Jeanne Lehman,
vocalists

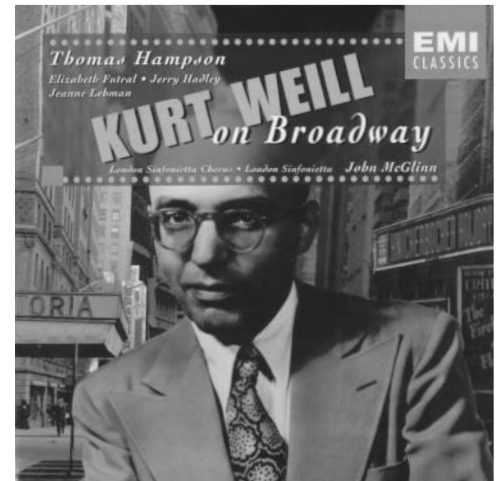
London Sinfonietta, London Sinfonietta chorus

John McGlinn, conductor

Liner notes by Miles Kreuger

EMI 5 55563 2

Recording includes "Westwind" [*One Touch of Venus*]; "It Never Was You"; "How Can You Tell an American?" [*Knickerbocker Holiday*]; "Song of the Hangman"; "Come to Florence"; "My Lords and Ladies"; "There Was Life, There Was Love, There Was Laughter"; "You're Far Too Near Me"; "The World is Full of Villains"; "You Have To Do What You Do Do"; "Love Is My Enemy" [*The Firebrand of Florence*]; "Who Is Samuel Cooper?"; "Here I'll Stay"; "I Remember It Well"; "This Is the Life" [*Love Life*]; "Johnny's Song" [*Johnny Johnson*].



Kurt Weill on Broadway is a much needed, well executed, but ultimately disappointing album. Fully half of the recording's sixteen songs are from *The Firebrand of Florence*, a work inspired by the sixteenth-century goldsmith, sculptor, and reprobate, Benvenuto Cellini. This 1945 musical-operetta, with lyrics by Ira Gershwin, ran for only forty-three performances. In his liner notes, Miles Kreuger contends that the show failed, not (as generally believed) because Weill's and Gershwin's work was second rate, but because of various strokes of bad luck in the original production. He is half right: Weill's work is excellent. Although probably not the ideal composer for this frothy and romantic piece, he acquitted himself well. In numbers such as "Song of the Hangman," he added real bite and punch to the work. It was Ira Gershwin who proved to be the downfall of the show.

There can be a certain charm to Gershwin's jargony, colloquial style of lyrics, but that charm is wholly lacking in his attempt here to write an operetta set in Renaissance Italy. It is difficult to forgive such lines as:

You may think that you do
Whatever you do do,
But there is a hoodoo
Who's running the game.

or

Oh, models of Florence
Your master is through.
Your tears fall in torrents,
But what can you do?
The fatal bell has rung.
The trap will soon be sprung!

Kreuger implies that Gershwin intended his work on this piece as a spoof of operetta.

Whether or not that is a correct assessment, the result makes for very unsatisfying listening. I kept thinking: "If only the original could have been in German, and Marc Blitzstein did an English adaption, perhaps then the show would have been a success."

The recording's other principal focus is upon four songs from the slightly more successful *Love Life* (1948, 252 performances) with lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner. Billed as a "vaudeville," the show's experimental nature—it follows one family through a century-and-a-half of American history during which the characters do not age but are changed by the times—and its cautionary message have given it a certain cult status. The show was written between two of Lerner's more successful collaborations with Frederick Loewe (*Brigadoon* and *My Fair Lady*). While *Love Life* cannot match the magic of either of those scores, it is both charming and well crafted. One duet, "I Remember It Well," provides a unique opportunity to compare Lerner and Weill with Lerner and Loewe. The lyric and idea are almost identical to the like-titled and better known song from *Gigi*. In my opinion, the latter wins.

I wish some of the other songs from *Love Life* had been recorded in addition to, or in replacement of, some of those here. (Especially missed is "Susan's Dream.") If my guess is right, the whole *raison d'être* of this recording was as a showcase, specifically, for Thomas Hampson singing Kurt Weill. I can almost feel McGlinn champing at the bit to include some female solos to be truer to the variety offered by the full works. Unfortunately that was not to be.

McGlinn as a rule brings out well-researched recordings featuring, whenever possible, original orchestrations. This one is

no exception. We are doubly fortunate here that all the orchestrations are Weill's own. No other orchestrator can make that dry woodwind sound seem quite so natural and appropriate as Weill does himself. One might crave a little more sweetness, but Weill is serving up an entrée in place of the more usually proffered dessert. The music exhibits a depth and substance rarely heard in a Broadway score.

Voices can have the quality of objects: Mel Tormé's is the velvet fog, Sarah Vaughan's is honey, Nancy Wilson's is wire, and Barbara Cook's is glass. For me, Thomas Hampson's voice is mahogany. It is a rich, strong, virile instrument. Hampson is not the actor that the best Broadway performers are, but these songs do not require the subtext of a Sweeney Todd. Of all the inclusions on this recording, the most successful is "How Can You Tell an American?" from *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938, lyrics by Maxwell Anderson). This vocal duel between Hampson and Hadley is full of swagger and guts, with a biting lyric and Weill clearly in his element. There were some missed opportunities here to match singer and song. A Hampson recording of "Lost in the Stars" (even as frequently recorded as that piece already is) could be glorious and worth virtually anything else on this disc.

Kurt Weill on Broadway is an album of rarely recorded Weill songs, performed well and with class. As one might expect, there is a reason that most of these songs are so little known. But second drawer Weill is often far more interesting than top drawer anybody else.

Mark Horowitz
Library of Congress

Recordings

Recorded Arrangements of Weill

Among the work of “classical” twentieth-century composers, Kurt Weill’s is one of the most frequently subject to arrangement. Sometimes the arrangements or “rethinkings” are for conventional forces, more often they involve unusual combinations of instruments or voices. The initiative in the latter case usually proceeds from performers who know they must create their own repertoire in order to have something to play or sing. Each year, a few of these arrangements are lucky enough to make it onto a commercial recording, usually not attracting—for a variety of reasons—much attention from reviewers. The editors of the Newsletter, having collected a number of such discs over the last year or so, thought it worthwhile to take a brief look at a (somewhat) arbitrary selection.

Edward Harsh

Tetra: By Arrangement

Tetra, an ensemble of four classical guitarists

Conifer Classics 74321-15353-2

includes arrangement of “Songs from The Threepenny Opera” by Stephen Goss



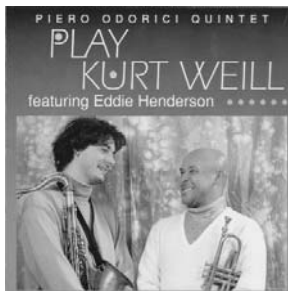
Belying the initial prejudice of a guitar quartet being a monochromatic and limited ensemble, this arrangement by Stephen Goss of songs from *Die Dreigroschenoper* displays ingenious and tasteful use of the full range of sonic possibilities offered by the medium. Subtle shadings of color and articulation illuminate the score at the turn of every phrase. Goss even negotiates without embarrassing incident the use of the occasional dramatic gesture, as in the taps and thumps on the guitar body to mimic percussion in the introduction to the “Cannon Song.” Most revelatory, though, is the unveiling of the contrapuntal nature of the work as a whole, this nature being cloaked in the original by—paradoxically—the heterogeneity of the ensemble. The uniform sound of four matched but carefully differentiated instruments reveals the relationships between voices in places both obvious (the fugato in the “Overture”) and surprising (the accompaniment in the later verses of the “Tango-Ballad”). Just one cautionary note: following a beautifully scored opening of “Polly’s Song” (featuring the striking use of a single, quiet harmonic to articulate the high B pedal point), the main melody in all its simplicity comes off as treacly and massively unalienated, a moment of passive elevator music in an otherwise very engaging arrangement.

Play Kurt Weill

Piero Odorici Quintet, featuring Eddie Henderson

Neljazz NLM 0941

includes arrangements of “Anstatt dass song,” “This is New,” “Alabama Song,” “Grabschrift,” “September Song,” “Green Up Time,” “DreigroschenOper [sic] (finale),” and “My Ship”



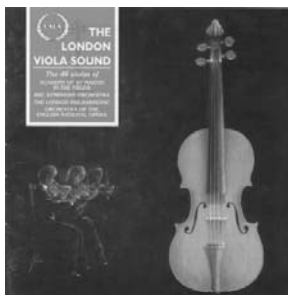
By its nature, the Odorici Quintet offers the most radical rethinkings of Weill among the recordings considered here. Jazz musicians of this tradition, in considering songs for arrangement, are most often interested in how the melodic constructions and harmonic implications of a given piece can serve improvisation. Their arrangements tend toward surgical removal of melodic material from the context of its original verse structure, accompaniment, and sometimes even its specific harmonization. The new contexts provided by the presentations on this recording are conventional: structures based upon statements of the subject melody (the “head”) followed by a series of improvised solos, the whole undergirded by stock repetitive accompanimental backdrops from the rhythm section. This treatment is much more successfully applied here to the American than to the German repertoire, the former more closely approaching the archetypes from which the conventions at play developed. “This is New,” for instance, swings happily into its new role, offering the performers a comfortable platform for launching the sort of solos toward which they naturally incline. By contrast, any trace of what the mysteriously titled “DreigroschenOper (finale)” once was, in detail or essence, is totally swamped by the musicians’ preferred conventions. It becomes so characterless and sedated that it cannot even turn and bite the foreign hand that leads it.

The London Viola Sound

The 48 violas of Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, BBC Symphony Orchestra, The London Philharmonic, Orchestra of the English National Opera.

Cala Records CACD 0106

includes arrangement of Weill's *Kiddush* by Julian Milone



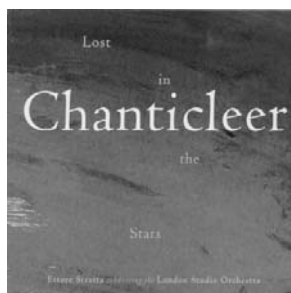
Kiddush, Weill's setting of a Jewish sanctification prayer and one of his few works from the 1940s not written for stage or screen, is presented here in a straightforward and competent re-instrumentation. Chorus, organ, and cantor (solo tenor) give way to the (how might one describe it?) unique combination of solo viola accompanied by nothing but lots of other violas. In terms of internal musical structure and function, the arrangement does not substantially recast the composition. The solo viola takes over the cantor's line almost note for note, with only a few added cadenza-like flourishes; the viola choir adopts most of the remaining chorus and organ parts. The surprising resonance of the ensemble exudes an appropriately reverent atmosphere, but, deprived of the associative richness of organ and human voices (not to mention the articulations and meanings of the verbal text), the piece loses the better portion of its ritualistic power. It sounds like pleasant marginalia from the pen of Ralph Vaughan Weill.

Lost in the Stars

Chanticleer, with Ettore Stratta conducting the London Studio Orchestra

Teldec Classics 0630-13132-2

includes arrangement of Weill's song "Lost in the Stars" by Gene Puerling



Chanticleer impresses immediately as a virtuoso ensemble: virtuoso in the sense not of speedy scales but of perfectly balanced and tuned chords and ensemble phrasing executed as if proceeding from a common musical mind. It seems odd to say that the musicians' self-consciousness of these very positive characteristics may play a role in undermining an attractive and resourceful arrangement of "Lost in the Stars." The problem is one of tempo. The sense throughout the performances on this disc (containing arranged standards ranging from Porter to Monk) is of an ensemble glorying in the prolongation of every moment and detail, in the delectation of every delicious harmony. The harmonies in this arrangement of "Lost in the Stars"—post-Gospel with a touch of South Africa—are luscious, but they do not become more so at *molto lentissimo*. Instead, the song becomes, depending upon one's inclination, either an immobile object for distanced contemplation or something to be played only with the lights down low. Flaunting devalues the gift.

Barbara Song

Barbara Thompson, saxophones, with the Medici String Quartet

Virgin Classics VC 5 45167 2

comprises arrangements of eleven songs by Weill, including "Je ne t'aime pas," "Barbara Song," "Mack the Knife," "Zuhalterballade," "It Never Was You," "Speak Low," "Surabaya Johnny," "September Song," "The Bilbao Song," "Nana's Lied," and "My Ship"



Although lively, this collection of arrangements (by a variety of arrangers) for solo saxophone and string quartet is troubled by an uneasiness of genre. The more successful ones tend to abstract the material somewhat from the original song texture. Barbara Thompson's own reworking of "Je ne t'aime pas," for instance, transforms a few rhythmic and melodic motives from the song into a playful exercise that allows the five musicians to interact in a real chamber music setting observant of instrumental idioms. By way of contrast, "Speak Low" as arranged here by John Dankworth comes off as a song stripped of text by covetous instrumentalists and feeling the loss rather acutely. Even the earnest inflections and pitch bends of Thompson's adroit playing cannot remove the sense that this melody (among others) has been forcibly de-voiced. One arrangement deserving of special mention, on dubious grounds, is Mike Westbrook's "September Song," which presents fragments of the tune as it might have been conceived first by Charlie Parker, then by some marginally successful exponent of progressive music in Vienna circa 1908, then by Parker again. As a conception, this truly merits the label "weird."

Betty Buckley / An Evening at Carnegie Hall

Sterling Records, S1012-2, 1996.

This recording has a lot going for it. There is often something special about live albums, an electricity you can sense between performer and audience. Well, that electricity is here in spades. Betty Buckley is a triple threat: she is a wonderful actress; has a big, distinctive voice; and, if not quite gorgeous, is a striking presence. She performs three Weill numbers here: "September Song," "Pirate Jenny," and "My Ship." "September Song" is marvelous; "Pirate Jenny" is very good; and "My Ship" is ill-conceived. The disc is an eclectic collection of songs, from "As Time Goes By" to Billy Joel, with an emphasis on Broadway. Of the group, for my desert island I would probably choose her "Rose's Turn" from *Gypsy*—it's a knockout.

Mark Horowitz

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